

Legos for Christmas

“I’m not going to say it again, Doug,” Mrs. Madison called up the steps. “Either you pick up your room, or I’m going to throw all of your things in the garbage!”

Doug knew she wouldn’t do it. He heard the same threat¹ every Saturday. It was always on Saturday because mom didn’t call Saturday Saturday. She called it “Pick-up-your-room-day.” Unless guests were coming on a different day – then “Pick-up-your-room-day” could be any day. But usually it was Saturday.

Doug half-heartedly² put some books in his bookshelf – backwards. ‘Mom will put them in the right way later,’ he thought to himself. ‘She always does. Why should I bother?’

“Doug! Are you picking up?” the voice called up the stairs again. “Because if you’re not then I guess that means you don’t need all those things.”

“Yeah, Mom,” Doug answered.

“What did you say? I should send all those toys and games to Africa. You know Doug, there are children in this world who don’t have ANYTHING to play with, NOTHING,” the voice went on.

“Doug? Answer me!”

‘How can I answer her when she didn’t ask me anything?’ Doug thought to himself

“Doug!?”

“Yes, mom...”

“So think about that. If you can’t take care of your things and pick them up once a week, then I’ll just send them to children who will appreciate³ them. There are enough kids...”

Doug closed his bedroom door and didn’t hear the rest of his mom’s sentence. But he didn’t need to hear it. He already knew what she was saying.

“There are enough kids who would be happy to have just one of your toys,” Doug imitated his mother’s voice. She couldn’t hear him with his door closed. He pushed some clothes under his bed, but on second thought he picked them up and threw them in the clothes hamper⁴. They were still clean, but it was much easier to throw them in the hamper than hang them up or fold them. “They have to be washed sometime anyway,” he said to himself. Now there was room under the bed for his Legos. He used his right foot to push them under. ‘No, better use my left foot,’ he thought. ‘I need to practice with my left foot for soccer.’

Next Doug looked at his desk and thought it didn’t look so bad. There was a note from school for his parents there, but it was already a week old so it certainly wasn’t important anymore. He threw it away. He stuffed⁵ some other things into the desk drawer and was satisfied.

He moved the other things on the floor (bottles, model airplane, boxing gloves) into the corners.

‘There,’ he thought, ‘finished.’ Just then his door flew open and the voice started again. “I want everything off the floor so that I can vacuum⁶. If there’s anything left on the floor...”

“You can vacuum now, Mom. I’m done. Bye, I’m going to Kevin’s,” Doug informed his mother.

Mrs. Madison stood in the middle of Doug’s room with the vacuum cleaner in her hands and her mouth hanging open. “Doug,” she began and then stopped again. Doug’s mother took a deep breath and started again. “Doug, I’m taking all of these things, the things in the corners, under your bed and on your desk and sending them to children who will appreciate them.”

¹ threat – Bedrohung

² half-heartedly – halbherzig

³ to appreciate – schätzen

⁴ clothes hamper – Wäschebox

⁵ to stuff – stopfen

⁶ to vacuum – staubsaugen

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40 Doug was tired of hearing this. Why did his mom always just talk and never do anything? He knew nothing would happen to him so he said, “Okay, Mom. Send the stuff⁷ to Africa.” Then he left his room, ran down the stairs and out the front door.

Mrs. Madison was still standing in her son’s room. She closed her mouth and thought about what her son had said to her. That’s when she made a decision. She picked up the boxing gloves, took the books out of the shelf that were in backwards, scooped up⁸ the Legos under the bed and collected the toys from the corners. After carrying everything downstairs, Mrs. Madison began to wrap all the toys in brown paper. The more she thought about her son’s behavior⁹, the angrier she became and the faster she wrapped. Next she tried to think of all the places in the world where terrible things were happening. Where had that Tsunami happened? Where were the tribes¹⁰ fighting? Where were the last hurricanes and fires and mudslides¹¹?

50 ‘The internet,’ thought Mrs. Madison. ‘I can’t think straight. The internet will give me the answers.’ After 15 minutes, Mrs. Madison had a list of ten places around the world. She quickly wrote the places on the packages like this:

55  *To a child
Banda Aceh, Sumatra
Indonesia*

She wrote Douglas Madison and their address in the top corner. Then she carried all the packages to her car and left for the post office. When she got to the second corner, she realized how silly she was being. How would the packages ever arrive? Would the postman walk around with the package until he found a child? And how much would it cost her?

60 She just wanted to teach her son a lesson¹², but she saw that it didn’t make sense to send the packages. Instead she turned around and drove back home. At home she put the packages in a big plastic garbage bag and hid them in a dark corner in the garage. ‘I’ll let Doug think that I sent them. We’ll see if he learns his lesson.’

65 “Mom!” Doug shouted from his bedroom that evening. “Mom, I can’t find my football! Mom!” Mrs. Madison was in the kitchen when she heard Doug calling her. She put down the knife and the potato she was cutting and walked slowly to the steps. Before she talked, she took a deep breath and tried to sound calm.

70 “Yes, Doug? Did you call me?”

This time Doug shouted even louder, “I can’t find my football!!!”

“I know you can’t find your football. I sent it to Africa,” Mrs. Madison said calmly and walked back to the kitchen. She didn’t wait for Doug’s reaction, but before she got to the kitchen she could already hear Doug running down the steps.

⁷ stuff – Zeug

⁸ to scoop up – aufsammeln

⁹ behavior – Benehmen

¹⁰ tribe – Stamm

¹¹ mudslide – Erdrutsch

¹² to teach sb a lesson – jemandem eine Lektion erteilen

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- 75 He burst into the kitchen and said, “And my boxing gloves? And my Legos?”
Mrs Madison took another deep breath. It seemed like her plan was working. “Let’s see... the boxing gloves went to El Salvador and the Legos to... umm... Indonesia.”
Doug couldn’t believe his ears. His mom really did it? She sent all his stuff away? At first Doug wanted to yell at his mom, but then he remembered: all the stuff would come back to him. There
- 80 was no way any postman in the world would deliver a package that didn’t have a name on it but only a city and country. So he smiled and said, “Good mom. And my model airplane?”
Now Mrs. Madison couldn’t believe her ears! Doug should be yelling now. He should be angry at her. He should want all his things back right now. He should promise to always pick up his bedroom.
- 85 The next afternoon after school, Doug waited for the postman. He was sure the first packages would come back already. Nothing. ‘Maybe the postman hasn’t come to our house yet,’ he thought. ‘I’ll walk around the neighborhood and look for him.’
When Doug got back to his house 30 minutes later, he hadn’t found the postman and there was still no package for him. But there was an upset mother and an angry father. “Where have you
- 90 been?” they both shouted at the same time.
“Mrs. Washington will be here in 5 minutes to pick you up for soccer practice. And you’re not even dressed!” his mother yelled.
Doug simply answered, “Then you can take me.”
Now it was his father’s turn¹³. “NO! Your mother is leaving NOW for the parent meeting at school.
- 95 Mrs. Monroe is coming. And I’m leaving NOW for a meeting at the office.”
Mrs. Madison rushed out the door when she heard a horn beep but came back in two seconds later and grabbed¹⁴ her purse. “See you for supper!” she called over her shoulder. Then she was back one more time. “Don’t forget the post office, honey!” she called to her husband. “The Christmas cards have to go out today!” Finally she got into Mrs. Monroe’s car and drove away.
- 100 Doug’s father was grumbling¹⁵ under his breath¹⁶. He took the car keys and left without saying goodbye to Doug. He was already late and now he had to stop at the post office, too. When he got into the car he saw the pile for the post office. ‘Oh well,’ he thought. ‘It will only take a minute or two.’ At the post office he scooped up everything on the seat next to him. He didn’t notice the small brown package that was with the letters. But the clerk in the post office noticed it. She tried
- 105 to ask Mr. Madison about the package with the strange address, but he was too busy looking at the clock. “Should I send this, too?” she asked him.
Without looking down, Mr. Madison said impatiently¹⁷, “Yes, everything. Send it. I’m in a hurry.”

¹³ to be sb’s turn – an der Reihe sein

¹⁴ to grab – schnappen

¹⁵ to grumble – motzen

¹⁶ under one’s breath – sich selbst etwas flüstern

¹⁷ impatiently – ungeduldig



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“Here, Doug. Here’s another one for you!”

“Okay, wait. My pile’s falling down!”

110 “Give this one to your cousin. He’s sitting over there.”

“I can’t see him. There’s too much wrapping paper¹⁸ on the floor. And all these piles of presents!”

It was Christmas Day and the Madisons were celebrating with their whole family. Grandmas and grandpas, aunts and uncles and all the cousins were there. The day started early at church and then everyone came to Doug’s house to open presents. That took a long time because there were

120 so many people and so many presents for each person.

At lunchtime the table was full of delicious-smelling foods. Everyone ate until they were stuffed – but they left a little room for dessert, too!



“Doug! Doug!!! Will you please come and get your presents from the living room!” It was the day after Christmas and Mrs. Madison was trying to tidy up the house again. ‘The holidays are hard work,’ she thought. “Doug, if you leave these presents down here one more day, I’ll...” Mrs. Madison

125 couldn’t finish her sentence because the doorbell rang just then. “I’ll get it!” Doug yelled and ran down the stairs. “Coming!” he yelled to the person on the other side of the door. “Yes?” he shouted as he opened the door. It was the postman. He gave Doug a thick toy catalog. “It wouldn’t fit in the mailbox,” the man said. “And here’s the rest of your mail.”

130 Doug thanked him and closed the door. He couldn’t wait to look at the new toy catalog. His birthday was in March and it was time to start a list. He handed the rest of the mail to his mom and went to the living room to write his birthday list.

“Mom! Can you bring me a pen?” Doug shouted, but his mom was already there. “Did you bring me a pen? And some paper, too.”

135 Mrs. Madison didn’t say anything. “Mom? Did you hear me?”

Mrs. Madison handed Doug a letter. When Doug looked at the envelope, he understood why his mom didn’t say anything. He was confused, too. The name and address on the airmail envelope were his, but the letter was from Indonesia. He didn’t know anyone in Indonesia.

Doug ripped it open and found a short letter.

¹⁸ wrapping paper – Geschenkpapier

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140 To Doug,

Thank you for the package. I like the blocks very much. The Red Cross lady is helping me to write this letter. She says you sent the blocks to me. How did you know about me? It was the best present ever. Thank you. Here is a picture of my house for you. I drew it.

From Agung

145

“Cool,” was all Doug could say at first. “Cool, a letter from Indonesia.”

Nobody said anything for a while. Then Doug asked, “Mom? I don’t get it. Did you really send all those packages?”

150 “The packages? No. The ones from your bedroom... They’re... I put them all in the garage. I didn’t send them. I don’t understand. They’re all in the garage,” Mrs. Madison said as she thought about that Saturday morning about one month ago.

Mrs. Madison walked out to the garage and Doug followed her. In the corner was the big, black garbage bag. They carried it into the house and opened it on the living room floor. All the brown packages were still in the bag.

155 “What in the world are you two doing?” Doug’s father asked as he walked into the room and saw them on the floor with the packages. They explained what had happened and gave him the letter from Agung.

“Look, there’s another piece of paper here, too. It’s from the Red Cross.” Mr. Madison quickly read the letter to them:

160

Dear Doug,

Agung was so happy about the Legos! That was such an excellent idea to send the package to “A Child” here. The children in Banda Aceh don’t have much to be happy about. Was this a school project perhaps? I would love to hear more about it and about you. Thank you again. There should be more young people

165 *in the world like you!*

Sincerely,

Mary Lincoln

Red Cross



Folgende Aufgaben wären denkbar:

- 1) Einfach lesen lassen
- 2) Verständnisfragen stellen:
 - a) Explain the conflict (problem) between Doug and his mom.
 - b) Describe how Doug picks up his room.
 - c) Read lines 38 to 46 again. How does Doug treat his mother?
 - d) Why didn't Mrs. Madison send the packages?
 - e) Describe Christmas Day at the Madison's house.
 - f) Complete Mrs. Madison's words to Doug in lines 133-134.
 - g) Do you remember? How did the package of Legos get to Indonesia. Explain.
- 3) Die Geschichte fortsetzen. Was macht Doug als nächstes? Ändert sich seine Einstellung?
(What will Doug do next? Will he change? How?)
- 4) Bilder zur Geschichte malen lassen.