

THE COOKIE CONSPIRACY

The plan was formed on a dark, stormy night. The room was lit with the dim light of a single bedside lamp, around which sat the three conspirators.

"You all know the situation," said Tom, the oldest and tallest. He pointed a long wooden ruler toward the door. "At 9 PM, cookies were baked in the kitchen. At 9:30, they were gathered into a container and secured in the pantry."

He stared at his comrades in arms as thunder boomed out from beyond the curtains. "Tonight we shall liberate them."

John, the smallest of the group, nodded his agreement. "If we don't act now, we may never see them again."

John and Tom then turned to Sara, the final component needed for their plan to succeed.

Sara didn't answer right away. Although she had smelled the same cookies, and watched sadly with the others as they had been carefully put away, she was not so sure about the plan.

Oh, she didn't mind the cookie-eating part. That was the best part—the part that nearly made it all seem worth it. Everything else was the problem. Slowly, she raised her hand. "I see a problem."

The others turned quizzically toward her. "It seems to me that the cookies were made for a purpose. Imagine guests arriving at the door tomorrow, maybe even chilled from the rain. Mother goes to fetch the cookies, but ... we ate them. Wouldn't that be..."

She squirmed in her seat, as Tom and John seemed unmoved.

"We can't do this without you, Sara," said Tom. "Remember the plan? I lift John up to the top shelf, John secures the cookies, and you stay on the lookout. It's the 1-2-3, the A-B-C, the indestructible arm of teamwork! It all falls apart without you!"



Sara sighed, and finally nodded her agreement. As much as it seemed like the wrong plan, she felt she simply could not abandon her friends in their hour of need.

They crept out of the room, silent on their toes like little gray mice. The rain tapped on the windows, and the wind howled outside as they wound their way down the creaky stairs. With every step, Sara agonized over her choice. Although she could almost taste the sweet, crispy cookies, and visualize them round and golden and ready to eat, she couldn't shake her anxiety.

Soon, they arrived at the pantry door. It loomed like a mountain, a sturdy barrier between them and the prize. Tom slowly opened the door while Sara held her breath, wondering if it would squeak.

"Phase two begins now," whispered Tom.

Tom slipped inside, beckoning for John to follow. Sara shifted from foot to foot, glancing down the hallways and at the closed doors, expecting at any moment for someone to appear. She eyed the clock as it slowly ticked down the seconds. Each tick and tock seemed louder than the last.

And suddenly, just as Tom's frantic whispers told her they nearly had the cookies, and just as the smell of freshly baked goodness wafted from the pantry, Sara decided what she had to do.

Ever so gently, she pattered to the kitchen door. And drawing in as big a breath as she could, she shoved it hard against the doorframe.

At the sound of the door slamming shut, the three dashed out of the kitchen. They topped the stairs and slipped into their rooms and into their beds with only a faint pitter-patter of bare feet echoing in their wake. Deep under their covers, they panted and held their breath, waiting.



Seconds later a beam of light was seen under the cracks of the doors, and footsteps paused in the hallway, then echoed down the corridor.

Tom and John looked at each other, then Tom said, "Crisis averted." Then they snuck into Sara's room.

"What happened?" asked John.

"Someone alerted the authorities," said Tom solemnly.

Even through her thick blankets, Sara felt all eyes turning to her. She peeked out from under her covers. "Sorry, guys." There was silence for a moment, as the rain tapped on the windows. Then she said, almost in a whisper, "It had to be done. I just couldn't go on with the plan."

She sat up. "I told you both before we went. It wasn't right, and I'm sorry I couldn't go through with it. My loyalty to my conscience comes before my loyalty to this conspiracy and the 1-2-3 method."

The lads listened and felt their hearts agreeing with Sara's words. That night of the plan became the night of the agreement, and a new rule was written down in the soft light of the moon: "Our conscience must decree whether to enact a conspiracy."

When morning came, Mom announced at breakfast that she had put the cookies into little pretty cellophane packages to give as gifts to their teachers for Teacher's Day. And, of course, she had also placed some for them in their lunch boxes.

The three children looked at each other, and without saying a word they knew that they were all glad that the cookies had remained "captive" the whole night long.

PONDER IT:

Have you ever faced a situation where your loyalty to a friend was tested in this way? What did you do?



S&S link: Character Building: Social Skills: Loyalty-2b

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