

Something New  
July 19th

I could hear the rain hitting the window outside this morning like someone rhythmically tapping on a drum.

But I wouldn't let bad weather ruin my weekend, so I searched the closet for my old yellow rain boots and jacket to wear to Clare's house.

I slid my feet into the boots, but my toes met the ends abruptly. My feet sort of fit, but my toes were all squished and curled. Had my boots shrunk?

'Whatever,' I thought; they were the only ones I had, so I went out the door. With the hood on my big yellow jacket and my feet squished in my boots, I felt like the world's biggest duckling waddling down the rainy road lined with wet red bricks.

Clare met me at her door and welcomed me in. The inside of her house always smelled a bit like cinnamon and the walls were navy blue.

"My dad just got back from a BIG business trip!" Clare explained. As he often did for work, he had gone to a Latin American country.

"And, of course," Clare said with excitement as we ran upstairs to her room, "he brought something back for us!"

Clare swung open the door to her room. On her bed was a beautifully decorated box, which she opened carefully. We both leaned in close. Inside was a small pile of exotic, neatly wrapped candies.

We both squealed with delight as Clare lifted the box and set it on her carpet. We sat on either side, examining the candies. The rain hit against Clare's window.

"Where did you say these were from?" I asked, picking up a piece of candy and seeing Spanish words on the wrapper.

"Mexico!" Clare replied.

We began sorting the candies into little piles based on color.

"Which should we start with?" Clare asked when all the candies had been organized.

"Let's try the red!" I said, and we each picked up a red one, unwrapped it, and ate it. Delicious! Yellow next, then blue, and—man alive—the green was sour!

Once we had tried each flavor, I stared at the floral box and empty wrappers, thinking.

“What do you think it’s like to live in Mexico?” I wondered aloud.

“I don’t know,” said Clare, “...let’s look!”

She ran out of the room and returned with her dad’s laptop. She set it on the carpet. I scooted over to look as she pulled up the internet and searched “Mexico.”

We saw the flag, map, population size, and many images of people, animals, babies, homes, and life from that culture. We clicked through them, fascinated, and the rain slowly softened.

She then went to YouTube and typed “music from Mexico.”

The instruments came together excitingly. We started tapping our hands on the carpet and then stood up and started dancing. We danced in circles around the box and laptop, laughing and clapping along because that music was really fun, and we both just loved it.

We kept researching Mexico and saw pictures of their food. It looked delicious—and if it was anything like the candy—I was sure it would be. Seeing all that food made me hungry.

Clare and I went to ask her dad for dinner, and he told us he could order whatever we wanted. I locked eyes with Clare, and we both said, “Can we order Mexican food?”

Clare’s dad looked online and found a local Mexican restaurant.

Twenty minutes later, the food arrived. We opened the styrofoam boxes and spread them all out on the table. It looked amazing, so we dove right in.

Clare’s dad explained what everything was called, and we tried repeating all the names. He then showed us how to eat it and what tasted best together.

Clare and I each ate a good amount of everything. Her dad was impressed and said, “Wow, you girls must be growing!”

I agreed.

I do think I’m growing, and that’s why I want to learn about new things and explore new places.

And that’s probably also why my old rain boots and rain jacket don’t fit anymore, either.

Your Friend,  
Joanie