

MONEY MERRY-GO-ROUND

A Comedy in One Act

Adapted by Burton Bumgarner

*From the short story, "Twin Spirits,"
by W.W. Jacobs*

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Wealthy Addie Cox has a lazy, worthless husband named Gilbert, who refuses to find work, and who is gambling away Addie's money. He also pawns Addie's property to finance his bad habits. Addie's nosy neighbor Doris visits one afternoon with her Uncle Joseph. She sorts out Addie's problems with Gilbert and suggests that they pretend that Addie is broke and the bank is repossessing her property. Unfortunately, they persuade Uncle Joseph to pose as the bank agent. Uncle Joseph proves to be as inept as Gilbert is lazy. The two men try to concoct a plot of their own, which will prove that Addie is not broke, but they are no match for Doris, whose understanding of the nature of deceit knows no end. W.W. Jacobs was a Victorian writer known for tales of horror and the macabre, but he also wrote this delightful farce which the playwright has set in the style of a 1930s screwball comedy.

Running Time:

40 minutes

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 m, 2 w, 1 extra)

ADDIE COX: Married to Gilbert, an upper-class Bostonian.

GILBERT COX: Addie's shiftless husband, a gambler.

DORIS BERRY: Addie's nosy neighbor, pushy and abrasive.

JOSEPH PIPER: Doris' uncle, boring and lazy.

A COURIER: A deliverer of telegrams.

PLACE: The parlor of Addie and Gilbert's upper-class New England home, and a tavern by the railroad station, several miles away.

TIME: The 1930s.

Additional production notes are at the end of the play.

ABOUT W.W. JACOBS

Born in 1863, British author William Wymark Jacobs worked as a civil servant and wrote stories and plays to supplement his income. Though politically conservative himself, his wife was a member of the woman's suffrage movement. He is best known today for his tale of terror, "The Monkey's Paw," a truly frightening story of desire, grief, and the consequences of getting what you wish for. During his lifetime, Jacobs was just as well known as a humorist and also a writer of sea tales. Twelve collections of his short fiction were published. He also wrote seventeen plays, many in collaboration with other playwrights, and seven novels. The horror stories actually account for a small portion of his artistic output. In reading a collection of Jacobs' short stories, one is reminded of Mark Twain's humor, Herman Millville's tales of the sea, and Stephen King's world of horror. Jacobs died in 1943.

MONEY MERRY-GO-ROUND

(AT RISE: *The parlor of Gilbert and Addie Cox in an upper-class neighborhood of Boston. A sofa, end tables, lamps, and other period furniture, and a doorway are USR. Also, a small desk is DSL left. A DOOR CHIME is heard. ADDIE COX enters, crosses to the door and DORIS BERRY and JOSEPH PIPER enter.*)

ADDIE: (*Unpleasantly surprised.*) Why, Doris. This is a surprise. I wasn't expecting to see you.

DORIS: (*Abrasive.*) Am I that unpleasant a surprise, Addie?

ADDIE: Oh, no. Of course not. It's always a pleasure to see you, Doris. It's just that I wasn't expecting anyone. That's all.

DORIS: We've been neighbors for years. Do I always need an invitation to visit?

ADDIE: Well ... uh ... no. You are welcome any time.

DORIS: If I needed an invitation, then we'd never see each other because you've never invited me to visit.

ADDIE: Oh. I've meant to invite you, but I've been very busy lately. Doing ... you know ... things.

DORIS: I did try to call you, but I couldn't get through.

ADDIE: The telephone isn't connected.

DORIS: The telephone isn't connected? That's odd. Why not?

ADDIE: Uh ... it just isn't.

DORIS: Then why don't you have it reconnected? A person shouldn't be without a telephone these days.

ADDIE: I intend to. Who is the gentleman?

DORIS: (*Looking around.*) Gentleman? Oh, him. This is Joseph Piper. My uncle on my mother's side. He was staying with my Aunt Augusta, until she went to Europe. Then he moved in with my cousin Hilda, and she went to Nantucket for the summer and didn't want to take him. Next he stayed with Uncle Herbert, who has twenty-five cats living in his house, so Uncle Joseph begged my mother to take him in.

Money Merry-Go-Round

-6-

DORIS: (*Cont'd.*) She let him stay with her until she couldn't stand him any longer. Now he's staying with me until I can push him off on another relative.

ADDIE: Well, it's very nice to meet you, Mr. Piper. At least I think it's nice to meet you.

(*SHE offers her hand to shake. HE takes it and weakly shakes her hand.*)

JOSEPH: And who might you be?

DORIS: This is Addie Cox. The neighbor I told you about.

JOSEPH: Oh, yes. I've heard so much about you. I can't remember very much of what I heard, but I have heard a lot about you.

DORIS: Don't worry about him. Every family has one.

ADDIE: Please come in. Would you care for tea?

DORIS: Why not? It's about the best offer I've had all day.

ADDIE: Very well. I guess I'll make tea. (*DORIS and PIPER quickly move past ADDIE to the sofa and sit.*) I'll just go boil some water.

DORIS: That's a very good idea, dear. Tea works best when you use boiling water.

(*ADDIE exits left. JOSEPH fidgets. DORIS slaps his knee.*)

DORIS: Don't fidget!

JOSEPH: Sorry. I don't mean to fidget.

DORIS: Then don't fidget! I can't stand people who fidget. It makes me nervous. I don't like being nervous.

JOSEPH: I don't like you being nervous either.

DORIS: (*Looks around for a count.*) Well, I wonder where Gilbert is.

JOSEPH: Gilbert?

DORIS: Yes. Addie's husband. I told you about him.

JOSEPH: You did?

DORIS: Yes, I did! Don't you listen to anything I say, Uncle Joseph?

JOSEPH: I listen to everything you say, dear. I forget most of it shortly after you say it.

Money Merry-Go-Round

-7-

DORIS: How terribly inconsiderate of you!

JOSEPH: Yes, it is inconsiderate of me.

DORIS: Now, I'll repeat what I told you before you so rudely forgot it. Addie's husband is Gilbert. My plan was to come over here and see if he was at home. If Gilbert was here you two could go outside on the terrace and talk about whatever it is men like to talk about, and I could have a pleasant, though dull, visit with Addie. She isn't one of my closet friends, so I doubt anything you do will embarrass me. Do you understand?

JOSEPH: I think so. You're trying to avoid me.

DORIS: Exactly. *(Stands and walks around the room.)*
Goodness. Addie certainly has no eye for decorating, does she?

(ADDIE enters with a tray with a teapot and three cups. She is unseen by DORIS.)

JOSEPH: If you say so, dear. I wouldn't know.

DORIS: These colors are all wrong. I mean, you may have found decor like this in a home say thirty years ago, but it's quite unfashionable today. There used to be a grandfather clock here. I wonder what happened to the clock?

ADDIE: *(Clearing HER throat, startling DORIS.)* The tea is ready.

DORIS: Addie, dear. There used to be a grandfather clock right on this spot.

ADDIE: Yes. It's not there now.

DORIS: Well, where is it?

ADDIE: Uh ... it's out. *(SHE sits, places the tray on the coffee table and pours tea.)* Cream and sugar, Mr. Piper?

JOSEPH: Please.

DORIS: Out? Did it go for a walk or something? Did you hear that Uncle Joseph?

JOSEPH: Of course I heard. Something about her grandfather going for a walk.

DORIS: Never mind.

ADDIE: It was in need of some repairs. So it's out.

DORIS: *(Looking up.)* I notice the chandelier is missing.

End of Freeview

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