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# The Gift: A Novel

By Richard Paul Evans



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A heartwarming and inspirational Christmas novel in the tradition of *The Christmas Box* and *Finding Noel* from *New York Times* bestselling author Richard Paul Evans. Sure to be a classic, this new tale brings to life the joy of the season and demonstrates the redemptive power of love: there is no hurt so great that love cannot heal it.

Nathan Hurst hated Christmas. For the rest of the world it was a day of joy and celebration; for Nathan it was simply a reminder of the event that destroyed his childhood until a snowstorm, a cancelled flight, and an unexpected meeting with a young mother and her very special son would show him that Christmas is indeed the season of miracles.

From the beloved author of the international bestseller *The Christmas Box* comes another timeless story of faith, hope, and healing.



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## **The Gift: A Novel By Richard Paul Evans Bibliography**

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Evans (*The Christmas Box*) returns with narrator Nathan Hurst, a frequently traveling, Tourette's-suffering security chief for a retail chain. When Nathan gets snowed in at the Denver airport at Thanksgiving, he offers half his hotel suite to a stranded needy family: recently divorced single mom Addison (a massage therapist), and her two children, Lizzy and Collin. Collin, who has leukemia, cures Nathan's Tourette's with his gift of healing touch. Exercising his secret gift makes Collin sicker, though, and as news of his healing powers eventually leaks out, leading to a demand for his services, his condition worsens. Nathan, meanwhile, feels emboldened by his cure, and moves to address childhood woes when visiting his nursing home-bound mother. The tightly honed narrative, brimming with good intention to find courage in shared suffering, soon brings everyone together. (*Oct.*)

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### About the Author

Richard Paul Evans is the #1 bestselling author of *The Christmas Box*. Each of his more than thirty novels has been a *New York Times* bestseller. There are more than thirty million copies of his books in print worldwide, translated into more than twenty four languages. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including the American Mothers Book Award, the *Romantic Times* Best Women's Novel of the Year Award, the German Audience Gold Award for Romance, two Religion Communicators Council Wilbur Awards, the *Washington Times* Humanitarian of the Century Award and the Volunteers of America National Empathy Award. He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah, with his wife, Keri, and their five children. You can learn more about Richard on Facebook at Facebook.com/RPEFans, or visit his website, RichardPaulEvans.com.

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## C H R I S T M A S 2 0 0 6

It's Christmas night. Everyone is asleep in the house but me. From my den window I see it has started snowing, but not in earnest. It seems to me a kind of curtain falling on the day.

There is a tranquillity to the moment that permeates my thoughts. I sit with a pencil and a pad of paper. I am prepared to write a story. This is not a Christmas story. Christmas is nearly over, dying like the fire in my fireplace, sharing the last of its warmth and light. Tomorrow the ornaments and decorations will come down, and we'll put Christmas away in boxes and bins. But first our family will visit a cemetery only a short drive from our house. I'll brush the snow from a headstone, then lay a potted poinsettia plant on its marble table. I'll hold my wife and daughter, and we'll remember a little boy.

Ours will not be the first footprints in the snow or the first flowers left. There will be two bouquets waiting. They're there every year.

You might already know some of our story -- or think you do. Some of it made the news. But what you heard was just a few bars of a song, and badly played at that. Tonight this weighs heavily on my mind. I believe it's time the world knew the whole truth, or at least as much as I can give them. So tonight, I begin to record our story for future generations. I know from the outset that many will not believe it. You may not believe it. No matter. I was there. I knew the boy and what he was capable of. And some things are true whether you want to believe them or not.

## Chapter One

I was born with Tourette's syndrome. If you're like most people, you're not sure what Tourette's is but suspect it has something to do with shouting obscenities in public. You'd be about ten percent right.

Tourette's syndrome is a neurological disorder characterized by repetitive, involuntary movements; things that make "normal" people uncomfortable. Some of us, about ten percent, curse in public. Some of us bark or make other animal noises. I have tics. I've had more than twenty different manifestations, from vocal tics like clearing my throat and loud gulping to repeated eye blinking, shrugging, head jerking, and grimacing. My last tic was in my hands, and even though it hurt, I still preferred it to a facial tic, because you can't hide your face in your pocket.

I also have a compulsion to spit in the face of famous people. I've never actually spit in anyone's face, probably because I don't know anyone famous, but the impulse is there. I once saw Tony Danza at a Park City restaurant, and I put my hand over my mouth, just to be safe.

The most peculiar of my symptoms is my need to touch sharp objects. If you were to go through my pockets you would find dollar bills folded into sharp corners. There's linen in paper money, which gives it an especially sharp corner. But anything sharp brings me comfort. On my desk at work there are always a dozen or more highly sharpened pencils.

People sometimes ask if my tics are painful. I invite them to try this experiment: blink sixty times in one minute and see how your eyes feel. Now do that for sixteen hours straight. I remember, as a boy, holding my face at night because I couldn't stop it from moving, and it hurt.

But more painful than the physical hurts were the social ones, like sitting alone in the school cafeteria, because no one wants to sit by someone making funny noises. The panicked look on a girl's face when your own face is doing gymnastics as you ask her out. (Tics are usually exacerbated by anxiety, and if asking a girl out doesn't make you anxious, what does?) Or being surrounded by every kid at summer camp, because they want to see what the freak will do next. There's a reason I learned to keep to myself.

Not surprisingly, I read a lot. Books are the most tolerant of friends. There were great books back then. *Old Yeller*, *Andy Buckram's Tin Men*, *Where the Red Fern Grows*, *The Flying Hockey Stick*. But my greatest love was comic books. Not the kiddie rags like Archie and Jughead, but the Marvel ones, whose heroes had muscles on muscles, bulging through skin-tight costumes. Characters like Spiderman, Captain America, Ironman, and the Incredible Hulk. I would read my magazines before and after school and long into the night, falling asleep with the lights on. I was always dreaming of being someone special: able to walk through walls (or knock someone through one), to fly, to burst into flames, or to wrap myself in a force field -- safe from whatever the bad guys could throw at me. Tellingly, the power I wanted most of all was to be invisible.

In a way I got my wish when I was eight years old. I became invisible. Not to everyone. Just to those who mattered.

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Tourette's wasn't the worst part of my childhood. Five weeks after my eighth birthday, on Christmas Day, a tragedy destroyed my family. Ten months later my parents filed for divorce. But it was never finalized. My father took his life on December twenty-fifth, one year to the day tragedy struck.

My mother was never well after that, physically or emotionally. She spent most of her time in bed. She never again hugged or kissed me. This was about the time my tics began. The month I turned sixteen, I moved out. I dropped out of school, piled everything I owned in the back of a Ford Pinto, and drove to Utah to live with a former schoolmate. I never even told my mother I was leaving. There was no reason to. I was rarely home, and we never spoke when I was.

You might assume that I was the victim of whatever bad thing happened. But you'd be wrong. It was something that I did. I suppose that's why I don't really blame my mother for how she treated me. Or my father for taking the back door out of life. It was my fault my life was such a mess. And Christmas was just another day on the calendar. I never believed it could be otherwise until I met Addison, Elizabeth, and Collin.

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The Bible says that God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. My story is about one of God's weak things. His name is Collin, a frail, beautiful little boy with a very special gift.

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## **Users Review**

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