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Curt Jürgens Show: "The Raise"

Adapted by
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KITCHEN AND OFFICE

There are two separate sets next to each other. One: the KITCHEN of the small apartment of a not very prosperous family. Two: the OFFICE of the director of a big insurance company.

There are three characters in the story, designated as: HE, SHE and the BOSS. HE is a small employee of the insurance company. SHE is his wife.

The show opens with CURT JÜRGENS, who later acts the employee. Mr. Jürgens walks up between the two sets TOWARDS CAMERA. He wears a grey flannel suit and no make up.

JÜRGENS

(as he addresses the unseen audience)

One upon a time

Ladies and gentlemen, what would you say if I asked you whether you believe in miracles? I'm sure there'd be many different answers. The most fascinating I ever heard, came from a famous French author, Jean Cocteau. This is what he told me: It happened way back, in the days when kings had absolute power over life and death. In those days, a king could tell a man: 'Entertain me, and I'll give you as much gold as you can carry, but if you bore me, I'll have your head chopped off.'

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(Jürgens smiles)

Fortunately, times have changed. Our heads don't roll anymore when we fail to entertain you. Now - as the story went - there was an old magician, and his most famous trick was called: 'The magic silver ball'. It was a ball about...

(Jürgens indicates size with his hands)

... this size. On command, it would roll over the ground in any given direction. The king had heard about the trick and wanted to see it. So the magician was told to come to the palace and promised as much gold as he could carry - if he were as great as his reputation. If not - well, the old man knew what would happen then. - Now, the 'silver ball' was made of two perfectly fitted halves, so that inside a dwarf could be hidden, who made the ball perform. Unfortunately, the dwarf died the day, the magician was to appear before the king. In his despair, the old man asked the first young boy he met in street, to take the dwarf's place. The boy said, first he had to ask his mother, but not to worry, he'd be right back. With that he took off, while the magician went to the palace.

In the great reception-hall the courtiers were assembled, and they all bowed when the king entered, and seated himself on his throne. The magician began with simple tricks - like conjuring rabbits and mice out of a hat. Then he went on to more difficult ones, trying to stall his famous trick as long as possible, to give the boy time to get to the palace, and into the 'silver ball'.

And when
the magician
told it to
roll, it would
go, wherever
he wanted

But the king was quickly growing impatient. What he wanted to see was the magic ball, and nothing else. The magician bowed and turned to his assistant. The ball was rolled on stage. All the old man could do now, was to pray that the boy was inside. His voice almost failed him as he gave the first command: "Silver ball, roll to the right." - For a moment nothing happened. Then the ball slowly began to roll to the right. The magician heaved a sigh. - "Now, to the left." The ball followed his command. The king applauded. "Marvellous", he cried, and then asked if the ball would obey him too. - "Certainly, Your Majesty." - "Roll up here", the king called. The 'silver ball' rolled towards the throne, hesitated at the foot of the steps - then rolled up those steps, and stopped at the king's feet. Even the magician was amazed. Obviously, the boy inside was smarter than the dwarf had been. - "Give this man as much gold as he can carry", the king said, smiled and rose, indicating the end of the performance. His pockets heavy with gold, the magician stepped out of the palace, just as the little boy came from way down the street running up to him. He was all out of breath as he stood before the old man: "Master", he cried, "forgive me that I'm late. My mother wouldn't let me go, before I had eaten."

(Jürgens smiles)

Well - that's all there is to the story. You'll have to decide for yourself now, whether what you're going to see is a miracle or not. Since I'm playing a character in this story, I should look a little different from the way I'm looking now. Therefore, I'm going to try on this wig...

(Mr. Jürgens sits down at the make-up table, and puts on a wig. Then, he enters his apartment as 'HE', the small employee.)

KITCHEN OF THE APARTMENT

DAY

SHE is at the breakfast table, reading a newspaper. HE (Jürgens) sits down across from her. In this first scene, the kitchen is very simply furnished, and lacks a certain number of gadgets, it will have later.

SHE

(reading from the paper)

Don't hesitate to do today what you know, you should have done long ago. You will benefit from it financially.

She looks up, a challenge in her eyes.

HE

Do you mean me ?

SHE

You're born in April, aren't you ?

(she looks at the paper)

The daytime is favourable for financial gains - the evening for love.

HE

Looks like I'll be late tonight, because our books are being audited.

SHE

Listen to my horoscope.

(she reads)

You will share the luck and financial advantages of a man close to you.
Evening favourable for love.

HE

The auditors are always coming this time of year. I can't help it. I wan't be home before nine or ten.

SHE

All right. But you could do what you should have done long ago.

HE

What's that ?

SHE

Go to your Boss. Tell him: Mr. Gordon, I think, I deserve...

HE

I should ask him for a raise ?

SHE

Yes.

HE

But there are lots of people ahead of me. People who deserve a raise more than I do...

SHE

You always think of others. Think of us -- think of your wife.

HE

I am thinking of you - all the time. You know that.

SHE

I don't. I'd like to have nice things, nice and elegant things. How can we afford them, with the money you make ? It's only a question of guts. Why don't you have the guts to go to Mr. Gordon ?

HE

I have the guts.

SHE

After all, you invented a new book-keeping system. They owe it to you.

(she flatters him)

I want to look up to my husband. I want people to say, that you're clever, so clever that they gave you an extra two hundred fifty a month.

HE

(shocked)

Two hundred and fifty ?

SHE

That isn't too much. You go in there
and say: Mr. Gordon...

HE

I'll be glad to say: Mr. Gordon...
But what if he says: Mr. Miller,
it's not your turn.

SHE

(pointing at newspaper)
It's the best day of the week for it.
Oh darling, don't be a coward. Please !

She looks so unhappy, he can't refuse to try it.

HE

(kisses her)
All right, I'll go to him.

SHE

You'll do that for me ?

He nods, gets up, and takes his briefcase.

HE

I'll see you tonight.

He exits. Outside the kitchen, he turns TOWARDS CAMERA
and addresses the unseen audience.

(a little helpless)

What could I do ? You've got to keep
a promise. It took a lot of courage
to walk up to Mr. Gordon's office...

He walks across the stage to the door leading to the office,
and knocks)

... and knock at his door.

BOSS'S VOICE
(from inside)

Come in.

OFFICE MR. GORDON

DAY

The BOSS, Mr. Gordon, sits behind a desk. He is at the phone.

BOSS

(into phone)

All right. Sell at 417, GCA 500.

That's the limit.

(he looks up)

What do you want ?

HE

Excuse me, Mr. Gordon...

BOSS

(into phone)

Hold on. I'll be right with you.

(looking up)

Yes ?

HE

You see, Mr. Gordon...

BOSS

(impatiently)

What is it ? What do you want ?

HE

(uneasily)

I know, I haven't been with the firm very long, but I believe that this book-keeping system...

BOSS

(interrupts)

I'm a busy man. Please come to the point.

HE

I don't want to bother you, Mr. Gordon, but I thought, perhaps - since it's the beginning of the year - and I...

BOSS

(very impatient)

Yes ?

HE

Mr. Gordon, I've come to ask you for a raise.

BOSS

You want a raise ? You haven't been with us very long. Nobody ever gets a raise, before he's been with us for at least a year. I can't make any exceptions. Bad for the general morale, you understand ?

HE

(taking off)

Yes, Mr. Gordon. I'm very sorry, I disturbed you - very, very sorry.

BOSS

(into phone)

Excuse me. What did you say ? - Oh yes. - Well, then let's buy 500 shares of....

By this time, HE is out of the door. On the way towards the door leading to his apartment, HE shakes his head regretfully.

KITCHEN OF THE APARTMENT

EVENING

SHE has decorated the table with flowers and candles.
When HE enters SHE runs towards him, giving him no chance
to explain what happened.

SHE

(kissing him)

You're a wonderful, wonderful man.
Don't say anything, just let me look
at you.

HE

(astonished)

What? *hey*

SHE

(elated)

It was all in the stars.

HE

Listen... *Helen - I -*

SHE

(interrupts)

Of course, it wasn't just the stars -
it was the feeling you had, you were
doing this for me.

HE

When I walked into Mr. Gordon's office...

SHE

(babbling on)

Don't say any more. You walked into
his office, and he said to you: I
know what you want, I haven't much
time...

HE

(interrupts)

He didn't have any time at all.

SHE

But just the same. He gave you the extra money. Oh darling, I'm so proud of you.

She kisses him once more. He wants to reply - but She continues.)

Of course, if you hadn't invented that new book-keeping system, it wouldn't have been quite that easy to get a raise. I bet, most of the others have to wait at least a year.

HE

That's what he told me.

SHE

(enchanted)

Isn't it wonderful. Isn't it just too wonderful. Now, you come and sit down, so we can celebrate. I've got champagne on ice. The roast's in the oven, and for dessert there's your favorite icecream.

HE

(smiles)

Strawberry ?

SHE

Strawberry- You'll see, all that's in the stars will come true. 'Evening favourable for love'.

SHE goes to the oven and looks after the roast - while HE steps out of the kitchen and between the two sets, where he faces the unseen audience.

HE

What could I do, ladies and gentlemen ? Spoil it all by telling her the truth ? She had so much faith in me. Please, try to understand; I love her,

cont'd

(HE)

We've been married three years, and what did I offer her ? She's so full of life - so trusting. I didn't really lie to her. I'm sure, some of you feel, I should have told her the truth. I know. It would have been smarter but - I just couldn't do it. Instead...

He makes a vague motion with his hand and turns back to the kitchen.

KITCHEN OF THE APARTMENT

DAY

A certain change has taken place. There is a much bigger ice-box. Gadgets, like a mixer, a percolater, electric coffee grinder etc. are standing around. The whole place is dressed up.

As in the first scene, SHE reads the paper - while HE sits down for breakfast.

SHE

You know what it says in my horoscope ?
'Concentrate on life at home this week'.

(she beams)

It must be fate that I talked to Mrs. McCormick this morning. Mr. McCormick can get us a dishwasher at less than wholesale.

HE

(worriedly)

Did you tell her about my raise ?

SHE

Naturally, I told her, and she was very much impressed. Oh darling - imagine, the latest model dishwasher with triple action. Big enough for eight.

HE

But, we're only two.

SHE

You talk like an accountant. Of course, if you didn't have that kind of mind, you wouldn't have invented a new system of book-keeping.

(she looks at watch)

Darling, you know what time it is ? Now that you're getting more money, you must be twice as conscientious.

SHE practically pushes him out of the door.

HE

Good bye, dear.

He kisses her and exits. Outside he turns to the unseen audience.

I'm sure, you were wondering about the new ice-box and the other changes in the kitchen. Well - you've heard my wife talk about Mrs. McCormick. It was Mr. McCormick who loaned me the extra two hundred and fifty dollars , the raise I didn't get. I had to pay him back. So I borrowed the money from someone else who wanted interest. The next month I had to do something to keep up the pretense. February, March, April - I couldn't tell my wife the truth. Not in Spring, not with this wonderful new dishwasher in operation, and the washer-drier she had bought in March. Soon, it was Summer and Fall and a year had gone by. I told you, I love my wife. I hadn'r much else to offer but this raise.

He turns and reenters the kitchen.

KITCHEN OF THE APARTMENT

EVENING

Further changes have taken place. The dishwasher is in evidence. SHE is wearing a new dress, and the table is set beautifully for dinner. As HE walks to the table, she is just opening a bottle of champagne.

HE

(surprised)

Champagne ? What's the occasion ?

SHE

Darling, don't you remember ? It's exactly a year that you got your raise.

HE

Oh yes, I remember.

SHE

(while she pours the champagne)

And because it's a year I've got a feeling that it's time again for you, to go to Mr. Gordon and say...

HE

(calmly continuing her sentence)

... Mr. Gordon, I told my wife that you gave me a raise of two hundred and fifty dollars. Even though it wasn't true at all.

(she stars at him
bewildered)

To make my wife believe it, I gave her two hundred fifty extra dollars every month. Where did they come from ? Out of the cashdrawer of your company. Twelve times two

cont'd

(HE)

hundred and fifty makes three thousand. Tomorrow the auditors will come, I know. - So, now you know everything too.

SHE

(aghast)

Is this true ?

HE

Yes.

SHE

You really did that ?

HE

Yes.

SHE starts crying. HE gets up and turns to the unseen audience.

Here we're are going to interrupt our show to ask your advice, ladies and gentlemen - your advice and your opinion about everything that's happened so far.

D i s c u s s i o n

The format of this show calls for several people to come up out of the audience and be questioned by Mr. Jürgens about their opinion, regarding the attitude of the people in the show. What is right or wrong about the way they acted etc. This part is unrehearsed. After the discussion, Mr. Jürgens steps again up to the CAMERA.

JÜRGENS

We will now show you the end of the story as written by the author.
You may or may not agree with him...
Now - where were we ? Oh, yes, I had just told my wife the truth.
And now I was going to face Mr. Gordon.

HE

(walking up to the office
of the BOSS)

This time it took all my courage to knock at that door.

(he knocks)

BOSS' VOICE

(from inside)

Come in !

OFFICE OF THE BOSS

DAY

HE enters and stands frightened and worried in the door.

BOSS

(without looking up)

What is it ?

HE

Excuse me.

BOSS

(looking up from his work)

Oh, it's you. Sit down.

This is an unexpected welcome. Now GORDON comes around the desk while HE approaches it, looking completely bewildered.

BOSS

Sit down and have a cigar.

(he offers him a cigar)

You don't have to tell me. I know
why you're here.

HE

You know ?

BOSS

Of course. I was pretty sure you'd
come to see me today.

HE

You were ?

BOSS

(laughing)

I've been expecting you.

HE

And what are you going to do now ?

BOSS

Well, I guess I have no choice.
Have I ?

HE

I guess you haven't.

BOSS

I'll say this: You've had it coming
to you.

Gordon is very jovial, while HE is hanging his head.

BOSS

I wonder what would be best ? To give you a raise or a bonus. Your book-keeping system has proven itself. It has saved us a lot of money. I'm the first to admit it. I figured that you'd probably enjoy a bonus more than a raise. What would you say to three thousand dollars ?

(HE finds no words, just stares dumbly at Gordon)
Well, say something !

HE

Three thousand ?

BOSS

Three thousand.

HE

When can I have them ?

BOSS

Whenever you want.

HE

Right now ?

BOSS

You want them right now ? A cheque ? Cash ? Right this minute ?

HE

(labored)

What would you say if I already had the money ?

BOSS

What ?

I wonder what would be paid? He
gave him a train or a house. Four
book-keeping system has proven it
self. It has saved him a lot of
money. It is the first to admit it.
I thought that you'd probably en-
joy a house more than a train.
What would you say to three thou-

and dollars?
(HE finds no words, just
stares dumbly at Gordon)
Well, say something!

HE
Three thousand?

BOSS
Three thousand.

HE
When can I have them?

BOSS
Whenever you want.

*I could stand to be paid
so much, so I quit*

Right now?
BOSS
You want them right now? A cheque?
Cash? Right this minute?

HE
(labored)
What would you say if I already had
the money?

BOSS
What?

HE

The three thousand. If I had taken them.

BOSS

You ?

HE

Yes. Twelve times two hundred and fifty makes three thousand. Now, I can return the money to you.

BOSS

I don't understand.

HE

I'll explain. But of course if you'd care to meet my wife, I could explain it even better. Would you like to come to dinner tonight ?

BOSS

(looks very surprised, but then smiles and says)

I think that could be arranged.

HE has turned away from Mr. Gordon and faces the audience again.

HE

He did arrange it. But the real miracle was that he didn't prefer charges against me. Somehow - I couldn't take that. I looked for another job and I found one. Mr. Gordon gave me a great send off, and a wonderful letter of recommendation. I believe that's the biggest miracle of them all. - -

HE smiles, bows and walks away.

THE END