



THE RED BOWL

It would be fun, *Alex* thought, to give *Cora* something for no reason at all. He had not planned to give his wife a present, but when he saw the red glass fruit bowl, he could not *resist* it. It came near being the prettiest bowl he had ever seen. From
5 time to time he bought *Cora* such a gift. She went in for beautiful dishes. He himself didn't know the first thing about them.

"I'll take this one," *Alex* told the clerk.

"Yes, sir. Would you like the individual fruit dishes that go with the bowl?"

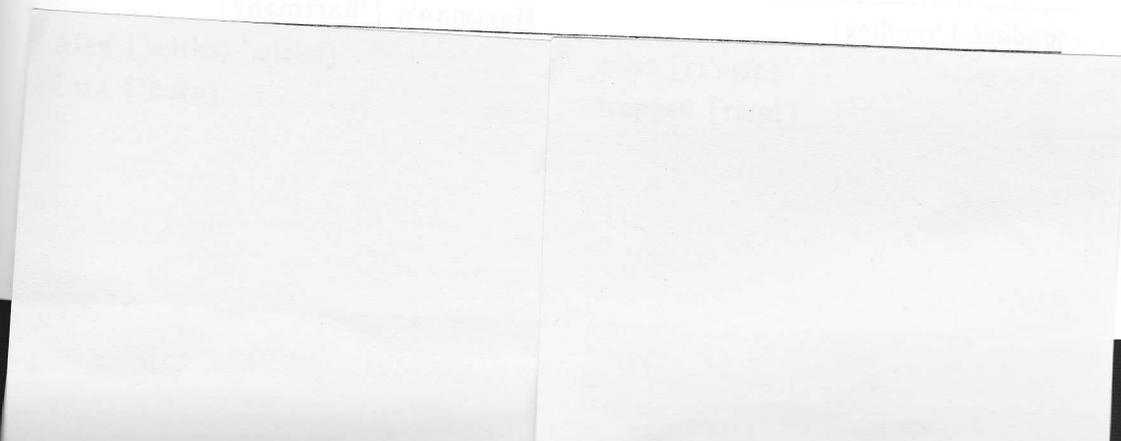
10 Before he answered, *Alex* looked to see if he had enough money, just to be on the safe side. As a rule he didn't carry much with him. "Not today, thank you. Perhaps later."

"Very good, sir. We keep them on hand regularly. Do you want this *wrapped* as a gift?"

15 "Yes, please."

"What is the occasion? A birthday, perhaps?"

"No, no special occasion." That wasn't exactly true. *Cora* always made it an occasion when *Alex* brought her a gift.



In a few minutes he was on his way home.

20 They lived in a *modest* little house, and although it was
rather *old-fashioned*, it was in a nice section of the city. It
wasn't too far from the office where Alex worked. There was a
bus stop at the corner, and two blocks away was a big shopping
center where Cora could get almost anything she needed. In
25 other words, it was in an excellent location. Alex and Cora
Jackson liked their neighbors, too; they were all very friendly
people. Both Alex and Cora took part in community activities.
They were very happy there.

Alex had taken time from work and left the office at five
30 o'clock this particular afternoon. He had left word with his sec-
retary to tell Cora he had gone downtown if she telephoned.
"If there's anything *urgent*," he had said, "you can get in touch
with me at *Hartman's* Department Store."

He wanted to get to Hartman's in time to buy a pair of
35 shoes before the store closed at six p.m. Hartman's had the best
shoe department in town.

It didn't take long to find a pair of shoes. There were two
pairs that he liked, but one cost ten dollars more than the other
pair. However, to Alex they looked the same. In fact, it was
40 impossible to tell them apart; so he took the cheaper pair.

Instead of taking the *elevator* down to the main floor, Alex
decided to walk. He wanted to stop on the second floor and
look at some new fishing equipment in the sports department.

modest [ˈmɒdɪst]

old-fashioned [ˈɒldˈfæʃənd]

urgent [ˈɜːdʒənt]

Hartman's [ˈhɑːtmənz]

elevator [ˈeləˌvetə]

At the bottom of the stairs was the *glassware* department,
45 and Alex had to pass through it to get to the fishing things.
What a lot of pretty glass! Cora would love it!

That morning when he left the house to go to work, Alex
had noticed that Cora seemed *preoccupied*. She hadn't been the
usual happy wife who kissed him goodbye and sent him off to
50 work in a wonderful mood every day. She was usually so sweet
and cheerful that he took it for granted she would always be
so. Today she had very little to say. About the only thing she
had done was to *remind* him to send a birthday card to his
Uncle Frank. "And don't forget to send it in care of your
55 cousin George," she said.

When Alex asked Cora if she felt all right, she replied, "Of
course. I feel fine." But something was troubling her, he was
sure. She seemed to be waiting for something, but he had no



glassware [ˈglæs,wɛr]

remind [rɪˈmaɪnd]

preoccupied [priˈɒkjə,paɪd]

idea what it was. It didn't help any when she said, "Don't lose
60 your way home tonight." What did she mean by such a state-
ment? Well, he guessed he'd just have to expect her to have her
good days and bad ones, like everyone else. He couldn't expect
her to be in excellent spirits every day of the year.

He had thought about Cora's strange manner as he sat look-
65 ing out of the bus window on his way to work. "Did I rub her
the wrong way with something I said?" he asked himself. No, it
couldn't be that. One thing about Cora; if she didn't like some-
thing he said, she let him know it. However, once she had done
so, she let bygones be bygones and everything was all right
70 again. She was always ready to meet him halfway when they
had an argument, too—which was seldom. No, today was differ-
ent. But why?

Once at the office Alex became *absorbed* in his work and
forgot his wife's strange manner. Not until later, in Hartman's
75 Department Store, did he think of it again. The beautiful *ruby-*
red bowl reminded him. Suddenly he felt he had to buy this
lovely piece of glassware for his wife. Surely it would help her
forget whatever was *bothering* her. He loved Cora very much
and didn't want anything in the world to make her sad. As far
80 as Alex was concerned, making Cora happy was his first respon-
sibility.

He could hardly wait to get home and sat holding the gift—
wrapped bowl carefully on his knees. Why did the bus move so
slowly? He was sorry he hadn't had enough money to buy the

absorbed [əb'sɔrbd]

bothering ['bɔðərɪŋ]

ruby-red ['rubi,rɛd]

85 little bowls that *accompanied* the big one. He would have had,
if he hadn't invited one of his friends to lunch that noon.
Usually they went Dutch, but today, for some unknown reason,
he had insisted on paying the restaurant check. Oh, well, he
would get Cora the other dishes later. Besides, the one dish
90 made such a big package that the man sitting next to Alex had
to move over and make room for him.

Alex smiled to himself as he pictured Cora's face. She would
tell him he was being too extravagant, especially when it wasn't
even Christmas or her birthday.

95 When he got off the bus, Alex hurried to the house, *practi-*
cally running all the way. A few minutes later, Cora, opening
the front door, almost fainted when Alex immediately handed
her the package. "You're all dressed up!" Alex *exclaimed*. "You
look beautiful!"

100 Cora tried to speak, but the words wouldn't come out. When
at last they did, she whispered, "Oh Alex! I was sure you'd
forgotten!"

"Forgotten?"

"I should have known better. You're always so thoughtful.
105 Still, this morning when you left without saying one word
about what day this is, I couldn't help feeling a little unhappy.
Now I realize you acted that way on purpose, just to confuse
me. Well, you certainly succeeded because I really got mixed
up. I wasn't sure what day it was myself."

accompanied [ə'kʌmpəniɪd]

exclaimed [ɪk'skleɪmd]

practically ['præktɪkəli]

110 She began to open the package, and Alex tried to remember what day it was.

“Oh! It’s beautiful! The most beautiful bowl I’ve ever seen!” she said. “No wife ever had a more wonderful surprise on her wedding *anniversary!*”

115 “I tried to choose something in keeping with the occasion,” Alex replied weakly as she kissed him.

So that was it! Of course! This was their fifth wedding anniversary. He’d lost track of the date. Little did he think he’d ever forget such an important day, but he did. Maybe, some
120 day, he would tell Cora the truth. Right now it didn’t seem a very kind thing to do. In the future he might not be so lucky as this time. Well, he would just have to turn over a new leaf. From now on he’d have to pay more attention to the calendar. He’d keep his fingers crossed with hope that he’d never forget
125 their anniversary again!

Adapted from *Idiom Drills*.