

Keep the Change

by
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DEDICATION

*Thanks to Bethany Kester Sheets and Jeff Sexton
for their input and encouragement.*

STORY OF THE PLAY

“Keep The Change” tells the story of the landlady of Moonshadow Apartments and two of her favorite tenants—Henry and Shake. Investment manager Henry Cale prefers to manage his irrational fears and anxieties from the safety of his apartment. He is secretly in love with longtime friend, content creator and world traveler Emma. When Emma invites Henry to accompany her to a distant tropical paradise, he must choose between his comfortable, controlled existence or the intimidating terrors of the world outside his door. Advising Henry is his elderly, still-a-hippie landlady Irene. She’s at a crossroads in her life as her guardian niece Sloane and Sloane’s lawyer Miss Penny are plotting to move Irene out to take control of the whole building. Irene is paid a surprise visit by Francis the Ordinary, a magician friend from their days living in a commune. Meanwhile, Shake, Irene’s maintenance man and Henry’s only friend, is concocting an elaborate lie in a pathetic attempt to win the heart of no-nonsense Ruby, his Fastdash delivery driver. When Francis the Ordinary hypnotizes Henry at a party, secrets are revealed that will affect his relationship with Emma. Shake is surprised to discover that the truth doesn’t always hurt, while Irene and Francis are delighted to discover that their options aren’t nearly as limited as they had feared. With fully realized characters, lots of physical humor, and sweet, tender moments, this play is sure to win over every audience.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 5 w, plus one offstage female voice)

IRENE: Landlady of Moonshadow apartments. Still a hippie, 80's.

HENRY CALE: Investment manager, attractive, male, 30's.

SLOANE: Irene's niece and guardian, fashionable yet not put together, female, 40's.

MISS PENNY: Lawyer, a belting voice and brassy style female, 30's.

SHAKE: Moonshadow apartment's maintenance man, shaggy, laid-back, friendly as a sheepdog, 30's.

FRANCIS THE ORDINARY: Irene's magician friend, male, 80's.

EMMA: Vibrant, content creator and world traveler, female, 30's.

RUBY: Hipster, cute, no-nonsense, female, 20's.

GERTIE: An offstage digital female voice.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

"Keep The Change" was originally produced in June 2024 at the Red Barn Summer Theatre in Frankfort, Indiana, directed by Luke McLaughlin. It featured the following cast:

Irene	Lisa Warner Lowe
Henry	Xander Haan
Sloane	Kiara Wood
Miss Penny	Mary Parks
Shake	Luke Aguilar
Francis the Ordinary	Aaron Moon
Emma	Kody Horrocks
Ruby	Madi Myers

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SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: Henry's apartment

Scene 2: Two hours later

Scene 3: The next evening

ACT II

Scene 1: Two hours later

Scene 2: The next morning

Scene 3: Two hours later

Scene 4: The next day

Scene 5: A few hours later

SET

Henry's apartment. Moonshadow Apartments. Winter. Dark walls, dark wood wainscoting, antique fixtures. Entry door at USL leads to the apartment hallway. An open archway SR leads to offstage bedrooms. USC the wall that previously divided the kitchen from the living room has been demolished, the kitchen walls are bright and a new counter with bar stools divides the rooms. Bare drywall shows on a new section of wall that hasn't yet been painted. A goldfish bowl filled with dice is on the counter. DSR, on a desk, is a computer. DSL an antique armoire holds books, liquor, glassware. Two armchairs, a comfy sofa and a coffee table at CS. Two imaginary windows DSC.

The computer should look a little fantastical. A gray box with neon-colored wires springing out of it, a tangle of cords, some seemingly unnecessary blue and red tubing. Monitor pulses light in sync with Gertie's dialogue.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: LIGHTS up on the apartment. We hear a key in the lock and the door opens. IRENE enters. She wears boots, wool coat, a silk flower adorns her braided hair, eyeglasses hang from a cord around her neck, scrap of paper is pinned to her sweater. She drops her overnight case, places her shoulder bag on the counter and a kettle on the stove. SFX: alarm bongs, startling Irene. LIGHTS pulse as GERTIE, a computer-generated voice, speaks from the computer.)

IRENE: Oh, my—scared me half to death—*mon dieu*.

GERTIE: Henry. Forecast. Bank of England will announce bond buy-back. Henry Cale?

(IRENE picks up Henry's cell phone from the counter.)

IRENE: Wrong number.

GERTIE: Forecast, B of E will repurchase bonds in unexpected attempt to stabilize UK markets. Henry?

HENRY: *(Offstage.)* Yeah, Gertie, I hear you.

(HENRY CALE enters from the SR hall, face covered with shaving cream. He wears jeans, a graphic t-shirt, and a pair of Oxfords. At the desk he clicks the mouse.)

HENRY: *(Cont'd.)* That's not unexpected. What kind of fiduciary whiz kid would I be if I didn't see that coming?

(SFX: cell phone beeps. IRENE turns back and looks in the refrigerator. Frowning, HENRY locates his phone but doesn't notice her.)

HENRY: *(Cont'd.)* What? Oh. *(Smile.)* Hello, Emma. *(Texting.)* Yes...see...you...soon. Heart emoji. no, no...too much. Delete.

IRENE: *Bonjour, Henri!*

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HENRY: *(Startled.)* Ahhh—Irene! You scared me. You should've said something.

IRENE: I did. I said, "*Bonjour, Henri.*"

HENRY: Did you need something, Irene? My rent overdue?

IRENE: No, just having some tea to knock the chill off. Just got back from Chicago, Sloane's parking the car.

HENRY: Sloane. She find enough Dalmatians to make a coat?

IRENE: I know you don't think much of my niece. But she's all the family I have left. I really think she's trying to help this time. And also, your face is melting.

HENRY: What—? Oh, great.

(HE wipes shaving cream off with his shirt. IRENE takes a legal envelope from her bag.)

IRENE: Would you look at this contract? I'd like your opinion.

HENRY: I can't right now, but I will, I promise.

(HE exits. IRENE pours the hot water into a cup, dips a teabag in it and, with effort, climbs onto a bar stool.)

IRENE: It's so good to be home.

HENRY: *(Offstage.)* You're not quite there yet.

IRENE: Not quite where?

(HENRY enters, fresh t-shirt, pulling on a sweater.)

HENRY: Not quite home. This isn't your apartment.

IRENE: *(Laughs.)* Don't be silly, of course it is.

HENRY: It's my apartment.

IRENE: No, it's not.

HENRY: Why would I be in your apartment?

IRENE: I was wondering the same thing.

(HENRY reaches out, carefully lifts IRENE's glasses and places them on her face. She smiles.)

IRENE: *(Cont'd.)* Oh. Hi, Henry.

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HENRY: Hi. Now, does this look like your apartment?

IRENE: Yes, it looks exactly like my apartment. (*Eyes widen.*)
Except the wall is gone. Oh Henry—where's my wall?

HENRY: In your apartment.

IRENE: (*Realizing her mistake, she claps her hands over her mouth.*) Oh wow. Oh man, I am so sorry.

HENRY: Forget it.

IRENE: I'm sure I will.

HENRY: Stay. Finish your tea. But I'm leaving.

IRENE: I wondered why there was nothing in my refrigerator
but a bottle of mustard. Are you going somewhere?

HENRY: Yes.

IRENE: But you don't go places.

HENRY: I go places. I just don't like to go places. So, I avoid
going places if at all possible. Today is unavoidable. I'm
picking up Emma at the airport. She's just back from an
Antarctic cruise. She camped on an iceberg with 5,000
penguins.

IRENE: I knew an Emma. No, that was Erma. Changed her
name to Liberty. Liberty Vaughn. Played the zither.

HENRY: You know Emma, travel vlogger, social media
influencer, YouTube content creator, *TikTok* ticker-tocker.

IRENE: I didn't understand one word of that. I may as well
talk to the wall that used to be there.

HENRY: Emma. She was the manager at Coffee Beans.

IRENE: Oh, Emma, of course. Shake remodeled one of your
bedrooms so she could stay here.

HENRY: Seemed impractical for her to keep an apartment
here for a just few weeks a year when I have all this space.

IRENE: (*Smile.*) How convenient for you.

HENRY: Stop, we're just friends, total opposites. She travels
for a living; I stay home by choice. She's social, I'm anti.
She says to-mah-to, I say ketchup.

IRENE: You're afraid to start another relationship because
you were so traumatized by your divorce.

HENRY: That's what you think.

IRENE: She really messed with your head. You have a fear
of commitment, among all your other fears and phobias.

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IRENE: *(Cont'd.)* You've holed up here like a hermit for what—three, four years now?

HENRY: Six but who's counting?

IRENE: Henry. Come here.

HENRY: No. *(Pause.)* Why?

(HENRY resignedly moves close to IRENE. Smiling, she places her hands on his cheeks.)

IRENE: You've buried yourself in this tomb with your computers and your numbers and your bottle of mustard. Open up your heart. Open your mind. Open the curtains and let the sunshine in. Can you dig it, Henry?

(HENRY can only mumble because she's squeezing his face.)

HENRY: Yeb, hi cam dib hit.

IRENE: *(Laughs.)* Ever hear that song—*Let The Sunshine In?*

HENRY: I have a feeling I'm about to—

IRENE: *(Sings.)* *Let the sun shine in, let the sun shine in, the sun shine in.*

HENRY: You made that up.

IRENE: Did not. It's a real song.

HENRY: What's the next line?

IRENE: Um. *(Talks.)* Let the sunshine in.

HENRY: Made up.

IRENE: *(Slaps his arm.)* It's a real song, man.

(HENRY notices the scrap of paper pinned to her sweater.)

HENRY: What's that?

IRENE: Beats me.

(SHE unpins it and reads. HE hurries towards the closet tripping slightly on her overnight case.)

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IRENE: Oh, far out. I would've totally forgotten if I hadn't remembered to write myself a note reminding me to remember. I'm expecting company too.

HENRY: Copycat.

IRENE: Francis. He lives in Elwood now with his daughter and her family. You'll have to meet him.

HENRY: Sure. Gertie, what time is it?

GERTIE: One fifty-four and thirty-three seconds.

IRENE: Who is that?

HENRY: The computer. Gertie, say hi to Irene.

GERTIE: Hello, Irene. Pleased to meet you.

IRENE: Hello, Gertie. Hello, refrigerator. Hello, toaster.

HENRY: I'm leaving now.

IRENE: Thanks for stopping by.

HENRY: *You* stopped by.

IRENE: I knew that.

(HE pours Irene's tea into a white cup and puts the blue cup back on the shelf. He touches each blue cup.)

HENRY: Sorry, I have to keep four blue cups on the shelf.

IRENE: Why?

HENRY: So I can touch them before I leave.

IRENE: Blue cups are for leaving, not for tea.

(HE paces, counting to himself.)

IRENE: *(Cont'd.)* Now what?

HENRY: I'm counting a mathematical sequence. In the *Fibonacci Sequence* each number is the sum of two preceding numbers. 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8—so on.

IRENE: Why?

HENRY: So I can leave the house. *(HE grabs dice from the bowl and tosses them a few times, throws dice in trash and takes his coat from the closet.)* Then I roll until I hit doubles. Like that--square pair, double fours. *(A beat.)* So I can leave the house.

IRENE: Do you go through that every time you leave?

HENRY: Yes.

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IRENE: I'd stay home too.

(HENRY has his hand on doorknob, ready to pull it open when—)

IRENE: *(Cont'd.)* Henry! I just had a cool idea—how about you and I host a little party—*un petit fete*—for our friends.

HENRY: No. *Non, pas de fete.*

(HENRY opens the door. SLOANE stands in the doorway, staring down at her phone.)

SLOANE: I'm looking for my aunt.

HENRY: Is she in your phone?

(SLOANE enters, followed by MISS PENNY. HENRY exits. Miss Penny wears a puffer coat over a business suit.)

SLOANE: You should really stay in your apartment.

IRENE: I thought this was my apartment.

SLOANE: *(Sweetly.)* Due to the fragility of your physical and mental state, it's in your best interest to avoid interactions with others, especially others in this particular apartment.

IRENE: Sorry. Tea?

SLOANE: No, thanks.

IRENE: Miss Penny?

MISS PENNY: Oh, no, Irene, I'm allergic. If I drink tea my ears swell to the size and shape of portobello mushrooms.

SLOANE: Let's get you home.

(SLOANE helps IRENE off the stool, then leads her by the arm to the door. She watches as Irene exits.)

SLOANE: Other way. That's right. Good. *(To PENNY.)* So sad for her. Yet so fortunate for me. How long have I been selflessly serving as caretaker for my bewildered aunt?

MISS PENNY: Nearly two weeks.

SLOANE: Seems longer. When do we meet the developers?
(Checks her watch.)

End of Freeview

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