

Cupcake Mystery

Leslie loved being a stay-at-home mum. Contrary to popular belief, she was never bored and always busy! Not only did she have her own two precious angels to look after, 3-year-old Angelica and 6-year-old Caedon, but she also took care of two neighbourhood brothers, Ross & Tony Price, aged 5 and 7. Having four young children in the house always came with lots of surprises!

On this beautiful summer day, Leslie had baking on the brain. After shooping the kids out into the garden to play, she got to work. An hour and a half later, she was pleased with her final results: an apple pie, a batch of ginger snap cookies and a dozen double-chocolate cupcakes. The kids seemed to be enjoying their time out in the sunshine, as Leslie watched them through the window the kitchen door.

She bundled up the pie and the cookies, and was just about to put away the cupcakes when she heard loud crying from the garden. Leaving the cupcakes on the kitchen counter, she rushed out the kitchen door, she saw that little Ross had gotten stung by a bee, right on the bottom of his foot. Scooping him up, she brought the other kids in through the kitchen, directing them to the go to the playroom. Taking Ross to the upstairs bathroom, she tended to his foot and tried to get him settled down.

Tony, Ross's big brother came up with them, but eventually, Leslie told him to join the other kids downstairs. Poor Tony just wanted to help, but his worried questions and nervousness wasn't helping Ross calm down. In time, Ross' tears dried, but he still wouldn't put pressure on his foot. Leslie carried him downstairs and sat him down on the big comfy chair in the playroom. Tony immediately rushed to his side, asking how he felt and trying to give him hugs and kisses in an attempt to make him feel better. Leslie decided she should go upstairs and call Mrs. Price to let her know what had happened.

After a short phone call, Leslie checked on the kids in the playroom then went back to the kitchen to finish up. As she went to put the cupcakes away, she realized one was missing—11 instead of 12! She smiled as she shook her head. She knew that leaving her freshly baked cupcakes out in the open was a temptation and that each of the kids enjoyed her double-chocolate cupcakes. However, all the kids knew the rules – they were not allowed to take any food without getting permission. Now, she had to figure out who the culprit was and take appropriate action!

She quickly surveyed the kitchen. Nothing looked to be out of the ordinary except for one of her large, oak kitchen chairs. Leslie had pushed all the chairs in after they were done lunch, but this one looked like it had been pulled back out again, out then hastily (but not properly) pushed back in.

Heading back to the playroom, she sat down on the couch beside Ross and observed the kids. Ross had gotten a hold of a teddy bear and looked like he was starting to fall asleep, oblivious to the story that Tony was trying to read to him. Caedon was noisily playing with superhero figurines. Angelica was busy preparing a pretend meal on the stove top of her toy kitchen set.

There was no obvious signs that one of the kids had eaten the cupcakes – no chocolate fingers or dirty mouths. Leslie had to assume that the cupcake had been hidden, as none of these kids were particularly neat eaters at this stage in their lives (she ought to know!)

Angelica was generally a happy child. She was a mama's girl and loved helping Leslie in the kitchen and with chores. Right now, Leslie was working on teaching her the value of patience which was proving to be a challenge! Ross was a small, quiet boy, but got along well with others. He absolutely loved sweets, but was a picker eater otherwise. Tony played the ever-protective big brother role, often times questioning the decisions Leslie made. However, Mrs. Price had talked to

Leslie about the struggles they were having in teaching him to not take things that didn't belong to him. Caedon was the leader of the little group. He was good-natured, but he was often bossy with his peers, tending to want things his own way. Leslie was constantly reminding him to put others first; having Ross & Tony around certainly gave him the opportunity to practice!

After a few moments spent deep in thought, she had the solution.

"Everyone, come here and sit by me. We have something very important to talk about." Leslie patted the couch beside her.

After the children had gathered, she began by saying, "You all know that I have been baking this afternoon. I made some double chocolate cupcakes. But now, one is missing. Someone took it when I wasn't looking. We all know that is against the rules. Does anyone know what happened?"

Four sets of wide eyes looked back at her as they all shook their heads from side to side. So, there was one little actor in their midst!

"Well, I know who did it." She turned toward the culprit and said, "But what I want to know is where you have hidden the cupcake!"

Caedon's wide-eyed look turned into a scowl. "How do you know it was me, it could have been anyone, Mum! Not fair!"

"Caedon, here is how I know it was you. First, your little sister is much too small to reach the kitchen counter and she isn't strong enough to move the kitchen chairs. She couldn't have taken the cupcake because she couldn't reach it. Ross was with me most of the time. Even when I went upstairs to make the phone call, he still didn't want to walk on his sore foot, so he wouldn't have walked all the way in to the kitchen. Tony was worried sick about Ross and sat down at his side as soon as I brought Ross back to the playroom. He was in the same spot when I returned from my phone call. I think he was too busy being worried for Ross to think about taking a cupcake. That leaves you, young man. Why did you break the rules?"

More scowls from Caedon. “Well, we never got to finish playing our game outside because Ross got stung by a bee. I was going to win; I know I was! When I saw the cupcakes, I decided I deserved a prize because I would have won if we got to finish the game. I didn’t think you would notice that one was missing.” He hung his head in shame.

“Well, I did. And no matter what, it was still against the rules and you know that. So, what did you do with the cupcake?” After a moment of hesitation, Caedon walked over to Angelica’s little kitchen set, and pulled the cupcake out of the oven.

“After Ross came down, everyone was looking at his bee sting, so I snuck it in here when you were upstairs. I was saving it for later because I didn’t want anyone to see me eating it.”

“Thank you for being honest with me, Caedon, but there are still consequences for breaking the rules.” Leslie said, retrieving the cupcake from Caedon’s grasp.

Caedon wasn’t able to enjoy any of the baked treats with the others that afternoon, but he did learn a valuable lesson. Taking something that doesn’t belong to you isn’t worth the effort!