

Reminiscing in Red Velvet

As usual, Michael stood looking into his closet. At 7:15 a.m., it was too hard to make a decision. He contemplated which shirt he would wear. The blue striped shirt? The green polo? The red t-shirt with "Michael" written on the back? He glanced over to the far right of the closet and saw the half dozen costumes his mother had made through the years: the train engineer, Captain Hook, Medieval Knight, Albert Einstein, Chinese Emperor, and his all-time favorite, the king costume. He instinctually reached over and touched the red velvet.

His mother had always made his costumes because Michael wanted to be characters that could never be bought at Walmart or at stores devoted to Halloween costumes. The year he wanted to be Captain Hook, there were no pirate costumes to be found anywhere; it was not until the release of *Pirates of the Caribbean* years later that pirate costumes became readily available. Starting in September Michael would begin to sketch his ideas for the costume that Halloween. When he was 8 years old, he sketched his most elaborate drawing. It was a king. The king's red cape cascaded behind him, trimmed in black and white animal print. The top part of the cape was adorned with gold jewels. Underneath was a pair of red and white knickers with gold buttons. The most impressive feature of the costume was, no doubt, the crown. However, Michael did not need to envision the crown, as he already had one. It was the perfect crown for an eight-year-old; it was completely made out of fabric, except for the gold jewels that surrounded the headband of black and white fur. The majority of the crown was luxurious red velvet, and the front was adorned with a large sapphire diamond. When he showed his mother the sketch, he had added several clarifications: the entire outfit had to be made out of red

velvet, the cape had to be long enough to drag on the ground by at least a foot, and a royal staff was needed.

He slipped the cape off of the hanger, draped it around his shoulders, and fastened the Velcro at his clavicle. The blue brooch at the Velcro fastening was missing several jewels, and the cape barely reached Michael's knees. It did not matter; his posture shifted, and he found himself standing taller and more regal.

"Mom, how do I look? Get me my staff."

"You look marvelous!" she said with an adoring smile as she adjusted the end of the long robe splayed out on the floor. "The length is absolutely perfect."

"My name is King Edward Francesco Alberto Henri Louis VII." Michael lifted his chin and pursed his lips as he adjusted the crown so it fit his head perfectly. He took his staff and held it in his right hand as straight as possible. The royal staff was almost as tall as he was, and he tried to stand as tall and straight as the staff. He placed his feet together and locked his knees. His reign had begun.

King Edward's kingdom was much larger than the U.S.A.; it was the whole world. He lived in a castle, but his mother was allowed to live in a separate wing of the castle. His dog lived in a royal dog castle that was a miniature version of his castle. Anytime a decision had to be made, King Edward would decide the outcome. Anytime he spoke, everyone would listen.

Even though King Edward still had to go to school, he shared with his teachers all the incredible changes he was instituting. He even wrote a paper about being a king:

*So far, I declared a no smoking law. I have stopped wars
and want to stop future wars from happening. As King, I*

taught the world that everybody is different in a good way.

When you think of King Edward Francesco Alberto Henri

Louis VII, you will think of happiness.

His teachers praised his creativity and thoughtfulness. However, they still refused to let him wear his crown in class.

Finally, the biggest day of the year arrived. He would visit select subjects in his kingdom. He would surprise them by knocking on their door in his full regalia. He knew he would have to fight off different monsters and thieves during his pursuit. On this particular night each year, many monsters would roam the streets of his kingdom under the full moon. He devised a plan where he would bring along his most trusted subjects, including his mother and father. At dusk, they would leave the castle and venture into the night.

King Edward took off his school clothes after dinner and slowly began to prepare. He first put on the white silk stockings, followed by the red velvet knickers. He then pulled the white turtleneck over his head as *Pomp and Circumstance March* was reverberating inside his head. He called out to his mother.

“Andiamo! We must be going now, dear mother. Please come and help me with my robe.”

The Royal Mother then delicately lifted the robe out of the closet and placed it over King Edward’s shoulders. She fastened the blue brooch and straightened out the velvet robe. The gold metal tassels jingled like bells announcing his departure. She lifted the royal crown off of the pillow and proceeded to crown her son.

His most trusted subjects were waiting for him outside his castle—a princess, an angel, and a dinosaur. The Royal House followed close behind, carrying lanterns to illuminate the night. There was a slight chill in the air and the darkness of the night hid the horrific monsters. King Edward could hear the monsters chattering and terrorizing the village, and dogs barking to alert all of the villagers. Down the street, a bonfire was burning brightly to keep the monsters at bay. The King led the way, determined to stop the wars between the monsters and the people. With his staff out in front, he diligently took step by step. His robe slowly dragged along the ground, collecting leaves as he walked. He knew that the future depended on him.

The Royal Mother was impeding the process. She insisted that the entire entourage stop, as she recorded the historic moment on film. The King did not want to stop, but he knew it was useless to argue. He stopped momentarily. As soon as the flash had disappeared, though, he hurriedly began walking and urged the entourage to continue.

As they approached the first house, the King instructed that the Royal Mother not follow him to the door. After the dinosaur handed him the sack, he personally approached the door. With all his might, he beat the door three times with his fist and waited. The door opened, and a couple stood erect at the door.

“Good evening, your majesty,” the man said.

The couple was obviously overjoyed to see the King. They gave him gifts of food, which he placed in the sack. The king thanked the villagers and assured them that there would be no monsters bothering their home tonight.

The King and his subjects moved to the next home and were greeted in the same manner. All 20 households treated them as royalty. One of the villagers even invited the King inside her home to meet her husband. She was overjoyed to see the King. Even though many monsters had come to her doorstep, the King was the first royalty that she had seen. Unlike the other villagers, she gave him handfuls of sweet treats, rather than a few morsels.

As expected, on the way back to the castle, a strange beast approached the entourage. The King clinched his staff, stepped forward, and confronted the monster. It had a large head and its entire body was green. Blood stained its face and a hatchet was protruding from its scalp. The most unfortunate beast was injured. The king recognized that he was not a threat—he was just different. The King simply nodded, knowing he was unable to help or even communicate with the being. It occurred to the King that, in order to successfully rule his kingdom, he would need to learn to communicate with all his subjects.

“Come on, Michael, it’s time to go!”

Michael glanced at his watch; it was 7:20 a.m. He tossed the cape onto his bed and quickly put on the blue striped shirt. He grabbed his wallet and inhaler and shoved the two into his left front pocket.

“Don't forget to turn off the television,” his mother yelled.

“OK!” As he looked for the remote, he took one last glance at the television and saw Pope Francis in New York. The Pope was wearing the white cassock as he walked by a large crowd lined up next to the barricades along the road. Many people were taking pictures and reaching out their hands. The Pope stopped and placed his hand on a person

in a wheelchair. He made the sign of the cross over the woman, “Benedicat te, Omnipotens Deus, Pater et Filio et Spiritus Sanctus” (“May the Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and The Holy Spirit”). A little girl slipped through the barricade and was immediately intercepted by the Pontifical Swiss Guard. She began speaking in Spanish about her parents being illegal immigrants, and the Pope waved her over to him. Again, the Pope said, “La bendición de Dios Todopoderoso, Padre, Hijo, Espíritu Santo, decienda sobre vosotros. The Pope then turned to H.E. Timothy Cardinal Dolan and asked, “Quale Preghiera Eucaristica faccio io alla Messa di questa sera?”

Michael turned the television off and found himself smiling. He understood. One person can make a difference, even without a crown—one person and one language at a time. Michael picked up his *Nueva Perspectiva*, 새로운 관점, 新视角 textbooks, and placed them in his backpack. He then turned off the light, grabbed his car keys, and headed to school for another day.