

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS TEXT!!!

Series: Miscellaneous Single Episodes

Show: Coronet Little Show: The Gift of the Magi

Date: Dec 19 1943

<http://www.myoldradio.com/include/popup.php?id=36879>

CAST:
ANNOUNCER
STORYTELLER
DELLA
SOFRONIE
JIM
ANNOUNCER:

The Coronet Little Show.

MUSIC: ETHEREAL THEME ... THEN IN BG

ANNOUNCER: The Coronet Little Show, presenting fact and fiction, dramatized by The Coronet Storyteller.

MUSIC: THEME FILLS A PAUSE ... THEN OUT

ANNOUNCER: Today, we are going back to a Christmas Eve in the nineteenth century -- O. Henry's story of the true Christmas spirit, of love and sacrifice, "The Gift of the Magi," will be brought to you in just a moment by The Coronet Storyteller. ...

MUSIC: TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY INTRODUCTION ... THEN IN BG, OUT GENTLY AT

STORYTELLER: 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. Della counted it for the third time.

DELLA: (COUNTS THE MONEY UNDER HER BREATH) Dollar eighty-three.

SOUND: CLINK OF COINS ON TABLE PUNCTUATES EACH SENTENCE

DELLA: Dollar eighty-four. Dollar eighty-five. Dollar eighty-six. [X] (DISAPPOINTED) Dollar eighty-seven.

STORYTELLER: It was still the same. And the next day would be Christmas. One dollar and eighty-seven cents with which to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it.

DELLA: (BREAKS DOWN AND SOBS LOUDLY, SUBSIDES BEHIND FOLLOWING--)

STORYTELLER: While Della's sniffles are gradually subsiding, take a look at the vestibule below, where you will see on the letter-box a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young." The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid thirty dollars per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to twenty dollars, the letters of "Dillingham" looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS TEXT!!!

unassuming "D." 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. That's Della.

She has now finished her cry and is looking into the pier-glass, attending to her cheeks with the powder rag. Suddenly--

DELLA: (GASPS) Oh!

STORYTELLER: As she stands before the glass, she pulls down her hair and lets it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs 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 -- which now ripples about her, shining like a cascade of brown waters, and reaching below her knee. Her eyes are brilliant, but her face has lost its color. Nervously and quickly, she does her hair up again, slips into her old brown jacket; puts on her old brown hat; and in the twinkling of an eye, she is halfway down the stairs and out on the street.

SOUND: DOOR SLAMS ... HORSES ON COBBLESTONES, CONTINUES IN BG

MUSIC: BRIDGE

SOUND: HOOFBEATS OUT BEHIND--

STORYTELLER: Della has a determined, almost desperate, look as she sights a sign reading: "Madame Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." She stops quickly, then opens the door...

SOUND: SHOP DOOR OPENS, BELL RINGS

STORYTELLER:... which leads to a flight of stairs.

SOUND: DELLA'S FOOTSTEPS UP STAIRS ... THEN OUT, IN AGREEMENT WITH--

STORYTELLER: Della rushes, panting, up the stairs and plumb into the portly figure of Madame Sofronie.

DELLA: (DESPERATE) Will you buy my hair?

SOFRONIE: (IMPERIOUS) I buy hair. Take yer hat off. Let's have a sight at the looks of it.

STORYTELLER: Down ripples the brown cascade.

SOFRONIE: (IMPRESSED) Hmmmm. Twenty dollars.

DELLA: All right. Only quickly, please.

MUSIC: PLUCKED STRINGS ... FOR A HAIRCUT ... THEN IN BG

STORYTELLER: In a few moments, the implacable Madame Sofronie and her scissors have done the job. And Della, minus her hair, but richer by twenty dollars, flees from the store into the street again.

MUSIC: CHANGES TO "JINGLE BELLS" ... THEN IN BG, FADES OUT AT [X]

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS TEXT!!!

STORYTELLER: This time she's looking for a different store, a store in which to buy, not to sell. At last, she finds herself in a department store in the midst of a gay holiday throng. [X]

SOUND: WALLA OF HOLIDAY THRONG ... THEN IN BG

STORYTELLER: At the jewelry counter, as she longingly handles a platinum chain, she hesitantly asks--

DELLA: You did say twenty-one dollars, didn't you? (PAUSE) Yes. That's what I thought.

STORYTELLER: This is it! This is the present just made for Jim and no one else! There's no other like it in any of the stores. She knows, for she turned all of them inside out. It's a platinum fob chain, simple and chaste in design. Della has made her mind up.

DELLA: I'll take it!

STORYTELLER: With the chain wrapped in a holiday box and clutched in her eager hand, Della finds herself again out on the street...

MUSIC: OVERLAPS WITH ABOVE ... "JINGLE BELLS" IN BG ... OUT AT [X]

SOUND: WALLA CHANGES TO HOOFBEATS WITH MUSIC, GRADUALLY FADES OUT BEHIND--

STORYTELLER:... But this time she is in such a rosy glow she hardly notices the other last minute shoppers hurrying by; the street trio playing Christmas carols; the old gentleman who tries to sell her a holly wreath. It seems but seconds until she is back in the little furnished flat again.

SOUND: DELLA'S FOOTSTEPS ... DOOR SHUTS

STORYTELLER: There's a sudden shock as the pier-glass confronts her -- this time accusingly. Now comes the moment of reckoning, as she gazes with dismay at the short ends of her hair. The rosy glow gives way to prudence and reason. Out comes the curling iron! On with the gas jet! -- as she sets to work repairing the ravages made by generosity -- and love.

In forty minutes, she finishes, with the last curl lying tiny and close to her head, making her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. But, to Della, gazing critically at herself in the pier-glass, the result is anything but wonderful.

DELLA: If Jim doesn't kill me first, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl.

STORYTELLER: But no more time for reflections, physical or mental. It's nearly seven and Jim is never late! She sits nervously, waiting for Jim.

SOUND: JIM'S FOOTSTEPS APPROACH DURING FOLLOWING--

STORYTELLER: Now, she hears his steps on the stair way down on the first flight. She has a habit of saying silent little prayers about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispers--

DELLA: Please God, make him not mind my hair so much. Make him think I'm still pretty.

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS TEXT!!!

SOUND: JIM'S FOOTSTEPS ARRIVE ... DOOR OPENS

STORYTELLER: The door opens and Jim steps in and closes it.

SOUND: DOOR SHUTS

STORYTELLER: He has a smile of welcome on his face as he glances around the room for Della. But the smile freezes on his lips as he suddenly sees her sitting on the corner of the table. An expression comes into his eyes as immovable as a setter dog at the scent of quail.

The expression terrifies Della who is expecting anger, surprise, disapproval, or even horror, but not this look of-- Of--

Della wriggles off the table and goes to him.

DELLA: Jim, darling, 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. And wait till you see the beautiful gift I got for you.

STORYTELLER: Della rattled on like that, but after she was all through, all Jim could ask laboriously was--

JIM: You've cut off your hair?

STORYTELLER: Della tried again. This time, more patiently.

DELLA: Sold, I tell you. Sold and gone, too. And it went for you, Jim. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered ...

MUSIC: SAD ... SNEAKS IN BEHIND--

DELLA:... but nobody could ever count my love for you. (BEAT) Now -- shall we have supper?

STORYTELLER: (PAUSE) At last, Jim seemed to wake out of his trance. He enfolded Della in his arms, and then he carefully draws a package from his overcoat pocket and throws it on the table.

SOUND: PACKAGE WITHDRAWN AND DROPPED ON TABLE ... THEN PACKAGE UNWRAPPED BEHIND--

STORYTELLER: Nimble fingers quickly tear open the string and paper. And then--

MUSIC: UP FOR A STING! ... THEN OUT

DELLA: (ECSTATIC) Oh, Jim! They're beautiful! How did you know?! They're - they're what I've always want---! (REALIZES, HORRIFIED) NO! My hair! My hair! Oh, Jim, how can I wear them?

STORYTELLER: There they lay. The Combs -- the set Della had worshipped for so long in an exclusive shop window. Pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful -- and vanished -- hair.

DO NOT WRITE ON THIS TEXT!!!

They were expensive combs, Della knew, and her heart had craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, Della hugs them to her, and looks up at Jim with dim eyes and a smile.

DELLA: (REASSURING) My hair grows so fast, Jim.

STORYTELLER: Then Della puts the combs down carefully, lovingly -- and even more radiantly prepares to show Jim his gift. She holds it out to him eagerly on outstretched palm. The dull precious metal gleams and glows entirely satisfied with its own value.

DELLA: Isn't it a beauty, Jim? You'll have to look at the time every fifteen minutes now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks with the chain.

STORYTELLER: For answer, Jim sits down suddenly on the couch.

JIM: (CAREFULLY) Dell--

STORYTELLER:--he says--

MUSIC: SNEAKS IN

JIM: Let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. I - I sold the watch to get money to buy your combs. (BEAT, QUIETLY) And now ---- how about supper?

MUSIC: UP ... "O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL"/"ADESTE FIDELIS" ... THEN IN BG

STORYTELLER: The magi, as you know, were wise men who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle 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 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, these foolish ones were the wisest.

They are the magi.

MUSIC: TO A FINISH

ANNOUNCER: You have just heard O. Henry's "Gift of the Magi" which was brought to you by your Coronet Storyteller.