

The Gift of the Magi

by O. Henry

O. Henry, whose real name was William Sydney Porter, wrote the short story "The Gift of the Magi." It was published in 1910. Below are the opening paragraphs of the story.

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 bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. 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 instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

Questions

1. Why is Della crying?
2. How did she get the money?
3. What do you think "one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony" means?
4. What does O. Henry mean by "with sniffles predominating"?