

The Untied Nations

by Chris Rose

It was the house at the end of the street; the one where nobody wanted to live. The landlord who owned the house always worried about it. He wanted to rent the house, but nobody wanted to live there. It was at the wrong end of the street, people said. It was too dark, they said. It was too damp. The rooms are too small. It's in the wrong part of the city. That's what all the people said when they came to look at the old house at the end of the street. Nobody wanted to rent the house; nobody wanted to live in the wrong part of the city.

The landlord thought about what to do. It was easier to rent flats, he thought, so he turned the big old house into small flats. Seeing as people from the city didn't want to live there, the landlord asked people from outside the city to live there. His idea was a success - soon, people came to live in the big old house. Two Polish girls, Agnieska and Magda came to live in the small flat on the ground floor. A French woman called Elodie came to live in the big flat on the top floor. Her boyfriend, who came from Morocco and was called Mourad came to live with her. An Australian boy called Hugh moved into one of the flats on the second floor, but he didn't work (he was an artist and spent all of his days painting, but he didn't sell any of his paintings so he didn't have much money) so soon he asked a friend of his, a German guy called Knut to move in with him and help him pay the rent. (Knut was an artist too, and sometimes Knut sold a painting, so he had some money, at least). A man from Zimbabwe called Dave moved into the other flat. He was waiting for his wife and son to get their visas so they could come and live with him.

All these people didn't mind that the house was at the wrong end of the street, it was no problem for them that it was a bit too dark, they didn't care that there was no garden, nor that the rooms were too small. The fact that the house was in the wrong part of the city meant nothing to them. They liked living in the big old house which was now a big block of small flats. It was cheap, they said. They didn't like the city where nobody had made them feel welcome. They liked living in the big old house where everybody came from somewhere else, and where, soon enough, everyone became friends.



Hugh and Knut invited the other people to come and look at their paintings, and everybody said they liked them a lot, but nobody bought them. Elodie and Mourad decided to cook a big meal for everybody in the house. They made a mixture of French and Moroccan food, which everybody thought was delicious. Dave showed everyone pictures of his wife and his son, and Agnieska offered to help him try and get visas for them so they could come and live in the big house too.

For a while, it was great. Everybody was very happy. "We should call this house 'The unofficial United Nations'" they joked.

However, things changed. After a while, everybody got fed up of the smells of Elodie and Mourad's cooking coming from upstairs. "Everything smells of garlic!" they complained. "The whole house smells of garlic!"

After a while, everybody got fed up of the loud music that Hugh and Knut always had on while they were working. "There's never any peace or quiet in this building!" they complained. "Those two lazy artists just sit around listening to loud music all the time!"

After a while, Agnieska and Magda stopped being friendly with the other people in the building, and invited lots of their own Polish friends over to their flat on the ground floor. They had parties that finished very late at night. They drank lots of vodka and made a lot of noise. Soon, the other people in the building were complaining. "We

can't sleep at night!" they said. "There's always too much noise from the Polish parties!"

Dave felt very sad about the situation. He remembered the time when they were the unofficial United Nations. He had liked it. He thought that he had found friends and people who could help him at a time when he was on his own, far away from his family. Dave wanted to change the situation. He decided to do something about it. Dave decided to have a meeting. He told everybody who lived in the building to come and meet in his flat. "We need to talk about our problems!" Fortunately, everyone agreed.

So Dave from Zimbabwe sat down next to Knut from Germany who sat next to Hugh from Australia who sat next to Elodie from France who sat next to Mourad from Morocco who sat next to Agnieszka and Magda from Poland.

"What are we going to do?" asked Dave. "We used to be friends, and now we're all arguing all the time!"

Everyone started to shout.

"It's the Polish parties all night!"

"It's the noisy music all day!"

"It's the smell of garlic all day and all night!"

"Wait! Wait! Wait!" shouted Dave, shouting even louder than all the other people. "Please be

quiet! We have to work together to solve our problems. If we can't work together, then we will all be alone forever."

Everyone was very quiet. They all knew that Dave was right.

"So...here is my suggestion. Agnieszka and Magda – no more than one party a month. And you have to invite us all! Elodie, Mourad - please put less garlic in your food! And invite us to dinner more often! Knut and Hugh – please buy some headphones."

Everybody was still silent.

"I think we need to vote on these issues" said Dave. "Everybody who thinks that Agnieszka and Magda should agree, raise your hands." Five people raised their hands. "Motion carried!" said Dave.

"Everyone who thinks that Elodie and Mourad should take it easy on the garlic and invite us to dinner more often, raise your hands!" Five hands raised. "Motion carried!" said Dave.

"Everybody who thinks that Knut and Hugh should buy some headphones, raise your hands!" Five hands went up. "Motion carried!"

"And everybody who thinks Dave should be our leader, raise your hands!" shouted Elodie. Six hands went up.

"Congratulations Dave!", said Elodie, "You are the first leader of the United Nations!"