



### Connor's third and fifth birthday parties.

Written by Carol Crooks aka CLarol the CLown. 2011.

I was invited to attend Connor's third birthday party. I had mentioned that perhaps the parent might consider an alternative to having me -a costumed entertainer- at her party. The mother assured me her son would be ok and beside's there would be another 20-25 children between the ages of 2-5 who would be in attendance. "You would be there to entertain them, my son is a little unsure about clowns but with the other kids around he'd be ok." Against my better judgment and at the insistence of the parent I agreed to perform at the party.

As I approached the house I could hear the noise from half way down the block. Kids were screaming, older kids were playing hand held video games, the hockey game was on, music was blaring and parent conversations echoed through the open concept two story metallic great room. When I made it through the knee deep pile of shoes at the threshold I could hear screams of "She's here!!!!!!!" in the high pitched squeal five year old girls make. You know that high C note that make opera singers jealous. The mom made it to the door dragging her right leg behind her. "Must be having physio for a bad knee I thought to myself." Then I saw the white knuckles and fingers digging into her leg. Her son - Connor - had his face buried in the back of her thigh and did NOT want anything to do with me.

As a matter of fact the son refused to be part of the party, and clung to mom the entire time. He felt comfortable with me only if his mother was present and eventually released his death grip only to sit on her lap with his arms snaked around hers so she could not escape his terror. At times he even covered his ears when the children joined in the show. Regardless of all this, I did my performance and the parent was happy with the outcome. Her son was ok with me by the end of the party, and I had made a fast friend.

Apparently I made an extremely good impression on the family as they invited me back to Connor's 5th birthday party. I must preface the next part of this story by letting you know, at this point in my career I was on a two year birthday show rotation. So if a family invited me back to their party the following year they got a completely different show from the previous year (FYI this still happens today). Being the anal retentive clown that I am, I also kept track of what show I performed, for whom, where and when. I digress.

When I arrived at Connor's fifth birthday I was performing the same show I had performed on his third birthday. I was a little weary of doing this because I thought he and his friends would pull the old "I've seen that trick before." Or "she did that last time!" I went ahead with it because it was packed in my show case. Yep did the same show, script tricks, gags, and games. Everyone, the adults, guests - this time the parents invited approximately 12 children and held the party in a smaller more intimate part of the house. They kept the adult "party" away from the children, and removed any toys and games from the area.

Vel vadya know? Connor was up helping me, doing tricks, laughing in all the right places, doing everything I wanted him to do and loving every moment of the attention and adulation. He had the time of his life. Mom and dad were able to take pictures and sit back and enjoy the presence of their child. Connor's friends had a really really good time too.

Upon leaving the mother said, "You were much funnier this time then you were last time. The children and adults really enjoyed your show it was so different and **better**." Yea she really said that. Made me feel really good about the last performance there but really...

She was right it was different and it was better. Different, not because of the show's content, that was exactly the same. Not different because "I" had gotten better than I was before I did everything the exact same way. It was different and better because of two years of maturity and development of her son and the children she invited to her party. He was now ready to enjoy a costumed character.

Same child different outcome. I rest my case.

