**The Jollys**

**A Priceless Gift**

**Table of Contents**

[CHAPTER 1](#_Toc20959098)

[A Priceless Gift 4](#_Toc20959099)

[CHAPTER 2](#_Toc20959100)

[A Priceless gift 10](#_Toc20959101)

[CHAPTER 3](#_Toc20959102)

[An Expensive Bargain 15](#_Toc20959103)

[CHAPTER 4](#_Toc20959104)

[A Valuable Lesson 19](#_Toc20959105)

CHAPTER 1

A Priceless Gift

Two days before Mother's Day, Grandma Helen, John, and Wendy were having brunch at a fancy European eatery. The three Jollys were just getting seated when the waitress, a beautiful woman in her forties, approached their table and greeted them.

“Good Morning! I am Dalila," she said as she put three menus on the table. "I'll be back in a second with your water."

As Dalila put the menus on the table, Grandma Helen and Wendy stared at her left wrist. Resting on Dalila’s wrist was a beautiful white-gold watch with blue diamonds. The watch shined brightly and seemed to hypnotize Grandma Helen and Wendy. Once Dalila turned away, Grandma Helen and Wendy looked at each other with their mouths wide open. “Did you see her watch?” asked Wendy, excited. “You bet I did!” replied Grandma Helen, still looking in Dalila’s direction. “I think that’s a Swiss watch,” she continued. John had not noticed the woman’s watch, but he saw the effect it had on his wife and mother. He had rarely seen them both as excited about the same thing.

“It sure looks nice, but what is so special about it?” he asked, confused.

“Everything is special about it,” replied Wendy. “It is classy and yet casual.”

“It’s a perpetual watch. That means it does not require a battery,” Grandma Helen added, a hint of admiration in her voice.

Dalila came back with the water, and Wendy immediately commented on her watch.

“That’s a beautiful watch you’ve got there.”

“Thank you. My husband and my son bought it for my birthday,” replied Dalila shyly as she leaned forward and put her wrist on the table to show the watch to Wendy and Grandma Helen.

John noticed Wendy’s eyes shining with envy as she looked at Dalila’s watch.

“It must be costly,” observed Grandma Helen. “Indeed. It is made of pure white gold with rare blue African diamonds,” Dalila replied proudly. “It's expensive, but it is also a priceless gift."

“You have a lovely husband!” exclaimed Wendy.

“And a very good son,” added Grandma Helen.

These last two remarks made John look up at the watch. The watch did not interest him one bit, but he couldn’t ignore his wife’s and mother’s interest in it. *It is a beautiful watch. I wish I could give one like this to Wendy,* he thought to himself as he leaned forward to get a better look. For the rest of the meal, Wendy and Helen discussed the watch and all of its particularities while John ate his meal in silence.

In the car, on their way back home, Wendy teasingly asked John: “So, when are we going shopping for beautiful Swiss watches?”

“One day maybe,” responded John curtly, continuing to look straight at the road. “Those watches are way too expensive for my taste anyway,” Grandma Helen remarked. “I would never want anyone to spend that much money on a watch for me.”

The next morning, John was at work when he received an e-mail from his boss. Sitting in front of his computer, he loosened his tie, took a deep breath, and opened the e-mail. He read apprehensively, and almost fell off his chair when he finished reading it.

"Congratulations, John! The clients have approved the project you were working on and were so impressed by your work that they've decided to move all of their advertisement business to our company! As a reward, I have increased your quarterly bonus by thirty thousand dollars.”

John was ecstatic! He could not believe his eyes. He jumped up and down, stifling a scream of joy to avoid startling the people outside his office. After a few jumps, he sat back in his chair and realized that he could now afford the watch Wendy longed for.

*With this thirty-thousand-dollar bonus I could get Wendy the Mother’s Day gift that she really wants,* he thought to himself.

During his lunch break, John drove to a jewelry store near his office. It was a small store, and John was the only customer there. He saw beautiful watches arranged in giant display cases that lined the walls. The floor and ceiling were glistening white, and large neon lights made the watches shine like a thousand little stars behind the displays.

The jeweler, a small chubby man, standing behind the counter, greeted John.

“Dear sir! You look like a man looking for a special gift for a loved one,” he said to John in an affable tone.

“Well, I want a white gold and diamond quality Swiss watch for my wife,” explained John, as he bent forward to look closer at the displays. “Something classy but casual.”

“Classy and casual and made of white gold, and blue diamonds?” repeated the jeweler slowly. “That’s a very specific request, and I know only one Swiss watch like this.”

He walked towards the last display on the wall, blew on his thumb, and then pressed it against a small black screen on the glass. The display case opened itself with a "*POP*” sound, and the jeweler in a smooth and careful motion reached for a watch behind the display. “Come here, princess,” he gently whispered, as he took the watch in his hand and handled it as if it were a newborn baby.

John observed the man and the watch he had in his hand. It looked very similar to the one the waitress had. “Yes! That one,” he said excitedly, “how much is it?”

“It costs twenty-five thousand dollars because it is a perpetual watch. It is an expensive watch that will make for a priceless gift,” he said proudly in the same way that a father talks about his child’s achievements.

John’s lower jaw dropped. He had not expected the watch to be this expensive. He looked at the watch for a few seconds, hesitating, but then the image of Wendy longing for the watch filled him with resolve.

“I will take it,” he said.

"Perfect. I will put it in its box, but before that, I want to show you something," said the jeweler in a serious tone. "You see, right behind the screen, there is a serial number that is unique to each watch. It guarantees that the watch is authentic."

John took a quick look at the serial number, nodded silently, and then paid for the watch. He left the jewelry store with what he hoped would be a great source of joy for his beloved wife.

That day, John returned home earlier than usual so he could set everything up before Wendy came home. He knew that after she came, Wendy would likely go to the kitchen to get herself a glass of juice. He wanted to place the watch on the kitchen table and surprise her there. John swiftly greeted Grandma Helen and Grandpa Henry, who were having a cup of tea in the living room, but did not mention anything about the watch before going to the kitchen.

John placed the little silk box containing the watch, a fresh rose, and a beautiful Mother’s Day card right in the middle of the kitchen table. He knew that Wendy would be home in about twenty minutes, so he decided to go and change before she arrived. As John was folding his suit in his room, he heard Wendy enter the house. He finished and went to the kitchen. He was looking forward to seeing Wendy’s surprised and happy expression. However, to John’s dismay, a completely different scene unfolded in the kitchen.

CHAPTER 2

A Priceless gift

Grandma Helen was sitting at the kitchen table, her face smeared in tears, holding the watch he had bought for Wendy. Wendy was standing behind Grandma Helen, comforting the old woman, and admiring the watch.

“Oh, John! This is too much,” Grandma Helen said to John in a voice muffled with cries. “How did you know I wanted this watch? Did Henry tell you we were talking about it yesterday?”

John's jaw dropped. He stood there, silently looking at Grandma Helen and Wendy.

"Hi, John," Wendy greeted him with a faint smile.

Grandma Helen, oblivious to her son’s silence, kept admiring the watch. Wendy noticed her husband’s confused look and silence.

Why is he just standing there not saying anything, she wondered.

She reached for the small note that John had put on the table and read it silently.

The card read: “A small gift to a dedicated wife, great mother and the most important woman in my life.”

Oh John, what a clumsy thing to write when your mom is around, Wendy thought to herself, smiling at her husband, who was still looking on in dismay.

Helen must not have noticed that the card mentioned “wife,” as in “John’s wife” rather than “Grandpa Henry’s wife,” she concluded.

While Wendy was thinking to herself, John came back to his senses and said, “Mom… I am sorry, but…”

Wendy, understanding what her husband was about to say, interrupted him.

“What matters is that you love the watch John and I got for you, Helen,” she said to Grandma Helen. Then, she looked at John in the eyes and mouthed, “Don’t say anything!”

John tilted his head to the side, confused by his wife's reaction. Grandma Helen, still completely oblivious to the exchange between John and Wendy, had finally stopped crying. She put the watch back in its box, got up, and looked at John. "I love this watch, but I cannot accept such an expensive gift. I will keep the card, but I want you to return the watch. The money would be better used on the children's college fund," she explained as she put the watch back in its box.

Wendy could barely believe what she was hearing. This woman is the most selfless person I know, she thought to herself, feeling moved. “Well, actually…” John started saying, but Wendy interrupted him again.

“Helen, no one deserves this gift more than you,” she said to her mother-in-law.

“No, Wendy. You and John work much too hard for me to accept a gift this expensive, she said, as she crossed her arms, “This watch probably costs as much as one or two years of college tuition for my grandkids.”

After hearing the mention of grandkids, Wendy knew that there would be no way to convince her mother-in-law to accept the watch. She decided to use a different strategy. She gently took the watch away from Grandma Helen’s hand and looked at it carefully.

“Helen, what John was about to say is that this watch is just a replica. It barely cost us more than a hundred dollars, but we hope that you’ll love it just as much as a real one.”

“A replica?” asked Grandma Helen, confused.

“Yes, although it looks like a real Swiss watch, it is not,” explained Wendy. “It is not made of white gold, and the diamonds are fake.”

Grandma Helen took the watch out of the box again, looked at it carefully, and exclaimed: "Well, this is a wonderful replica. It looks and feels like a real Swiss watch."

John could not believe his ears and tried to interject, but before he had time to say a word, Wendy moved towards him, grabbed his hand, and yanked it down in a way that made it clear that he should be quiet.

Grandma Helen moved towards John and kissed him softly on the cheek.

“Replica or not, this is a priceless gift,” she said tenderly.

Wendy smiled at Grandma Helen, excused herself, and then led John to their bedroom. On their way, they passed by Grandpa Henry, who just woke up from a nap on the couch. He smiled and winked at Wendy in a mischievous way. He must have overheard us, she thought as she winked back at him.

Once John and Wendy were in their room with the door closed behind them, John looked at Wendy and said in an angry tone: “Wendy! What were you thinking? That watch is not a replica, and it was meant for you. It’s worth twenty-five thousand dollars!”

Wendy placed her hands on her hips and said, “What were you thinking buying such an expensive watch?”

Her happy demeanor had completely disappeared.

“Also, if you are to buy a gift for Mother’s Day, shouldn’t you buy one for your mother rather than your wife?” she continued.

"Well, I got a big bonus today, and I bought this watch for you," he replied. "I even remember her saying she would never want such a watch, so I was planning to gift her and Grandpa Henry a nice weekend at the spa. I just did not expect her to mistake the watch as hers, and even less that you would play along and give her the watch so easily!”

“John! Your card was misleading, and telling her the truth would’ve have broken her heart! Didn’t you see how happy she was?” Wendy continued.

“You are right,” John admitted and nodded slowly.

"Of course, I am right! I am a mother. I know how Helen felt. Plus, who said I gave her the watch? Knowing Helen, one day, that watch will become Anne's," she exclaimed.

John’s eyes widened. He knew his wife was right. Grandma Helen loved making gifts to her grandchildren.

“Well, I guess you are right about that,” he conceded, “but we can’t just let her think that a twenty-five-thousand-dollar watch is a one-hundred-dollar replica.”

Wendy nodded silently and looked at the ground as if to recognize that she had made a mistake.

“It was a small white lie to make sure she accepts the watch. Once she gets used to it, we’ll tell her the truth,” she replied.

“A white lie is a harmless lie, but it’s still a lie,” said John, thinking out loud.

CHAPTER 3

An Expensive Bargain

Over the next few weeks, Grandma Helen wore the watch proudly every day and showed it to all of her friends. However, as Wendy had predicted, one morning during breakfast, Grandma Helen announced to the whole family that she would one day give the watch to Anne as a high school graduation gift. Anne was delighted by the news.

“I can’t wait to get that shiny watch,” she said, as she stared at her grandmother’s wrist. “I’ll be the only one with a beautiful watch!”

“Will we also get watches?” asked Tom and Allan in unison.

Grandma Helen had not expected this question. After a brief moment of hesitation, she said, "Of course, Grandpa Henry and I will prepare some nice graduation gifts for you boys as well."

“I hope we get watches too!” exclaimed Allan.

The whole family laughed and finished their breakfast, but Grandma Helen started thinking about the fact that maybe she should also get watches for the twins.

A few days later, Grandma Helen was sitting on a bench at the park, drinking tea after a vigorous walk. A tall, lanky man in his fifties came and sat next to her. He greeted her politely, sat at the other edge of the bench, and started reading a book. After a few minutes, he took his eyes off of his book and addressed Grandma Helen, who was still drinking her tea.

“Wow, is that a Swish watch?” he inquired, pointing at the watch.

“Yes, it is,” answered Grandma Helen. “It was a Mother’s Day gift from my son.”

“Wow! You’ve got a generous son,” the stranger exclaimed, “I bet it cost him a lot of money.”

“Actually, it looks expensive, but it’s just a replica! It cost no more than a hundred dollars,” whispered Grandma Helen as if she was confiding to an old friend. The stranger sat a bit closer to Grandma Helen and looked at the watch carefully.

“Do you mind if I take a look?” he asked.

"Of course not," answered Grandma Helen as she took off the watch and handed it to him. "It even feels like a real one."

“It sure does,” said the stranger, as he took the watch. “I’ve never seen a replica as real as this one.” He lifted the watch very close to his face and noticed the serial number engraved in the metal. *Even the most realistic replicas do not have such well-engraved serial numbers, and those diamonds are definitely not fake,* he thought to himself.

There was a flash of greed in his eyes, but he gently returned the watch to Grandma Helen.

“Where did you say your son bought this watch?” he asked innocently. “I’d love to buy one like this for my daughter.”

"I'm sorry, but I don't know. But I could ask him,” replied Grandma Helen. “I’m sure they have plenty more like this one.”

“Oh, that would be nice, but her birthday is tonight, and I really would have loved to get her a nice gift right away,” lied the man. “Do you think maybe I could buy this one from you?”

Grandma Helen felt there was something odd about the man’s sudden eagerness to buy her watch. She put her right hand over her left wrist as if to make sure the watch was still there and got up from the bench.

“No, sorry. It’s getting late, and I should get going,” she replied.

“I apologize if I was rude,” replied the man. “I could offer you four hundred dollars for your watch. You could buy four watches like this one.”

Grandma Helen was about to leave, but the mention of four watches stopped her in her tracks. She remembered Tom and Allan’s asking if they could also get watches. *Maybe this could be a good deal after all. With four hundred dollars, I could buy each one of my grandchildren a watch and still have one for myself,*she reflected.

“Well, I won’t let this watch go for less than four hundred and fifty dollars,” she replied, trying to sound like a hard bargainer.

“Four hundred and fifty dollars! You’re a hard bargainer!” exclaimed the man with a sly smile, as he took out four hundred and fifty dollars from his wallet and tried to hand it to Grandma Helen. Grandma Helen hesitated for a second, but then she took the watch off her wrist, held it in front of her face, and looked at it for a few seconds. *John and Wendy will understand,* she thought to herself sadly.

CHAPTER 4

A Valuable Lesson

Back in the Jolly’s home, Grandpa Henry, Wendy, and Helen were sitting at the kitchen table, having a cup of coffee, and discussing the watch. “I know what you’ve done, Wendy,” chuckled Grandpa Henry. “While I don’t approve of it, I think it worked. Helen is in love with the watch, but you must tell her the truth.”

“What truly matters is the intention behind the gift, not its price,” answered Wendy defensively. “I am planning to tell her the truth tonight.”

“It was just a white lie to make sure that Mom accepts the watch," said John, as he put his hand over the top of his wife's hand.

John knew that Wendy would do the right thing and tell Grandma Helen the truth when she came back. A few minutes later, they heard Grandma Helen enter the house.

"Good evening!" she said as she entered the kitchen.

“Good evening, Helen. There’s something I wanted to tell you,” said Wendy in a gentle voice.

Grandma Helen nodded and sat next to John across Wendy. Then, she put her left wrist on John’s shoulder and kissed him gently on the forehead. John immediately noticed that the watch was absent from his mother’s wrist.

“Mom, where’s the watch?” He exclaimed.

Clueless to the alarmed tone in her son’s voice, Grandma Helen smiled at him and said, “I don’t have it with me, but let’s first hear what Wendy has to say.”

Upon hearing Grandma Helen’s answer, Wendy stopped herself and repeated John’s question.

“Helen, where’s the watch?”

Sensing that something was wrong, Grandma Helen looked at Grandpa Henry, who had been silent, and asked, “Henry, is everything okay?”

"Of course, dear, but what happened to the watch?" he replied gently.

“I don’t have it with me, Henry. Now could you please tell me why is everyone acting so strange?” she asked, irritated. She looked at her son and daughter-in-law suspiciously.

Wendy’s face turned white, and John put his face in his hands in shock.

“Mom, do you not have the watch anymore?” asked John, his voice shaking.

“Honey, I went to the park, and a man offered to buy the watch off of me. He offered me four hundred and fifty dollars for it, and I figured that with that money I could buy one watch for each of my grandchildren, and a new one for myself.”

Wendy coughed out the coffee she was drinking. John patted her back, and Grandpa Henry started laughing.

“You sold that watch for four hundred and fifty dollars!” Wendy asked, raising her voice in anger.

Grandma Helen’s face turned cold, and staring her daughter-in-law in the eyes, she said in a low, angry voice, "What if I did, Wendy? Isn't it my watch?"

Grandpa Henry intervened. “Helen, Wendy, please calm down,” he said, and then turning to his wife, he added, “Helen, what happened?”

Grandma Helen raised her chin away and crossed her arms. Then, realizing how distressed John looked, she yielded and answered Grandpa Henry.

“The man offered me four hundred and fifty dollars, but there was something weird about him. People don’t just go to parks and offer to buy watches off of strangers,” she explained.

“So, you still have the watch?” mumbled John with hope.

"Well, on my way home, I walked by a jewelry store and had them take a look at the watch. After finding out its real price, I came home and put it in our safe upstairs,” she said matter-of-factly.

John started laughing in relief. Wendy patted his back and joined in her husband's laugh.

"I understand why you felt like you needed to lie to me, Wendy, but next time please just tell me the truth," said Grandma Helen. "Anything you and John offer me is priceless anyway."

Wendy got up and moved towards Grandma Helen.

"I am sorry, Helen," she said, as she hugged her mother-in-law.

Grandma Helen hugged her back, and Grandpa Henry and John both started laughing and joined the embrace. At that moment, Anne Jolly entered the kitchen and saw all the adults laughing and hugging each other.

“What is going on?” she asked, confused.

Grandma Helen looked at her granddaughter and said: “Well, we all found out tonight that the watch I will give you on your graduation day is priceless.”

“I already knew that, Grandma. Anything you’d give me is priceless,” replied the youngest Jolly, as she joined into the big family hug.