

BOOK STUFF

#34

'Twas the night before Christmas, when
all through the house, not a creature
was stirring, not even a mouse.' Clement C Moore



Homework

by Simon Armitage

It's evening again, late.
I go out into the lane
and doodle a beard and moustache
on the face of the moon
with a red pen.

Over the next hill
an old teacher of mine
takes off her glasses
She can't believe
what she's just seen.



Fair Inequality?

John and Margaret went shopping to buy Christmas presents for their three sons: Matthew, aged fourteen, Mark, who is twelve, and Luke, ten. The loving parents always tried to treat their children equally. This year they had budgeted to spend £100 on each of the children.

For once it looked as if their shopping would be trouble free, for they soon found what they were looking for: hand-held PlayBoy games consuls at £100 each. Just as they were about to take three to the checkout, John noticed a special offer. If you bought two of the new, top of the range PlayBoyPlusMax consuls at £150 each, you would get an original PlayBoy free. They could spend the same amount of money and get superior goods.

'We can't do that,' said Margaret. 'That would be unfair, since one of the boys would be getting less than the others.'

'But Margaret,' said John, excited at the thought of borrowing his sons' new toys, 'how can it be unfair? This way none of them gets a worse gift than he would have done, and two of them do better. But if we don't take the offer, two of the kids are worse off than they would otherwise be.'

'I want them all to be equal,' replied Margaret.

'Even if it means making them worse off?'

From John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, adapted by Julian Baggini, *The Pig that Wants to be Eaten and 99 Other Thought Experiments*



Christmas quiz

1. What is a male turkey called?
2. What is traditionally hidden in a Christmas pudding?
3. In which tin of chocolates would you find 'The Green Triangle' ?
4. In Japan which takeaway food is traditionally eaten at Christmas?
5. What's the name of the popular Christmas dinner item consisting of a sausage wrapped in bacon?
6. What are they called in Scotland?
7. Who directed *The Nightmare Before Christmas*?
8. 'Let it Snow' plays out the end of which 1988 action film?
9. Which 1946 classic Christmas film stars James Stewart?
10. On Christmas Eve a young boy goes on a magical journey to the North Pole
11. Name the Bing Crosby song that's also a Christmas film of the same name.
12. Who plays Scrooge in *The Muppets' Christmas Carol*?





And finally...some Christmas crackers!

13. What's white and minty?
14. What's green, covered in tinsel and goes ribbet ribbet?
15. Why should you never play games in the jungle?
16. Why does a seagull fly over the sea?
17. Why couldn't the skeleton go to the Christmas party?

The Paring Knife

I found a knife under the refrigerator while the woman I love and I were cleaning our house. It was a small paring knife that we lost many years before and had since forgotten about. I showed the knife to the woman I love and she said, 'Oh. Where did you find it?' After I told her, she put the knife on the table and then went into the next room and continued to clean. While I cleaned the kitchen floor, I remembered something that happened four years before that explained how the knife had gotten underneath the refrigerator.

We had eaten a large dinner and had drunk many glasses of wine. We turned all the lights out, took our clothing off, and went to bed. We thought we would make love, but something happened and we had an argument while making love. We had never experienced such a thing. We both became extremely angry. I said some very hurtful things to the woman I love. She kicked at me in bed and I got out and went to the kitchen. I fumbled for a chair and sat down. I wanted to rest my arms on the table and then rest my head on my arms, but I felt the dirty dishes on the table and they were in the way. I became incensed. I swept everything that was on the table onto the floor. The noise was tremendous but then the room was very quiet and I suddenly felt sad. I thought I had destroyed everything. I began to cry. The woman I love came into the kitchen and asked if I was all right. I said, 'Yes'. She turned the light on and we looked at the kitchen floor. Nothing much was broken but the floor was very messy. We both laughed and then went back to bed and made love. The next morning we cleaned up the mess but obviously overlooked the knife.

I was about to ask the woman I love if she remembered that incident when she came in from the next room and without saying a word, picked up the knife from the table and slid it back under the refrigerator.

Michael Oppenheimer

- Answers
1. A Tom or a Gobbler
 2. A silver sixpence
 3. Quality Street
 4. KFC
 5. Pigs in Blankets
 6. Killed Soldiers
 7. Tim Burton
 8. Die Hard
 9. James Stewart
 10. It's a Wonderful Life
 11. The Polar Express
 12. White Christmas
 13. A polo bear
 14. Mistle-toad
 15. Too many cheetahs
 16. If it flew over the bay, it would be a baygull (geddit?)
 17. He had no body to go with him



