

26th January, 2008

SOMEBODY CALL THE POLICE

DEAR DIARY, Debbie at work offered me some jelly babies today; sweets I hadn't eaten in years, but it reminded me of when my youngest son was three and he decided that he would become a thief. Oh the shame of it. I couldn't be more horrified. Up until that point, he'd been an angel, a blessing, a joy to behold and then he turned into a common criminal before you could say 999!

We were in the supermarket only for a short while when Dean helped himself to a packet of jelly babies.

As we were walking towards the car, I saw him handling a packet of sweets which seemed to have appeared from nowhere. I asked him where he got them from and his reply was his friend at nursery gave them to him. I said to him which one of your friends were kind enough to give you a whole packet of sweets to yourself and he replied Shana. My thought was 'oh really!' I said to Dean and his older brother Daniel, when we get home, I want to hear the truth from someone, so think about it, truth or slipper.

This is when Daniel – who I presume wasn't about to go through the indignity of a slipper on behalf of someone else – said Dean took them from Tesco's mum! I didn't say a word to either child until I got home. The silence made them nervous which is something I use up to this day. The long deadly silence gives a child plenty of time to think about what awful thing is going to come crashing down on them.

I told both children to sit on the sofa and not to move as I needed to make a phone call to the police station to report the crime. I pretended that I was talking to a police officer by having an animated conversation with the receiver. When I turned around, the boys were standing; their eyes wide like saucers but Daniel's saucers were full of unblinked tears. I said to Dean unfortunately you have to go to prison. Dean was too young to understand the gravity of such talk but Daniel knew how bad this thing really was and started bawling.

I said to them the police will be arriving any minute now and Daniel they're taking you to the police station to make a statement. How I kept a straight face, I will never know. Daniel held on to Dean and said mummy please don't make us go. I said well it's the law, if

The AUGUST MAYFIELD Diaries

you commit a crime, you go to prison. There's not much I can do about it unless I beg the police to be kind because Dean's so little.

The bawling carried on for a little while. It was quite sad actually. I felt really sorry for them and almost began to believe the lie I was telling them. Anyway, I agreed to call the "police station" to plead on behalf of Dean. I told the boys that the police, on this occasion, have decided to drop the charges as it was Dean's first time. Their poor little faces. They both clung to my legs in thanks.

Dean said sorry mummy, even though at three I'm sure he still didn't know what was really going on. I told them both that they must never ever take something that didn't belong to them ever again as the consequences are serious.

I told them that it doesn't matter if they never actually get caught by security guards or the police because Jesus is watching... but that's another story.

At 14 and 15, my children have no interest in taking something that doesn't belong to them. I think they learned an early lesson that day.

As cruel as it seemed, it was worth it.

August Mayfield