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The Bead Dealer

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4-6 Months

Reaching four to six months can be a game changer in a relationship because not a lot of relationships last that long. Many couples have met the parents and said I love you by this mile mark. This is the stage where gifts don't—or shouldn't—matter as much because you are in love. Home crafted gifts are the best—they can be something simple, like pictures of the two of you in a "memory book" or a love letter. A minimalist could do a sneaky love note in a new wallet for them. It will surprise them the first time and will serve as a little reminder that you were thinking of them.

End of the relationship

But what if the relationship is headed south? Can you break up with someone right before Christmas? If you're not that person and you are waiting until after the holidays, not getting them a gift is just asking to be dumped. Get them something they will use—but that's not romantic. A pair of headphones or a scarf is a perfect idea. They're things they will use, but won't remind them of you.

WRAP IT UP

Avoid the panic of romantic presents with this guide If you still can't think of any ideas, just remember to keep the gift personalized and don't be too worried about not spending enough on them. After all, it's the thought that counts.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING AROUND AND YOU JUST STARTING DATING YOUR NEW BAE. HOW DO YOU SAY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND SHOW THAT YOU LOVE SPENDING TIME WITH THEM WITHOUT SAYING I LOVE YOU? SIMPLE: YOU FOLLOW THE DATING TIMELINE.

1-4 Dates

You've now moved on and have been on a few dates with this person. What gifts would I give them? The suggested gifts here would be a card with maybe a gift card to their favorite restaurant. Don't go out and spend a fortune on a fancy dinner, maybe cook dinner.

Do f*ck buddies even share Christmas presents? This is pretty much all up to the gift givers and receivers. Something that is fun and flirty but kind of quirky like the relationship you guys share. Maybe a funny mug or T-shirt—something that says, "This is fun, let's not change it."

2-3 Months

At this point, you have been together for a while. The gifts can become more practical, like stuff they need—but they can also be something romantic and extravagant, like nice jewelry. If you live together, it could be something your partner thinks the apartment needs or maybe something they want. At this stage gifts can get more expensive—but you're too in love to care...right?

11

7+ Months

THE BEAD DEALER

CHRISTY’S TALE OF GEMS, STONES AND ALL THINGS SHINY

BY RICHARD MARTINEZ PHOTO BLAKE LANSER
“I’ve got just the thing!” A howling cackle of laughter erupts. “You just gotta dig around for the good stuff,” says Christy Radach, owner and operator of Grandma’s Attic in Campustown.

Radach may have an easy job, selling beads, but now in her eleventh year of owning Grandma’s Attic, she ultimately knows it’s a more than just that.

“Most people come in with an idea of what they want but sometimes, extracting that idea is the hardest part there is,” she cackles.

Beading is a majority of the business of Grandma’s Attic, located on Welch Avenue in Ames’ Campustown. The art consists of using beads, stones or gems to create unique pieces of jewelry. While her work doesn’t stop at just plain arts and crafts, Radach explains that’s always been a part of her life.

“I’ve been working with my hands for as long as I can remember, my whole life,” says Radach. “In particular, I’d say 30 years ago, somebody gave me a box of embroidery floss a nun had given them—and being young with no job at the time—I started making friendship bracelets and went to rock concerts and left with more money than I came in with. So I said, ‘hmmm...’”

Christy Radach later met her husband, Alan, who collected rocks.

“I’ve been collecting rocks since the time I could walk and even till this day, sometimes on my way from home,” says Alan Radach. “When I showed Christy the rocks I’ve been collecting, she began to get interested in the many kinds there are and it started to fuel her interest in what you can do with them.”

Alan collects a wide variety of rocks, precious stones and other things found in the ground (no, seriously.) Christy and Alan combined their passions and found out they can put their obsessions into practical use for others to enjoy by making jewelry.

“I started making jewelry from a purple Volkswagen van with daisies painted on it and we would go to craft shows, traveling around with our stuff,” Christy says. “I started to collect beads and when my daughter was born, I created my first business, Radical Rose, to design stuff!”

That was over 20 years ago.

The previous owner of Grandma’s Attic owned the shop for 18 years. The last nine of those years, Christy worked alongside her.

“The woman who owned [Grandma’s Attic] called me up one Thanksgiving break and explained she was getting swamped and needed help,” Christy says. “So it was the first job I had someone call and begged me to work for them,” she chuckles.

Previously, Christy had worked in historic downtown Ames before moving to Campustown to become a part of Grandma’s Attic. The move was a perfect decision, as the students in Campustown contribute to why Christy has been part of the community so long.

“I love being a part of Campustown now,” Christy grins. “You never know what’s going to happen. You’ll be sitting here and some girl will go by with a tail and kitty-cat ears and I’ll just be like...’that was cool.’ Yet it’s strange to see how they keep getting younger and younger every year,” she cackles.

Grandma’s Attic offers, to say the least, custom jewelry work and repairs, tapestries and incense. The items in the store are meticulously curated, with tapestries from a trader Christy knows in Africa or genuine gemstones she hand selects from dealers in India and Oregon.

“The best part about finding and buying some of these beads is that they don’t go bad...they’re a safe investment,” says Alan.

He helps manage the inventory, finances and general upkeep of the shop alongside Christy.

“Some of these stones we find are just such high quality, they’ll keep for years. So we naturally decided that there’s no such thing as buying too many beads.”

There are more than 210 trays of beads with between 18 to 24 varieties in each tray. Excluding the strands of jewelry hanging in the shop—and Christy’s “private collection,” (most of which she’s memorized)—the shop has around 4,000 beads to choose from.

“Beads just...accumulate...” says Christy. “But the only thing in my life that is anal-retentively organized are my bead trays. I know where every bead is and where it should be. I can walk past a tray and see something that’s slightly not the right shape or size and know exactly where it should be.”

“I like the idea about our ‘Attic’ because you never know what you’re gonna find digging in the attic,” says Christy. “We’re not a ‘buy something and get out’ kind of shop, it’s a wander around, enjoy yourself and play with the toys kind of place. We like to hang out and have fantastic conversations about just weird stuff like Buddha or astrophysics. We have big, comfy chairs so people like to sit around.”

Alan describes Grandma’s Attic as a little confusing—in a good way. The shop’s large assortment of items may be disorienting, but that’s exactly what their store is all about—spending a good time looking around.

“I walk by [Grandma’s Attic] every day and I’ve always had some interest, so I stopped by,” says Dillon Olson, senior in marketing. “It just has this home feel and as I was looking around, I was most impressed how Christy told me about where everything came from.”

Olson ended up creating a leather necklace with an Indian water buffalo tooth and Israeli wood pieces. “I had a vision, kind of, of what I wanted, but [Christy] really helped me well,” Olson says. “I think it turned out really nice.”

“I like to say that my goal is to make sure when you walk in here, you won’t find anything in here that you’ll find anywhere else,” said Christy. The main gem dealer she buys from visits Grandma's Attic once a year from Oregon. “He drives a generic white van and comes in with cardboard orange crates filled with Ziploc bags with the most amazing rocks you’ll ever see in your life. These are things I pick out individually, so they’re not something you pick out from a book or a catalog online—and then they send me whatever they want—I pick this strand because I like this bead,” she says.

Christy takes on several commission pieces to do repair work on jewelry as well. Thanks to a handful of leftover pieces of stones she has collected from her grandmother, who helped inspire her to make jewelry, repairs get done quickly with second-hand materials from past works, or get recycled for future use.

“The most precious thing I got from my grandmother was a bag of all of her broken stuff,” Christy said. “It’s all just random things that used to be bracelets, used to be whatever, broken items that wouldn’t function as jewelry. It’s first, just a hug from my grandma because it holds all of my early memories of her, and second, her old stuff is a valuable resource of just all kinds of sizes, colors and shapes for things that I can fix in repairs.”

“[Grandma’s Attic] is a little more than that,” says Olson. “It might look like a bag of broken junk, but it’s a hug, from my grandma to me.”

As Grandma’s Attic continues to expand its collection, the shop has no plans to stop looking for new items to add. The couple just hopes to be able to keep doing what they’re doing.
“I’m sure my husband would like me to make more money—we’re lucky to have kept our doors open for over twenty years,” said Christy. “Whatever you decide to do, find something you love and you’re really passionate about. Most businesses go out in three years, and we’re really lucky to be here because I’ve been doing this forever and I love what I do every single day.”

Alan currently works as a custodian at Iowa State. He focuses on working to contribute any way he can to keep the store running.

“When it rolls around to tax season, sometimes I roll my eyes and think, ‘Why am I doing this,’” Christy says. “I made earrings out of corn the other day, like, they were super cool. 😄

“How many people get to make earrings out of corn? That’s the kind of thing that keeps me going, it excites me. If I can keep doing it for more years to come, I’d be a happy girl.”

Christy Radach is in her 11th year of running Grandma’s Attic in Campustown.

**GRANDMA’S FAVORITE BEADS so far**

**CHOCOLATE LAVA:**
“It had some long Hawaiian name for it, so I helped rename it. He says it’s actually from Indonesia, since Hawaiian lava is supposedly cursed. Pele (the Hawaiian Fire Goddess) does not want her lava stolen, so people return rocks back all the time if they find out it’s Hawaiian.”

**LAPIS LAZULI:**
“This stuff is so beautiful. I’ve been here for 11 years and we’ve never had big pieces of Lapis, just little pieces. He kept pulling out bag after bag that I never made it to the turquoise, which is really unusual for me because I buy a lot of turquoise.”

**BLACK-LIP SHELL:**
“Ordinarily, this stuff is just processed, laminated and stamped out by a machine. These are different because it takes the skill of an artist to make these kinds of cuts and colors. Someone took their mind, and their art to make it something more, and I like that.”

**RHINO JASPER:**
“This stuff is just cool. It has such a neat texture to it! I mean yeah it’s dyed and processed—and I don’t prefer to buy a lot of that stuff—this stuff is way cool and you don’t see this everywhere.”