

# **THE NEW YORK STORIES**

(Based on the writings of O. Henry)

Adapted by Nikki Harmon

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Here are ten short views of turn-of-the-century New York through the eyes of O. Henry, the master of the twist ending and chronicler of everyday people from young shop girls with enormous dreams to the ne'er-do-wells with plans for easy life.

Among the people you'll come to know and almost love are: three of the dingiest and laziest musketeers you've ever seen, plotting to relieve a hard-working wife of a whole dollar she earned scrubbing clothes; a young gentleman with a sudden insurmountable problem in giving away a "mere one-thousand-dollar" inheritance; and two sophisticated patrons dining at an elegant hotel who aren't necessarily who they seem.

With this variety of short plays, you can design your own special evening of entertainment. It offers the ultimate in flexible casting, from a minimum of three men and one woman to a maximum of twenty-eight men and nine women.

*This play, originally entitled, O. HENRY!, was the 1988 winner of The Dayton Playhouse National Play Writing Competition. It was first performed July 23, 1989, at The Dayton Playhouse, Dayton, Ohio under the direction of Cynthia Karns. The play was produced by Jim Payne. Original set design was by Greg Smith. Original lighting design was by Tim Guth. Sound design was by Michael Sliney. Costume design was by Cynthia Karns, Ron Lenker and Leslie Zara. The stage manager was Jim McCarthy and the assistant director was Ron Lenker. The cast was as follows: Geoff Burkman, Jeff Hare, Jeff Karas, Steven Miller, Michael Moore, René Porter-Stewart, and Jené Zuccaro.*

**CAST BREAKDOWN**

*3 to 28 men and 1 to 9 women*

*Any number of actors, including a full complement of 37, can be used. A minimum cast of four would play the following roles.*

**WOMAN:** Clara Peters, Miriam Hayden, Young Woman, Sarah, Miss Reineman, Miss Beaumont, Carol Cartwright, Ellen Rockwell, Maggie O'Conner.

**MAN ONE:** Ragsy, Bobby Gillian, Second Man, Mr. Parkenstacker, Walter Franklin, Sherrard Plumer, Jimmy Conway, Richard Rockwell, Andy Donovan.

**MAN TWO:** James Peters, Tolman, First Man, Chauffeur, Mr. Dubinsky, Carson Chalmers, Harold Farrington, Patrolman, Kelly.

**MAN THREE:** Kidd, Bryson, Policeman, Short Order Cook, Mr. Uditsky, Phillips, Cedric, Captain, Anthony Rockwell.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### **ACT I**

- Scene 1: The Harbinger
- Scene 2: One Thousand Dollars
- Scene 3: After Twenty Years
- Scene 4: While the Auto Waits
- Scene 5: Springtime A La Carte

### **ACT II**

- Scene 1: A Madison Square Arabian Night
- Scene 2: Transients in Arcadia
- Scene 3: According to Their Lights
- Scene 4: Mammon and the Archer
- Scene 5: The Count and the Wedding Guest

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

**THE HARBINGER**

CAST OF CHARACTERS (4 M, 1 W)

**JAMES PETERS:** Avoids work whenever possible; 38-50.

**RAGSY:** A compatriot of Peters with an equal ability; 25-35.

**KIDD:** A third member of the trio; 40-55.

**CLARA PETERS:** Peter's wife. A surly washer-woman; 20-30.

**TIME:** Spring, 1901.

**SETTING:** A park bench in Union Square across the street from a run-down, back-room apartment, so gloomy that the landlord is embarrassed to take the rent.

*(AT RISE: JAMES PETERS, RAGSY and KIDD, the dingiest and laziest three musketeers you'd ever find, are sitting on the same bench they've inhabited for the past five years. CLARA is ironing in the apartment at the other side of the stage.)*

RAGSY: How'd you knowed it was real?

PETERS: The coalman seen her have it.

KIDD: Then why ain't she spent it yet? A whole dollar ain't something you hang on to without finding something to do with it.

RAGSY: Like getting some good bottles of some good stuff.

KIDD: Yeah! Like that.

PETERS: She done some washing, that's how she must'a got it, and all she gimme for breakfast was the heel of a loaf and a cup of coffee. She's hoarding it. That's what she's doing.

KIDD: I can't remember when I seen a whole dollar all in one place.

RAGSY: I had one once.

KIDD: When? When'd you have a dollar?

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RAGSY: Well, it weren't exactly mine.

KIDD: Thought so.

RAGSY: But it was just as good as.

KIDD: Just as good as don't count.

RAGSY: It's closer than you ever got.

KIDD: How do you know? I could'a had thousands of dollars.

RAGSY: Could'a don't count.

KIDD: Counts more than just as good as.

RAGSY: It don't!

KIDD: Does!

PETERS: Do!

RAGSY: How do you figure?

PETERS: Simple. He could'a had thousands of dollars back there sometime.

RAGSY: Back where?

PETERS: There.

RAGSY: Where's there?

PETERS: 'Fore we knowed him. Okay?

KIDD: Yeah. Back there.

RAGSY: Okay, but I still don't see how it counts the same as me and my dollar.

PETERS: You only almost had a single dollar and since Kidd could've had thousands of dollars, it figures it counts more 'cause everyone knows thousands is more than just one. To them that can count.

RAGSY: I can count!

PETERS: Then you see how it is.

KIDD: Yeah, it's like he says.

RAGSY: I guess it makes sense, but it still seems actually touching one counts for something.

PETERS: He's got a point.

KIDD: Then both counts the same.

RAGSY: Okay, then.

PETERS: (*To RAGSY.*) But, I still wanna know who it was gives you a dollar.

RAGSY: Some guy on a bar stool down at MacGuire's gives it to me to hold.

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