

# CONFESSIONS OF A PEANUT BUTTER ADDICT

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A short comic monologue by  
Allan Bates

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**SARA:** It all started when I was in the second grade. My mother says it was when I was in the first grade. But I know it wasn't. We've had that argument hundreds of times. Or probably really dozens. Dozens at least. Not really arguments. Discussions. She thinks...my mother, that is. She thinks it was when I was in first grade because that's when I met Annabel. I did meet Annabel when she moved next door to us and that was in first grade. But the problem was when I met Emily when she transferred into our school, my school, Maple Avenue Elementary School, when I was in second grade.

Emily had gone to Ben Franklin Elementary and she wasn't very happy there because people teased her. I never knew why because Emily was - still is - a very nice girl. And smart. And she always brought the best sandwiches to school for lunch every day. She... But first, let me tell you about Annabel's sandwiches. Really interesting! They'd have things like olive spread or arugula—I still don't know what arugula is. And Annabel would sit right there next to me and open her sandwich and say, "This is arugula" or whatever. And she'd stick her finger between the leaves of arugula and find maybe some weird cheese that she'd tell me the name of but I couldn't ever remember and then put the sandwich back together and ask me if I'd like a bite... Annabel always started her sandwich with a huge bite. When she took that huge bite and I said, "Yuk," she always had this funny little look on her face like she was almost ready to cry. So after a while, about October I think it was, I started saying, "No thank you, Annabel." Then she'd take that huge bite with a smile on her face. I think that's when I learned to be really polite. Like I am now. I hope you've noticed that.

So you see, Annabel wasn't the problem and it wasn't in first grade. No matter what my mother says.

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The problem was when Emily transferred into Maple Avenue Elementary School in second grade. Right from the start Emily became friends with Annabel and me. And we'd all sit together at the same table in the lunch room. And Emily would bring these delicious sandwiches. Peanut butter and jelly! Peanut butter in every sandwich! Sometimes with grape jelly, which was all right, but sometimes with strawberry jam or apricot jam or peach jam. All of them delicious! Believe me, I know they were delicious because Emily used to give me a bite every single day!

Well, she didn't give me a bite at first but after a few days she could see I really wanted to taste her sandwich and that's when she started to say, "Go ahead and try a bite." She saw I wanted to try her sandwich because I'd be sitting there with carrot strips wrapped in wax paper and held together with a rubber band and raisins in the same kind of package. And an apple or a banana and usually some cheese, yellow cheese, and crackers. But always carrot strips and raisins. And sometimes I didn't even open them.

At first I'd take a little nibble of Emily's sandwich and want more. Pretty soon she'd say, "Go ahead, take a big bite." And before long I was taking a huge bite every day and Emily would just smile at me and I'd say, "Thank you." Which is not easy to say when you have peanut butter sticking to your teeth. I could always tell if it was Emily's mother who made the sandwich that day or if Emily made it herself. Because when Emily made the sandwich she always put the jam in there extra thick. And usually it was strawberry when she made it. And those days we'd always have some strawberry jam on our chins and peanut butter on our teeth when we were done. Emily always offered Annabel a bite too, but Annabel always said, "No thank you" and went on with her

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sandwich. Though sometimes when she put her finger in her sandwich she'd push something really strange looking out of it.

I suppose you think all this isn't why I became a peanut butter addict. But it is.

One day when I came home from school Mother wasn't there. She was just next door, but I didn't know that. And I was hungry. It had to be a day when Emily's mother had made her sandwich and put in something like grapefruit marmalade which would mean I didn't even taste a little bite. I still can't stand grapefruit marmalade. Anyway, I looked in the kitchen cabinets for something to eat. There were cans of soup and boxes of tea and stuff and of course a roll of waxed paper, but I didn't find anything to eat. So I climbed up on the sink and looked into the cabinet up there. And I found peanut butter. Not just one jar of peanut butter, but six jars of peanut butter! Creamy. Crunchy. And extra crunchy. All of them open except one jar of extra crunchy. I climbed down off the sink and got a spoon and ate a whole spoonful out of each jar! Well, each open jar. They were all delicious! Even without strawberry jam.

After a few days of that—me climbing up and eating spoonfuls of peanut butter when, well like when my mother was doing the laundry— she wondered where all her peanut butter had gone. Actually, she knew.

But I should tell you first—one day I was sure Mother was going to catch me. I heard her footsteps coming near. I climbed down from the sink as fast as I could and got away. I was pretty sure she didn't hear me. Didn't hear me or see me after all.

I'll bet you know sort of what happened. The peanut butter jars got emptier and emptier. And, well, as the peanut butter jars got emptier and emptier, I tried to take less and less each day. But it didn't seem to work. It seemed like the harder I tried to take less the more was gone out of each jar. After maybe a week or two, I tried the unopened jar, the extra crunchy jar, and this time I found it was open. I ate a tiny spoonful. I put a bigger spoonful of it in the crunchy jar and smoothed it to look like it belonged in that jar. I turned the lids on the crunchy jar and the extra crunch jar extra tight and hurried to my room.

The next day I didn't even touch that extra crunchy jar. I really didn't.

But the day after that...soon after I came home from school...while I was in my room with the door shut, I heard a sound, like feet shuffling, outside my door. Then nothing. All quiet. Then I heard a gentle knock on my door. Then quiet again. Then I heard Mother say, "Sara." Just, "Sara." Her voice sounded... Well, I knew it was Mother's voice, but I'd never heard her voice like that before. Very quiet. Almost like she'd never called me Sara before.

My own voice seemed to stick in my throat. Then, I said, "Yes." Kind of lower than usual, trying to sound calm.

"Sara, may I come in?" She had never asked me before if she could come in. She had just knocked on the door once, waited a second, and then come in.

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