

# **Christmas Stories**

**from**

## **Tu Ingles!**



# Babushka

## A Russian Legend

[una leyenda rusa]

On the night that Christ was born in Bethlehem, in Russia, a country far away, an old, old woman named Babushka sat in her cozy [acogedor] little house by her warm fire. The wind was drifting [amontando] the snow outside and howling [rugiendo] down the chimney, but it only made Babushka's fire burn more brightly.

"How glad I am that I can stay indoors!" said Babushka, holding her hands out to the bright blaze. But suddenly she heard a loud knock [golpe] at her door. She opened it and her candle shone [su vela brilló] on three old men standing outside in the snow. Their beards were as white as the snow, and so long that they reached [llegaron] the ground. Their eyes shone kindly in the light of Babushka's candle, and their arms were full of precious things: boxes of jewels, and sweet-smelling oils, and ointments.

"We have traveled far, Babushka," said they, "and we stop to tell you of the child born this night in Bethlehem. He comes to rule the world and teach all men to be loving and true. We carry Him gifts. Come with us, Babushka!"

But Babushka looked at the snow, and then inside at her cozy room and the crackling [chisporroteando] fire. "It is too late for me to go with you, good sirs," she said, "the weather is too cold." She went inside again and shut the door, and the old men journeyed on to Bethlehem without her. But as Babushka sat by her fire, rocking, [meciendo] she began to think about the little Christ child, for she loved all babies.

"Tomorrow I will go to find him," she said, "and I will carry him some toys."

So, when it was morning, Babushka put on her long cloak [capa], and took her cane [bastón], and filled a basket [cesto] with the pretty things a baby would like -- gold balls, and wooden toys, and strings of silver cobwebs [telarañas] -- and she set out to find the Christ Child.

But Babushka had forgotten [se ha olvidado] to ask the three old men the road to Bethlehem, and they had traveled so far through the night that she could not catch up [no podía alcanzarse] to them. Up and down the roads she hurried [se apuró], through woods and fields and towns, saying to whomsoever [a cualquiera] she met: "I am looking for the Christ Child. Where is he? I am bringing some toys for him."

But no one could tell her the way to go, and they all said: "Farther on [mas adelante], Babushka, farther on." So she traveled on, and on, and on for years and years, but she never found the little Christ Child.

They say that old Babushka is traveling still, looking for Him. When it comes Christmas Eve [Cuando llega Nochebuena], and the children are lying fast asleep [produndamente dormidos], Babushka comes softly through the snowy [cubierto de nieve] fields and towns, wrapped [envuelta] in her long cloak and carrying her basket on her arm. With her cane she knocks gently at the doors and goes inside and holds her candle close to the little children's faces.

"Is He here?" she asks. "Is the little Christ Child here?" And then she turns sadly away again, crying: "Farther on, farther on." But before she leaves she takes a toy from her basket and lays [pone] it beside the pillow as a Christmas gift. "For His sake," [por el bien de Jesus] she says softly, and then hurries on through the years and forever in search of the little Christ Child.

# **The Gift of the Magi**

## **[El Regalo de los Reyes Magos]**

**By**

**O. Henry**

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved [ahorrados] one and two at a time. 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 lie down on the shabby [desvencijado] little couch and cry. So Della did it.

Take a look at the home. A furnished [amueblado] apartment at \$8 per week. In the entrance downstairs was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and a doorbell [timbre] from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also there was a card bearing the name, "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his apartment above, he was called "Jim" and strongly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della.

Della finished crying and dried her cheeks with a rag. She stood by the window and looked out at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard [jardin trasero]. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present [regalo]. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Jim's paycheck [sueldo] of twenty dollars a week didn't go far [no alcanzó mucho]. Expenses [gastos] 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 -- something worthy [digno] of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a long, tall mirror [espejo] between the windows of the room. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender [delgada], had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled [hizo girar] from the window and stood before the glass. 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 Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride [orgullo]. One was Jim's gold watch [reloj] that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling [rizando] and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment [prenda de vestir] for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered [vaciló] for a minute and stood still while a tear [lagrима] or two splashed [salpicó] on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle [destello] still in her eyes, she fluttered [revoloteó] out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mme. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight [tramo] up Della ran, and collected herself [se incorporó], panting [jadeando].

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take your hat off and let's look at it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting [levantando] the mass with a practiced hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

The next two hours flew by. Della was searching in 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 [al revés]. It was a platinum chain [cadena], simple in design, but substantial. It was worthy of Jim's 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 could be proud to check the time. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it secretively because of the old leather strap that he used in place of [en lugar de] a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons [tenacillas de rizar] and lighted the gas and went to work fixing her hair.

Within forty minutes, her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls [rizos] that made her look wonderfully like a young boy. 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 chorus girl [corista]. But what could I do? What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?”

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 [chuletas].

Jim was never late. Della doubled the watch 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 [susurró]: “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. To be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat [abrigo] and he didn’t have any gloves [guantes].

Jim stopped inside the door. His eyes 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 [serpenteó] off the table and went to him.

“Jim, darling,” she cried, “don’t look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold 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 it weren’t obvious to him.

“Cut it off and sold it,” said Della. “Don’t you like me just as well, anyhow? I’m me without my hair, aren’t I?”

Jim looked about the room curiously.

“You say your hair is gone?” he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

“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 [dulzura], “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 [despertarse]. He hugged his Della. He took 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 unwrap [si abres] that package, you may see why I was surprised at first.”

White fingers and nimble [háviles] tore [rompieron] at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy [grito de alegría], and then, a quick change to hysterical tears and crying, while Jim hugged her.

Jim’s gift to her was a set of combs [un juego de peines], combs that Della had admired for a long time in store window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jeweled rims, just the color to wear in the beautiful vanished [desaparecido] hair. They were expensive [caros] combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned [anheló] over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses [trenzas] that should have adorned the coveted [codiciados] adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom [pecho], and at length [por fin] she was able to look up with dim eyes [ojos nublados] and a smile and say: “My hair grows so fast, Jim!”

And then Della leaped up and cried, “Oh, oh!”

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly [ansiosamente] upon her open palm. The dull, precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

“Isn’t it a dandy [excelente], Jim? I hunted [cazé] 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 [se tiró] 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 for a little while. They’re too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs.”

“Dell, why don’t you put the chops on.”

The magi [los Reyes Magos], as you know, were wise [sabios] men -- wonderfully wise men -- who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger [pesebre]. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones.

And here, I have told you the story of two foolish [tontos] people in a flat who very unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But, of all who give gifts, these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.



## **The Little Match Girl**

**[La vendedora de fósforos]**

**Hans Christian Andersen**

It was dreadfully [horriblemente] cold. It was snowing fast, and was almost dark, as evening came on [empezó], the last evening of the year. In the cold and the darkness, there went along the street a poor little girl, bareheaded [con la cabeza decubierta] and with naked feet. When she left home she had slippers [zapatillas, pantuflas] on, it is true, but they were much too large for her feet. They were slippers that her mother had used until then, and the poor little girl lost them in running across the street when two carriages [carruajes] were passing terribly fast. When she looked for them, one was not to be found, and a boy seized [cogió] the other and ran away with it, saying he would use it for a cradle [cuna] some day, when he had children of his own.

So on the little girl went with her bare feet, which were red and blue with cold. In an old apron [delantal] that she wore were bundles [hazes] of matches [fósforos], and she carried a bundle also in her hand. No one had bought so much as a bunch [manejo] all the long day, and no one had given her even a penny.

Poor little girl! Shivering [tiritando] with cold and hunger, she crept along, a perfect picture of misery.

The snowflakes [copos de nieve] fell on her long flaxen [rubio] hair, which hung in pretty curls [rizos] about her throat; but she thought not of her beauty nor of the cold. Lights gleamed [brilló] in every window, and there came to her the savory [sabroso] smell of roast goose [ganso asado], for it was New Year's Eve [Nochevieja]. And it was of this which she thought.

In a corner [esquina] formed by two houses, one of which projected beyond the other, she sat cowering [encogiendose] down. She had drawn under her little feet, but still she grew colder and colder; yet she dared not go home [no se atrevió ir a casa], for she had sold no matches, and could not bring a penny of money. Her father would certainly beat [le pegaría] her; and, besides, it was cold enough at home, for they had only the roof above them; and, though the largest holes had been stopped with straw and rags, there were left many through which the cold wind whistled [silbó] .

And now her little hands were nearly frozen [congeladas] with cold. A single match might do her good if she might only draw it from the bundle, rub it

against the wall, and warm her fingers by it. So at last she drew one out. How it blazed and burned! It gave out a warm, bright flame like a little candle, as she held her hands over it. A wonderful little light it was. It really seemed to the little girl as if she sat before a great iron stove [estufa], with polished brass [latón] feet and brass shovel and tongs. So blessedly it burned that the little maiden stretched out her feet to warm them also. How comfortable she was! But the flame went out, the stove vanished, and nothing remained but the little burned match in her hand.

She rubbed another match against the wall. It burned brightly, and where the light fell upon the wall it became transparent like a veil, so that she could see through it into the room. A snow-white cloth was spread upon the table, on which was a beautiful china dinner service, while a roast goose, stuffed with apples and prunes, steamed famously, and sent forth a most savory smell. And what was more delightful still, and wonderful, the goose jumped from the dish, with knife and fork still in its breast, and waddled [andó] along the floor straight to the little girl.

But the match went out then, and nothing was left to her but the thick, damp [húmedo] wall.

She lit another match. And now she was under a most beautiful Christmas tree, larger and far more prettily trimmed [adornado] than the one she had seen through the glass doors at the rich merchant's. Hundreds of wax candles [velas de cera] were burning on the green branches [ramas], and merry figures, such as she had seen in the shop windows, looked down upon her. The child stretched out [extendió] her hands to them; then the match went out.

Still the lights of the Christmas tree rose higher and higher. She saw them as stars in heaven, and one of them fell, forming a long trail of fire.

"Now some one is dying [muriendo]," murmured the child softly; for her grandmother, the only person who had loved her and who was now dead, had told her that whenever a star falls a soul [alma] goes up to God.

She struck yet another match against the wall, and again it was light; and in the brightness there appeared before her the dear old grandmother, bright and radiant, yet sweet and mild, and happy as she had never looked on earth.

"Oh, grandmother," cried the child, "take me with you. I know you will go away when the match burns out [se apaga]. You, too, will vanish, like the warm stove, the splendid New Year's feast, the beautiful Christmas tree." And to prevent her grandmother from disappearing, she rubbed the whole bundle of matches against the wall.

And the matches burned with such a brilliant light that it became brighter than midday. Her grandmother had never looked so grand [elegante] and beautiful. She took the little girl in her arms, and both flew together, joyously [alegremente] and gloriously, rising higher and higher, far above the earth. And for them there was neither hunger, nor cold, nor care. They were with God.

But on the corner, at the dawn of day, sat the poor girl, leaning [apoyandose] against the wall, with red cheeks and smiling mouth, frozen to death [muerta del frio] on the last evening of the old year. Stiff and cold she sat, with the matches, one bundle of which was burned.

"She wanted to warm herself [queria calentarse], poor little thing," people said. No one imagined what sweet visions she had had, or how gloriously she had gone with her grandmother to enter upon the joys of a new year.