

# Crankyville

by Jim Gold

When the sun rose in Crankyville, locals cried. As it climbed higher into the clear blue sky, warming the good earth, they sat in their backyards wailing. At dinners that included delicious steaks, rich wines, and succulent desserts, they moaned.

Crankyville residents were not a happy lot.

Then one day, after 9.3 months of incubation, Lawrence and Emily Cranky gave birth to the Sam child. “He is strange creature,” noted Mrs. Cranky. “See how his eyes shine?” Sure enough when Sam saw the sun rise, his eyes lit up and he crawled around his crib, singing. Noon was giggling time, evenings, he breast-fed with happy gurgles.

Puzzled and on the verge of outrage, Mrs. Cranky shook her head. “Such a strange child,” she lamented. “What is wrong with him?”

“We can’t have him go around smiling all day,” declared Mr. Cranky, slamming his fist on the table. “What will the neighbors think? Let’s bring him to Leslie Pissencure, the sad therapist.”

“You’re right, Lawrence. It’s a down day in Crankyville when you see a child smile. And our own son! How embarrassing! It’s too much to bear.” She broke down in a grin.

Mr. Cranky took her hand. “Don’t worry, dear,” he assured her. “Dr. Pissencure is excellent. She’ll fix our Sam so he never smiles again.”

“You’re wonderful,” sighed Mrs. Cranky. “What would I do without you? . . . If there is one thing I can’t stand, it’s a happy child.”

The Crankies took Sam to the Teary Pavilion of Lachrymose Hospital, which specialized in cases of public happiness. Dr. Pissencure gave the boy misery miracle

drugs and depressive talk therapy for two years. But even those powerful modern techniques couldn't stop the baby from gurgling, smiling at the staff, and rocking with excitement when the sun came up. Soon Dr. Pissencure gave up.

“He is a danger to the community,” said the hospital’s chief surgeon. “If he keeps laughing, we’ll all be out of business. We need something drastic, like the scalding rag. We’ll dip it in boiling oil and wipe that smile off his face.”

They wiped Sam’s face with the rag. But he kept smiling. Then he laughed. At that moment, the hospital fell down.

from *Carlos the Cloud*

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