

1.

My family moved from Taiwan to a small town in central Georgia, where my dad got a visa for his family and a job. I had just learned English, and from what little I could gather from my classmates, Santa Claus would come down one's chimney and put toys in one's stocking on Christmas Eve! What a great country, I thought. After I looked up "stocking" in my Chinese-English dictionary, I knew what I had to do.

On that fateful night, after everyone went to bed, I took my longest, cleanest knee sock and attached it to a nail already on the mantel(壁炉). Obviously, the previous owners of this house were no strangers to this Santa character.

I woke up before everyone else on Christmas Day and ran to the fireplace. To make a sob story short, I was hit with the reality of an empty sock and the biggest lie ever told. I burst into tears, quickly took down the sock, and stuffed it in the back of a drawer. Santa was dead.

Every December since then, the topic of Christmas memories would unavoidably come up, and I would amuse my friends with my poor-little-me story. I had to make it as funny as possible, or else I would cry.

How could I know that Santa was just late? Nine years ago, on Christmas Eve, an older man with a white beard and a red cap knocked on my front door. He said, "I've been looking for you for twenty-five years." He handed me a bulging red stocking, winked, and left. On top of the stocking was a card. It read: "For Becky—I may have missed you in the second grade, but you've always lived in my heart. Santa."

Through tear-blurred eyes, I recognized the handwriting of Jill, a friend I had met just two months before. I later discovered that the older man was her father. Jill had seen the hurt little girl underneath the thirty-something woman and decided to do something about it.

So now I believe that Santa is real. I don't mean the twinkle-eyed character of children's mythology or the creation of American holiday marketers. Those Santas annoy and sadden me. I believe in the Santa Claus that live inside good and thoughtful people. This Santa does not return to the North Pole after a crazy delivery but lives each day purposefully, really listens to friends, and then plans deliberate acts of kindness.

21. What does the underlined part "what I had to do" in Paragraph 1 refer to?

- A. Waiting for Santa Claus.
- B. Putting a stocking on the mantel.
- C. Asking for gifts from her parents.
- D. Looking up "stocking" in the dictionary

22. It can be inferred from the passage that the author's parents ____.

- A. didn't love their child at all
- B. didn't know the previous owners of the house
- C. didn't know much about Christmas tradition
- D. didn't have enough money to buy the author Christmas presents

23. When the author told her friends about the story, she felt ____ in her heart.

- A. proud
- B. amusing
- C. hate
- D. regret

24. The author of the passage is probably ____.

- A. a teenager
- B. a primary school student
- C. a middle-aged woman
- D. a native American

2.

A recent survey in the United States showed that the average family spent more money on its pets than on its children. Although rather shocking, it should not surprise anyone who has seen the doggy parlors(客厅) where loved pets rest. Are Americans unique in treating their little friends in this way? No, the English, too, pay more attention to their pets.

This can clearly be seen when we look at pet foods, which often contain more vitamins than human food. They certainly cost much. Last year the British public spent two hundred million pounds on pet food alone, to say nothing of veterinary bills or animal furniture. It is difficult not to feel angry about this when considering what the same amount could do for victims of starvation and poverty, so it is not unusual for me to get hot under collar when I read an old man left all his money to his dog instead of his children.

There are a variety of reasons why I find pets-raising alarming. They cause physical problems. An example of this is New York where they have great difficulty getting rid of the mess that dogs leave on the streets. Many people find this funny, but in a number of large cities it is a major problem. Animals can cause disease, too. It is the threat of rabies — a disease with no known cure.

Another problem is the carelessness of pet owners. Most little children want a dog or a cat, and they continually push their mothers and fathers until they get one. It is only when the "sweet little thing" has been brought home that the parents realize how much time and money must be spent on "Rover" or "Bonzo". Then they just abandon it. As a result, they are allowed to run free. English farmers lose hundreds of sheep a year, killed by someone's pet and you must have read of children being hurt by some pets of their own.

Lastly, I would only suggest that we have got our priorities wrong and that something should be done about it. In my view, it's time we stopped being sentimental about