

The Girl Who Had Too Many Things

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Once upon a time, there was a quite young girl named Abby. She was a wonderful girl –funny and kind, and very smart. But even so, it was hard for her, just like for many other girls and boys, to see something she really, really wanted and not ask for it. When she went shopping with her mother, there was a rule: she could pick one small thing to buy that was extra. But it seemed to here there were a zillion things in the stores, and many of them were things that Abby thought she would like – she always thought it wasn’t fair to have to pick just *one* if there were a *zillion* to choose from.

One day, Abby and her mother walked into the supermarket and Abby climbed into the cart. As they started down the first aisle, she pointed sharply to the kids’ eye-high shelf and said “I want the Sugar Clusters cereal!” “Okay,” said her mother, and handed the cereal to Abby in the cart.

They turned the corner at the end of the aisle, passing a display of cookies. Abby almost asked for one, then didn’t. She liked the Sugar Clusters. As they passed more yummy things, it got harder and harder to pass things up, until finally Abby said “I want the super crunchy peanut butter!”

“You want to trade the Sugar Clusters for the Super Crunchy peanut butter?”asked Abby’s mother.

Abby looked back and forth between the cereal in her basket and the peanut butter on the shelf for a moment and then said, “No. I still want the Sugar Clusters. I want the Sugar Clusters AND the Peanut Butter!”

Her mother very calmly said, “You know the rule, Abby, you need to pick one. Which one do you want more?”

Abby, who was listening to her mom's voice but not the words, wailed "I want them both the same! I want both!"

Her mother patiently said, "Abby, you are whining and screaming and that's not okay. I think perhaps we shouldn't get either of these things." She reached into the basket and took the cereal out, leaving it on a shelf, misplaced but out of Abby's reach. Abby yelled "NO!" at the top of her lungs, and her mother smoothly wheeled the cart into the turn at the end of the aisle.

"I know you're upset Abby, but don't worry, I'm sure there will something around the corner that you'll like also." Abby was already looking at the new things appearing in front of her face, which had started to return to its usual shape after the contortions of crying. Her eyes lit up and she said "You're right, mom! Chocolate covered pretzels!!"

Abby thought about trading the pretzels in a few times, but knew that they were the things she wanted – even more than the Sugar Clusters or the peanut butter.

They had just arrived home, Abby clutching the chocolate pretzels, when Abby's dad said, "I need to go down to the pharmacy to pick up a few things – want to come, Ab?" Abby and the pretzels ran to the car.

This was not an ordinary pharmacy that her dad was going to. It had lots of STUFF. Abby followed her dad in, still holding the pretzels. Dad didn't seem to have noticed that she already had her Thing from the shopping trip with her mother. She wondered if she could get more. Then her father said something new. He said, "Okay, Abby, I'm going to pick up the prescription. You can get whatever you can carry. Just stay in sight, ok?" and he headed to the back to get in line.

Abby scanned the displays and shelves and pictures of items hanging from the ceiling, and her heart raced with glee. EVERYTHING she could carry? She saw some pens that looked nice. She still had the chocolate pretzels, so she grabbed a fistful of pens with her free hand. Then she saw a pad to draw on, and tucked that under her arm. Then she saw some popcorn, and tucked

that under the other arm. Then she saw a hat, and tugged at it with two fingers from the pretzel hand until it fell on her head. Then she saw a ball, and tucked it between her knees. She thought “if I eat the chocolate pretzels up fast, I can take something else in my hand” and she started to pop them in her mouth and chew.

Then she saw her dad was almost up to the counter, and knew she had to get there fast or he would pay without her and she wouldn’t get anything. She wobbled over to him as fast as she could, hoping the credit card for the person in front of him wouldn’t go through, but it did. She wasn’t sure she was going to make it and wobbled faster and faster...until she felt *her hat-sliding-one-way-while-her-feet-were-going-the-other-and-she-realized-she-was-off-balance-and-then-first-the-popcorn-slipped-out-from-her-arm-and-spilled-and-the-pens-fell-and-the-pad-slipped-and-for-some-reason-she-was-still-holding-onto-the-ball-with-her-knees-and-as-she-tipped-over-she-knew-that-had-been-a-mistake-and-suddenly* she was flat on the ground looking up at her father’s grin, clutching her remaining chocolate pretzels and one rainbow colored pen.

“And the young lady would like to add what she’s carrying,” he said to the clerk. The clerk looked at Abby, then back to her father, and said, “and that would be...?” Abby looked at the mess, then back at her father’s kind eyes and big hearted smile, and said to the clerk with a wry smile of her own, “One pen, thank you.”

Abby ate the rest of her chocolate pretzels in the car, and at home she found some scrap paper to draw on with the rainbow pen. She made all sorts of shapes, and traced some of the pretzels, and wrote her name, and lots of things. She kept that pen for many years. And every time after that, when she went shopping, she still saw lots of things she wanted, but each time she happily traded and traded until she had the one thing she wanted most that day.