

Lissa Rovetch
70 Steven Court
Fairfax, CA 94930

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91 Arizona, Keeping Secrets, February 2013

Dear Arizona,

My problem is that I have a friend who's always whispering secrets to me. I keep worrying I might accidentally let something slip. Plus I've heard that whispering secrets in front of other people can hurt feelings. What should I do?

Sick of Secrets in South Carolina

Dear Sick of Secrets,

I used to feel special when somebody told me a secret. But then something happened that made me never want to hear another secret as long as I live!

We were playing indoor soccer in PE, and this girl (who I'll call Lillian because it wouldn't be nice to use her real name in this letter) came up and whispered into my ear.

"I'm having an amazing ice skating party for my birthday and you're invited. But you have to keep it a secret from Mareya cause she's way to good an ice skater and she'd just be showing off the whole time, so she's not invited!"

Then, before I could say anything back, Lillian was gone, and I was stuck with a head full of confusion. Part of me was thinking, "An ice skating party sounds really fun. I'm so glad I get to go!" But at the exact same time, the other part was thinking, "Mareya would never be a show off like Lillian said, and her feelings will be so hurt if she discovers she's been left out, and why in the world did I get stuck having to keep a secret from one of my very favorite people ever?!"

Those opposite thoughts kept spinning around and around in my head all day long. Then just when I'd finally managed to forget – these two girls who I'll call Ruby and Daisy came up to me after school.

"Hey, we just got invited to Lillian's party, and we heard you did too!" Said Daisy.

"I just got the coolest gloves that'll be perfect for ice skating!" Said Ruby.

She unzipped her backpack and pulled them out.

"Nice purple stars!" Said Daisy.

"I know – right?" Said Ruby. "Do you think Lillian would like gloves like these for a birthday present?"

"Yeah, I bet she'd love them," I said.

And right then, of course, is when Mareya came along and said, "Awesome gloves!"

"Thanks," said Ruby. "We were just wondering if they'd make a good present for,"

"For a mouse!" Daisy interrupted. "A cold little mouse who needs a nice warm house!"

"We were?" I said, cluelessly.

Then Ruby winked at me making me realize that Lillian must have told them to keep the whole party thing a secret from Mareya too.

“Ohhh, that’s such an adorable idea! That would be the luckiest little mouse!” Said Mareya. “In Miss Carter’s first grade class, we had the two sweetest grey mice named Pip and Pop who would sleep in a toilet paper roll. I bet they would have loved to snuggle up in cozy, warm gloves like these.”

And right then was the second time in one day that my brain felt like it was in the middle of the world’s most un-fun game of tug-of-war. One side was saying, “Phew! That was a close one! Good thing you didn’t accidentally let the secret slip about Lillian’s party!” And the other side was saying, “This is Ridiculous! Why on earth are you keeping secrets from one of your best friends ever?”

I felt weird on the way home, and even weirder all evening after that.

“What’s up, Zonykins?” Asked my mom. “You’ve been staring at the very same math problem without making a single mark for at least twenty minutes.”

“Lillian invited me to her ice skating birthday party, but said I have to keep it a secret from Mareya for the world’s stupidest reason!” I cried. “Then Ruby and Daisy and I pretty much lied right to Mareya’s face because she was about to find out – and I’m way better friends with Mareya than I am with any of those other girls, so I don’t get at all why I’m not just being totally honest with her – except for the fact that it’s not okay to tell secrets – and, on top of that, I’m afraid Mareya might be sadder if she finds out the truth. So, I guess, I partly want to keep the secret to protect her from having hurt feelings. What am I supposed to do?”

After talking it over with my Mom, we decided the best thing would be for me to actually make myself tell Lillian how I was feeling. It took me a while to get up the courage, but I finally gave her a call. I told her how the whole secret thing was making me unbelievably miserable and explained that I was absolutely positively certain that even though Mareya was an incredibly talented ice skater, she was definitely not a show off. I also told her that keeping the secret from my really good friend was making me way too uncomfortable, and that if Lillian wanted to uninvite me from her party, I’d totally understand. Luckily, Lillian was really nice about the whole thing.

“I guess that was kind of inconsiderate of me to put you in that position,” she said. “And you’re probably right about the showing off thing. It’s just that Mareya’s such an awesome athlete, I always end up feeling jealous around her.”

“I know! Me too!” I told her. “But it’s not her fault that she’s good at all that stuff. And she is a really nice person.”

"Yeah, you're right," said Lillian. "I'm going to call and invite Mareya right now. I'll talk to you later, okay?"

"Okay," I said.

And that was that.

So Dear Sick of Secrets, I guess I was pretty lucky. I mean, Lillian could have had the complete opposite reaction when I told her how I was feeling, but I definitely ended up being glad I got up the courage to tell her what I was thinking. And as far as what to do about your friend goes, if I were you, I'd just be completely honest and say you don't want to hear anymore secrets. Think of it this way - it's way easier to keep a secret that you've never heard in the first place!

Ciao for Now,

Arizona

