



'Tis Better to Give Than to Receive

by Jennie Webb

GIRLFRIEND'S GUIDE TO THE UNIVERSE with Jennie Webb

You wanna talk gifts? For me, giving is infinitely better than receiving. Always has been.

But don't give me more credit than I deserve. It's only because I'm the most opinionated person on the planet, with crippling limitations when it comes to embracing and showcasing the hideous—or even those gifts that are perfectly lovely but simply have no place in my home. All of this makes me a terrible gift-getter.

Ask my sweet, eager-to-please mother who spent many, many excruciating years agonizing each and every time she shopped for me, all in the hopes of making the perfect selection. Although she hasn't entirely given up her search for the holy grail of gifts, she's now on automatic pilot: "It's exchangeable; the receipt's inside."

Yes, there's part of me that feels awful about it, that wishes I were more open and gracious. Okay, less picky. I mean, I dearly love the thought behind gifts. I love the fact that I have girlfriends who are brave enough to show up with the occasional "this seemed like you!" surprise. I love the parent-prodded 99-cent store tokens from kids in my family. I even love opening those packages that universally warrant a "Sweet Jesus! What were they thinking?" as long as I have the option of the trash, Goodwill, or the re-gifting pile when all is said and unwrapped.

Now I'm perfectly aware that beauty—and necessity—is in the eye of the beholder, and most of my pals have learned to accept me and my "no gifts, please" mantra. It probably won't shock you to learn that my husband and I don't exchange presents. But honestly, don't you wish you didn't have to bring out that knitted toilet paper cover every time Aunt Olive comes to visit?

So I don't think I'm completely alone on my finicky island. Shortly after the holidays last year I got a panicked call from my sister-in-law, she of the exquisite taste whom I adore. I remember feeling very proud that I'd found the ideal gift for her: a set of jewel-tone aperitif snifters.

"Jennie," she said breathlessly. "Do you remember what your Dad's girlfriend gave us for Christmas?"

"Um . . . Yes!" I exclaimed. "A picture frame. It was a yard sale find." (My father's girlfriend takes great pleasure in reporting, in detail, how much she *didn't* spend when it comes to gifts. But that's another story.)

"Oh, good," my discerning compatriot sighed. "I just re-gifted some little colored glasses to them and was afraid they were from her."

Right. ■

✿ "Don't you wish you didn't have to bring out that knitted toilet paper cover every time Aunt Olive comes to visit?"