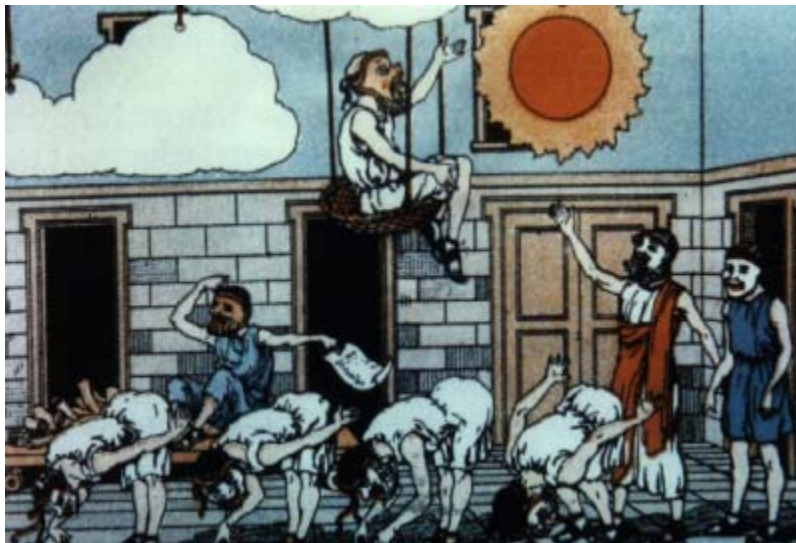


Dollartorium

A Comedy
By Ron Pullins

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"Come on down to the Dollartorium
Come on down while the getting's good...."



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Characters

RALPH	40-50, Man
STELLA	20-25. RALPH'S daughter
MONEY MASTER	45-55's. Male. Slick, devilish.
CHORUS	
CHORUS LEADER	Female or Male
CHORUS 1	Male or Female
CHORUS 2	Female or Male
SYCOPHANT/MRS. RALPH	Ralph's wife, 40-50, female, but also plays the Golem like SYCOPHANT - wily, sinister.

Scene 1	Living room with t.v. Easy Chair. Sofa.
Scene 2	Outside the Dollartorium.
Scene 3	The Dollartorium. Interior.
Scene 4	The Dollartorium. Interior.
Scene 5	The Dollartorium. Interior.
Scene 6	The Dollartorium. Interior.
Scene 7	The Dollartorium. Inner Chamber.
Scene 8	The Dollartorium. Interior.
Scene 9	Road home

Synopsis
Dollartorium: A COMEDY

Aristophanes' CLOUDS was first performed in Athens in 453 BC, a Greek comedy that did much to destroy the reputation of Socrates. Greek philosophy had turned into sophistry, in Aristophanes' opinion, and was in need of the serious comic treatment few could deliver more ably than he.

Philosophers don't rank high in modern American society, but financial types do -- high and deserving of ridicule. They are the target for this very loose recasting of the CLOUDS which has poor RALPH yearning for the lifestyle of the rich. Inspired by a late night television commercial for a "how-to" book, Ralph is drawn to the Dollartorium, passes several tests of fitness for wealth, and is admitted into the secret chamber where he learns who controls the financial system.

Some rescuing is required, of course, and his daughter STELLA fills the role, ultimately reducing the power of the unconscionable rich, while leading her father to Kansas (where no one has any money, but where you neighbor will look you in the eye) and back to his senses.

Scene I

SETTING: Living room. Television on.
AT RISE: RALPH slouches, half asleep, in a chair.
STELLA sleeps on the couch. MONEY MASTER
speaks from inside the television. MRS RALPH
enters sweeping.

MRS. RALPH

(To RALPH and STELLA)

Get up. Time to go to work, Ralph. You, too, daughter dear.
Ain't you two a pair? Bills to pay, Ralph, and you, Stella,
college loans coming due, and not a lose penny in this
house.

MONEY MASTER

(from t.v.)Wake up, little man.
Take control of your life.
Take control of your fortune.
And ignore your sweet wife.

Come on down to the Dollartorium.
Be my guest at the school of riches.
See what future lies in fortune,
Where fortunes soar, and sores cause itches....

MRS. RALPH

(indifferent to the MONEY MASTER)

Damned t.v. Always blaring. Get up. You'll be late, Ralph.
This ain't no time to lose your job. Stella, the early bird
gets the worm, and I'm so hungry, worms sound tasty.

CHORUS

(CHORUS enters singing)

Come down, Ralph, to the Dollartorium.
Come on down while the getting's good.
Come on down to the Dollartorium,
Where the dough ain't bread, and the bread ain't food.

MRS. RALPH

Get dressed, Ralph. If you're greeting customers, you have
to be there when they open the door.

RALPH

I'm getting up, sweet bird of my boudoir.

MONEY MASTER

Get up off that sofa, Ralph.
Move that lazy butt of yours.
Go on down and see our book.

It will change your live. It will opens doors.

MRS. RALPH

(Nodding towards television) Now there's someone who knows the ins and outs of getting rich, Ralph. Why aren't you like that? You barely have a job at all. Look at him. He's made fortunes for all sorts of people. Everyone back east here knows how to get rich, but you.

RALPH

I'm getting up, dear, celestial sphere of my heavenly orbit.

MRS. RALPH

Ralph, if you had any gumption, you'd be studying this man's secrets, kissing his feet to learn how to get yourself rich.

RALPH

But darling, dear, peach of my eye, if I had any gumption, I wouldn't've let you talk me into leaving Kansas a year ago. We'd be there now, raising our darling daughter, and I'd've opened my little store across the river by now.

STELLA

Look at those testimonials, Ralph. That one's earned a \$1,000 a week. That one, \$10,000. He works two days a week. That one, one day! That one, two hours! You think they'd be on t.v. if it weren't true? You're not paying attention to the culture, Ralph. These are times to grab and get, Ralph, and you're just a small man.

RALPH

We should have stayed in Kansas. Opened that little store across the river.

MRS. RALPH

There you go again.

Listen to the culture, Ralph.
Pay attention to the noise.
It's what you really must, must do,
To play with the rich, rich boys.

MRS. RALPH (CON'T)

You'll not have a nickel, Ralph
If you don't join the fight.
Grab what you want, take what you need,
To hell with feeling right.

RALPH

Then I'll start to think. I can't sleep when I think.

MONEY MASTER

(Sings) Three easy payments of \$29
One hundred pages on financial health.
It's the authorized book on the secrets of riches,

It's your one way ticket to fabulous wealth.

Yes, my friend, The Golden Book of Getting Rich, the best self-help book on getting rich ever written. In a year, in a month, in a few short days, twenty pages into the book, ten pages, two! You'll begin to reap its benefits and start on the journey to financial well being....

RALPH

Darling, you think they'd sell that for \$60? Anyway, we don't have \$60.

MRS. RALPH

I'm signing you up, Ralph. I'll find sixty dollars. That's what I'm gonna do. Yes, that's what I'm gonna do. I'm gonna go on line and sign you up. And you're gonna go there, Ralph, get that book, read that book, learn that book, and you are going to get rich. Yes you are, we're gonna get very, very rich. Very rich. Sixty dollars? I got sixty dollars if it'll get me sixty million. All I need is a little space on my credit card and that I got. You get down there and get that book, Ralph, read that book and learn, and get rich, that's what's gonna happen, yes it is.

(MRS. RALPH exits)

MONEY MASTER

Borrow it, beg it,
go out and steal.
Don't be a weenie, Ralph.
This book is for real.
Ralph, Ralph, my friend,
Get out of your chair.
Change your ways, and your life,
And give ambition fresh air.

CHORUS

(Enter CHORUS, dance across stage)

Come on down to the Dollartorium
Come on down while the getting's good.
Come on down to the Dollartorium
Where the dough ain't bread, and the bread ain't food.

RALPH

Liars and cheats. I've seen enough of you all. Too many swindlers in this country. Too many crooks. I'm sleeping.

MONEY MASTER

Liars and cheats!? Swindlers and crooks!? I beg your pardon.

(MONEY MASTER steps out of t.v.)

My god, man, you've been chosen! I am selecting you. Don't you want your children to go to the finest colleges, meet

the finest men, give birth to the finest babies, live in the finest houses, drive the finest cars that eat the finest gas?

RALPH

Chosen? Hell, I'm lucky I chose chose to get my butt out of bed and go to work every day.

MONEY MASTER

I'm gonna change your life....

RALPH

If you want to change my life, get me a beer.

MONEY MASTER

...but you must have that yearning in your gut for vast wealth. It's a gen-u-ine offer, friend. You are just the kind of unthinking idiot that can make sense of fabulous wealth. It's in the book. How to get what you want by taking from others. How to elevate yourself by cutting others down. How to earn vast sums without paying taxes. How to surround yourself with things, and dames, and coins, and....

CHORUS

Come on down to the Dollartorium
Come on down while the getting's good.
Come on down to the Dollartorium
Where the dough ain't bread, and the bread ain't food.

RALPH

Dames? Really? And all this from a book?

(RALPH farts. STELLA snores)

MONEY MASTER

Exactly. Everything you need to know. It's in the book.

RALPH

What's in it for you?

MONEY MASTER

Nothing.... except....love. Yes...you can love me.

RALPH

Love you?

MONEY MASTER

I want love from those I select. My sycophants. Is that so wrong? Is it too much to ask for a card on father's day?

RALPH

And you want me to....

MONEY MASTER

Exactly, you little bastard. Just love me a little, and I will make you rich. Don't worry your ugly little puss what's in it for me. When I've made you what you can be, you repay me with love.

RALPH

You broke my t.v.

MONEY MASTER

Stick with me, Ralph, and you'll own a thousand televisions, factories that make televisions, patents that make television television. Cables. Air waves. You'll be big, Ralph. The owner, not the watcher.

RALPH

It'd certainly make my wife a happy man.

MONEY MASTER

Come on down to the Dollartorium. It's the perfect time. All that money that used to be everywhere is still there, only in the pockets of the rich. In trust funds, or blind funds, or hidden funds, or funds offshore. Come on down, Ralph, to the Dollartorium. Here's my personal invitation. Follow the coins, Ralph. Follow the yellow gold coins.

(MONEY MASTER returns to the t.v.)

RALPH

Follow the yellow gold coins....

CHORUS

(The CHORUS, dressed as coins,
dance off singing)

Come on down to the Dollartorium.
Come on down while the getting's good.
Come on down to the Dollartorium
Where the dough ain't bread, and the bread ain't food.

RALPH

Then I will.

(pause)

Thank you.

(pause)

Yes, I will. I don't see why not. Follow the yellow gold coins.

(RALPH looks around for MONEY
MASTER, then puzzles over the
ticket which folds out to a map.)

Why not me? The rich are no better than I am. Why not now?
Follow the yellow gold coins, oh, yeah.

(Pause. STELLA snores)

I should be rich. I get up and work every day. I work hard.
I must be missing something. Yes. Why not me. Follow the
yellow gold coins, I see. Follow the yellow gold coins.

(RALPH puts things on a scale)

If I put my assets here, and my liabilities there, the
difference is my net worth. My house....well that part the
bank doesn't own, I'll put that here. My car.... well, less
the thirty months of payments I sill owe the finance
company... Boy, I got net worthless.....

(stands back)

Well, I own this shirt and these pants. And this television
set. Except it's broken. And my underwear. Nobody is going
to repossess that. How did I get in such a mess? I oughta
get rich. I gotta see that book. (To STELLA) Goodbye, dear,
fruit of my loins, vegetable of my garden.

STELLA

Where are you going?

RALPH

Sweet bud of your mother's flower, things have got to
change. I'm tired of being poor, my beamish girl, tadpole in
the pond of my fertile youth. I getting rich.

STELLA

I hate rich people.

RALPH

I've been going at this money thing wrong. Working's not the
answer. The rich don't work. They make money. These days you
get paid more for playing baseball - a game! - than you do
for standing all day at a cold wet bench gutting chickens.
Which is harder? You get paid more to sell insurance on corn
than you do to plant and harvest it. Where's the risk?
What's the danger?

STELLA

But those things take skill and talent.

RALPH

Gutting 200 chickens an hour, that's a talent. Tamping down
graves with a pneumatic hammer, that's a skill. Dipping wool
in a hot tub of stinking dye all day in a factory basement
that smells like rat piss, that's work. You should make more
money cleaning out dirty grease traps behind the fryers than
the manager does counting out his money. We've been going at
this thing all wrong, Stella

STELLA

You know this, father, who's flat ass broke?

RALPH

No more working. That's my plan.

STELLA

Let's go back to Kansas, father, open up that little grocery store you want, be friends with our neighbors. We can watch as our food grows in the sun. We can read, and think, and talk, even go to the theater, and we don't have to wait until we retire to have the time to do it. Tell me those stories again.

RALPH

We should have stayed in Kansas. Your mother insisted we come back East. She said, this is where the money is. Maybe so, but I haven't seen any of it. Houses are expensive. Schools are outrageous. A grocery store Kansas. A little farm with cows and pigs. But your mother insisted.

STELLA

You blame mother?

RALPH

I sold the farm and moved to town, but there wasn't any theatre, she said. All people did, she said, was walk around and say hello to one another. And, in the spring, plant tomatoes. And, in the fall, put up fruit. What kind of life was that? she asked. Making Christmas candy. Getting up at dawn to gather eggs. But, Stella, what's wrong with that?

I'm ruined. I don't sleep. I worry too much. So I sit for hours in front of this blasted t.v. and watch those ads about things I don't want and can't afford.

On the farm, with my chickens, I wasn't rich, but I had friends, and time, the sky, the land, and I almost started a little grocery store across the river.

STELLA

And pigs. You said you raised pigs, too. I always wanted to raise a few pigs.

RALPH

Cursed. The truth is, Stella, my progenitoritive love, the flower forced through my green fuse, I was far happier in Kansas, my friends were real, my heart was big, and my mind was pure. Even pigs are happier in Kansas than I am here back East. And we treated them better, too.

STELLA

Even if we eat them, I suppose. Aren't you going to work today?

RALPH

I am, dear daughter, apple of my eye, fruit of my loins, coin of my wallet, lovely heir to my dominions, coordinate of my lineage, telegram of my genetic code. No more work.

STELLA

Okay. Let's go to Kansas. It's much easier to be poor there, and simpler. And more than just being stories you tell, we'll have that farm, we'll start that little store across the river.

RALPH

Oh, that. Yes, yes. And a farm out back where we'll grow our food....

(pause)

No. No, no, no. I'm beyond that now. I've got my ticket and I say, off to the Dollartorium.

Scene 2

RALPH

(On a road outside the
Dollartorium)

I've worked all my life, and got nothing.
All my life I've been such a fool.
My pockets are constantly empty.
My life's but a cold plate of gruel.

I've been shit on, and shoved,
Pushed this way and that,
I've been spit on, and fired,
And look where I'm at!

I'm a doormat. That's all.
A fool for the rich.
A tool for their pleasure,
A dog they can switch.

I've been walked on, run over,
I've got marks up my back,
I've been kicked at and scratched
While stretched out on the rack.

I'm a doormat. That's over!
I'm so angry at last
I'll learn from the richest
To make them doormats damned fast.

(RALPH sings tentatively.
Offstage CHORUS chimes in)

Come on down to the Dollartorium,
Come on down while the getting's good.
Come on down to the Dollartorium,
Where the bread ain't dough, and the dough ain't food.

Hey, yeh. That can be me.

(With more energy....)

Come on down to the Dollartorium....

Hey! I like this it.

(RALPH knocks on door)

SYCOPHANT

What's going on here? What's going on? Who the hell is
knocking on the door so very, very loud? So very, very
forceful. Don't do that. Don't do that at all. This is a
private business. Very private. Can't you see that?

RALPH

Hi. I'm Ralph. I've been invited.

SYCOPHANT

Good. And good bye.

RALPH

Whoa! I'm here to see the book. I was invited. This is the Dollartorium?

SYCOPHANT

It is. And you're an idiot. Not that we have yet determined who you are, or even where you are, and especially not why you are here. Until then, let me alone. I've things to do. I'm in the middle of creating a deal. A very important deal.

RALPH

A deal? (affectionately) Oh, that's why I'm here. Can I watch? Can I learn? I want to make deals.

SYCOPHANT

Oh, dear. Now I've forgotten the terms. These things are complicated, and, thanks to you, the world might very well be a poorer place. I'm very, very confused. Something people want something to buy something and some other people have something to sell. Or do the both want to buy? Or do they both want to sell? And now or later....

RALPH

I'm sorry. Can I come in?

(RALPH enters)

SYCOPHANT

You've cost me. I was inventing a new financial instrument. I was going to go bankrupt and get rich.

RALPH

Bankrupt? I thought people here made money.

SYCOPHANT

We do. We do. God, you're naïve. But the big money's in going broke, if you do it right. In a big way. Most people don't go broke properly. Just a little bit there, miss a house payment, an overdrawn check, and, poof, you're in foreclosure, you've lost your job, and your neighbors think your dick is too small. But, if you've borrowed so much money that the bank can't let you fail, then they'll give you all the money you need. More, and isn't that the definition of being rich?

RALPH

I'm writing this down. This is good. This is very good. All this is in the book?