

Christmas Gift

by 侯旻君 Chloe Ho

Tomorrow will be the Christmas Eve; every family is preparing the delicious meal and wonderful gifts for its beloved ones. Ann's home is no exception. In the Cuthbert, Ann is busy preparing her "masterpiece"—a chocolate cake. She is flouring the floor of the kitchen, making a huge mess. As a thirteen-year-old girl, she doesn't think too much before working on one thing. Meanwhile, Mrs. Cuthbert is in the living room, watching a TV drama. The kitchen is in a mess, and Mrs. Cuthbert smells something coming out from the kitchen.

Mrs. Cuthbert Ann...Ann...(Mrs. Cuthbert calls her daughter anxiously) Are you in the kitchen? What's that smell? (Mrs. Cuthbert notices there is a smell of burning from the kitchen)

Ann No...I'm in my room. What's wrong? (Ann has no idea why her mom sounds anxious.)

Mrs. Cuthbert Ann, come down "now." You should be in the kitchen when cooking something.

Ann Fine! Coming. (Ann feels annoyed when her mom asks her to get downstairs. After coming down, Ann finds out what happens and she screams.) NOOOO...my cake. It's smoking! The oven...Mom...help me! (Ann's mom quickly puts out the fire and turns off the overheated oven.)

Mrs. Cuthbert Sweetheart, do you know what you "did?" You almost burned up the kitchen... You're too reckless. Remember, you're thirteen; a young lady..

Ann Mom, I didn't mean to...Now, I can't give Gilbert a delicious cake... This cake is the fifth try and I thought it would be successful. Now I can't surprise Gil and I totally ruin everything.

Mrs. Cuthbert Ann, I told you baking a cake is not easy. Even for me, I have to practice so many times and learn from the failure. I think what happens today teaches you a lesson. You're a smart girl; I believe you will understand. (Mrs. Cuthbert's voice gets softer and she is no longer angry at her daughter.) But now, I guess what you should do is to clean the mess in the kitchen. Okay?

Ann Got it, mom. I'll clean up the kitchen. I don't want Gil to see this mess when he comes in the afternoon. (Ann goes to fetch a mop.)

Mrs. Cuthbert Take your time, Ann. I'm going to prepare the meal for tomorrow. *Ann keeps cleaning and scrubbing the floor and the counter. On the other hand, Mrs. Cuthbert starts to take out all the ingredients carefully she needs for Christmas Eve and puts them on the other side of the kitchen, trying not to disturb her daughter. After about two hours, Ann finishes the cleaning job, and then she gives a relieving sigh. Meanwhile, someone knocks the door.*

Someone Hello! Mrs. Cuthbert, Ann, I'm Gilbert. I bring some stuff here for the Christmas tree.

Mrs. Cuthbert Hi! Gilbert, how are you? Come on in. Ann and I were waiting for you. *(Mrs. Cuthbert hides the cake disaster when opening the door.)*

Gilbert Mrs. Cuthbert, I'm good. How's your day? *(Gilbert goes into the house, and puts his bags down.)*

Mrs. Cuthbert I had a "lovely" morning. Ann, Gilbert is here, come out. *(Mrs. Cuthbert then goes to the kitchen to continue her preparation.)*

Ann Gil, I've been waiting for you. Let's start... our work. *(Ann tries to hide her nervousness and the disaster, too.)*

Gilbert Ann, are you okay? You sound...ah...weird.

Ann NOOO...I'm fine. Let's stop chitchatting and start working. *(Gilbert stops saying anything. They start to decorate the Christmas tree with stockings, bells, tinsels, glass ornaments, and the Christmas star. They spend more than one hour to finish the work, and the decorated tree is splendid.)*

Gilbert Ann, I can't wait for tomorrow. It'll be the best Christmas ever. Inviting my family to celebrate together is the greatest idea. Ann, you're brilliant.

Ann Oh! Gil, it's not a big deal. I want to celebrate the Christmas Eve with you. Don't you have to go home now? It's dinner time. I think your mom will be angry if you're late. *(Ann tries to persuade Gilbert to go home quickly.)*

Gilbert You've never said...well...you're right. Well, see you tomorrow. *(Gilbert prepares to leave with concerns. Mrs. Cuthbert goes out from the kitchen and says goodbye to Gilbert.)*

Mrs. Cuthbert Ann, you're a lousy liar. Gilbert must think you're strange today. How're you gonna do about the gift?

Ann Mom, don't mention that. I'll go to a gift shop and see what I can buy...

Mrs. Cuthbert I don't want to throw a wet blanket, but it's holiday season. The shops close early. Maybe, I can help you make cookies...there's no enough flour after...

Ann Oh...What can I do? Thanks Mom, but I don't want to make "normal" cookies as gift. Maybe I can make...wait... Mom, do we still have wool in the house?

Mrs. Cuthbert Yea...why ask?

Ann Mom thanks. I know what I can give to Gil. Gloves!

Ann runs away after knowing what she can give to Gilbert as a gift. She locks herself in her room, starting to knit the gloves diligently. Even though her mom and dad ask her to come down for the dinner, Ann refuses to break off her knitting. She stays up late working hard. When she finishes her gloves in the early morning, the

drowsiness seizes her, so she gradually closes her eyes and falls into sleep. The Christmas carol outside wakes Ann up in the afternoon.

Ann It's Christmas Eve. Why am I still here? *(Ann jumps out from her bed.)* Wait! My gloves. I am gonna wrap them up and give them to Gil. What kind of the wrapper should I use?...He'll love them... *(Ann gently picks up the gloves.)* Awwwwwww.... *(She screams out loud.)*

Mrs. Cuthbert Ann, are you okay? I hear your screaming. *(Mrs. Cuthbert rushes to Ann's room to see why her daughter screams.)*

Ann I'm fine, mom. I scream for joy. It's Christmasssssssss...

Mrs. Cuthbert O...Kay. Don't forget to put your gift under the tree. The Blythe will come at 6:30p.m. *(Mrs. Cuthbert presumes her daughter is just too excited, so she doesn't keep asking.)* You can have some gingerbread before the dinner. You haven't eaten since last night.

Ann Thanks, mom. I'll come down soon. But, I want to change my clothes first. *(Mrs. Cuthbert goes downstairs, leaving Ann alone.)* What have I done? I knit two right-hand gloves. Stupid! I'm running out of time.

Ann waits anxiously after putting the gift under the tree. She has no mood for tonight, but she has to face the real problem. At 6:30, the Blythe arrive punctually with many gifts in hands. These two families greet each other happily. They enjoy the meal cooked by Mrs. Cuthbert, and the deserts brought by Mrs. Blythe. Mr. Blythe and Mr. Cuthbert start to talk about the stock market and other man stuff. However, Ann can't concentrate on what Gilbert tells her. Her mind is occupied by the gift disaster. At the end of the Christmas celebration, they start to give gifts to each other. Ann's parents give her a new dress, and a set of stationery. Gilbert's parents also give her a lovely doll. On the other hand, Gilbert receives a new soccer, a telescope from his parents, and a hoodie from Ann's parents. Later, the adults start toasting to each other.

Gilbert Ann, look at what I have prepared. It's a music box with a little elf dancing on it. I've been saving my pocket money since March. *(Gilbert pulls Ann aside and takes out his gift with joy.)*

Ann It's so lovely, Gil. I love it. *(Ann wants to show her excitement but she fails. Her voice trembles.)*

Gilbert Anything wrong? You sound upset...I know, I shouldn't buy the stupid elf...You like fairy more, right?

Ann NO! I love elf, and the music box. I love everything you give me. I hate myself because I don't have something nice to give you.

Gilbert Ann, if you don't have a gift to give me, that'll be fine. Spending this special day with you is enough to me already. *(Gilbert comforts Ann gently.)*

Ann I “have” something. I was gonna bake you a cake, but I almost burned the kitchen. Later, I knit two gloves for you...*(Ann takes out her gloves shyly.)* Here you are. *(Gilbert takes over the gloves, and he laughs when he sees them.)*

Gilbert Ann, thanks. I love them. I guess it must be tough for you to prepare gift to me. Really, I love them although they are both right-hand ones. Your heart is what I appreciate. *(Gilbert quickly puts one glove on.)*

Ann Really? But your gift is so perfect. You always know what I like while I always make a mess. If I were you, I wouldn’t forgive myself.

Gilbert Ann, being your friend is the best gift to me. I’ll always be with you. And I know you’ll give me a good gift next year.

Ann You’re the best, Gil. I promise you. *(Ann gives Gilbert a big smile and hugs him.)*

Gilbert Ann, look! It’s snowing outside. *(Gilbert takes out the other right-hand glove, putting it on Ann’s hand.)* It says that the first snow in the winter brings good luck for the whole year. Hold my hand, let’s get out. *(He holds Ann’s hand.)*

Ann I think I need good luck for the New Year. Gil, thank you. And, your hand is warm. *(Ann replies shyly.)*

Gilbert It’s because your gloves are warm and full of love. Be careful, the ground is slippery. Ann, this is the best Christmas Eve in my thirteen-year life.

Ann Of course! Because we are together. *(Ann holds Gilbert’s hand tightly.)*

Gilbert Yeah! Of course. *(Gilbert murmurs.)*