

The Celebration on Cook Avenue

by Mr. Hocklenutty & Ms McAnulty's Class

It is a cold wintry night. Detective Ray Ronaldo is watching his favorite television show, *Tom & Jerry*. Tom is just about to choke Jerry when Detective Ray Ronaldo's cell phone rings.

It's eight o'clock. Detective Ronaldo says, "I'm not picking that up." The phone rings again. And again. Finally, Ray takes a look at the name on the caller i.d. and suddenly jumps to the phone. The caller is Captain Meyers, Detective Ronaldo's very nice boss, who only calls Ray at home when there is a mystery to be solved.

"Yeah, boss. What's up?"

"Sorry for calling this late, Ray-Ray, but we've got a report of something strange happening down on Cook Avenue," says Captain Meyers.

"What kind of *strange*?"

"Reports say there's some kind of celebration going on?"

"Celebrating what?" asks Detective Ray.

"Well, that's what we've got to find it. It seems like it could be a celebration of almost anything."

"Never fear Detective Ray-Ray is here."

Quicker than you can say "Ms McAnulty's Class is the smartest, best-looking first grade class in Hawthorne Park history," Detective Ray Ronaldo races down to 101 Cook Avenue.

As soon as he walks into the house, Detective Ronaldo senses something is going on. Something fun. He could tell by the laughter coming from the back room.

He walks further into the house and sees a flickering light coming from a candle. Not one candle, but many candles. He peeks through a crack in the doorway and sees wrapped boxes.

His cell phone vibrates. Captain Meyers is calling.

“Well, Ray-Ray, did you figure out what the celebration is?”

“Not yet, but I’ve got a couple of clues.”

“What are they?” Captain asks.

“I see gift wrapped boxes.”

“Could be Christmas,” guesses the Captain.

“Maybe,” says Detective Ray, keeping his cool. “Candles, presents, it could also be...”

“Kwanzaa.”

“Yah,” agrees Ray, “Or, somebody’s birthday.”

“Birthday, birthday. That’s it,” screams Cap Meyers into the phone.

“Wait, I think I smell something.”

“Fire?” guesses Cap. “I’ll call 911.”

“You are 911.”

“Right.”

“Listen, Cap. I’m going to sniff around for some more clues and I’ll call you back.”

“You’re the detective.”

Ray clicks off his cell phone and takes a deep breath. He savors every aroma that drifts into his detective size sniffer. “Mmm,” Ray says to himself. “That smells delicious.” Potatoes... fried potatoes, he guesses. Hm? What celebration involves fried potatoes, he wonders.

He doesn’t have time to think long, because through the crack in the door comes a little spinning top. The top comes to a stop at the tip of his right boot. “What in the world is that?” Detective Ray wonders aloud.

“It’s a dreidel,” answers the voice of a small girl who comes spinning in after the top.

“Who are you?” asks the voice of a slightly taller boy.

“I’m Detective Ray Ronaldo.”

“Is there a problem, sir?” Asks a short and stout older woman, wearing an apron with the phrase “World’s Best Latke Maker” on it.

“Uh, no ma’am. I was just sent down here because we got a call about a strange celebration.”

“I don’t think this celebration is strange,” says a tall dark man holding an object with candles in it.

“Well, now that I’m here I can see it’s not strange,” says Detective Ray apologetically.

“Well, it is a little strange,” comes the voice from the mouth of a jolly fellow looking in through the kitchen window.

“No, there’s nothing strange,” argues Ray. “Dreidels, fried potatoes, candles. You don’t have to be a detective to see you’re having a Hanukkah party,” concludes Detective Ray.

“You may want to look again,” says the tall dark man, holding up the candle holder. “You know what this is, Detective?”

“I believe it’s called a menorah.”

“Nope,” says the short stout woman with the apron. “*This* is a menorah.” She shows him a candle holder with 8 candles in a row and one candle towering over the rest.

The tall man speaks again, pointing to the 7 candles on his candle holder. “This is a *Kinara*.”

“Oh, my!” exclaims Ray, “This is a Kwanzaa party!”

“Not quite,” bellows the round man with a white beard wearing a red suit coming out of the far corner. “This my friend is a ChrisKwaNuka celebration!”

Four more children step up to Detective Ray Ronaldo and say in one voice, “We’re enjoying and sharing all our celebrations together.”

“Come, Detective. Sit down and have a latke and enjoy the beautiful differences and many similarities that ChrisKwaNuka observes and honors,” insists the woman in the apron.

Detective Ray takes a seat at the table, then bites into the potato latke with a touch of sour cream atop it. He savors the flavor until his cell phone rings.

“Well, Ronaldo, have you figured it out yet,” comes the voice of Captain Meyers.

Detective Ray Ronaldo wants to tell the captain to come and enjoy the celebration, too. But he’s unable to get the words out, because he’s too busy filling his mouth with delicious latkes! He is truly enjoying ChrisKwaNuka!