

That time we broke a plunger ornament on Christmas Eve

We were enjoying spending Christmas Eve at home when I heard someone at the door. A friend decided to surprise us by stopping by with a gift. She and her daughter had been shopping when they spotted something for us.

It would celebrate the most important event of the year, she said.

"When Jesus was born?" said Daniel, listening at my side.

"Well, no, that was important, but that's not it," she said.

"When the three wise men came?" our first-grader asked.

"No, not that either," she said. "It was something around Halloween."

"The Boo Bash?" he guessed. And, of course, he was right, because our friend and her family were on the team with us that claimed the honorable mention for our table decorations that night. We had created a "poo bash" table, complete with a Halloween potty. The idea for the table had started when Daniel plucked a plunger from a shelf at the dollar store.

My friend held out a gift bag, and Daniel reached for it, but she stopped him and said it was fragile. Still, somehow as she and I fell further into conversation, he reached into the gift bag, pulled out the tissue paper, and the gift inside plummeted to the floor.

Shards of red and gold glass—the remains of what had been a beautiful hand-blown glass plunger ornament—went everywhere. All that was left was one big piece, which we had to throw away while John went for the shop-vac.



I felt terrible. Everything I have ever learned about being a grateful recipient of a gift came to mind and then flew out of my head. How do you show appropriate gratitude as a recipient when you break the gift in front of your friend as you open it on Christmas Eve? And yet it was also...hilarious.

At that moment, all we could do was stand there, looking at the shards of glass all over the floor, and laugh. So that's what we did. We laughed and laughed. She told us how excited they had been to find a plunger ornament, and I thanked her and apologized and told her how perfect the gift was. And yet it was all just absurd that this ornament had not even made it from the gift bag to the tree.

Once you know a plunger ornament exists and that your thoughtful friend wanted you to have one, though, you have to have one. So the day after Christmas we went to Valley View Farms, where our friend and her daughter had found it, and we

searched the whole store. We found some fantastic ornaments and bought a few, but we could not find a plunger.

So I went online and was thrilled to find a duplicate. I ordered two—one for us and one for my father in-law, a retired master plumber who will enjoy having his very own. When we give him his, we will have to wrap it in bubble wrap, inside tissue paper, in a very soft box.

And whenever I look at ours, I'll think of memories of Halloween and Christmas Eve, and I will laugh. What else can you do when you have a plunger hanging on your tree?