A THOUSAND DOLLARS

Adapted by

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SYNOPSIS

According to his uncle's will, Bob, a carefree young man, must spend $1 ,000 within 24 hours and give an account of how it was spent to the lawyer. After a humorous conversation with his long-time housekeeper, Bob decides to buy a diamond necklace for an actress he admires. But the actress wants a necklace worth more than that so Bob, wisely, walks away.

Moments later, when he spies a blind man, Bob decides to give him the money, perhaps for an operation to help the man see again. But it is Bob's eyes that are opened when he finds the man can see perfectly and is just running a scam.

Finally Bob encounters Linda Hayden, a caring, generous woman who has bought gifts for a group of orphans. Bob discovers Linda was the ward his uncle reared and the gifts she purchased for the children were from the $100 she was left in his will.

Saying the lawyer made a mistake, Bob gives her his $1,000. Upon returning to the lawyer's office, Bob grandly starts to report his generosity when he learns of a codicil that if he had spent the money in a way which was prudent, wise, or unselfish, then he would receive bonds valued at $50,000. But if he wasted it, the entire $50,000 was to be paid to Linda Hayden.

In true O. Henry style where coincidence affects character, Bob tells the lawyer he lost the money at the race track, every last penny.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3m, 3w, extras)

BOB GILLIAN: Young and carefree; doesn't take much seriously.

TOLMAN: A lawyer, all-business.

BRYSON: Long-time housekeeper for Bob.

LOTTA: Self-centered singer.

LINDA HAYDEN: A deserving young woman.

BLIND MAN: Operates a convincing con.

STAGEHAND

WOMAN

CHILDREN

SET

Only one moveable chair is required.

PROPS

briefcase holding will and wad of money, envelope – Tolman
clipboard – Stagehand
dark glasses, cup of pencils, and small ledger - Blind Man
coin – Woman
rag ball – Children
bag of clothes and toys – Linda
paper and pen - Bob

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: O. HENRY comes out and sits on a chair CS. He's a keen observer of life and genuinely enjoys people.)

O. HENRY: I've always loved stories - reading them and making 'em up. I guess I can thank - or blame - Aunt Lina for that.

Evelina Porter ran our home when my mother died. We enjoyed having her around, especially on Fridays, when we would gather for a night of popped corn and story-telling. Aunt Lina would start the story and we'd all be responsible for keeping it going. I guess that's when you could say I started to make up my stories ...

What's that? Oh, I'm sorry, we haven't been properly introduced. The name's William Sidney Porter. You may've read some of my stories. Oh, but you probably know me by my pen-name. I chose the name of a man I had grown to respect and like, Orrin Henry. Now, I know what you're thinking ... what kind of a name is Orrin, especially when you don't have to have it? Well, as much as I respected Mr. Henry, I didn't keep his entire name. I shortened it and became known simply as "O. Henry."

After working on several newspapers, I moved to New York City and an apartment with a window which overlooked many of the four million people of the city, each of whom had a story to tell. After watching and talking to them, I was lucky enough to have success in writing their tales. Let me tell you one of my favorites. It's about Bob Gillian.

(O. HENRY gets up and starts pacing. While he talks, BOB GILLLAN enters and sits in the chair. Bob is young and carefree. He's not malicious but he doesn't take much seriously. Shortly after he enters, TOLMAN, a lawyer, comes on. He's all-business, carrying a will and a wad of money inside his briefcase.)

O. HENRY: *(Fondly.)* Ah, Bob Gillian - a likeable guy without a care in the world. I guess the best place to start the story of Bob is by quoting the Good Book. From that immortal text, we learn that money is the root of all evil. Well, I've also learned through the years that NOT having money is also a cause of a lot of evil. But that never was Bob's problem - far from it. His problem was - well, let me put it to you in the form of a question: What would you do if you had a certain amount of money - say $1,000 - and you had to spend it, in one way or another. Do you think that would be a problem? Me neither. But it certainly was a problem for Bob Gillian. *(Stands SR or SL, watching.)*

TOLMAN: Here's the money your uncle left you, Robert, - $1,000. It's in fifty twenty dollar bills.

BOB: I'll take your word for it - it's MUCH too much trouble trying to count all this. Besides, it's such an awkward amount. If it had been $10,000, a fellow might wind up with a lot of fireworks and do himself some credit. Even $50 would have been less trouble.

TOLMAN: I know I shouldn't be surprised at anything you say or do, but even now you continue to astound me.

BOB: Should I take that as a compliment?

TOLMAN: No self-respecting gentleman would do that.

BOB: And I know that by no stretch of the imagination do you consider me a gentleman.

TOLMAN: At least I can say you are perceptive.

BOB: Please say what else it is you have on your mind.

TOLMAN: Out of deference to your uncle's memory, I don't think I shall.

BOB: Oh come on, Tolman. Uncle's dead. What you feel about me isn't going to affect him anymore. Besides, I'm sure I know exactly how you feel about me.

TOLMAN: Oh?

BOB: Uh-huh. You feel that Uncle was far too lenient with me, giving an allowance rather than making me work for my living. You feel that I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth, then asked someone else to feed me with it. Am I close?

TOLMAN: *(Agreeing with sentiment.)* Perhaps I wouldn't have put it that way ...

BOB: But it's close enough?

TOLMAN: I'd rather get on with the special condition your uncle made about your money.

BOB: Yes, the condition. Very well, please go on.

TOLMAN: I don't know if you paid much attention to the details of your uncle's will, but I must remind you of one particular stipulation. You are required to give me an account of how you spend the $1,000 as soon as you've spent it. And you must spend it within 24 hours.

BOB: That seems to be an odd request. I wonder what Uncle meant by it?

TOLMAN: Different people have their reasons for what they do. I trust you'll follow his request?

BOB: I will. I just wonder what difference it would make. I mean, he can't very well disapprove of how I choose to dispose of the funds, can he?

TOLMAN: I think not. But again, I trust you'll follow this request.

BOB: I will, Mr. Tolman. You may trust that I will. You may not believe it, but I held Uncle in high regard.

TOLMAN: I can't say I would have assumed that.

BOB: *(Sober.)* No. And I regret that I didn't express myself to him. The time for flowers is when the loved one is alive, not for their grave. *(Shifting gears - light.)* But then I'm not a florist and don't intend to become one. You don't have to be so snide in your responses. I know that when I compare myself with Uncle, I come up wanting in several areas -numerous areas as I'm sure you and old Bryson would agree. But I have to remember that he was who he was and I have to be who I am. We all have our crosses, right Tolman?

TOLMAN: Yes. I share your respect for your uncle. And you will show his respect by following his wishes?

BOB: Back to those wishes? Yes, Tolman, you may count on it. In spite of the extra expense it will cost me. I may even have to hire a secretary to keep track of my expenses! Good day, Mr. Tolman!

End of Freeview

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