

Cookie Catastrophe

On Wednesday over February vacation, I tried making chocolate chip cookies. Mom was at law school, Dad was working downstairs, and my little sister was reading, hair falling into her face. It was early afternoon when I started and warm, golden sunshine slanted through the window over the sink, illuminating the entire kitchen. The chocolate chip bag crinkled like dried leaves when my spider-like hand found it, pushed to the dark back of the baking cupboard. Retracting my arm, I examined the bag for a moment before climbing off the counter where I had been kneeling, nearly hitting the jars of flour and sugar with my knee. I plopped the clear bag face-down onto the stained cutting board so that I could consult the recipe on back. I scurried around, arms stacked high with what I needed: measuring cups and spoons, mixer, that sort of thing. I noticed that two sticks of room-temperature butter were needed. I had neglected to set them out before hand, so there were like pale, greasy bricks. Setting them indelicately on a small plate, I covered them with wax paper and set them next to the surprisingly cold radiator. That done, I started on the dry ingredients. It was the beginning of the end.

I measured flour, baking soda, snow white against the dull flour, and salt into a fairly small, white bowl with cracked glaze. I had just started blending them when a loud noise filled the house from end to end. “Beep! Beep! Beep!” The oven was preheated. I set aside the white bowl and took out another, larger one, tan, with a navy inside. In it I dumped the butter, still brick hard, but chopped into smaller cubes, granulated and brown sugar, and vanilla extract. After heaving the bowl to the counter, I prepped the mixer, firmly sticking the beaters into their holes, and plugging in the long white tail. Positioning it over the bowl, I brought the beaters down and the machine whirred to loud life. The sugar became a small hurricane, whirling fast, with debris of butter and clouds full of vanilla extract. Every few minutes I stopped and repositioned over the worst chunks of butter, now coated in a “skin” of sugar. When they were finally blended, I cracked two gooey eggs on top of the peaked, yellowy mess. After blending the eggs in, the mixture looked runny and had an orange tint. Glancing at the recipe again, I shrugged and dumped that half-bag of chocolate chips and half of another bag into the bowl and mixed them in, too. I got out the cookie sheets and, forgetting the parchment paper,

started spooning the runny cookie dough on. Dad had come up, and was peering at the mush. “uh, are you sure this is how it’s supposed to look?”

“Yes, Dad” I said, vaguely.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, Dad. Now, can you please put these in the oven?” I pointed to two of my three trays of misshapen balls. Obliging, he stuck them in, and I let out a huge sigh of relief. I was walking over to help Dad brush up when he said, brow furrowed, “There’s a bowl of flour over here.” He was holding the white bowl. My breath caught in my throat. I could feel my eyes growing to the size of cherries. I was standing stalk still, frozen like an Ancient Greek girl who met Medusa. Dad was mirroring my expression of stony fear. “We need to get those out of the oven *now*.” Dad grabbed oven mitts and yanked open the oven door. My eyes bulged. Golden puddles were dripping off the trays, down to the bottom of the oven. A cluster of partially melted chocolate chips marked the spot of each lump of dough. With no way to save them, Dad dumped my efforts down the sink. The only good part of my cookie catastrophe is that, now, a week later, cooking pizza still smells like slightly burnt chocolate chip cookies.

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