



### A gift from the heart

Harry was a very happy lad. Grandfather had given him a whole dollar for his birthday, and Harry had carefully put it away, so he would have money to buy Christmas presents, and today was the day!

He decided what he would buy for his Mother, and Dad, and little sister Dawn, and if he reckoned aright, there would be a whole quarter left over for himself! After all, this story is about a time when a dollar bought a lot more than it does today.

So, off to the big store with simply thousands of good things to buy. Harry stood in the doorway, his mouth open, and gazed at all the shimmering, scintillating, decorations. There was a warm feeling in the air, as he listened to the carols. People were laughing as they passed by clutching mysterious parcels, of odd shapes, sizes, and beautiful wrappings.

Harry bought the box of embroidered handkerchiefs for Mother, and then he found a lovely little black tin horse, with silver painted saddle for Dawn, and finally, a hammer for Dad's workshop.

Now he could get something for himself. But what? There were so many things to choose from. A book, a ball, a toy wagon, a top – what to choose? Harry could feel the quarter burning a hole in his pocket as he wandered around the store. Then he saw her, standing by the doll counter, gently feeling the dresses adorning the dolls. There were so many of them. Big ones, as tall as the little girl herself, and tiny little ones you could hide in your hand.

"How much for this doll?" asked the little girl, pointing to a beautifully dressed one. "Oh that one is fifteen dollars," replied the clerk. Harry noticed the pale complexion on the face of the little girl, and her blue coat was poor, and ragged. She certainly didn't have fifteen dollars. probably doesn't even have one dollar if the truth be known, he thought.

The dolls seemed to beckon to her, and she continued to stand at the counter asking the clerk the prices of all the dolls there. All the prices were too high. but the clerk patiently answered her questions. Finally, the little girl, tears in her eyes, asked, "Don't you have any dolls with clothes for ten cents?"

"I'm sorry," said the clerk, "But the cheapest doll we have with clothes on is twenty-five cents." The tears began

rolling down the little walf's cheeks. "Thank you anyway," she said, in a whisper, as she began to turn away from the counter.

Harry felt very uncomfortable inside. Harry strode forward, his cheeks aflame, brighter even than Father Christmas's suit! "I'll take one of those dolls with clothes on for twenty-five cents," he said, pushing the quarter at the clerk. She looked at him with eyebrows arched. "Here you are young man," she said. "Thank you," replied Harry, taking the brown paper bag. He looked around, and caught sight of the little girl on her way toward the front doors of the store. He hurried up to her, and thrust the bag at her. "Here, take this, it is for you!"

The little girl gasped as she saw the doll in the bag. "Oh, thank you, thank you," she said, hugging the little doll to her. But Harry barely heard her. Suddenly tears came to his eyes, as he realized that he had spent his last quarter, all he wanted to do was to go home, and hide in his room.

It was breakfast, the next morning, when Harry heard the news report on the radio.

"The half frozen body of a little girl was found in an alley behind Timkins Department Store early this morning, by two policemen on their beat. Barely alive, she was rushed to County General Hospital. She had taken off her blue coat, and wrapped it around a little doll, she clutched to her breast." The announcer continued, "Lats report from the hospital was that she is resting comfortably. Authorities are trying to find out who she is. In other news..."

Harry didn't listen to any more. he smiled to himself as he thought of the expression on the little girl's face when she opened the bag, and drew the out the doll. That nagging feeling fled Harry's tummy, and he began whistling to himself. surely that was the best gift of all, a gift from the heart. he had given her twenty-five cents, but she had given herself to the little doll.

A very Merry and Blessed Christmas to you all!

- our thanks to Rev. Peter Walford-Davis for this story.

