

The case of the stolen birthday gift

“Now that he’s left the room, I’ve got some bad news,” Becky said.

She had just arrived to join us on our Ocean City vacation, which also included a small family birthday party for Collin, who is her godson.

“Someone broke into my car and stole his gift. I don’t want him to know about it, though. I don’t want him to think that all of Baltimore is bad.”

Becky lives near Patterson Park and teaches Spanish at Archbishop Curley High School. She is almost always wearing Orioles propaganda or at least some semblance of the Maryland flag. This girl loves her city, almost as much as she loves her godson. And he loves visiting her in the “urban community” she calls home. (Collin pointed that out to Becky when we visited her while his kindergarten class was learning about different kinds of communities.)

“Oh, Beck. I’m so sorry!” I said.

“Thanks. I’m so sad because I bought him a Minions tent and pictured it set up right here in the condo. I also got him Minions socks and a Minions activity book. The worst part is that each part was neatly wrapped with a card on top that said, ‘Happy 6th Birthday, Collin!’ Who steals a 6-year-old’s gift?!?!”

Probably the same kind of person who stole my diaper bag, I thought.

“That’s a shame,” I told Becky. “Maybe it’s making some other kid happy.”

“I just hope that Collin isn’t upset that I didn’t get him a gift. I’ll just take him to get an ice cream or something,” she said.

Later in the week, Becky watched as Collin’s slushy turned his lips and tongue turn blue and his spirits soar courtesy of a week’s worth of sugar consumed in one sitting. (Hey, it’s vacation!) When he came up for air, he asked her what the best part of his vacation was.

“That you came down to be here with me,” he said.

All the time and thought that Becky put into choosing and preparing the perfect birthday gift was not a waste. When we're searching for the perfect present for someone, it's an opportunity to reflect on what makes that person unique and focus on how much we care about him or her. But, one-on-one time with his godmother over a messy slushy at the Royal Farms on 83th Street, were the kinds of experiences that Collin will remember forever. Those memories are the best birthday presents anyone can get.



Collin and his godparents, Becky and Greg, on his 6th birthday in Ocean City, MD.