





# The Last Present

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(Based on a true story)

*God loveth a cheerful giver* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

**T**hud! Kristi plopped down on the ice. For a moment, she sat looking at the skates she'd found in the attic. They were wrinkled, black, and three inches longer than her feet. Someday she would be a figure skater and sail across the rink in a glittering blue skirt. But right now all she had were old skates, a coat that was too small, and a patch of ice in the horse pasture.

"Hey, ballerina! Where did you get those ugly skates?"

Kristi looked up and saw her 17-year-old brother, Jake, sitting on the fence. She wondered how long he'd been watching her. "Go away!" she yelled.

"You should've seen your face, like you were a famous skater or something. Then—crash!" Jake laughed.

Kristi scrambled to her feet, slipping on the ice. "Just you wait. Someday I'll be famous."

Jake backed away from the fence, still grinning. "OK, OK. I believe you. But you'll need better skates."

That evening, Kristi told her mother that she wanted ice skates for Christmas.

Mother leaned over and hugged her. "We'll have a wonderful Christmas this year just because it's Christmas." She looked serious. "But try not to get

your hopes up about skates. What money we have has to buy things we need."

Still, Kristi hoped.

Three days before Christmas, she noticed a box under the tree without a name tag. It was shaped like a big shoe box. She knew it had to be skates! Kneeling under the tree, she picked it up and shook it.

Just then, Jake walked in. He smelled like hamburgers because he worked at a fast-food place after school. Quickly, Kristi set the box down.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"Nothing," she said, trying to look innocent.

He had a funny look on his face. "You probably think . . ." he started to say.

"Think what?" Kristi asked.

"Nothing," he said.

On Christmas morning, Kristi sat by the tree while her father passed around the gifts. She got a new coat, socks, and a mystery book.

Kristi waited, watching the box with no name tag. Finally, her mother leaned over, picked it up, and handed it to Kristi's father. "Merry Christmas, Dear." She kissed him on the cheek. "You've needed these for a long time."

It was a pair of work boots.

Kristi bent her head over her new book, seeing just a blur of words. She wasn't going to cry and ruin everyone's Christmas.

The next day, Kristi went sledding with her friends. She wore her new coat and had so much fun she almost forgot that she had wanted skates. Later that afternoon she sat curled up in a chair reading her book when Jake came in the door. He was still wearing his work uniform and he smelled like french fries.

"I'm going to the store," he said. "Do you want to go with me?"

Surprised, Kristi closed her book. "OK."

Soon they were driving downtown in his old car. It stalled at a stoplight and people behind them honked while Jake restarted it. The car sputtered down the road to a sports equipment store.

"You have to come in and try them on," Jake said.

"Try what on?"

"Skates," he said. "I thought I'd get you some, since—"

"Skates?" Kristi cried. "Skates? Really?"

"Yeah," he said, scratching his ear.

They went inside and the salesman pulled out a box. Nestled in blue tissue paper were the skates, their silver blades shining. Kristi sniffed their newness and tried them on, balancing carefully on the blades.

When they got home, it was almost dark. But there was a full moon. "There's enough moonlight to go skating if you want," Jake said. He picked up the old black skates. "Maybe I'll skate too."

Together they walked out to the pasture. With trembling fingers, Kristi laced up her skates and stepped onto the ice. They were firm around her ankles. She glided across the ice and did a smooth turn, amazed at how much easier it was.

Jake put on the old skates and joined her. They skated a long time, sometimes falling down and laughing. Over by the fence, the horses watched.

"The horses probably think we're crazy," Jake said.

Kristi looked at the horses, then stopped to watch her tall brother as he wobbled across the ice. It was then she noticed his pants were too short, and his coat sleeves were frayed at the cuffs.

Kristi watched as Jake took long, awkward strides around the ice. "He could have gotten himself some clothes," she thought, "or maybe fixed his car." But he bought her skates. A warm feeling started in her chest and grew until she felt so warm she could almost take off her coat. Suddenly, Kristi wanted to do something kind for someone else. She wanted to be as kind to everyone as Jake was to her.

Kristi looked toward the fence where the horses were quiet and watching. "Do you want to know what the horses really think?" she asked Jake. "They think you're the best brother ever." ●



"Giving, not getting, brings to full bloom the Christmas spirit."

**President Thomas S. Monson, First Counselor in the First Presidency, "Christmas Gifts, Christmas Blessings," Ensign, Dec. 1995, 2.**

