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It was just after the war & there was a fantastic air of optimism about. A labour government was in power having got in on a policy of all things for all men providing you're a worker. I incidentally stayed up all night to watch this happen & rejoiced with the rest when it did. I also wasn't old enough to vote. Shortly after this it became apparent that riches were not going to come easily & everything was going to stay on ration for some time.

I say everything but there was ^{AT LEAST} a consignment of pomegranates in the shops one of which I rushed to buy. After hocking open the leathery skin & digging my teeth down into the sweet juicy interior I came up with a mouthful of pips & some juice after which

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my mouth was completely dry again.

This was not the pomegranate of my childhood as I remembered it.

I realized I had grown up.

Everyday life must be resumed & made to be as good as possible.

possible.

There was a local youth club nearby that I frequented & where I had numerous friends plus the odd enemy. Here we would indulge in all sorts of pastimes, Billiards, gym work, cards for money when the warden was not around & chatting up the girls down in the street below. (It was a boys only club.)

We also dreamed up & discussed all sorts of ideas & wishes that we might have. Most of these were so far out they were rejected out of hand but occasionally someone said something that sparked us off & we gave it a whirl.

This was just ³ such a suggestion.
Seeing as how several of us will
soon be due for National Service
why don't we have a Party. Better
yet with Christmas not too far
away lets make it a Christmas
Party. Being young & very local
community conscious, even better ^{still} lets
make it a Super childrens Christmas
party. So it was agreed & plans
were made. Permission was asked
for & obtained from the warden
providing everything was kept within
the realms of sensibility.

Invitations would be sent out to
all the most needy children in
the area & the age limit was agreed
at ten years old down to four.

Four ~~year olds~~ to 6 year olds to
be accompanied unless they had older
brothers or sisters coming

We also decided it would be approx. one week before Christmas so as not to spoil their own festivities & also not turn ours into a disaster if it didn't come up to par.

There was to be food, presents & entertainment, that to tell an order we thought.

The food was the easy part all we had to do was convince our various mothers that they really wanted to cook & supply it.

The presents meant a lot more work on our part some threats some bribes some pure Blackmail for nisters aunts & anyone else to knit little animal toys, make up rag dolls etc.

We also had local env. school woodwork classes given over almost entirely to toy manufacture, wooden (without the teachers knowledge OF COURSE

blocks, Noah's ~~ark~~ ^{ark}, animals & jig saw puzzles etc. My own ~~offering~~ ^{FORTEE} being wooden pistols & battleships.

The entertainment was to be provided by ourselves. One lad was a fairly accomplished magician two girls were allowed in. they were twins & did poems in unison two other boys were brushing up a dogg dance (hot nailed army boots actually) another lad was doing a george formby impression complete with ukulele and our warden had agreed to do a Stanley Holloway style monologue entitled about & the lion

The speciality act was to be a roller skating ballet by four of us lads and yet to be choreographed. Music would be by our very own play anything by ear pianist.

The finale would be a rendering of Silent Night by the whole company & hopefully some of the guests.

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The whole thing was to be held in our gym which was rectangular with high ceiling & almost full height wall bars on both ^{LONGER} sides. At one end we had a makeshift stage full width except for the entrance alongside & curtains to cover this area.

It was decided that the stage area with curtains closed would be where the Artists would prepare & they would come out into the main body of the gym to perform.

The tables would be set trestle style continuously along both walls & across the far end away from the stage. All the guests would then be seated on the outside facing inwards ~~thus making moving etc. much easier~~ ~~the leaving area from behind them~~ All moving etc would ~~be~~ be done from ~~it~~ within the confines of

the central area. ⁷

The date was set for the Friday before Christmas & preparations were commenced in earnest.

I barely had time to go to work but at the same time needed to because the occasional paint spraying of cars I did meant quite a few toys got painted as well if the colour was anywhere near acceptable.

During this time also our performers were rehearsing really had to get things right.

Our skating routine was quite good with figures of eight & zooming around on one leg all performed with ^{THE} musical accompaniment of a wind up gramophone playing a slowed down version of the Sabre Dance. The slowing down done by lightly applying the stop brake to the

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turn table & stopping at a set pencil mark on the case.

What our act lacked was a dramatic start. It was decided we needed to come into the arena at speed not slowly & then start skating after we got through the curtain.

After much discussion we arrived at what we considered a brilliant solution. We would construct a sloping ramp & disguise the entrance into the arena as the end of a large red crocker protruding through the curtain. The crocker was duly constructed test runs were carried ^{OUT} & our act fine tuned. We even marked the table position on the floor to make sure there was sufficient room to perform.

Decoration of the gym was the only thing left to arrange. Crisp white table cloths (actually bed sheets were being supplied by local parents. Small logs were cut from surrounding wooded areas & transported by a group on carrier bicycles as was the mistletoe, ever-greenery & holly with berries. This took care of the table decorations & wall bars. Above on top of the wall bars cardboard boxes were placed filled with finely torn up pieces of white paper to represent snow. The boxes had doors cut into them & they were all linked together by string on each side of the gym to be pulled simultaneously when required.

We also had several pockets of red, green & white crepe paper given us as the colours had faded while in a window display in town it

also stopped us ^{monetary} from asking for a donation as well from the shop in question. Most of the green & white paper was cut into strips & twisted into chains. It was then draped from the ceiling across the hall. Things were looking good. Lost but very important crackers were to be ^{MADE} for all those invited.

The red crepe was cut into squares, the ends frayed a slightly smaller piece of card was then laid on it. A few goodies, a tightly folded paper hat & a yellow painted piece of card shaped like a cloud with the word bang printed on were laid in the centre the whole was then rolled up & the ends tied with fancy wool. To complete the artistry pieces of card were cut ~~into~~ into simple patterns stars & crescent moons etc. covered in silver paper & stuck onto the crackers.

Nobody asked where the various coloured silver papers come from but

I'm sure there ^{!!} was a distinct smell of tobacco about it. At last all is complete & we are ^{RARIN} ready to go.

The big day arrives & everything is ready. The food is ferried into the hall tables are laid & place names set. Four o'clock & the guests start to arrive. The children lining both sides of the hall & just turning the corner on both sides of the end table. The central part of the table being reserved for our local dignitaries & a couple of financial benefactors. The mayor & mayoress being plumb centre. Everyone was seated & a hush was called for & our local vicar said a short prayer of thanksgiving for what we were about to receive & made some mention of our decorative skills with very good quality holly. He also mentioned in passing that his holly bush was

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suddenly looking very totally compared
with previous years.

That over the children set to,
crackers were unrolled, hats put
on after considerable swapping & it
was into the meal with gusto.

Chicken sandwiches, egg & corn sandwiches,
paste sandwiches all disappeared like
corn before the combine harvester.

Large bowls of lemonade made from
lemon flavoured powder were ladled
out & slurped down, fairy cakes
came & went along with the
blancmange & jelly. All in all an
excellent report

All the helpers were kept very busy keeping the tables & children tidy & towards the meal end Quiet was called for & Misto the Mosterful magician made his appearance. The children loved the act. very much appreciating coins being extracted from their ears & noses & the odd bunch of flowers seemingly appearing from nowhere. Of course there was the odd knowall Jerry who tried to explain it all away but these were quietly leaved on. The rest of the acts came on in turn & each was well received & vigorously clapped then came the wind up or last act etc. Our act was so well rehearsed & ready as it ever would be. We had decided on a father christmas style of costume & it was agreed at

the end we would skate around
 a hand cast the present.

We waited nervously at the top
 of the ramp behind the curtains
 the gramophone was primed & ready.
 The announcer could be heard saying
 Ladies & gentlemen I would now
 like to present (Roll on the piano)
 The flying father.

Dead quiet. up started the grammy
 & down we came bursting through
 the tissue paper covering the end
 of our super crocker. Oh Hell!
 we were supposed to come down
 into the arena in line astern
 holding each others belts turning
 at the end to commence our
~~figure of eight~~ sequences.
 We had practiced we had measured
 & marked our area nothing could
 go wrong. So what idiot had

allowed ~~all~~ the riders & helpers
 to sit on the floor down both
 sides of the arena in front of
 the tables. All credit to our
 leader he actually made the
 turn although it was much
 tighter, I being second nearly
 made the turn so did the third
~~and~~ one in line. The end one
 unfortunately flew off the end
 like a rocket straight down the
 arena on his rear end & in
 under the table cloth which he
 carried with him finishing up
 tangled in the undershirt of the
 lady mayoress. I & my mate
 number three both landed on
 the ladies sitting on the floor
 alongside. The leader huddled
 back towards the curtain
 revolving all the time &

Trying to regain control. Impossible:
 At the end of the table a
 helper made a grab for him &
 they were both flung against the
 wallbars causing snow to fall
 on one side of the hall.

The vibration on the floorboards
 had set our gramophone back to
 full speed & the sabre dance was
 completed in very short time &
 in high pitched tone.

We struggled sheepishly to our feet
 but to a great ovation everyone
 without exception was laughing &
 clapping the best comedy turn they
 seen in a long time. The pianist
 compounded this by playing a little
 jingle so we leaped back behind
 the curtains. It took a while
 for the audience to quiet down
 & we had to take a couple

of certain calls. Eventually however we got the congregation to singing Silent night while we slipped around with the presents.

It must have been a good party as the children didn't really want to go home. It was certainly a party I will never forget in fact a real Christmas cracker.