

THE GIFT
OF THE
MAGI



The Gift of the Magi

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. Della counted it three times. She was very careful with money and bought only the cheapest food. But she only had one dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day was Christmas.

There was nothing to do so she sat down and cried. Della lived in New York City in a poor, little apartment. The rent was \$8 a week. The name on the front door of their flat was "Mr James Dillingham Young". In the past he earned \$30 a week, but now he earned only \$20 a week. When he came home after work Della always hugged him. And this was very good.

Della stopped crying and dried her face. She stood by the window and looked at a gray cat on the gray street.

"Tomorrow will be Christmas Day and I have only one dollar and eighty-seven cents to buy Jim a Christmas present," she thought. She wanted to buy him something fine and beautiful. She wanted to show him that she loved him a lot.

There was a small mirror on the wall and Della stood in front of it. Her eyes were bright. She pulled down her beautiful long hair. It went below her knees.

Now, the James Dillingham Youngs had two very special things. One was Jim's gold pocket watch. It belonged to his father and before that, to his grandfather. The other special thing was Della's hair.

She put up her hair again. A tear or two fell on the old red carpet. Then she put on her old brown coat and her old brown hat and quickly went out with her eyes still shining.

She stopped in front of a door with a sign: Madame Sofronie, Hair Goods. Della opened the door and saw a big woman.

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame Sofronie. "Take your hat off and show me your hair."

Della's beautiful brown hair fell down.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame Sofronie and she touched the long hair with her expert hand.

"Cut it off, quickly! And give me the money," said Della.

During the next two hours Della went to many stores and looked for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It was perfect for Jim: a simple gold chain for his pocket watch. He was proud of his pocket watch but it had no chain.

The gold chain cost twenty-one dollars, and Della hurried home happily with it and the eighty-seven cents. When she got home she looked at her very short hair in the mirror.

"Oh dear, what can I do with my hair?" she thought.

She was very busy with her hair for the next forty minutes. Then she looked in the mirror again. She looked like a schoolboy with tiny curls all over her head.

What's Jim going to say when he sees me?" she thought. "But what could I do with one dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At seven o'clock the coffee was ready and the frying pan was on the stove.

Jim was never late. Della had the gold chain in her hand and she waited for him near the door. Then she heard his footsteps on the stairs and she was afraid for a moment. "I hope Jim still thinks I'm pretty," she thought.

The door opened and Jim came in. He was thin and serious. He needed a new overcoat and he had no gloves. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two years old and he already had a family.

His eyes were fixed on Della. She could not understand the look on his face. He was not angry or surprised. He simply looked at her with a strange expression on his face. Della ran to him.

"Jim, darling," she cried. "Don't look at me that way. I sold my hair because I wanted to give you a present. My hair will be long again, it grows quickly. Oh, Jim, say 'Merry Christmas' and let's be happy! I have a beautiful gift for you."

"Did you cut off your hair?" asked Jim slowly.

"Yes, I cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me anymore? I'm still Della!"

Jim looked around the room.

"You cut your hair?" Jim said again, almost stupidly.

"Yes, I sold it because I love you so much, Jim. Shall I get dinner ready now?"

Jim put his arms around Della. Then he took a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it on the table.

"Don't worry about me, Della," he said. "I will always love you. It doesn't matter if your hair is short or long. But if you open the package, you'll see why I was strange before."

Della was excited and she quickly opened the package. She gave a little scream of happiness, but then she started crying.

There were The Combs-two beautiful, tortoise-shell combs with little jewels. They were the

perfect color for her hair. When Della saw them the first time in a store window on Broadway, she wanted them. She knew they were expensive combs and now they were hers. But she did not have long hair anymore!

Della held The Combs in her hand and looked at them. She smiled lovingly at Jim and said, "My hair grows very fast, Jim!"

Then Della jumped up like a cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

She showed Jim his beautiful gift.

"Isn't it splendid, Jim? I looked everywhere to find it. Now you'll look at your watch a hundred times a day. Give me your watch! Let's see how it looks on the new chain."

Jim sat down and put his hands behind his head and smiled.

"Della," he said, "Let's put our Christmas presents away and keep them a while. They're too nice to use now. I sold my watch to get the money to buy you The Combs. And now, let's have dinner."

- THE END -

Hope you have enjoyed the reading!

Come back to <http://english-e-reader.net/> to find more fascinating and exciting stories!