

A short story "The presents"

The presents

Pauline Pfeiffer crammed the last -for the time being- present into the small closet under the stairs. She closed the door with difficulty and panted, out of breath. She hadn't yet got rid of the extra kilos of her pregnancy. She had already started sending her correspondence to *Vanity Fair*, but she did not dare go by their offices, before regaining her former silhouette. She straightened the seam in her stockings and returned smiling to the living room. The joyful sound of the doorbell kept announcing new visitors. The maid was hurrying to open the door and was taking their hats, their coats and the presents for the newly christened Patrick and then she piled them up at the back of the living room. The next day when Pauline began opening the presents, a strange surprise awaited. Almost half of the first five boxes revealed tiny shoes in various patterns and colours. Pauline put a record on, poured herself a gin and tonic with ice and called her husband. They continued opening the presents together and after the fourth pair, they started laughing and placing bets. In the end, the astonished parents counted twelve pairs of shoes of the same size for their beloved son who started crawling towards them, as if he knew what was going on. They looked at each other's eyes for a moment. And after one more burst of laughter which brought tears in their eyes, Pauline said that they could not use them all because children's feet grow more rapidly than the fresh radish they grew in their garden. The little one would only need maximum two or three pairs; "and the rest?" she wondered putting them somewhat mechanically all back into their boxes, "if I was a member of a charity organisation for children, they would find their place," she murmured, "but what could the unemployed in our club do with them?" "Very simple," her husband said grabbing some boxes, as he was leaving the room, "we will sell them and give the money to the club." Pauline put three pairs aside and then closed the last box shouting, "OK, and how are we going to do that?" "We will put an ad in the newspaper," his hollow voice came from under the stairs. "And what are we going to say then?" she shouted again, already biting a pencil. "Easy, now start writing..."

"I'm listening..."

"For sale: baby shoes, never worn."