

# USE YOUR BRAIN MYSTERY NIGHT



## GIFT'S UNGIVEN



Read the story and see if you  
can solve the mystery!

After 144 long months, Addie Alvarez's 12th birthday was finally here. She was having a party, of course, and at first she thought she should make it a massive, wild affair with dozens, maybe hundreds of guests, the type of event that requires the renting of a banquet hall to host it. She thought it might feature a live band, ice cream sundae bar, and possibly a magician even though they were sort of lame. But after doing some important math, Addie decided that a small get-together at home would be better because that would save lots of money for presents and as far as she was concerned, presents were the most important thing for a kid. Maybe when she was 15 she'd be more "grown up" and want a fancy quinceañera, but right now she was all about the presents.

This thought process informed her choices on who to invite to the party. Of course Addie has lots of friends, but since she was interested in present quality, she carefully picked the five that would best fill her coffers. Marcus's mom was a lawyer and his dad was a doctor, so he was a lock. Jennifer's parents owned the local toy store, so she was in. Anthony's mom had an employee discount at Equity, Addie's favorite clothing store, so inviting him only made sense. Addie didn't know anything about Lin's family, but she saw her get picked up in an Aston Martin once so she got an invite. Finally, she invited Madison because she had wonderful taste in everything. Of course she did, which is why Addie and her had been best friends forever.

The day of the party started well. For breakfast Addie's parents made her pancakes topped with dates, bananas, walnuts, and of course maple syrup. Delicious. They also bought her a phone for her birthday! This was a total surprise. In the past her parents had always told her she was too young for her own phone (even though some of her classmates had them). Addie started to worry a little she might be getting old, but then the doorbell rang and thoughts of presents brought the kid out in her.

Madison was the first to arrive. Addie hugged her before Madison put a present, a small box wrapped in green paper, onto a small table in the living room. Green was both Maddie and Madison's favorite color. They chatted on the couch, putting each other's numbers into their phones.

Anthony arrived next wearing a fashionable blue sweater with big pockets. He put his present, a rectangular box no doubt containing a nice outfit right on top of Madison's. Lin was next at the door, waving to someone in a fancy red sports car. She hung up her purple jacket and purse, revealing a dress made by a designer Addie couldn't pronounce, and placed a giant box in front of Madison and Anthony's gifts, completely obscuring their much smaller presents. Addie couldn't wait to unwrap that one.

Jennifer was the fourth to arrive, the silly cartoon unicorn on her shirt contrasting with her seriously stylish tote bag. She put her yellow and blue striped square box in front of the table as there wasn't any more room on it. Finally Marcus showed up twenty minutes late, still wearing his basketball jersey and shorts. He slipped a card sized envelope under Lin's giant box while apologizing profusely.

"Everyone's here," said Maddie's mom. "Let's play our first game!"

They went together into the dining room where a tarp covered the table and a dropcloth was on the floor. Addie was a little embarrassed that her mother had thought making a fingerpaint mural would be a good activity. It seemed a little babyish, but it was actually a lot of fun. Unfortunately it was a giant mess. By the time they finished their project, a 10 by 5 masterpiece that said "Happy Birthday Addie" which included six penguins, the Empire State Building, and a green alien named Blip, all of their hands were filthy.

"Ok, clean up," said Addie's Mom. "You can use the bathroom here and the one upstairs, just don't touch anything!"

Marcus went into the bathroom adjoining the dining room while Lin and Jennifer walked through the living room to head to the upstairs bathroom. Anthony and Addie were joking around while they waited.

"I can't even guess what Lin got me," said Addie. "It's massive!"

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"Really?" said Anthony. He looked into the living room, but couldn't see the table from this angle.

Jennifer came back into the room followed a few seconds later by Lin and Marcus from opposite directions. Anthony headed to the upstairs bathroom while Madison and Addie cleaned their hands in the downstairs bathroom, watching Lin explain to a disgusted Marcus and Jennifer what Foie Gras was. By the time Anthony had made it downstairs everyone was already gathered together in the living room. They chatted some more, ate snacks, and played games, all six friends together in the room the whole time.

Finally, the moment of truth came: present opening time. Addie grabbed Lin's giant box first and ripped open the paper with fierce desire, revealing a cappuccino machine. She was confused.

"I love a hot cup in the morning," explained Lin.

Addie's mother grimaced as she grabbed the big box. "We'll save it for when you're older," she said. "Open another gift."

Addie grabbed Marcus's card. It was a generic greeting card from the store that said "Happy Birthday for a Special Girl." It wasn't even signed, but there was a twenty dollar bill slipped in. Marcus gave an embarrassed smile. He clearly had bought this on the way over, but there was nothing wrong with cash.

Do mine next," Anthony said. "You'll like it." Addie obliged. Inside was indeed a perfect spring outfit topped with a lime green shirt. Addie loved it, but Madison was mortified.

"Where's my present?" she asked.

Everyone looked over. The table was empty. Addie's heart rate increased.

"Seriously, where is my present?" Addie asked.

Anthony shrugged.

"I remember seeing a green box on the table when I came back from the bathroom," said Jennifer.

Addie looked to Lin.

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“Maybe it fell under something,” Lin offered. “It was quite small.”

They looked around the room and under the table, but it was nowhere to be found.

“Maybe she forgot to bring one,” said Marcus.

“No, I saw it,” said Addie. And she thought about it for a few seconds. “It was here and now it isn’t, but I know who took it!”.

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Who do you think took  
Madison's present?



# GIFTS UNGIVEN

## The Solution

"Who did it?" Anthony asked.

"I know it wasn't you," Addie explained. "Your hands were covered in paint the longest. You couldn't have picked up your present to get Madison's without leaving prints everywhere. By the time you finished washing we were all in the living room."

"But everyone had paint on their hands!" Madison complained. "Did your mom take it?"

"No, they had to do it after they washed their hands," Addie said. "That's how I know it wasn't Marcus. He didn't go into the living room by himself because he used the bathroom in here."

"So it was Jennifer or Lin," Marcus said. "But which one? Didn't they go together?"

"Yes, they left together, but they came back separately," Addie said. "So both of them had the chance to take the present."

"Why would I take the present?" Lin asked. "I have everything!"

"Just because your rich doesn't mean you can't be mean," Addie said. "But I don't think it was you. You came in right after Jennifer so you only had a few seconds. If you tried to hide it in the living room, we would have found it. You're also wearing a dress so you have no place on your person to keep it."

"But I didn't do it," Jennifer said.

"Yes you did," Addie said. "First of all, you have that tote bag. But the real reason I know you did it was you said you saw a green package on the table."

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## The Solution

“So?” Madison questioned. “I did use green wrapping paper.”

“Right,” Addie said. “But Lin’s giant cappuccino machine completely blocked the view to your present. Jennifer got here after her so the only way she would have seen it is if she was sneaking around the present table when no one was looking!”

“But Lin said the gift was small!” Jennifer insisted. “She was sneaking around too.!”

“Lin saw the present when she put her giant box in front of it,” Addie clarified.

Knowing she was caught, Jennifer took the present out of the bag. “You got me,” she said. “But I had a good reason!”

“What?” Addie said, not believing her.

“Open your present!” Jennifer said.

Addie tore open Jennifer’s carefully wrapped gift. Inside was a Lady Sherlock Detective kit. “I thought it’d be fun,” she explained. “But you’re so smart I guess you don’t need it.”

Addie smiled and even Madison had to admit it was pretty funny.

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