

Meldy Gets The Goat (Mr and Mrs Sproule)

It was already December and the Wagley family were talking about Christmas.

“Do you remember the year we gave you all charity gifts?” asked Mrs Wagley.

Her three daughters smiled. They remembered.

It had started when Mr Wagley had looked into their rooms. “They have so much stuff. It’s like uberstuff city up here!” he thought. “We need to do something about it, but what?”

Mrs Wagley came up with a possible solution. “We’ll give them charity gifts this year!”

At school the twins, Kick and Popster, were discussing Christmas presents.

“I’ve asked for a new ‘phone,” declared Kick while her sister said, “Me, too.”

One of their friends said, “You always get the same things, don’t you.”

Another friend said, “Well they’re identical, so why not?”

Meldy, the youngest daughter, also sat with her friends.

“I’ve asked for a dog!” she said.

“What sort?” her best friend asked.

“I don’t care as long as it isn’t too big. Oh, and it shouldn’t chase the squirrels! I’ve heard my mummy and daddy talking about animals so it’s a dog, I know it is!”

“What will you call it?”

“If it’s a boy it’ll be Max and if it isn’t it’ll be Maxine!”

On Christmas morning the 3 girls were excited. But the parents had begun to have second thoughts. How would they react when they saw their presents?

“It’s too late now,” Mrs Wagley said. “Anyway, it’ll be good for them. They need to appreciate how lucky they are.”

Then the moment came for the presents to be handed out.

Meldy’s was first. She opened the envelope and the first word she saw was ‘goat’. She got really excited.

“You got me a goat! Thank you! I promise I’ll look after her! She’ll be called Maxine! We can have goat’s milk! I must go and see her! I love her already!” With that she rushed out of the door. Her parents exchanged concerned glances.

“It’s in.....,” called out her father but Meldy didn’t hear.

“Honestly, a goat?” asked Kick, “I’m not milking it!”

“It’ll ruin the garden! Don’t they smell? Where did you put it?” asked Popster.

A few minutes later Meldy returned. She was still excited.

“Maxine’s at the farm, isn’t she! When can we go to see her? What does she like to eat? She’ll like carrots, I’ll get some.....”

“Meldy!” exclaimed her father. “She’s in Africa!”

“What’s she doing down there? When’s she coming to us? We can build a shelter for her and.....”

“Meldy,” said her mother, “it’s a charity gift. That means we bought her for a poor family that needs her more than we do. They can milk her and use her hair to make things. You’re very lucky to have a comfortable home and a loving family. Millions of children around the world are very poor and have virtually nothing. Sometimes we should think of others instead of ourselves.”

“But I wanted a pet!” whined Meldy.

“Your pets are the birds and the squirrels who live in the garden,” said her father. “You can enjoy them without having to clean up after them.”

“But will they call her Maxine?” asked a concerned Meldy.

“We’ll write to them and tell them your chosen name,” replied Mrs Wagley. Mr Wagley smiled at her as if to say, “Good save!”

During this conversation the twins exchanged worried glances. What were they going to get? A goat, a pig or a cow?

When Kick opened her envelope she found that her present was to teach some girls in India to read while Popster’s was to provide two beehives with colonies of bees for a community in Africa.

“Oh well, we suppose it was a good idea,” they agreed. “You’re right, we do have too much stuff. We don’t really need new ‘phones, our old ones will just have to do.”

When the Wagley girls got back to school in January, all the other students were talking about their presents.

“What sort of dog did you get, Meldy?” asked a friend.

“I got a goat,” said Meldy.

“When can we come to see her?”

“You’ll have to go to Africa.” Then she explained the concept of a charity gift.

“So you didn’t get anything.”

“Yes, I got a goat and it was given to a family that needs it. I’ve got plenty of stuff already.”

“That’s so weird!” said the friend.

Meldy’s favourite teacher had overheard this conversation.

“Meldy,” she said, “I think your parents are right. We often don’t realise how lucky many of us are in this country. Your goat will help a poor family by giving them nourishment. I’m proud of you for being so mature about it!”

Meldy walked on air for the rest of the day.

The twins had to deal with their friends as well.

“You didn’t get your new phones then?” sneered one classmate.

“No, but why do we need them anyway? Our old ones aren’t that old!”

“Everybody else got new phones!”

“We’re not everyone else, are we!” countered Kick. “Somewhere out there are some girls who will learn to read. Do you realise what that could mean to them? They could start a business, study at university, even become scientists or doctors. Our parents chose well, we’re proud of them!”

“And another community has now got two beehives,” added Poster. “They can sell the honey via the ‘Fair Trade’ system and improve their community. I think that’s brilliant!”

“Well, I suppose...,” said the classmate.

That evening the parents had asked their three daughters about their day.

“My favourite teacher said I’m being mature about the goat and she’s proud of me!” said Meldy. She was still glowing.

“And we said we’re proud of you, our parents, for giving other children and their families the opportunity for a better life,” said Popster. “Someone said all the other students got new phones and we said we’re not like all the other students!”

“You certainly aren’t! We’re proud of you all as well,” their parents had said.

“What are you going to get us next year? An elephant?” joked Kick.

“Can I have a ride on it?” asked Meldy. She was already getting excited.

Two days later, the current school term was nearing its end. Mr Wagley turned to his wife.

“We have got to start thinking about Christmas presents. What are we going to get them this year? One, two or three elephants?”