

GIFTED PEOPLE

Not gifted at birth, I've spent my life searching for gifts, hoping for gifts, dropping hints about my birthday coming up. Without my yearly haul, I'd have none. I don't mind admitting I'm jealous of those who compose symphonies at age nine. And I'm not jealous of their talent. I'm envious because they get birthday and Christmas gifts on top of the ones they received at birth. It doesn't seem fair for gifted people to receive still more. But consider the downside. If you deprived them of all the toys and sweaters the rest of us get, they'd feel rejected and unloved, and that would ultimately affect their ability to use the gifts they were born with. They'd lapse into Chopsticks in the middle of a Chopin sonata, and for a confused second we wouldn't know if they'd gone mad or whether we were simply listening to a beautiful interpretation of something pedestrian and simple.

NOTHING VENTURED

I thought I'd be the only one to show up at the costume party without a costume, but a lot of other people had the same idea. It turned out to be a fairly boring party. Everyone was dressed in street clothes, except for two girls who showed up as two halves of a horse. Almost immediately the one in front noticed, through her eye-holes, that nobody else was wearing a costume, so she took the horse's head off and made her friend step out of the bottom. You could tell they were embarrassed. To ease their awkwardness, various people got into the horse's costume and pranced around in it. The other guests laughed. Things started to click. But the girls suddenly felt a little resentful. They couldn't get their costume back. They went up to the host and said they had a routine all worked out, and wanted to do it. They bent down to show him but it didn't come across very well because you could see how hard they had practiced.