

The Little Umbrella
A Children's Story
by CJ Heck

I know a little town like your town. It has a little main street just like a lot of main streets, and a little store not too different from a lot of little stores.

The owner of the store was a kind and gentle man named Pop Starr. Pop was a good man, and all the people in town knew and loved him. Pop's store had a lot of things on a lot of shelves for people to buy. This is a story about one very special thing in Pop's store.

In the back of his store, Pop had built a special room just for toys. Boys and girls loved going into the little toy room. They gazed in awe and wonder at all the colorful toys on the shelves that reached all the way up to forever -- well, *almost*, but not *exactly*.

Children spent many hours wishing for the beautiful toys they played with in Pop's toy room. Even Santa Claus had heard about the little toy room, in the little store, on the little street, in the little town.

Now, I told you that, so I could tell you this ...

Way up high on the top shelf in the toy room was a little umbrella. The umbrella had been there for such a long time, maybe forever ... well, not *exactly*, but *almost*. It had been there so long that it was covered by a thick layer of dust. It was a sad umbrella and it was also very lonely.

Every day, the little umbrella looked down from its shelf at the toys in the toy room. It had never seen such wonderful colors! How it wished it could be so beautiful. What a joy it would be to wear any of the colors it saw on the spinning tops, the rubber balls, and the bright red fire engines!

The little umbrella wanted to be like the airplanes the children played with in Pop's toy room, zooming up-down-up UP and then maybe go even higher, way up into the sky! It would be so exciting to feel the wind blowing over and under its wings. What a wonderful thing to be -- what an important job to have!

The little umbrella felt so alone on its high shelf in the toy room. It longed to be held and loved, just like one of the pretty dolls the little girls hugged and whispered to in Pop's toy room. What a wonderful thing to be! What an important job to have!

Hour after hour, day after day, year after year, the little umbrella watched and waited as the children come into the little toy room to play with the toys. The little umbrella dreamed that someday it, too, would be needed just like the people needed old Pop Starr who owned the little store, on the little street, in the little town.

Now, I told you that, so I could tell you this ...

One day, a huge and terrible storm cloud blew into the little town. It hid the sun and kept it from shining and outside, it became very dark. A horrible wind began to blow and it made the shutters of Old Pop Starr's little store rattle! The rain came down hard and everything it touched was soaked. The storm brought thunder with its powerful booms and lightning that lit up the sky forever -- well, *almost*, but not *exactly*. Old Pop stood and watched it all happen from the window in his little store.

Suddenly, the door opened and the little bell hanging at the top of the door jingled. A woman rushed into the store holding the hand of a small child. Both of them were out of breath and both were soaked from the rain. Now, Old Pop knew just about everyone who lived in the little town, but he didn't know the woman and her small child. He welcomed them in out of the storm with his kind and gentle smile, a warm hello, and two warm dry towels.

The woman told Pop that her car had run out of gas just down the street from his store. They walked to the gas station, filled their gas can, and they were on their way back to the car when the awful storm began. She told him they were glad to find Pop's store, but they were in a hurry to get home to their own little street in another little town far away from there.

Now, I told you that, so I could tell you this ...

Kind Old Pop scratched his head and thought for a minute. Then, with another big smile, he walked to the back of the store and into the little toy room. From his tall ladder, Pop reached high up to the very top shelf and searched around with his fingers. He finally found exactly what he was looking for. Pop brought down the little umbrella. He brushed off the years of dust and with a twinkle in his eye, took the little umbrella to the woman and her small child.

The joy in giving and the joy in receiving went around and around. Everyone was happy. The woman and her small child thanked Pop for his kindness. Then they said goodbye to the kind and gentle man in the little store, on the little street, in the little town. Then they stepped back outside into the wind and the rain and opened up the little umbrella.

Now, I told you that, so I could tell you this ...

The little umbrella was so surprised! It had been waiting for so long, maybe forever ... well not exactly, but almost. It had finally left its lonely place high on the top shelf in the toy room! Where was it going? What was going to happen?

"OH MY!" Cried the small child. "What a beautiful umbrella! Mommy, it has every color in the world!"

"Could it be true?" Thought the little umbrella, finally able to see himself without the thick layer of dust. "Green, blue, red, purple, orange and yellow! Oh my!" The little umbrella exclaimed to itself. "Just look, look, look at my colors! I am as colorful as the toys in the toy room!"

As the mother opened the little umbrella, it went up, up, UP! The wind rushed across and over and then under and it was such a wonderful feeling! The little umbrella thought, "Oh my! I'm just like the airplanes in the little toy room!"

Then, just when the little umbrella thought it couldn't be any happier, the very BEST thing happened. It felt love and a growing need to protect the mother and the small child holding onto its handle. The little umbrella knew it was keeping the rain off of them and it felt proud. It was a very good feeling. This was an important thing to be! This was a very special job to have!

So, the little umbrella from high on the top shelf in the toy room, in the little store, on the little street, in the little town was very happy -- not *almost*, but *exactly*! The little umbrella had learned something wonderful. It didn't have to wish to be anyone else. It was perfect -- just the way it was.