

"It's Suzanne's birthday on Wednesday next," confided Eleanor to Bertram Kneyght at a moment when Suzanne had left them unusually far behind; "my birthday comes the day before, so we are both on the look-out for something to give each other."

"Ah," said Bertram. "Now, perhaps you can advise me on that very point. I want to give Suzanne something, and I haven't the least idea what she wants."

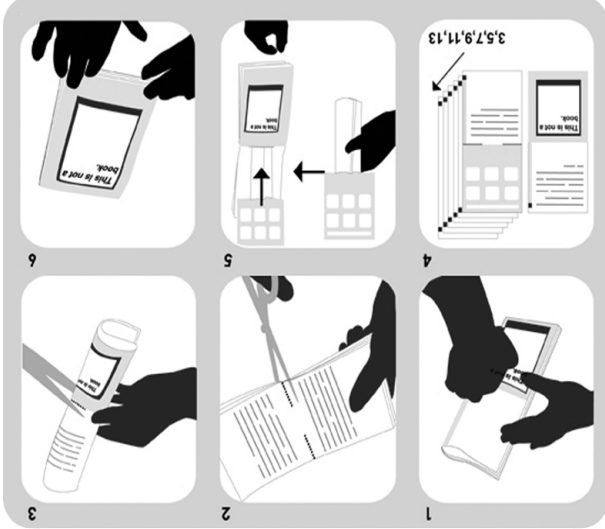
"She's rather a problem," said Eleanor. "She seems to have everything one can think of, lucky girl. A fan is always useful; she'll be going to a lot of dances at Davos this winter. Yes, I should think a fan would please her more than anything. After our birthdays are over we inspect each other's muster of presents, and I always feel dreadfully humble. She gets such nice things, and I never have anything worth showing. You see, none of my relations or any of the people who give me presents are at all well off, so I can't expect them to do anything more than just remember the day with some little trifle. Two years ago an uncle on my mother's side of the family, who had come into a small legacy, promised me a silver-fox stole for my birthday. I can't tell you how excited I was

Suzanne, in her anxiety to pilot her cousin to the desired haven of the fur department, was usually a few paces ahead of the others, coming back to them now and then if they lingered for a moment at some attractive counter, with the nervous solicitude of a parent rook encouraging its young ones on their first flying expedition.

"More or less, and autumn sales are on just now," Eleanor replied.  
"It is always as full as this?" asked Bertram of Eleanor.  
and loiterers.  
plunged bravely into the jostling throng of buyers plate-glass doors swung open and the trio mart that stood temptingly at their elbow. The friend with genuine heartiness, and readily accepted their invitation to explore the crowded Mr. Bertram Kneyght greeted his cousin and her friend with genuine heartiness, and readily "hurry!"  
"There's our man!" exclaimed Suzanne suddenly; Eleanor said nothing further on the subject, but the corners of her mouth rearranged themselves. asked to make them.

.....  
Kensington; about thirty-six shillings, quite a little Dresden figure that I saw somewhere in Now it so happens that I have been very keen on one doesn't seem to have a desire in the world. like that," said Suzanne, "all one's ideas vanish; "As a rule when one is confronted with a problem Eleanor.  
"Now I understand the anxiety," observed know what I wanted for a present."  
birthday cropped up, and he asked me to let him solid use to us, but yesterday the subject of my does turn up. I can't say he's ever been of much for years he is always Cousin Bertram when he sight. Even if we don't see him or hear from him that we've never let the relationship drop out of cousin of my mother's, and so enormously rich now from the Argentine. He's a kind of distant "Well, old Bertram Kneyght is over in England just birthday doesn't come till the end of March."  
"You lucky person," interrupted Eleanor; "my happens next week --"  
"I am worried," admitted Suzanne; "not worried exactly, but anxious. You see, my birthday "You look worried, dear," said Eleanor.





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**Saki (H H Munro)**  
**Fur**

beyond my means. I was very nearly describing the figure, and giving Bertram the address of the shop. And then it suddenly struck me that thirty-six shillings was such a ridiculously inadequate sum for a man of his immense wealth to spend on a birthday present. He could give thirty-six pounds as easily as you or I could buy a bunch of violets. I don't want to be greedy, of course, but I don't like being wasteful."

"The question is," said Eleanor, "what are his ideas as to present-giving? Some of the wealthiest people have curiously cramped views on that subject. When people grow gradually rich their requirements and standard of living expand in proportion, while their present-giving instincts often remain in the undeveloped condition of their earlier days. Something showy and not-too-expensive in a shop is their only conception of the ideal gift. That is why even quite good shops have their counters and windows crowded with things worth about four shillings that look as if they might be worth seven-and-six, and are priced at ten shillings and labelled seasonable gifts."

"I know," said Suzanne; "that is why it is so risky to be vague when one is giving indications of

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one's wants. Now if I say to him: 'I am going out to Davos this winter, so anything in the travelling line would be acceptable,' he might give me a dressing-bag with gold-mounted fittings, but, on the other hand, he might give me Baedeker's Switzerland, or 'Skiing without Tears,' or something of that sort."  
 "He would be more likely to say: 'She'll be going to lots of dances, a fan will be sure to be useful.'" "Yes, and I've got tons of fans, so you see where the danger and anxiety lies. Now if there is one thing more than another that I really urgently want it is furs. I simply haven't any. I'm told that Davos is full of Russians, and they are sure to wear the most lovely sables and things. To be among people who are smothered in furs when one hasn't any oneself makes one want to break most of the Commandments."  
 "If it's furs that you're out for," said Eleanor, "you will have to superintend the choice of them in person. You can't be sure that your cousin knows the difference between silver-fox and ordinary squirrel."  
 "There are some heavenly silver-fox stoles at Goliath and Mastodon's," said Suzanne, with a

"I can't think why you didn't grab him by the arm," said Eleanor; "I would have if I'd known him longer, but I'd only just been introduced. It's nearly four now, we'd better have tea."

Some days later Suzanne rang Eleanor up on the telephone.

"Thank you very much for the photograph frame. It was just what I wanted. Very good of you. I say, do you know what that Kneyght person has given me? Just what you said he would -- a wretched fan. What? Oh yes, quite a good enough fan in its way, but still..."

"You must come and see what he's given me," came in Eleanor's voice over the 'phone.

"You! Why should he give you anything?"

"Your cousin appears to be one of those rare people of wealth who take a pleasure in giving good presents," came the reply.

"I wondered why he was so anxious to know where she lived," snapped Suzanne to herself as she rang off.

A cloud has arisen between the friendships of the two young women; as far as Eleanor is concerned the cloud has a silver-fox lining.

sigh; "if I could only inveigle Bertram into their building and take him for a stroll through the fur department!"

"He lives somewhere near there, doesn't he?" said Eleanor. "Do you know what his habits are? Does he take a walk at any particular time of day?"

"He usually walks down to his club about three o'clock, if it's a fine day. That takes him right past Goliath and Mastodon's."

"Let us two meet him accidentally at the street corner to-morrow," said Eleanor; "we can walk a little way with him, and with luck we ought to be able to side-track him into the shop. You can say you want to get a hair-net or something. When we're safely there I can say: 'I wish you'd tell me what you want for your birthday.' Then you'll have everything ready to hand -- the rich cousin, the fur department, and the topic of birthday presents."

"It's a great idea," said Suzanne; "you really are a brick. Come round to-morrow at twenty to three; don't be late, we must carry out our ambush to the minute."

At a few minutes to three the next afternoon the fur-trappers walked warily towards the selected

way fruitlessly through half a dozen departments. Suzanne silkily, when they had pushed their "All our trouble and forethought thrown away,"

Which turned out to be a true prediction.

never find him in this crush."

was on ahead with you," said Eleanor. "We shall "I got separated from him long ago. I thought he

shoppers. "Where is Bertram?"

making her way through an obstructive knot of "Hullo, I thought I had lost you," said Suzanne,

such a dear, dear girl."

Get her as nice a one as you can see -- she is

your left; you can easily slip away in the crowd.

feel that way. Look, there is the fan counter, on

hadn't had the prospect of getting one I shouldn't

feeling ready to burst into tears. I suppose if I

a shop window or round anyone's neck without

this day I can scarcely look at a silver-fox felt in

since, and I never got my fur. Do you know, to

presents at such a time. He has lived abroad ever

he could not be expected to think of birthday

moment his wife died, and, of course, poor man,

all my friends and enemies. Then just at that

about it, how I pictured myself showing it off to

were beautiful in her eyes as long as she was not

Suzanne cheerfully; the sacrifices of friendship

"Sorry, anything to oblige, but not that," said

coming into her eyes.

talk with Harry," urged Eleanor, an angry glint

"But I most particularly want an opportunity to

me to tears. I nearly go to sleep over it."

such dreadfully slow players as your aunts, botes

"ordinary bridge at three-pence a hundred, with

"Sorry, my dear, no can do," said Suzanne;

playing."

want to be free to talk to him while the others are

unexpectedly about nine-fifteen, and I particularly

play, and Harry Scarbrooke is going to come in

Adela and the aunts. Otherwise I shall have to

other, and stay on to make a fourth at bridge with

"just drop in after dinner on some pretext or

this evening," said Eleanor to her companion;

"I say, dear, I wish you'd do something for me

leisurely walk.

of advancing years into the discreet exercise of a

exactly the sort of weather to tempt a gentleman

establishment. The afternoon was brilliantly fine,

of Messrs. Goliath and Mastodon's famed

corner. In the near distance rose the colossal pile