



Janet Reuter

December 2019

**December is the month when we celebrate Christmas and we spend time with our families. It is also the time to read some special Christmas stories.**

I have some very special Christmas stories that I love and can read over and over again. Last year I wrote the **The Crachits' Christmas Dinner** from **The Christmas Carol** written by **Charles Dickens** for you to read, which is one of my favourites. This year it is **The Gift of the Magi** or **The Christmas Present** which was written by **O. Henry (1862 – 1910)**.



This American writer of short stories whose original name was **William Sidney Porter** wrote stories that romanticized in particular the life of ordinary people in New York City. His stories expressed the effect of coincidence through humour, grim or ironic, and often had surprise endings, a device that became identified with his name. This story is so touching it makes you shed a tear each time you read it.

In our society today Christmas starts as early as September when the shops begin to sell special biscuits and cakes for the very far off festive season. Then by November all the decorations and presents wrapped for Christmas can be bought. But what do we buy? Everyone has more than enough of everything. This simple little story takes us back to a time in New York City like many other places in the world where people had very little. However, it tells us about presents that were bought and given with love and genuine generosity.

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bargaining with the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas. There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which confirmed to her that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is in total misery let's take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It was not exactly only fit for a beggar, but it certainly was poor! In the hall below was a letter-box into which no letter would ever go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger would ever ring but bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young." "The Dillinghams" had seen better days. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling, something just a little bit nearer to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

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There was a mirror between the windows of the room. Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the mirror. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length. Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham's in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat opposite, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the caretaker, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy. So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet. On went her old brown jacket and her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

She stopped by the sign which read: "Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds" One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie. "Will you buy my hair?" asked Dell. "I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it." Down rippled the brown cascade. "Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand. "Give it to me quick," said Della.



Oh, and the next two hours were heaven. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present. She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and pure in design, as all good things should be. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value, the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might never be embarrassed about checking the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, it looked poor because of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home but her intoxication soon gave way to fear. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by her generosity added to her love for Jim. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends—a mammoth task. Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a little schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically. "If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do, oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

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At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops. Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit of saying a little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."



The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, his eyes immediately were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face. Della wriggled off the table and ran over to him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold it because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again, you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say „Merry Christmas! Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice, what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not understood what she had said. "Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?" Jim looked about the room curiously. "You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of an idiot.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you, sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della in his arms. For a moment let us think about this situation. What was the value of this gift? Eight dollars a week or a million a year, what is the difference? A mathematician or a philosopher would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but what was the meaning of valuable.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table. "Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

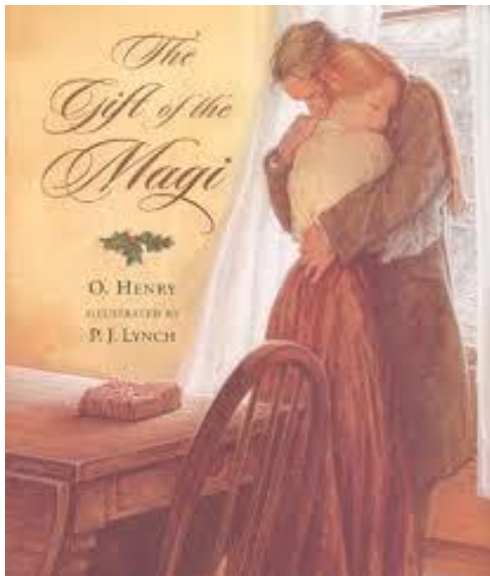
With white and nimble fingers she tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy and then, alas! A quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

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For there lay The Combs, the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims, just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possessing them.

And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone. But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!" And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!" Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and radiant spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it. Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled. "Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."



The magi, as you know, were wise men, wonderfully wise men who brought gifts to the Baby in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful story of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise people of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as Della and Jim they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi. **O. Henry**



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## 40 years of The English Speaking Theatre in Frankfurt

In **1979** Frankfurt's first English-language theatre was founded in Sachsenhausen by a group of English speaking expats. Kevin Oakes became the theatre's artistic director. The ensemble was called **Cardboard Clowns**. The next year **1980**, Judith Rosenbauer joined the ensemble as an actress and later on became its managing director. Shortly afterwards the ensemble disbanded. Judith Rosenbauer and some others continued its activities under the name "**Café Theater.**" Again after another year in **1981** the theatre moved from Sachsenhausen into a larger space in the Hamburger Allee and was then called "**English Theater Frankfurt, Café Theater.**"

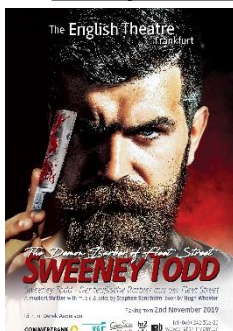
Thanks to its growing popularity under Judith Rosenbauer's direction, the theatre again relocated in **1990** and was then housed in a 230-seat facility in Frankfurt's famous Kaiserstrasse. It was at this time that I discovered the English Theatre and to my mind it was absolutely the best time of all in its history so far. The location on the Kaiserstrasse alone gave it a certain cult status and special atmosphere. This was the famous **red light district** of Frankfurt and therefore the people next door and on the street were very varied and to say the least more colourful than the normal culture vulture theatre goes on the other city streets. However, the mix gave the evening a certain tension! The theatre was small and not at all new, the seating was tight and the back stage area even tighter. I had a very good friend who worked back stage and he would always organize the best seats, front row balcony for my groups of English ladies. The greatest advantage was the **James' Bar-Café** on the street front. Everybody met there for a drink before and after the performance when it was possible to chat in a relaxed way with the actors. Great! You could hear about the lives of these talented young people, hear about their experiences in theatre and about their future dreams and ambitions. Also to catch up on the repertoire theatre scene all around Britain was very interesting. This part of the evening was as good the performances which were always lively, sometimes raw, funny or ironic and inspiring. A great mixture from Oscar Wilde to Broadway musicals.

The previews were epic, invitation only and very smart with lots of famous German stars of stage and TV as guests. The tombola was terrific and Bernd and I once won a **Breakfast at Tiffany's**, in the Frankfurt Goethestrasse. Not New York but very inspiring!

Sadely, this cult status theatre became too old and small and so from **2001** another move was needed but as often happens economic difficulties raised their ugly heads. In **2002** to keep the tradition of English-language theatre in Frankfurt alive, **The English Theatre**, a limited charity, was founded. Daniel John Nicolai became artistic and executive director of the new organization, which began co-producing with other English theatres in **Vienna, Los Angeles and New Jersey**. **The English Theatre GmbH** moved in **2003** into its new, state-of-the-art, 300-seat home, sponsored by the **Dresdner Bank**. The theatre is now the largest English-language theatre on the European continent.

The glossy new English theatre has now the chance to think bigger, put on larger productions with up to date stage equipment and good back stage space. **James' Bar** is smart with cocktails and finger food but you don't rub shoulders anymore with the young talented actors and musicians from Liverpool or London. They leave after the performance as the bar is no longer in their budget. However, it is so good to have this theatre and I hope it's future is now safe!

## This years Winter musical is Sweeney Todd (until 09/02/2020)



An infamous tale of Victorian-era barber Benjamin Barker, now Sweeney Todd, who returns home to London after fifteen years of exile to take revenge on the corrupt judge who ruined his life. When revenge eludes him, with the help of Mrs. Lovett, a resourceful proprietress of a failing pie shop, he opens a new barber shop where they plot a unique plan that leads them down a dangerous, thrilling path with deadly and delicious consequences. Mrs. Lovett's luck sharply shifts when Todd's thirst for blood inspires the integration of an ingredient into her meat pies that has the people of London lining up... and the carnage has only just begun!

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## ➤ [News about and for the English Ladies](#)

**Live performances of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden at Kinopolis, Bad Soden: Coppelia with Music by Leo Delibes on 10/12/19. The Nutcracker Suite by Tchaikovsky. On various dates in December. These are the very best pre-Christmas treats that anyone can have.**

Another real treat which is nearby at the Hessenpark in Neu Anspach is the **Advents Market**. This really does feel like a special traditional Christmas market..  
**31 November and 01 December**



The **Christmas Market** in the castle in Bad Homburg is my second favourite. It is only open at the weekends before Christmas.

**The next is the Nikolaus Market, Bürgerhausplatz Neu-Anspach, 07/12/2019.**

If you haven't already heard about the project in Neu Anspach to reforest all the critical areas which have been damaged by insects or the extremely hot Summers that we have had over the last few years you can catch up with it at the **Nikolaus Market**. There will be an information stand about the **WaldLiebe** project which had a very successful day planting 600 chestnut trees in November. It was amazing how many people turned up to plant the trees. So many children had a chance to plant a tree for their own future. Edeka Supermarket and Bäcker Ernst supported the event with food and drinks and the Red Cross were there to help out. The Neu Anspach artist James Reuter (my son) has designed T-shirts with the WaldLiebe deer motive (see next page) to be sold at the market to raise more money for MORE trees!!!!!! Great Christmas presents for a good cause!



### **Birthdays in December:**

**Inge Handschuh  
Christel Walter Endres  
Petra Kohlen  
Ruth Schmitt  
Heidi Ernst  
Happy Birthday Ladies!!!!**

# WALDLiebe

**Waldschutzprojekt Neu-Anspach**

