

Toy Party

by C. T. Martin



Yesterday, I went to a party and had the most fun that I have had in a long time. It all started this week when Vicky, who sits in front of me, turned around and said, "This Saturday I'm having a toy party and you're invited."

I was shocked. I had been trying to be friends with Vicky all school year and she pretty much ignored me almost every time I tried to talk to her.

"Come on Vicky, we're almost ten. Aren't we too big for toys now?" I said, still surprised she was speaking to me.

"Don't be silly Chad," Vicky said with a smile, "and stop pretending that you don't like toys. Anyway, this is going to be a cool party, trust me."

"But, a toy party?" I asked, still doubtful that I'd want to go.

"This isn't just any toy party," she replied, turning back around to face me

again. "It's a toy exchange party. You bring a toy from the country that your family is from. Everyone's name goes in a hat and whatever name you pull, that's the person you find and give your toy to."

"That does sound kind of cool," I admitted, as I wondered how she ever came up with such a neat idea.

Our teacher walked in and started writing fractions on the chalk board and so in a hurry Vicky whispered, "Bring a piece of old clothing too, like a shirt or a sweater that you no longer want."

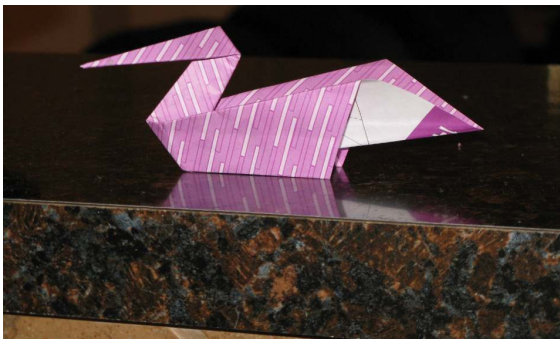
Several of us live in a group of townhomes. There's a community clubhouse in the middle of them and that's where the party was at. As I walked up to the entrance I noticed Jendali outside standing very tall and walking around on a pair of poles. She was losing her balance as I called out to her, "Don't fall off your stilts!"



Jendali yelled back, "They're my Dad's. He calls them takeuma."

As I stepped inside the smell of buttery popcorn and chocolate candy hit me. I dropped my old jersey into a green basket near the front that was marked, "Old Clothes Here." Vicky ran up to me and handed me a slice of hot pepperoni pizza.

"Come on!" she said, grabbing me by the arm. "Let's go over to the paper airplane table and ask them to make you something."



As we walked over, we passed a table where several kids were watching Jendali's mother make interesting shapes out of paper. I overheard her call it "origami." The man at the airplane table made me a working model of an old double decker from World War I. It was sweet!

In the corner on the other side of the room, was a man dressed like a clown making balloon animals for the younger kids, like Vicky's little sister. When Vicky noticed me staring at him, she told me it was her Dad behind all

that clown makeup and I should meet him after the marionette show.

"What's a marionette show?" I asked.

"It's a puppet show from Italy," Vicky said proudly.

The puppets in the marionette show danced to music and were so real looking, I forgot they were only puppets.

During the toy exchange I pulled Vicky's name, so I got one of her Dad's marionettes. Stephen got my name, so I showed him how to work the Chinese Beyblade that my grandmother gave me. It's pretty simple really, you just pull the string and watch the wooden top spin. I was kind of bored with it, but he really liked watching the different colors swirl around on the circle top.

"What are you going to do with a set of dolls?" I said to my best friend Albert. The card attached to them said, "Matryoshka dolls from Russia." Each one was larger than the other and fits inside the next largest size.

"I don't know," he said, looking perplexed.

At the end of the party everyone picked a piece of clothing they liked out of the green basket and took it home with them. The idea was that even if you didn't want something anymore, maybe somebody else would want it.

"We shouldn't be too quick to throw things away. Recycling is important,"

Vicky's dad announced as he removed his clown nose. As it turned out, Vicky left wearing the old pullover sports jersey of mine. I found a cool new baseball cap. Well, it was new to me.



It was a great party! We had candy, pizza, and lots of different and fun things to do. The best part was learning what people do in other countries and recycling clothes by exchanging them with each other. Most of all, after waiting for most of the school year, I was finally friends with Vicky.