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Family Plays

TWO PAILS OF WATER

**BY
AAD GREIDANUS**

**TRANSLATED FROM DUTCH BY
BILL HONEYWOOD**

TWO PAILS OF WATER

First presented by Toneelgroep Arena,
a professional Dutch theatre company for young audiences.
The first English production was by
the Unicorn Theatre of London.

Comedy. By Aad Greidanus. Translated from Dutch by Bill Honeywood. Cast: 4m., 2w. This tale is an exquisitely comic bit of folly. All is at sixes and sevens in the village square, where Alphonso Goldpurse yearns to marry the constable's daughter, Simplina, and Dophilus, the shoemaker, pines for the constable's other daughter, Sandra. But Simplina's affections are directed to Dophilus, while Sandra is drawn to Mr. Goldpurse. And in any case, their father refuses to allow his daughters to marry, since he needs them to do all his work so he can sleep. Into this scene comes Hoddell de Boddell, the rag-and-bone man. By a hilarious series of pranks, he convinces the constable that he is seeing things that do not exist—and by further fancy footwork he persuades the girls that they are the victims of hallucinations, common to unmarried girls. Then he induces the two suitors to swap clothes and exchange places. The resulting situation creates some delicious comedy, while bringing all to rights. *One ext. set. Folk costumes. Approximate running time: 75 minutes. Code: TN8.*

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CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

SANDRA	The village constable's daughter
SIMPLINA	Her sister
DOPHILIUS	A poor shoemaker
ALFONSO GOLDPURSE	A rich merchant
JORIS	The constable himself
HODDEL DE BODDEL	A rag and bone man

Two Pails of Water was first presented in Amsterdam, Holland, in 1960, by Toneelgroep Arena, a professional Dutch theatre company for young people, who toured the play across the Netherlands in 170 performances.

Translated into English, it was presented in 1965 by the Unicorn Theatre of London, England, under the direction of Caryl Jenner.

The English-speaking world is indebted to the Netherlands Centre of the International Theatre Institute, at The Hague, for making this translation available.

TWO PAILS OF WATER

PART ONE

The scene is a village square, surrounded by houses.

On the left we see the fine white house of Alfonso Goldpurse, a rich merchant who is always so frightfully busy, and who possesses so much money that he doesn't know what to do with it.

Back centre stands the neat cottage of Joris, the village constable, who lives with his two daughters Sandra and Simplina.

To the right stands the tumble-down shack of Dophilius, the poverty-stricken shoemaker.

In the middle of the square is a round stone well, which is encircled by a wooden bench. Over the well is a wooden framework carrying a rope and pulley for drawing water.

The curtain rises at dawn, with the village awakening to life. Cocks clarion. From the open window of the houses the shuffle of people is heard, as they get up and begin to move about.

Sandra and Simplina enter from their house to draw water.

While they are lowering a pail, Dophilius enters sleepily. He is wearing his apron, and carries a hammer in one hand and a shoe in the other. He walks quickly to the two girls at the well.

DOPHILIUS (To Sandra, hopefully). Morning, Miss Sandra. Let me help you with that heavy bucket.

(Sandra turns her back, sticks her nose in the air, and refuses to answer.)

SIMPLINA (Sweetly). Hallo, Dophilius, are you already hard at work?

DOPHILIUS (Coolly). Hallo, Simplina. Yes, I've already started, not that it's any use. No-one wants to buy my shoes anyway.

(Dophilius walks towards his house in a huff, angrily kicking at a stone. At this moment Alfonso Goldpurse opens his door, entering in a flurry, his pockets overflowing with cheques, letters and telegrams. He carries a bulging briefcase in one hand and a newspaper in the other. He is still chewing his breakfast.)

ALFONSO. No time to eat. No time to read the paper. No time to . . .

(He hears the rattle of buckets, looks around and hurries toward Simplina). . .

Good morning, dear, kind Simplina. What are you doing? YOU mustn't carry that heavy bucket! Wait a minute, and I'll call my servant, he'll carry it for you.

(Simplina turns her back on him, sticks her nose in the air and refuses to answer. She grabs her pail and hurries to house).

SANDRA *(Wistfully)*. Hallo, Mr. Goldpurse. What a lovely velvet jacket you're wearing!

ALFONSO. Bah! I've got at least ten more like this.

SANDRA. How wonderful it must be to be so rich!

(She takes hold of pail).

This bucket's so heavy! I wish I had a servant to carry it for me.

(Telephone bell from Alfonso's house).

ALFONSO. There it goes again!

(Runs inside).

SANDRA. How fine to have a servant . . . and a telephone . . . and ten velvet jackets . . . How lovely it would be to be rich!

SIMPLINA *(Off)*. Sandra! The wash is boiling over!

SANDRA. Oh! The wash!

(Sandra exits quickly, with pail. Enter Joris the constable, washed and dressed for the day).

JORIS. Aaaaaah! What a fine day for Joris the constable! Plenty of sun to make my buttons sparkle. No rain to make my moustache droop. No wind to blow my beautiful helmet off . . .

(Takes off helmet to admire it).

A jolly fine day to, er, to, er, to do something! I haven't got to worry about keeping an eye on the girls.

(Peeps through the keyhole).

They're too busy with the spring cleaning.

(Noises off of buckets tinkling, and splashing water).

And I don't have to keep an eye on Dophilius . . .

(Peeps through D's keyhole to the accompaniment of busy hammering). . .

Because Dophilius is too busy making shoes.

(Peeps through Mr. G's keyhole, noises of rattling typewriters and ringing telephone bells). . .

And I never have to keep my eye on Mr. Goldpurse, because he's always so busy that he never has the time to get up to anything! So, so. Everyone's at work, and people at work are too occupied to get up to things, so in that case

(Looks around him carefully).

I think it would be best . . . if Joris . . . took a little nap. After all, it's been an early start, and who can tell what can happen before the day's out? Yes, I think it would be better if I took a little rest now, and then at least I'll be fit if anything should happen.

(He is just about to sit on the bench when Sandra and Simplina enter, Sandra carrying a tin with glue, and Simplina carrying a tin with paint).

S. & S. Father Joris! You've got to paper the kitchen walls.

JORIS. Paper the kitchen! Brrrrrr.

S. & S. And paint the bench.

JORIS. Paint! ME! Brrrrrr.

SANDRA. Come now! The sooner you begin, the sooner you'll be finished.

JORIS *(Stands up importantly)*. I . . . er . . . I've got no time.

SANDRA *(Firmly)*. Here is the glue.

JORIS. But I just said . . .

SIMPLINA. And here is the paint.

JORIS. But I told you . . .

SANDRA. And there's bubble and squeak for dinner.

SIMPLINA. And apple pie for afters.

(Exit).

SANDRA *(By the door)*. That is, if you're finished in time!

(Exit).

JORIS *(Helplessly)*. But I tell you . . . Hmm. Bubble and squeak! Apple pie!

(Takes ahold of the two tins, and walks around the bench, kicking it sulkily).

I've not got time to paint benches! Pai-i-i-int! And glu-u-ue! As though a constable hasn't anything better to do! I'll teach 'em! I'll . . .

(He grabs hold of the two pots as if to throw them away, but thinks twice about it) . . .

Hmm. Bubble and squeak, and apple pie! Just my cup of tea! *(He rolls up his sleeves).*

Now which was the paint, this, or that? This looks a bit like the glue, or the paint!

(Sticks his finger in, and can't get it out again).

It's the . . . glue!

(Finger shoots free).

And jolly good glue too! So, that must be the paint. Now don't let me get it mixed up. I know what I'll do! I'll put the paint on the floor, and the glue on the bench. Now I can't make a mistake.

(Sits).

Ooooh! First take the weight off my poor feet! Might as well; put them up for a moment.

(Yawns and falls back sleepily).

The . . . paint . . . on . . . the . . . floor . . . and . . . the . . . glue . . . on . . . the . . . hench . . . Aaaaah.

(Falls to sleep, snoring).

(A handbell is heard, off, approaching, and a melodious voice crying "Rags and bones. Any old rags and bones". Hoddel de Boddel enters with his handcart. He is rather remarkably dressed, but his attire stamps him as a happy character. He rings his bell,—Joris sleeps through it all—and sings:)

Any old rags?
Any old bones?
Any old shirts,
Or any old blouses;
Any old breeches,
Or any old trousers;
Silks and laces,
Pa's old braces;
Furs and muffs,
Or powder puffs;
Boxes and crates,
Broken down grates;
Shawls and mittens,
Unwanted kittens;
Carpets and mats,
And this's and that's;
Shoes or nightshifts,
Any old wedding gifts;
Shift 'em and shake 'em,
Hoddel will take 'em.

(Puzzled by the silence, he looks around, rings his bell.)

HODDEL. "Any old rags!" . . . Doesn't anyone live here?

(Rings).

Seems queer!

(Rings harder).

Perhaps the people around here aren't very inquisitive, that would seem stranger still!

(Rings harder).

I'll have a look.

(Peeps through Dophilus' keyhole, to the sound of busy hammering) . . .

Hmm. Hard at work!

(To Joris' house, Sound of buckets and scrubbing brushes).

They're hard at work too!

(To Alfonso's house, Sound of typewriters and telephones. Surprised).

Hmmmm! Harder still! Everyone here seems terribly busy!

(Sees Joris lying on the bench asleep, laughs softly).

Ooooh, it's the constable! Just you wait, we'll teach him to sleep while everyone's hard at work!

(He tiptoes to his handcart and digs out a constable's tunic and helmet from among the rubbish, puts them on, and is about to return to the bench) . . .

Half — a mo'. A moustache! I almost forgot that!

(Digs out a false moustache and sticks it on his upper lip. He then takes a straw and begins to tease Joris by tickling the various parts of his face as if it is a fly. Joris slaps himself awake, but Hoddel ducks out of sight behind the well before he can be seen).

JORIS. Oh!

(As he pulls himself slowly upright, Hoddel's head appears at the other side of the well, the wooden framework over the well resembling the frame of a mirror. Joris' mouth falls open in amazement, Hoddel's follows suit. Hoddel simulates all Joris' movements like an image in a mirror. They stand up slowly).

Hey! That looks like a . . . How did that mirror get there! Ha, ha, ha, what a good mirror! A jolly fine mirror! Now I can have a good look at myself. At long last I can have a good look at my beautiful tunic.

(He pulls his tunic straight, twirls his moustache, and examines himself with great satisfaction. Then he first stands to attention

and begins to take on a variety of military positions. He giggles with satisfaction, and starts to act sillily, making faces and funny little hops. Once again he begins to examine his image carefully).

Hey! Am I seeing things? It looks as though . . . I think . . . (He turns around, peering into the so-called mirror; turns left and right examining himself and feeling himself all over nervously).

I really do believe that I am getting thinner! This tunic hangs a bit loose! See! Too loose. Much too loose. And now, if I look hard, very hard, I do believe that my helmet has grown bigger too!

(He shakes his head from side to side, Hoddel's helmet is indeed much too large, falling almost over his eyes).

Too big! My lovely helmet, much too big! And my handsome tunic! What will people say? Everyone will laugh at me, I must do something! But, what? Wait a minute! That mirror . . . I suppose it is alright? I mean, it might be a magic mirror!

(He taps, his finger tips meeting those of Hoddel).

Hey! I tap and hear nothing!

(He punches, his fist meeting that of Hoddel).

A soft mirror! Never in my life have I heard anything like that. I'll have to look into this a little closer!

(He climbs on to the stone rim of the well itself. Hoddel too. They stand with their faces close together. Joris makes faces, and Hoddel copies him carefully).

It all seems to agree, but . . .

(He taps the mirror again) . . .

But if I tap the mirror it doesn't make any sound, and that doesn't seem to agree.

(He takes hold of the framework and looks around the edge of it).

I don't get the hang of this!

(He puts himself at the side of one of the supports and looks left and right of it, Hoddel naturally follows suit).

It all seems to be alright, and yet it doesn't.

(He walks around the well to the back of the 'mirror', Hoddel to the front. He bends forward and peers until their noses touch. They change helmets).

Still, I really do believe that it's a proper mirror. I am Joris, and that is Joris too. This is my helmet, and that one also.

(They change helmets again).

You see! That's alright. But I still don't understand it fully.

(He sits down on the rim of the well to think things out more clearly).

I still don't get the hang of it! When I twirl my moustache, he twirls his, naturally, because it's a mirror. When I take hold of my helmet, he takes hold of his, naturally, there's nothing extraordinary in that. And when I take hold of his helmet, he takes hold of mine . . . Hey! Ho! But that's not possible! A mirror can't take hold of a hat! But then, it can't be a mirror at all!

(Stands slowly up).

What . . . is . . . it . . . then . . . really! . . .

(Turns to well).

(Hoddel has meanwhile taken advantage of his meditation to run to the handcart, take off his uniform and moustache and hide them. He stands idly rummaging among the bits and pieces. Joris climbs back on to the well and discovers that the 'mirror' is no longer a mirror. He tries to tap it, walks around it, and finally steps through it).

Nothing! Absolutely nothing! Vanished into thin air. But by all the raindrops, I saw it! With my own two eyes, I saw it! I'm certain!

(He gets down from the well and looks searchingly around).

Hallo! What is that!

(Puts on his spectacles).

Who can that be?

(Takes out a telescope and looks again).

I'll have to look into this, and find out more about it!

(He puts away the telescope, pulls his tunic straight, pulls himself into an official posture, and ambles slowly toward Hoddel, his hands behind his back).

Ahem!

(Hoddel doesn't hear).

Aaaa-he-e-em!

(Hoddel starts, and begins calling).

HODDEL. Rags, Bones, Any old clothes!

JORIS. And who might you be?

HODDEL. Ah! Officer . . .

JORIS. I said: "Who might you be?"

HODDEL. What? You don't know me, constable? Everyone everywhere knows me! I'm Hoddel de Boddel, the junk man.

(Bows).

JORIS. Aha! And what might you be doing here?

HODDEL. Collecting junk.

(Cries).

Any old clothes!?

(Joris sleuths around the cart like a Sherlock Holmes).

JORIS. So! So! And what do you reckon to do with that lot?

HODDEL. Sell it.

JORIS. Aha! So, you sell things?

HODDEL. Anything you can think of, constable.

JORIS. Aha! So-o-o-o. Something of everything, huh? . . . Tell me, Mr. Junkman, er, you wouldn't perhaps have a mirror for sale, would you?

HODDEL. A mirror?

JORIS. Yes, a big one. You know, a sort of full length one that you can see your whole self in.

HODDEL. A mirror! Let me see now . . . No, that's something I haven't got just at the moment. Are you in need of one, officer?

JORIS. I? Well, er, I've sort of lost one, if you see what I mean. It was here only a moment ago, on the well.

HODDEL. On the well? I can't see a mirror on the well!

JORIS. No. That's it, you see! It disappeared!

HODDEL. Disappeared? That's strange!

JORIS. Very strange.

HODDEL. D'you need a mirror very badly, officer?

JORIS. Yes! I mean no. You see, I think . . . I - er - rather believe . . . Tell me, junkman, how do you think my tunic fits?

(Hoddel walks around Joris, pulling at his tunic here and there).

HODDEL. Hmm. Very smart. Very tidy. A little on the large side, perhaps.

JORIS. What's that? Too large? There! How about my helmet?

HODDEL. Mmmm. Smart. Very smart! Just a tiny bit too big, if I may say so.

JORIS. You think it's too big? I know it! Nothing fits me any more. I'm losing weight.

HODDEL. Perhaps you don't eat enough, constable.

JORIS. That's it! That must be it. I must eat more.

HODDEL. Or perhaps you work too hard?

JORIS. Yes, that's it too. I work too hard.

HODDEL. Perhaps you're overworked.

JORIS. Overworked? What's that?

HODDEL. That means that you work too hard, that you're always tired.

JORIS. Ay, that I am!

(Yawns).

Ooooooh! How tired I am!

HODDEL. And then you just can't eat any extra.

JORIS. That I can't! Not one single extra spoonful can I get past my throat.

HODDEL. And you can't sleep enough, either?

JORIS. Sleep? Huh! Haven't shut my eyes in weeks! And I'm so tired!

HODDEL. There you are! And perhaps you see things that are not really there at all? For instance, you thought that you saw a mirror . . .

JORIS *(Glancing at well)*. But that I did see! . . .

HODDEL. There you have it!

JORIS. Then I must be o, o, over . . . worked. What can I do?

HODDEL. DO? That's just it, you musn't DO anything! Just stay quiet, and rest, and sleep and eat.

JORIS. You've got it! I've got to get more sleep. I need plenty more sleep, because I'm terribly o, o, er . . .

HODDEL. Overworked.

JORIS. Yes. That's it, overworked. I'm going straight to bed!

(He moves toward the house, but stops halfway, remembering).

But I can't.

HODDEL. Why not?

JORIS. I've got to paint the bench.

HODDEL. But that's very dangerous, constable, for a man in your condition.

(Shakes head).

It always starts in the same way. First you start to see things that aren't really there, then to hear things, and to smell things.

JORIS. Hear things? And smell things? That aren't there at all! But that's terrible! I'm going straight to bed. I'm o, o, —

(Turns at door of house).

HODDEL. Overworked.

JORIS. That's it. Overworked!

(Exit).

HODDEL. Ha. Ha. Ha. The lazy constable! He's overworked! Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha.

(Alfonso enters, agitated).

ALFONSO. What's all the noise about?

HODDEL *(Pulls himself quickly together)*. Rags and Bones!

ALFONSO. Who are you?

HODDEL. I'm Hoddel de Boddell the junkman. Have you any old rags to sell?

ALFONSO. Old rags! Me? I haven't got any old rags. Everything I've got is new!

HODDEL. Then perhaps you would like to buy something from me?

ALFONSO. No! I've got everything.

HODDEL. That's not possible. Have you got a hat like this, with such lovely feathers?

ALFONSO. I've got ten like it in the cupboard.

HODDEL. And this fine chinese jacket?

ALFONSO. I've at least a hundred jackets.

HODDEL. Oh! Then have you got . . .

ALFONSO. Yes. I've got that too. And that. And that. I've got everything, so you can stop it now, I've got to get to work.

HODDEL. To work? Why?

ALFONSO. Why? To make money, of course!

HODDEL. What do you do with your money then?