

THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

THE CHARACTERS

Bethann: a younger employee, right out of college, in her first professional job

Francine: Bethann's roommate

Michael: Bethann's supervisor

"Thanks, Bethann, for springing for the good fruit. These are delicious!" Francine gushes while noshing on a fat, juicy pear.

"Happy to do it. Just one of the perks of my fab new job. Gotta love the holidays—and clients with generous expense accounts."

Francine is a little surprised by Bethann's response.

"Wow! Your work actually lets you keep stuff that comes in? In my office, everything gets sent back, donated, or added to the break room communal stash. They take it pretty seriously. Some big exec got in trouble for accepting box seats from a contractor, so they laid down the law."

"Yeah, but that's a vendor," Bethann counters. "Isn't that a different thing? It's like a bribe or something. But with your clients, they're already paying you. Why should it matter? When I was a kid, my dad was always bringing home fancy chocolates and those weird sausages no one ever eats that he got from his clients."

"Maybe it's just my company. They tend to take everything so seriously. Your work does seem more laid back."

The next morning...

Bethann opens her email to the cheery monthly message from the CEO: business is going well, been a great year; at this time of year I'm reminded how thankful I am for you and all your hard work; great things ahead for us; etc, etc, etc. Suddenly, her eye is drawn to a section, "Thank you in advance for your continued respect of the company gift policy. As you already know, it's critical that we avoid even the appearance of anything that could be deemed improper. We appreciate your understanding and diligence. It makes a difference!"

Well, that isn't the best news... I wish I'd known about the gift policy—yesterday. I don't know. Maybe they mentioned something about it at orientation. I just don't remember. They gave us so much information that week.... Bethann swallows hard. Do I really need to speak to Michael about this? Ugh. He haaaates when I knock on his door.