

What about teddy bears?

It was night in Swindon. The whole city was covered in night lights. The light was coming out of street lamps, groceries, coffee shops, cafeterias, shopping malls, restaurants, libraries, people's mobile phones and -last but not least- from blocks of flats. From one of that hundreds of blocks, you could see a dim pink light coming out of the window. It was Theresa Bist, who turned it on. It was Friday night and she didn't have anything to work on, just surfing the internet as usual.

Theresa Bist was a quite normal 13 years old girl, with long wavy ginger hair and grey eyes. Actually, she was slim and way higher than average 13 year-olds. She was a reliable, kind and empathetic girl. On the other side, she was often too stressed about unimportant things, stubborn and an overthinker. She was a total opposite of her best friend. Bess Kinley was a very talkative and energetic person. Sometimes, she was impatient and too noisy. Long dark brown hair and eyes adorned her circle-round face. In short, Bess belonged to Theresa's little group of friends. What is rare, the girls didn't have a lot of things in common. They weren't interested in the same type of books, films, songs, not even colours. The only thing Theresa and Bess had in common, except they have been attending the same school, was that both of them played the piano. That's why Theresa didn't have time to go out with friends. She went out just for their birthday celebrations. Recently, she hadn't been on any. The earliest event should be her best friend's birthday celebration. It was going to be on the same day as a piano concert. „And that will be,“ Theresa thought, „hold on! It is tomorrow, isn't it? Oh no. Now it makes sense. The SMS that Bess sent me...”

„Hi, after the concert- be near that new patisserie. We'll have a lot of fun ☺. Bess”

It was Saturday, the day of the concert, morning. Theresa was hurrying. How could she forget about her best friend's birthday? How could she forget to buy her a present? She was getting off the bus. It was late. Theresa had exactly one hour and thirty-six minutes to buy Bess a present, catch the bus and be on the concert on time.

Theresa confidently entered the shopping mall. She knew what she wanted to buy. She had planned it all night. A perfect outfit in Bess's favourite colour. T-shirt with a picture of... wait. Theresa nearly passed a clothes store by, without getting in. She turned around and she froze. She suddenly realized that on Saturdays, all clothes stores were opened from eleven o'clock

a.m. . And at eleven o'clock she already had to be on her piano concert. She looked around: „I have a plenty of time and there are loads of other shops here. I will, sure, find something else to buy!“ she calmed herself down.

The first shop she went to, was a drugstore. She hoped to find there something that Bess would like. But everything was either too expensive or useless. How could Bess use a beauty blender if she didn't even wear make up? How could Bess appreciate a cream highlighter, if she did not know what a highlighter was? And what about those sparkly nail polishes? Was it really true that Bess said she loathed everything that had glitter on it or was it just Thesa's imagination? Theresa went to another shop. A stationary shop. A shop assistant was just showing her all kinds of pens, pretty notebooks, unusual rubbers, colorful rullers, high quality glues...Then Theresa realized her best friend hated school. She got out really quickly.

Next was a bookstore. Bess was into reading books. Her favourite book genre was adventure and action. As Theresa was walking between the bookshelves, she read titles: CLASSICS, FANTASY, COMICS, HORROR, DETECTIVE, SCIENCE FICTION, ROMANCE, HISTORICAL FICTION, THRILLERS, BIOGRAPHIES. She had already seen a dozen genres but she couldn't find the action and adventure one. She knew that Bess would love to get a book. If she managed to find the adventurous one, she could buy it and then be on the concert in advance. That would be great! Theresa came to a shop assistant and, full of hope, asked her about the book. „I am sorry, adventurous books are sold only in another branch. Here you go.“, shop assistant handed to her a little card with location and contact of that branch. „Thank you,“ Theresa said quietly.

After going to next few shops, she started feeling stressed. She was slowly running out of time. She had been almost everywhere. A jewellery store, a shoe store, a technology store, a speciality store, also a pet store, even though Bess did not have any pets. There was only one option left. A toy store.

Theresa came in with the tiniest soul. She carefully looked through the stuff. All those toys, games, dolls, toy guns and animal pendants made her feel upset. She couldn't find anything. „Eventually, I will end up owing up to my best friend about forgetting her birthday. Bess will definitely be angry with me. We will not be best friends anymore. No one else will want to be friend with me after this. I will be without friends for the rest of my life. I will have no family and I will die alone!“, Thesa whispered to herself and suddenly broke into tears. A shop assistant noticed it. „What happened honey?“ she asked. Theresa was quiet. It was really

embarrassing. She didn't think of somebody seeing her crying. She slowly looked at the women in front of her. The women seemed nice. She had long grey hair and big green calm eyes. Her face looked like an old turtle's face and for some reason, it made the girl feel better. She was kindly looking at Theresa, apparently wanting to help her. Theresa exhaled. Consequently, she told the woman everything about herself, about Bess and her birthday, about the piano concert, about not having enough time, rushing and not being able to find a perfect gift because all clothes stores were closed. The shop assistant took the situation into her own hands. She told Theresa to wait for a while and then came carrying a huge box, full of the rarest toys Theresa had ever seen. „These are toys that weren't sold last year because kids weren't interested in them. They are not on offer but maybe you will find something that your best friend would like.“ And she started unpacking the toys and showing them to Theresa. There were loads of logical games, brain teasers, jigsaws and thousand-pieces puzzles. Also, Theresa had seen some strange accessories there, for example pig's head's shape earrings, wooden bracelets and caps looking like hamburgers. It amazed her but it was not Bess's style. „Let me contemplate a second.“ The shop assistant stayed and was pulling odd faces for about ten seconds. After that, she thoughtfully uttered: „And what about teddy bears?“ Theresa stared at her. Of course! How could she forget?! Loving teddy bears was almost the only thing, that the two of them had in common. „Did I ask something wrong?“ the woman was worriedly checking on her. From so much joy, Theresa had forgotten to close her mouth. „No, everything is okay. I think we found a perfect gift!“ she smiled. „Let me see those „lucky“ bears!“

A couple of minutes later, Theresa left the toy store carrying two big teddy bears and a big smile. In the toy store, there had been just two teddy bears left. One was dark blue - Bess's favourite colour and second one was brown with the cutest sparkly eyes that Theresa couldn't refuse to buy. „It must have been fate; exactly two teddies left, two different colours, on sale,..“ Theresa had felt obliged to buy them both- one for Bess and one for herself. As a result, she was now carrying Bess's teddy in hand, because her backpack was literally „filled“ with teddy with sparkly eyes. Theresa checked the time. It was half past nine. The bus should arrive at the bus stop at ten o'clock which meant that she had fifteen minutes to get out off the shopping mall and then fifteen minutes to walk to the bus stop. The distance between the shopping mall and the bus stop was about ten minutes walking on foot, so she had a five-minute time reserve.

Theresa decided to go to the toilet first. Toilets were on the top floor, so it took her five minutes to get there. However, she didn't rush, she knew how much time she had. She opened the toilets' door, came in, entered the cabin, locked herself, did what she needed to do and tried to get out. Yes, tried. The door was jammed. „Excuse me, is anyone in here?“ she asked. No response. „Hey, can someone please help me open the door?“ she said louder. „Please, I can't get out!“ she screamed. Silence. She was stuck. For the next five minutes, Theresa was trying to make a noise. She was shouting, knocking, clapping and also kicking the door. It didn't help. After three more minutes someone came in. Theresa took a deep breath: „I am sorry, my name is Theresa and I cannot get out of this cabin. The door is stuck. Can you please help me?“ A person answered: „Oh, yes of course. I will try to pull the door, but you must help me by pushing it from your side. Lean on it with your whole weight.“ „Alright.“ agreed Theresa and she put the blue teddy on the floor to have her hands free. „Three, two, one.“ counted the stranger and they both tried to open the door. It was unsuccessful. They tried it three more times but the door was, unfortunately, still stuck. „Wait here, I will call a charwoman.“ said the person and quickly got out.

Theresa was alone waiting in the toilet cabin. It had been almost eight minutes since the stranger left. She had only nine minutes to leave the toilets, get out of this stupid mall and catch the bus. She started feeling anxious. What if she didn't manage to get out of the toilets in time? She would miss the buss. Then, if she didn't catch the bus, she would be late for the concert. Furthermore, she wouldn't be able to go on a celebration because she would be detentioned by ... „Hello, are you still here?“ asked the familiar voice. Theresa was relieved. It was the person with a charwoman. The charwoman had already experienced this stuck door, so she knew how to deal with it. A few seconds later, the door was opened. Theresa was so happy, she couldn't even talk. She took her backpack, thanked the charwoman and finally got off the shopping mall. She was running to the bus stop, when she remembered that she had not buy any chocolate. At this point she thought: „I ruined everything. At least I could've bought a stupid chocolate! It can't get any worse!“ Well, it could. After barely catching the bus, she desperately called her mum to buy a chocolate. Suddenly she noticed, that she had her hands too free. The teddy bear was left in the toilet cabin. What is more, the teddy bear that Theresa left in the cabin was the blue one. The one for Bess. At this point Theresa nearly passed out. It was too late to go back and take the teddy. Needless to say, yes, Theresa had bought two teddies. However, Bess hated sparkly things, not to mention big sparkly eyes on the teddy bear. Theresa had screwed things up.

The concert hall was crowded. In ten minutes, the performance was going to start. Theresa was sitting in the changing room, talking to Bess. She was pretending to be totally fine and excited. She didn't say a word about her earlier experience of that day. In reality, she felt horrible. The guiltiness of her forgetting was like a heavy large backpack on her back. It was dragging her down. A couple of minutes later, Thesa's mum appeared. Theresa came to her and inconspicuously asked about the chocolate. „Yes, I have it, darling.“ Mrs. Bist answered. „Thank you, then.“ thanked Theresa and moved to walk back on her seat. „Hold on!“ her mum grabbed her hand. „I have to ask you something first. What about teddy bears, do you still like them?“ She slightly opened her handbag. Thesa widened her eyes. She couldn't believe what she was staring at. „I was in a shopping mall to buy the chocolate and on the toilets, I found this teddy bear. Someone must have forgotten it... I am just kidding, I know how much you love teddy bears so I took it.“ Theresa hugged her mum. „Mum, you can't imagine how grateful I am! In fact, it was me who bought the teddy. I will explain everything to you after the concert, but now I have to go. It starts in 3 minutes.“ „Okay, Theresa, I am really curious about that! Anyways, good luck on the concert.“

Two hours later, Theresa was waiting in a queue to wish Bess happy birthday. The concert had been great. Because of the forgotten and again-found gift she had been in a really good mood. She had played very well and the audience had stood up clapping for her. Bess had also been fantastic and after the concert they decided to walk to the patisserie on foot together. Theresa had hidden the teddy bear into a bag in advance, so she could see Bess's reaction on the celebration.

It was time. Thesa's turn to wish Bess happy birthday and give her a present. „Dear Bess, I wish you the best birthday full of happiness! From now on, you are officialy a teenager but I firmly believe that you will like the present I bought you.“ Bess unpacked the teddy bear. „Awwww, I love this teddy. I was secretly expecting my mum to buy it for me, but she didn't. I was quite upset. And you did. This is the best gift I could have ever expected to recieve! Thank you!“

The effort had paid off. But planning things also pays off. From that day on, Theresa made herself a „birthday calendar“ in which she remarked all her friends' birthdays' dates. The next birthday in the calendar was Loren's (Thesa's and Bess's friend's). „What will we buy her?“ Theresa asked Bess. „I am not sure, what about teddy bears?“