

Secret Angel

By Katherine Nye Rolfes

Just before Christmas every year the Brandon family drew names for secret angels. Each person wrote her or his name on a piece of paper. Then they placed the folded wad in a big blue bowl.



"It's your turn," Mike said as he passed the bowl to Marietta. "If you draw my name, you can feed my hamster or take the trash out when it's my turn."

"All the nice things you do must be kept secret," said Mr Brandon. "Don't give away any clues."

Marietta closed her eyes and reached for a name. ANNE was written in big bold letters.

"This person will be lots of fun to have!" Marietta said as she stuffed the name into her pocket.

The next morning, while Anne was fixing her hair in the bathroom, Marietta slipped into her sister's room.

"I'll make her bed for her," she thought. "Then I'll straighten her dresser top."



But Anne's bed was already made. The bright yellow spread was tucked smoothly over the pillow. Her dresser top was neat.

Marietta sighed. "Anne doesn't need help from a secret angel. Her room always looks nice."

The next morning Marietta got Anne's coat out for her.

"It will get nice and warm hanging near the register," she thought. Warm air puffed into the long brown coat.

"Too bad my angel didn't know that I have to wear my green jacket today," Anne said as she put the coat back into the closet. "I'll need the hood over my wet hair after swim practice."

"That's right!" Mrs Brandon said. "You don't want to catch cold before the party tonight."

Anne's class had voted to have its Christmas party at the ice skating rink. There would be hot dogs and cocoa, races and games. Mrs Brandon had made Anne a new red skirt that whirled when she spun around.

"It was silly to put her brown coat out," Marietta said to her-self sadly. "Anne is so grown-up she knows just the right thing to wear."

Marietta kicked at the sparkly snow as she and Mike walked to school. Everything was crunchy cold.

"I'm having fun doing nice things for my secret person," Mike said. "I haven't left any clues either."

"I haven't done anything special for my person yet," Marietta said with a frown. "The things I've tried have all been silly."

Marietta wondered who had her name. Someone had already put her doll clothes neatly into a new shoe box.



"Christmas will be over before I think of something nice," she said.



When Marietta got home that afternoon, a Christmas-cookie smell met her at the door. Her mother was busy icing the cutout shapes.

"They're delicious!" Marietta exclaimed as she nibbled the top of a tasty bell.

"I'm making them for Anne's party tonight," Mrs Brandon said, "so I need to finish them before dinner. Anne will have to hurry to be ready in time."

"Is there anything I can do to help?" Marietta asked.

"You could set her things out for her."

Marietta took the new skating skirt and a white sweater from Anne's closet. Then she found her warm tights in the drawer and placed everything on the bed.

"I'm glad I'm doing something nice for Anne," she thought, "even if it isn't secret."

Marietta looked for Anne's skates in the corner of the closet. Then she checked the shelf in the garage. She finally found them lying in a dirty spot next to the wagon.

"Anne can't wear these. They look terrible!" Marietta thought.

The skates were covered with smudgy scratches. The old laces had broken and were tied in tight knots.

Marietta ran to the hall closet for the white shoe polish and a rag.

"They've got to look just as nice as her new skirt," she thought as she dabbed the polish over the skates. She rubbed until they glistened. The dirty laces looked even worse against the clean skates.

"Maybe there are some new ones in the catchall drawer," Marietta thought. The catchall drawer had rubber bands and paper clips. It had bits of colored string and cereal coupons.

"What are you looking for? Mrs Brandon asked as Marietta pulled the drawer all the way out.

"I can't tell," Marietta said with a smile. "It's a secret."

There at the very back of the drawer, was an extra-long pair of white laces.



"I've got to hurry. Anne will be home any minute," Marietta thought as she raced back to the garage. She cut off the old, knotted laces. Then she put the new ones evenly through the holes and tied neat bows at the top.

"Anne will be so surprised," she thought as she placed the skates beside Anne's bed. She got to her own room just as the front door opened. She waited for Anne to find her skates.



"Wow!" Anne exclaimed when she spotted them. "My skates look just like new! Thanks for fixing them, Mom."

"I didn't fix them," Mrs Brandon answered. "I've been busy icing cookies."

Marietta plopped onto her bed and grinned at the ceiling.

"Now I feel like a secret angel!" she thought.