

Edgar and the Incredible Birthday Demand of 1989

By Toni Margarita Plummer

Edgar was going to a birthday party with his family. His mother drove and his little sister, Ana, was strapped into her car seat in the back. Edgar held a plastic yellow bat. It was his lucky bat, the one he used to hit *piñatas* with.

His mother turned onto the freeway. She glanced at the bat. "*Mí amor*, I don't think there will be a piñata at this party."

"Yes, there will. Parties have piñatas," Edgar replied with conviction.

"Yes, sweetie, but this is a different kind of party."

"If it's a real party, there will be a piñata."

"Yes, but-"

"You said it was a party." He looked stoically at her. Normally for a party she'd be wearing her summer dress and *chanclas*, with her hair in braids. Not a work suit. Her hair, drawn up tightly into a bun, made him especially suspicious. He tried to squint at each of the many bobby pins.

"It is a party!" she almost shouted. "Mr. and Mrs. Blythe are having a birthday party for their little boy, Tobias. He's going to be seven. Just like you." She reached out a hand to tickle his stomach, but he was having none of it. She sighed, like she did sometimes after a long day of work. "Sometimes people do things differently, Edgar. There's nothing wrong with it. That's just the way things are."

But Edgar clutched tighter onto his bat.

They had to drive a long way, far from all the tall buildings and up through the mountains. They parked in front of a large house and Edgar's mother got out to unbuckle Ana, who had been sleeping.

"You can carry Tobias's present," she said to Edgar and she handed him a box wrapped in shiny blue paper. "You wanna leave your bat in the car, honey?"

Edgar shook his head. He held the present with both hands, the bat tucked under one arm.

His mother bit her lip. "Maybe one of the kids will have a ball and you can play a game."

Edgar only looked at her. She patted his hair, combed stiff and shiny with gel, and pushed Ana in her stroller to the front door of the house.

His mother nodded toward a button on the wall. Edgar pushed it and they heard chimes inside. A young woman wearing a black dress answered. "Good afternoon. Invitations?"

"Oh, yes." Edgar's mother fumbled through her purse to produce a blue card.

"Thank you. Everyone is in the back yard. Follow me."

They passed through a large living area. One long table was overflowing with presents and Edgar's mother told him to place the present there. The young woman slid open a glass door and held out her hand for them to step through. "Make yourself at home."

Edgar surveyed the scene. There were balloons and two clowns in a corner juggling. There were bowls of punch and trays of food. But it didn't really look like a party.

There were more adults than kids, for one thing. There were hardly any kids at all. This partly pleased Edgar, because it meant he'd have a better chance of hitting the piñata and knocking it down. Sometimes, at his cousins' parties he had to wait a long time for his turn.

"I see Mr. Blythe. Let's go say hello."

They walked toward a man and woman.

"Sonia," the woman called. She had huge blonde hair and blinding earrings. "I'm so glad you made it."

"Mr. and Mrs. Blythe. This is my son Edgar, and this is Ana."

"Oh, they're adorable," Mrs. Blythe cried.

"Hello, little man," Mr. Blythe stooped to say to Edgar. He had gray hair and thick glasses.

"Are you the grandpa?" Edgar asked.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Blythe." Edgar's mother blushed.

"That's quite all right. A very confident young man you have here. I wish Tobey were more like that. Why don't you go find him, little man? Have a good time. It's a party!"

"Go on," his mother urged him before he could question this last comment Mr. Blythe had made. He left them talking and cautiously stepped onto the impeccable green lawn.

There was a playset, like the ones in the park, except bigger and brighter. The sun reflected off it. A little red-headed boy sat alone at the bottom of the slide.

Edgar walked up to him. "Your hair's on fire."

The boy's mouth crumpled.

"I'm not making fun of you."

The boy looked up hopefully. "You're not?" His face held two large blue eyes.

"No, it's cool. People should call you Fire Boy."

"Thanks." The boy saw the bat. "Do you wanna play baseball?"

"No," Edgar said casually and the boy lowered his head again. "Where is Tobias?"

"That's me. I'm Tobey."

"Happy Birthday, Tobey." They shook hands.

Edgar tried to remain calm, but he was too impatient to see the piñata. He liked to get a good picture of it in his mind because he'd be blindfolded later and wouldn't be able to see it.

"Where's the piñata?"

Tobey looked confused. "The what?"

"The piñata."

"I don't know."

"Let's go look." He pulled Tobey up from the slide. "Your parents have to have one somewhere. They wanted to surprise you. But don't worry, when we find it, only I will look so you can still be surprised."

Edgar tried to think of all the places a piñata would normally be kept. They went to the garage, but there were only two big cars there. They went to the kitchen, but there was just a huge cake. They checked behind the couches in the living room, and in the closet. Tobey wanted to stay and shake his presents, but Edgar reminded him of their mission. They even peeked into Tobey's parents' room. But there was no piñata there either.

"Are you sure there's a pinada here?"

"A piñata," Edgar corrected him. He was beginning to doubt they would find one,

especially since Tobey, the birthday boy, had been looking under rugs and in pots in the kitchen. Maybe he really didn't know what a piñata was.

"We'll ask your dad," Edgar decided. This question must be settled once and for all.

They walked up to the huddle of adults laughing, everyone seeming to be especially interested in what Mr. Blythe had to say.

Tobey tugged on his father's sleeve. "Dad, this is Edgar. He has something to ask you."

"I see you've made a friend, Tobey. Hello, little man. Having fun? Are you going to play baseball?"

Edgar still carried his lucky bat with him.

"No. I want to say that I'm sorry I called you a grandpa before. And please, where is the piñata?"

Mr. Blythe laughed at the apology and then said, "What, son?"

"The piñata," Edgar said as politely as he could and tried to smile. His mother was talking to a woman across the yard. She waved one of Ana's little hands over at him.

"Well, I don't know what you mean, little man. But we have a cake. And clowns."

Mrs. Blythe nodded at this and spoke to the surrounding guests. "Yes, they came with excellent credentials."

Edgar's brow furrowed. "So you have no piñata? With candy and toys?"

"Oh, we have candy and toys. Didn't you get a gift bag, little man?" He pointed to a table by the sliding glass door. It was covered with many blue bags, all stuffed with tissue paper.

"All the candy and toys are in those bags?" Edgar confirmed.

"Yes."

"Thank you, sir," and he led Tobey away.

Edgar sat him back down at the slide, put his hands on his shoulders, and looked into his blue eyes. It was hard to say, but Tobey was his friend and he had to tell him the truth. "Tobey, you should know something. You have no piñata at your birthday party."

Tobey looked perplexed and Edgar took this to be confirmation of his new friend's extreme anguish and disappointment. "I don't want you to worry. We'll think of something." Edgar sat down on a swing to do just that.

A light sound of hands clapping came from the clown corner. "That's it for today, kids. Thank you for joining us. And have a great day!"

The kids walked over to the playset. They were two girls and a boy.

"Who are you?" the smallest girl asked.

"I'm Edgar," Edgar answered.

"What are you doing?" the bigger girl asked.

"We're planning."

"Well, I'm Julie and this is my little sister Rachel," the bigger girl said.

"And I'm Will," said the boy.

These were all the kids at the party. Except for Ana and one other baby. But they didn't count.

"Are you going to play baseball?" Will asked.

"No. We're planning on how to get a piñata."

"A pinada!" Rachel shrieked. "What's a pinada?"

The sound of the tiny girl laughing at this sacred birthday component made something inside Edgar go off. "What's a piñata! What's a piñata!" and he plunged into a 5-minute rant on how you picked the one you wanted at the supermarket and they were stars or animals or even cartoon characters and how you filled it with your favorite candy so that it became so heavy it was heavier than you your mother said and how they hung it on a rope and two of your uncles swung it from the roof or a wall or somewhere high and they blindfolded the kids and spun them round to make them dizzy and how funny it was seeing all your cousins trying to find the piñata and everyone shouting where it was and some aunt starting to scream cuz they were coming too close to her and how when someone hits it hard enough all the candy just drops out and the kids are on the floor grabbing what they can and maybe even using a fallen cone to scoop up the candy with and how all your friends tell you it's a great party and it's the best time ever. When he had finished, he took a deep breath. "I'm sorry."

The kids stood motionless, their jaws dropped. Tobey especially looked awestruck by this news.

Rachel was the first to speak. "My mommy always says it's best to make your own present."

Edgar, who had saved up money once for five weeks to buy his mother a jeweled picture frame, tolerated this statement with thinly disguised irritation.

"Why can't we make a pinada?" she went on.

While this idea was not entirely preposterous, it did strike Edgar as a bit over-confident. He had helped make a piñata once at a church fiesta. But they had been experienced in making piñatas and there had even been a priest there. He tried to communicate the delicacy of the process to the kids. "We can't make one. We don't have the right," he paused, "supplies."

"Supplies? What kinds of supplies?" Julie asked.

"Newspaper, glue, colored paper, balloons," he ran off nonchalantly.

"Those things are easy," Will scoffed.

"Where are they?"

Everyone looked at Tobey. The red-head blushed. It was the most attention the kids had given him all day. He scratched the back of his neck and peered up into the sky. "We could go to my room, I guess. I have stuff there."

So they all followed Tobey to his room. They passed by Ana in her stroller. Julie stopped to touch the baby's hand.

"She's so cute," she commented.

"She's never hit a piñata before," Edgar told them, and they proceeded into the house. They came back out again, bearing a box of old science magazines, Elmer's glue, construction paper, scissors, party balloons and a clothes hanger. These all struck Edgar as possible piñata-making supplies, although he couldn't be sure because they were different from what he had used at the church fiesta.

They set the box on the lawn and eagerly took out the supplies.

"There are different kinds of pinadas, right? So what kind are we gonna make?" asked Will.

"Well," Edgar began (He had decided to stop telling people it was piñata, not pinada), "we should make something that's not too hard."

"Like a mermaid?" Julie asked.

"Oh, I know!" Rachel jumped, with her hand raised. "A leprechaun!"

"Maybe something round would be better." Edgar looked at them strangely.

"How about the Death Star? That's almost round," Tobey suggested. They all liked that idea, so they decided that's what the piñata would be.

"Okay," Edgar said. "Will, you blow the balloons. Rachel, cut out the colors we'll need. Julie, you glue the paper onto the balloon. And Tobey, you twist the clothes hanger so that we have a hook to hang the piñata on."

"What are you gonna do?" Julie asked.

"I'm the only one who's made a piñata before. So I'm the supervisor."

"What is that?" Rachel asked.

"It means I make sure you all do your jobs."

The arrangement seemed fair enough to everyone. They got to work. When they were done, they set their creation on the grass and stepped back to look at it.

What they had made exceeded their expectations, in that it was something none of them had ever seen before. Edgar attributed the discrepancy to a combination of having the wrong size balloons, too much glue, and no priest. They hadn't thought about where the hole would be, not that there was enough room to fit more than five pieces of candy in it. They hadn't even gotten the color right, Julie and Rachel alternating blacks and whites because there was no gray paper.

"Is that what a piñata looks like?" Rachel asked doubtfully of the small sagging heap.

"No, it's not. Something must be wrong with these supplies."

Tobey rubbed his eyes.

"They're not bad supplies, Tobey," Edgar assured him. "It's just that they're not used to making piñatas. They're good at making other things."

"Oh," Tobey smiled.

"And besides, most piñatas are cardboard now. Those are the ones you buy at the store."

Everyone nodded, their eyes still frozen on the unfortunate project.

"It could be the Death Star after the Jedis blew it up," Will said, and thankfully, everyone laughed at this and forgot to be sad that they hadn't made a good piñata.

"If we don't have a piñata and we want one, there's only one thing we can do," Edgar said slowly, so as to have all the kids' undivided attention. "We must demand one. We'll go on strike. That's what my Uncle Paco did with his friends at the supermarket."

"What does 'strike' mean?" Rachel asked.

"It means we don't work till we get what we want."

"But we're not working," Will said.

Edgar considered this. "Then we don't go to the birthday party."

All the kids looked around. No one wanted to state the obvious. Edgar amended his statement. "I mean, we just don't do the birthday things. It's Tobey's birthday. So the party doesn't go on till we get our piñata."

This made Tobey nervous. He wrung his hands and looked over at his father, who was very happy and in the middle of telling a rather long joke.

Edgar laid his hand on his shoulder. "You want a piñata, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Then we've got to fight for it."

"Fight fight!" The kids shouted.

"No, when you're on strike you say, 'Strike.'"

"Strike strike!" they complied.

"What do we do first?" Will asked.

"People have to know that we're on strike. So everyone go tell their parents."

The kids ran off. They tugged their parents toward them, whispered in their ears, and then ran back to the playset.

"Now what?"

"Now we wait." Edgar lay down on the grass. He put his arms underneath his head and looked into the blue sky. The other kids did the same.

"It's fun to be on strike," Rachel noted.

They all laughed. Edgar was very happy. He closed his eyes and thought of how he'd be the one to break the piñata, at the end after everyone had had a chance to hit. He thought of all the candy he'd get. Maybe there would be lollipops and gum. But he wouldn't scoop it all between his knees like his cousin Brenda did. That would be cheating.

A few minutes later, Rachel spoke again, "Nothing's happening."

"Sometimes you have to wait a long time when you're on a strike," Edgar told them.

"How long?"

"Sometimes a whole month."

Tobey frowned. "But in a month it won't be my birthday anymore."

Edgar sat up. "That's right."

Tobey smiled proudly at his astute observation.

"So what do we do to make it faster?" Julie asked.

Edgar thought. "If we had signs it would be faster. We need to hold up signs saying we're on strike. Who here is a good writer?"

"My sister is," Tobey answered, feeling on a roll of bright ideas. "She's in the 9th grade."

"Where is she?"

Tobey shrugged. "She's up in her room. She didn't want to come to the party."

Edgar lifted himself from the grass. This sounded like just the right person to write their strike posters. "Let's go see her."

Amanda's room was on the second floor. On the door was a "Do Not Enter" sign, but Edgar recognized this from his cousin Ernie's room. It was just a joke that older kids used.

Tobey's sister opened her door after the first knock. She had blonde hair, but it wasn't big like her mother's. "What do you want, Squirt?" she demanded of Tobey.

"We call him Fire Boy," Edgar said. This wasn't exactly true, but Edgar thought it was a better nickname than "Squirt."

"Who are you?" She stared at Edgar.

"I'm Edgar."

"You all Squirt's friends?" She made a funny look with her face. Tobey drew in his breath.

"Yes, and we need your help," Edgar replied seriously.

"Oh yeah? Well, I'm busy."

"You don't look busy."

Tobey's and the other kids gasped. But Edgar didn't see what the matter was. His older cousins were always saying they were busy when they weren't doing anything at all.

Amanda regarded Edgar closely. "Well, I'm not going downstairs. So, you're on your own."

"You don't have to leave your room. We just want you to write something for us."

"I'm not doing your stupid kindergarten homework for you, if that's what you want."

"Only Rachel is in kindergarten and she finished her homework yesterday," Julie countered.

"Yeah," Rachel said.

"We're on strike," Edgar explained. "And we want you to write signs for us."

"Strike from what?"

"The birthday party."

Amanda considered them for a moment. They tried to be very quiet and still, but Rachel was humming and swaying. Julie gave her a little push.

"All right, come in." She held the door open for them.

"Wow, she never lets me in her room," Tobey whispered to Edgar.

Amanda hopped onto the bed and the kids all stood around. She grabbed two poster boards and some markers.

"Are you a good writer?" Edgar wanted to make sure.

"I can write."

"You know all your a,b,c's?" Rachel asked incredulously.

Amanda smiled for the first time. "Yes. Do you know what you want to say?" she shook a red marker.

"Mmm," Edgar hummed, "you can decide what to write. Since you are the writer."

"Sounds good to me."

Amanda made two signs with big letters and bright colors. When she was finished she pushed them toward the kids. "All done."

They left and as Tobey was walking out she called, "Hey, Fire Boy." He turned back fearfully and she grabbed him in a hug. "Happy Birthday."

"Thanks," Tobey said shyly, and he closed the door softly behind them.

They walked downstairs, carefully holding up the two signs, Edgar directing. Tobias was smiling widely and kept bumping into the staircase.

They walked back to the playset and propped one sign in front of the slide, and the other between the two swings. The one by the slide read, "We Can Have Our Cake and a Piñata Too!" and the one by the swings read, "No More Gift Bags, All Those Price Tags. We Want Lotsa Sweets in Our Piñata." Edgar wasn't sure they told the adults everything. He would have written, "Please buy us a piñata at Rocio's. They're ten dollars." But he knew that strike signs weren't like that, being written in the language of politics. He declared the signs satisfactory.

"Now something should happen," Edgar told Tobey and the others. They stood by the signs, holding them by the edges, and waited patiently.

A couple came bearing more balloons and presents. They didn't bring any children with them, so the strike team wouldn't be growing. The couple laughed very loudly and all the other adults went over to talk to them. The kids held the signs firmer and stared very hard at the adults. But there was no reaction.

"This isn't working. We have to stop people from coming. They just keep bringing more birthday stuff!" Will lamented.

"Rachel, you stay here with one sign. We'll take the other one to the front," Edgar said. They took the one about the cake and carried it to the front yard.

A nice car pulled up and the driver, wearing a black suit and sunglasses, got out to open the back door for an elderly couple. The man and woman walked to the front door.

"Wait," Edgar held out his hand.

"Tobey, it's me, Grandpa!"

"Hi, Grandpa," Tobey waved back. "Hi, Grandma."

"Did you bring Tobey a piñata?" Julie asked.

"A what?"

"I think she said, piñata, dear. You know, the Mexican party favor." The woman wore pearls and a long blue dress.

"We can't let you in until you bring a piñata," Edgar said firmly but good-naturedly.

Tobey's grandpa smiled. "Is that so? Where do you get them?"

"They have them for ten dollars at Rocio's."

"And where is that?"

"It's by the playground. Hurry."

"I told you we forgot something," the woman said as they turned around to shuffle back to their car.

"At Christmas, Richard wants a Chinese fountain. Now he wants a piñata. I don't understand it." The man laughed softly.

The kids waited a few more minutes, but no one else was coming, so they returned to the backyard. Rachel was at her station, picking her nose. Julie yelled at her to stop. "You can't do that while you're holding the sign!"

They continued to hold the signs and after a little while they saw Amanda come out of the house. There was another girl with her who looked the same age. "Amanda," Mrs. Blythe held out her hand, "so good of you to join us. Everyone meet my daughter, always fashionably late. She takes after me." She hugged Amanda around the shoulders and Amanda smiled uncomfortably.

"I just thought we'd take some pictures of the party," she said.

"Great idea!"

Amanda motioned to her friend and they sat at a table in the shade.

Just then, Mr. Blythe tapped on a glass and held up his hands.

"Attention, everyone. I want to thank you for attending the birthday party of my son, Tobias. It's a pleasure to work with each of you. And I hope we continue to work toward the success of Blythe Corporations with enthusiasm, innovation, and always in the spirit of family. Now who's ready for cake?"

The adults clapped. People dressed in black suits came out of the house carrying the huge cake, lit now by seven candles. They set it on a table.

"Tobey," Mr. Blythe called, and the adults clapped again.

Tobey gulped. "What do I do?" he asked the kids.

Edgar patted him on the shoulder. "Just remember our demands."

Tobey nodded, took a deep breath, and walked toward the crowd.

"You ready to make a wish, son?" Mr. Blythe asked.

Before he could answer, he was swept to the head of the table. The cake blazed in front of him and he felt himself sweating.

"Go on, blow out the candles, sweetie," his mother said.

Tobey looked to Edgar, who had climbed to the top of the slide and was shaking his head no.

"Um, I can't," Tobey stammered.

"Don't be silly. You're a pro at it."

Tobey pointed toward the playset. "Have you read our signs?"

Everyone looked to the signs now for the first time. Rachel was picking her nose again. When she saw everyone staring she quickly folded her arms in her lap.

"What do they say?" there was whispering in the crowd.

"Amanda!" Mrs. Blythe shouted and Amanda and her friend giggled a little.

Tobey was scared, but he spoke clearly for everyone to hear. "It means that I can't blow out candles or open presents or do any birthday things, until we have a piñata."

"A piñata!" Mr. Blythe began to laugh, and then stopped when he saw Tobey's somber expression.

"I can't do it, Dad."

"Tobias, there's no way we can get one now. Just blow out the candles."

Tobey looked at Edgar and the others. They all watched him silently, hopefully. They were counting on him. And Edgar's words still rang in his mind. Not the ones about having all your friends say it was a great party. He had friends now, for the first time, and he knew that good party or not, they would stick by him. The words he was remembering were the ones about having the best time ever.

"I'm sorry."

"Tobias," his mother coaxed. "You've never even had a piñata. How do you know you like them? Your father and I would give you anything you ever wanted. You know that. But you can't always get your way. Is that what this is all about, just getting your way?"

"No, it's just that—" he stumbled.

He could see Amanda standing just outside the crowd, watching him with a new interest. All the adults who had been embarrassedly looking away from the scene, now watched him too, with a quiet kind of warmth in their eyes. "I made a promise," he finally said. He stepped away from the table and walked slowly off, the crowd parting to let him pass.

Edgar was going to let out a shout of victory, when he saw his mother at the foot of the slide. "Edgar, I want to talk to you." She had that quality in her voice that let him know he was in trouble. He slid solemnly down and followed her into the house. They stood in the kitchen.

"Did you tell all those children to strike?" she asked him.

"Yes."

"Why? Why did you do that? Don't you know it ruined the party? After all the Blythes did to put it together for Tobias? After all the trouble they went through?"

"They didn't get him a piñata."

"Edgar." He could tell she wanted to yell, but was restraining herself. "What did I tell you in the car? People are different. They don't all have piñatas at their parties. It doesn't mean it's a bad party. It's just different. Do you understand?"

He thought of Tobey's big, blue eyes and Will saying, "pinada." "Yes, I understand."

The kitchen phone rang. She stood looking at him until the third ring and then she picked up. "Blythe residence. Edward, hi."

Edgar hung his head and turned to leave. "I just thought they would like to have one, this time."

His mother watched him drag his feet out of the kitchen. Something lit up inside her. "Edward, I think I know just what you're looking for."

Edgar found the kids in the front yard, lying on the grass.

"Wouldn't it be nice if Santa Claus brought one?" Rachel was saying.

Edgar knew this was a misunderstanding of the way piñatas arrived, but he didn't say anything to discredit this hope. They needed some cheerful words.

He smiled at Tobey, who was quiet, but smiled back, and he lied down with them on the grass. Edgar closed his eyes. He must have fallen asleep, because when he opened them, the sun had set and it was dusk.

Edgar was going to sit up, when out of the corner of his eye he saw what looked like a unicorn's horn. And then a donkey's tail. And then an alligator's green eye. Each bright, in rustling paper. But it couldn't be. He sat bold upright and there walking through the lawn from a van to the Blythe house were men, carrying piñatas! Some of the men carried one under each arm!

"Guys, guys!" Edgar shouted. The kids, who had all fallen asleep too, woke up. "Look,

piñatas!"

Tobey, Julie, Rachel, and Will all stared wide-eyed at the wonderful objects. They each picked themselves up and dreamily followed the men to the backyard.

The party was still as full as it had been before, the adults feeling strange about leaving their hosts with the whole birthday cake. The servants had blown out the candles and removed them and the cake just sat, intact, but with seven little holes in the icing.

When the men came into the backyard, the adults were just as surprised as the kids had been. The men placed all the piñatas in the center of the yard, eleven in all, and then got back into their van and left. No one said a word, but just stared at the miraculous collection. The piñatas rustled a little in the breeze, the mane of the unicorn and the tail of the donkey streaming in the early evening.

They might have stayed frozen like that all night, but Tobey's grandparents came into the yard, followed by their driver.

"Dad, where have you been!" Mr. Blythe exclaimed.

"Richard, I wish you'd make your invitations clearer. One doesn't know what to expect. It's a good thing you have Sonia working for you."

"Sonia?"

"That's right. She's one damn good business woman."

"We got these for a steal," Tobey's grandmother added.

"You did this?" Mr. Blythe asked, still appalled.

"Of course. I was informed by the kind children in front that you were in need of one. So I thought, why not bring more?"

When Edgar could stand to take his eyes from the beautiful assortment of piñatas, he sought out his mother, like he always did when something miraculous had occurred. She was holding Ana on one of the swings. The strike posters were turned to their blank sides, propped by the brick wall.

"Did you do something?" Edgar asked, approaching his mother cautiously.

"Do something? What do you mean, baby?" She didn't look up.

"*Tú sabes*. About the piñatas." He watched her closely, for signs of magic.

She shrugged. "I may have told Mr. Edward Blythe about a certain local party supplier friend of mine." She looked up at him and smiled. Edgar rushed her with a hug and a kiss on the cheek. He even kissed Ana.

They lost no time in putting the piñatas to work.

They turned the outside lights on and transferred the candy from the gift bags. Edgar's mother let her hair down and climbed onto the garage. Amanda went up the tree and they swung the piñatas between them. One after the other. There were so many, that everyone got a chance to hit. Even the adults hit. This was a bit too liberal for Edgar, but he was so happy to have any piñatas at all, he didn't oppose it. And the adults had a great time, especially Mrs. Blythe. She must have really been needing to hit something, because she tore the *estrella* apart and was reluctant to hand over the bat. Tobey broke two piñatas, like a true birthday boy. Edgar held his lucky bat in Ana's chubby hands, to help her hit her first. All she really did was tap it, but she seemed to have good instincts and Edgar saw her future drawn out over the years, one piñata blast at a time.

Edgar still keeps in touch with the kids from the Incredible Birthday Demand of 1989. He had his mother take dictation for two years every Christmas until he began writing his own letters, to make sure they were all doing their jobs.