**Wafers**

*Norman Yeung*

I don't remember his name but he was a good ol' Canadian kid with lots of Richard Scarry books and lived on William Street with his good ol' white family. Anglo-Saxon. Maybe Protestant. He was an early friend and maybe his name was Chris. That's a good name for someone like him. He knew me as Norman, which of course is my name but I'm also Lup-Man. Four years before I met him, I was pooping my cloth diapers in a village in China. I met him in kindergarten.

Chris was having a birthday party, the first birthday party that I'd ever been invited to. What is this "birthday party"? What do we do? "Mom, my friend up the block is having a 'birthday party' and I think I'm supposed to give him something."

"That's nice. What are we supposed to give?"

"I dunno, but it's gotta be soon. The party is now."

"Oh. Well..." My mom searched the kitchen cupboards. I guess we could have given him fruit, but that'd be the bummest gift of all bum gifts. I guess we could have given him money in a red envelope but he wouldn't understand, and besides, we didn't have money to give. "You can give him this," my mom beamed triumphantly as she pulled a package of wafers from the top shelf. "They're very good." It was Garden brand. It was strawberry. It was unopened.

My mom escorted me up the block as I clutched the wafers at my chest, wrapped in a plastic bag with the slogans of a Chinatown herb store. Not even wrapped, just... bundled.

As we walked up the steps the shrieking of jubilant five-year-olds got louder. I knocked, the door opened, and the squeals were intense. Chris's mom greeted us with a smile, "Are you Norman?"

"Uh-huh. We're here for the 'birthday party'. This is my mom."

"Hello!" my mom said in the broken English she had just learned.

I held out the crinkly package proudly, with both hands. "This is for Chris."

"Oh!" the mom said with modest, if not fake, surprise. "Chris! Your friend is here!" Chris came bounding to the door, his head sweaty. "Norman and his mom brought you a gift!"

"What is it what'd you get me?" he panted. He unravelled the bag -- the easiest unwrapping he'd performed -- and pulled out the treat.

"Ooh, cookies!" his mom chimed. Chris dumped the wafers back into the bag, handed it to his mom, and ran back into the house to join the squealing. "Thank you," she said politely.