

The Hat

by Luisa-Fernanda Restrepo Bedoya

“No way I lost it!” Where could it be? I remember it was in the living room five minutes ago, I went to the bathroom, and when I came back, it was nowhere to be seen. Melody is coming soon, and I am not ready yet. Why is it that I am never ready on time? I desperately ask my mom who is upstairs “mom, where is my sombrero vueltiao?” If there is one thing I know from my 16 years of life; is that mothers always find what is lost. My mother sighs; as if this were not the first time, I had lost something so easily. She answers, “Jennifer, have you looked inside your room?” Of course, I have had, it is the first place I started looking in. I simply say, “yeah I have, and I don’t find it there either.” My mom stops folding the laundry and tells me to come with her by using her index finger like a hook. We both go inside my room, to my surprise, my mom pulls my hat under my shrubs. One of the perks of having plants in your room is that many things can get lost under them. I was so glad to have found my hat that I gave a kiss on my mom’s cheek. “Gracias, mami!” I spoke. My outfit was finally complete, I had my poncho on me and my sombrero vueltiao. Now I just needed to wait for Melody to come to my house so we could both go to the school multi-cultural party together. While I wait for her, I sit on my balcony and admire all the different flowers that our neighbors from the floor below are growing. I can see some Jasmines, bluebells and lavender, at this time of the year flowers are fully bloomed and if you are lucky, you can smell them from above. I wanted to smell the radiant aroma of the flowers better, so I bent over to get closer to them. As I was smelling their natural perfume, the wind started to blow in my direction and before I even had the chance to think, my hat was gone with the wind!

I could not believe it! I was praying that it would land in the park at the center of our neighborhood. Without hesitation, I rushed downstairs to get out of the apartment and I started the search for my hat. I looked around and all I could find were benches, kids playing around, and the main tree situated at the center. The first place I searched for were the community gardens, where most people like to work together and share their vegetables with their community. It is practical in the summer because people do not need to go to a store. Now I understand why there are so many wind turbines in Ontario; with all that wind, you can get huge amounts of electricity. Continuing with my search, I kept looking for my hat but the only thing I could see were all the tall buildings shaped like cylinders that would interconnect each other with bridges. It makes it easier to walk to different apartments without needing to take your vehicle. It is also great when you want to hang out with friends who live near you. My eyes were gazing the tall buildings and the solar panels on the shops it would reflect the light on my eyes, almost blinding me. I was about to give up and go home, when suddenly I heard the tickling sound of metal cones. “Can’t believe you have lost it again!” says my best friend, Melody. I did not recognize her at first because she was wearing her beautiful jingle dress. “I really need to be careful with my things, it’s like they keep running away from me!” I said with embarrassment. “What would you do without me?” says Melody sarcastically. She hands me my hat “I found it on my way here, I knew it was probably yours

when I saw you searching around like a crazy woman”. I gave her a big hug and said thank you. We both walked to my house to tell my mother we were going to school. Once that was done, we were on our way to start our adventure.

“What do you think will happen there?” I asked because it would be the first time Melody and I would go to a semi-formal. “No idea, I heard all the cool students will go there so I guess we just need to act cool, right?” Melody is always aware of her surroundings, and she always seems to know what to do. As we walked the streets, we were mesmerized by the lights the city has put in the trees, the lanterns gave a sensation of warmth and gave beauty to our tiny forests. We were almost there, we just needed to go under the tree arc, followed by a giant tree possessing a hole in the middle where people would walk under it. We see a large cylindrical building. It had green walls where hummingbirds would get nectar from the red beebalms. Once inside, we thought the other students were waiting patiently for the party to start. “Are we early?” I asked Melody. “No, the party started 30 minutes ago” For some reason, no one was on the dance floor and people were simply standing, waiting for something to happen. Everything seemed right; the music, the lights, and snacks. I was confused seeing no one wanting to start the night by going to the dance floor. Anyway, I was getting slowly disinterested so I decided to go to the snack bar where they were giving water pods. There were many different types of flavors such as apple juice or grape juice. I took grape juice then I swallowed the pod. I learned in history class that previous generations would use plastic cups to distribute water at gatherings. Luckily, we found a way to create water pods which replace the water cups. For some mysterious reason, the school felt very warm even if no one was dancing. It became so intense that the principal decided to open the retractable roof at the school. Thank goodness we got all the electricity from the water dam at the river near us. Otherwise, it would feel like a waste of energy holding this event. All the lights gained their energy from the sun, and they had the shape of butterflies. They were set on the bushes. They made the scene look as if we were in an enchanted forest. Gradually the temperature became bearable, and the breeze helped us not melt. I started to look for Melody, but I was not able to find her from my point of view.

Once again, I began looking at my surroundings, there were many kids wearing their traditional clothes for the event. Sadly, no one wanted to display their ethnic dances to the audience. I would have been interesting to learn new dance moves and listen to different music rhythms. I always admired those who had the courage to go to the dance floor alone and show off their dance skills. I continued walking and admired all the distinct cultures present at the party. Minutes have passed and I still cannot find Melody. There is nothing more boring than being at a party all by yourself. As the night continued, the wind started to become stronger, and people were still standing like zombies. Probably because they were shy. I turned my head to the right and saw a girl with a jingle dress, “must be Melody!” I thought to myself. Unfortunately, right about when I was going to take a look the wind hits my face and takes my most precious possession; my hat again! There was no way I would lose it again, especially among so many people. Without thinking I started running after my hat without thinking where it would lead me. Once I got the grip of it. I suddenly realized where I was; in the center of the dance floor and everyone was looking at me! I completely froze. “Oh” I said quietly nervously to myself. I could not simply leave because everyone was waiting for me to start dancing. To think all this happened because I always lose this ridiculous hat and cannot keep it in my head. Now what!

Then, when I least expected the familiar sound of metal cones showed up again.... Melody! She saw me and knew she had to come to my rescue. "What do we do?" I whispered while trying to maintain calm. Melody as always, knew what to do, she simply answered, "follow my steps." She put her hands on her hips and started the basic steps on the jingle dance on the tip of her toes. I tried to follow her moves and by miracle was able to stay coordinated with her. Then the DJ saw us and put some Ojibwe music to accompany our dance. Slowly, all the students seemed to gain interest, but they were still too shy to join us. I decided to pull a student who I knew from my French class toward the center to dance with us. And like a domino effect, students would join us to do the jingle dance. I was amazed by how quickly the ambiance changed; everyone was having fun. Once the song was over, the DJ put another song this time from Cuba, out of nowhere all the Latino students started dancing salsa including myself. They were teaching everyone how to dance. The night was great, and everyone was learning something new. Students were proud to share their heritage and a part of their identity with the school. For the first time in my life, I had experienced a party this huge.

It was time to go home, we could clearly see the faces of everyone saying they wished it could last longer but everything had a beginning and an end. We took the city bus and sat near the door. While the bus was recharging its battery to continue its journey, I told Melody "Didn't know you could dance like that; you really impressed us all tonight" I said to compliment Melody because she saved me from embarrassment. "Usually, the jingle dance is to heal the mind and spirit, but in this case, I just showed the only dance I knew" Melody explained. "Well, you definitely healed everyone's spirit, remember at the beginning they all looked like zombies" I said laughing. "Thanks Melody, you definitely saved me today, first by finding my hat and then by going to the dance floor with me. You always get me out of trouble." Melody looks at me and smiles. "You know Jennifer, without you, we would not have started the party." At this point, we could say your hat is alive because it brought life to the semi-formal party." We both laughed at the same time. Maybe this time it was not inconvenient to lose my hat.

The end