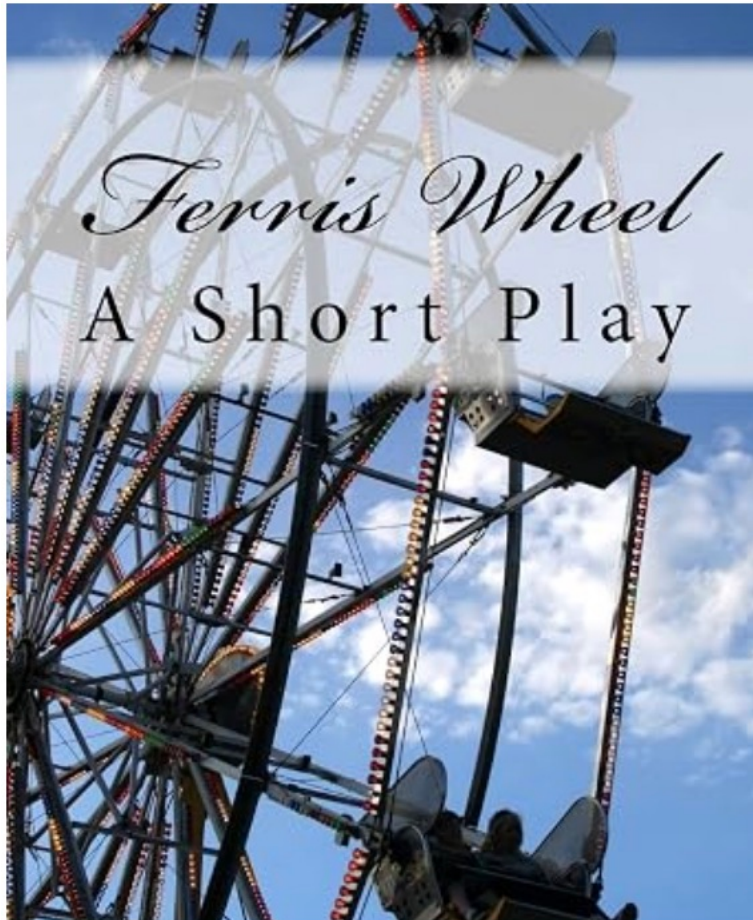


PERUSAL SCRIPT
(½ of the play)



FERRIS WHEEL

A SHORT PLAY
by
Mary Miller



Leicester Bay
THEATRICALS

Newport, Maine

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FERRIS WHEEL

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CHARACTERS: 1f 1m

JOHN and DORIE: They can be any age as long as they are close to the same age. However, the play becomes more poignant if they are a little older and rather average looking.

SETTING:

The setting is two folding chairs placed side by side or a small bench. The motion of the Ferris wheel can be created by the movement of the actors, gradually leaning forward going up and gradually leaning backwards going down. The safety bar in front of them should be mimed when necessary.

Note: The play runs almost as two separate monologues with the characters seldom relating to one another until they have to.

FERRIS WHEEL is an award-winning short/one-act play by *Mary Miller* that has been produced across the United States and around the world. Originally published in the anthology *TAKE TEN: New 10-Minute Plays* by Random House, **FERRIS WHEEL** continues to delight audiences of all ages. ***1F, 1M. 21 minutes. Simple setting w/possible projection.*** It is the perfect play for any production company from Broadway to local community theatres as well as high schools and colleges alike. Suitable for all ages. Funny and touching, the play is the unlikely love story of two lonely people who are forced to ride together on an old country Ferris wheel. She's afraid of heights. He's afraid to give up smoking. They are both afraid of each other. A "*delight for audiences of all ages*" *Ferris Wheel* is the "*perfect short play*" for any group from Off Broadway to local community theatres, high schools, colleges, and churches alike. **ORDER #3393**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Miller, an award-winning playwright with a 30-year career, has received over 400 productions of her plays in 44 states, 17 countries and translated into 7 languages. **Mary Miller Plays** are recognized for inventive storytelling with dynamic characters that entertain and engage audiences. Best known for her short play *Ferris Wheel*, originally published by Random House, Mary won the John Gassner Memorial Award for *In the Kitchen*, Dayton FutureFest for *Waiting for Oprah*, and Theatre Conspiracy for *Virgin Tears*. She was a finalist at South Carolina Conference with *A Christmas House* and made her New York debut with *Light Burgers*. www.marymillerproductions.com

FERRIS WHEEL

The stage is two folding chairs / or a small bench. A Woman is seated with her arms outstretched in front of her, her fist clinched, her feet planted firmly on the ground and her eyes shut.

A Man enters. He looks down at the woman and then behind him and then back at the woman. He then starts to sit next to her...

JOHN: Excuse me. Excuse me? I hope I'm not ... crowding you...

DORIE: *(flustered/embarrassed)* No.

(He slides into the empty seat next to her and takes hold to the "bar.")

JOHN: I would have taken another seat but the line is too long to let anyone ride by themselves.

(She nods but doesn't respond.)

They force you to be a couple whether you want to or not ... not that I mind. I mean it's a pleasure.

(He looks at her, sitting bolt upright and perfectly rigid.)

JOHN: Are you comfortable?

DORIE: Just fine. Whoops ... we're off.

(She squeezes her fist tighter, clinches her eyes shut and presses her feet to the floor.)

JOHN: Are you all right?

DORIE: I'm fine.

JOHN: Are you sure?

DORIE: Couuuldn't be better.

JOHN: But you're not looking?

DORIE: No. Heights. I'm frightened of heights.

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JOHN: And you ride a Ferris wheel?

DORIE: Just once a year. On my birthday.

JOHN: Happy birthday.

DORIE: Thank you.

JOHN: You're welcome.

(He looks at her gripping the bar.)

Your knuckles are turning white. Are you sure this is good for your circulation?

DORIE: What doesn't kill me makes me stronger, type of thing.

JOHN: So you do this in lieu of a birthday party with cake and ice cream?

DORIE: Oh no, I have that too, when I get through. Like a reward.

JOHN: But you go through this first.

DORIE: My Daddy started it and I keep it up.

JOHN: He was frightened of heights?

DORIE: Oh no, he just believed you should do something that frightens you at least once a year. Builds character. Strengthens moral fiber. You ought to try it sometime.

JOHN: I am riding.

DORIE: No, doing something *you're* frightened of, this doesn't count if you're not frightened of heights. I had this cousin once who tried to pretend like she was frightened of small places until she got locked in the attic during a thunderstorm. Lightning struck that house and burned it to the ground.

JOHN: Now she's frightened of fire?

DORIE: No sir, she's dead. You can't go messing with things like this.

JOHN: Truth is stranger than fiction.

DORIE: Don't you know it. Once I had this art teacher named Miss Thumb, who was missing two fingers. She used to say to paint all you needed were your ten good fingers and she'd hold up eight.

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(She demonstrates and then grabs for the bar.)

DORIE: Whooopppss!!

JOHN: (Are) you all right?!

DORIE: I'm fine. *(pause)* ... You're not from around here?

JOHN: No. Passing through, saw the wheel and drove on over. That's my little red car down there.

(He points. She starts to look and stops.)

DORIE: I'll take your word for it. *(pause)* You know it's funny running into a man like yourself riding a Ferris wheel alone.

JOHN: *(embarrassed)* I used to do this as a kid ... but you get older...

DORIE: Nonsense, you're never too old. My Momma always said you're only as old as you feel. Of course some days I feel like I'm a hundred....

(Suddenly they both jerk forward in their seats ... and stop still.)

DORIE: Oh my God? What happened?

JOHN: Looks like we stopped.

DORIE: Why?

JOHN: We seem to be stuck.

(He leans forward to look.)

DORIE: Don't do that!!

JOHN: Do what?!

DORIE: Don't move! You're rocking the car. Please don't rock the car.

JOHN: I'm sorry. They're probably just making an adjustment. We'll be moving ...

(They do not move. He looks at her)

... any minute.

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DORIE: Yes. *(panic growing)* We should be ... rolling? Any...minute...?!

JOHN: Would you care for a cigarette? Calm your nerves.

DORIE: Me? No. I don't smoke. Do you?

JOHN: Not if you don't want me to.

DORIE: No, it doesn't bother me.

(He starts to light up.)

When I was younger I saw this demonstration with an invisible man, where they hung this sack off his windpipe and said it was an exact duplicate of the human lung tissue. Then they put this lit cigarette in its plastic mouth and we watched the smoke slowly trickle down into the lung sack. And all of a sudden it started popping and bubbling--disintegrating right in front of our very eyes 'til it was nothing but a brown dripping glob hanging off that clear plastic windpipe. They said that's what happens to a tiny layer of your lung every time you take a puff. So I don't care to smoke myself, but if you want to go right ahead.

(He looks at the cigarette in his hand, changing his mind.)

JOHN: I was thinking of giving it up. Now would be as good a time as any. Right? ... Do something you're frightened of ... sure? Why not?

DORIE: Once you do, it's best not to take it back. Remember my poor dead cousin...

JOHN: I don't need a cigarette.

DORIE: Good.

(He pats his chest pocket where his cigarettes are, then starts twitching his shoulder, drumming his fingers on his leg impatiently...leans over, looks down.)

JOHN: It must be mechanical.

DORIE: *(newly panicked)* Mechanical?! We could be up here for days!

JOHN: No.

DORIE: It is possible.

JOHN: Anything is possible...

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DORIE: Oh God.

JOHN: Why don't you open your eyes?

DORIE: I'm frightened of heights!

JOHN: Just lean back and look up.

DORIE: Lean back ... and ... look ... up!?

JOHN: Like in a field, on your back, looking up. Nothing scary about that.

DORIE: Leaning back, looking up? Lean back and look up.

(She does)

Yes.

(looking up)

Oh God, it's going to rain. What are we going to do if it rains?!

(looking at him)

This thing will rust over solid and we'll be stuck up here forever!

JOHN: It's not going to rain. My knee locks up when it rains and it's fine. See.

(He moves his knee.)

DORIE: Don't move!

JOHN: I'm sorry.

(He looks at his pocket where his cigarettes are.)

DORIE: So much for my luck. I should have checked my horoscope.

JOHN: We're going to be ... all right.

(referring to having quit smoking)

I'm going to be ... OK?

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(He looks away from his pocket and pats his chest)

This isn't so bad.

(Uneasily, he takes a deep breath.)

DORIE: ... Bad. I knew today was going to be bad when the cream in my coffee curdled up like a relief map of the Himalayas.

JOHN: It's easy.

(struggling)

This is easy.

DORIE: You know, like the kind of maps we made back in high school ... out of flour and salt water? Of course my mother never would let me cook.

JOHN: I could have quit a long time ago. *(pause)* So, how long has it been?

(He feels in his pants pockets.)

JOHN: You wouldn't happen to have any gum, would you? Juicy Fruit? ... Doublemint?

DORIE: Gum? No. My grandmother never allowed it.

JOHN: Neither would mine.

DORIE: She thought it was tacky. Bad for your teeth.

JOHN: ... a waste of money.

DORIE: ... socially incorrect.

JOHN: *(as if to himself)* She grew up during the depression ... always kept her money in a black leather purse pinned tightly under her arm.

DORIE: *(to herself)* My family has always been socially correct, even at the most incorrect political times.

JOHN: When she died, that was the first time I'd ever seen her without that purse.

DORIE: My cousin made her debut during the Vietnamese War.

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JOHN: I thought without that purse, she wasn't going any place.

DORIE: My sister was a Nixonette during the Watergate Convention.

JOHN: Not Heaven ...

DORIE: We got our first color TV the day Kennedy was shot ...

JOHN: ... not Hell ...

DORIE: ... spent the rest of the week watching his funeral ...

JOHN: ... they say her house is haunted ...

DORIE: ... in black and white ...

JOHN: ... I know what she's looking for ...

DORIE: ... on a *color* TV!

JOHN: ... that damn *purse*!

DORIE: (*to him*) So, I doubt I have any gum. But you're welcome to look.

(*She hands him her black leather purse and he jumps.*)

JOHN: NO! No. I can wait.

(*pause*)

So ... Seriously. How long has it been?

DORIE: Five minutes.

JOHN: Just *five* minutes!

(*to himself*)

And I'm already starving. I'm going to blow up like a blimp.

(*He unconsciously starts moving his leg and tapping his foot.*)

DORIE: (*without looking down*) What are you doing?!

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JOHN: Nothing.

DORIE: You're moving.

JOHN: I'm not moving.

DORIE: You're twitching.

JOHN: Twitching?

DORIE: *(pointing down/looking up)* Your leg. It's going like a house of fire. Are you nervous? ... Or is this some sort of warning signal before you break into a full uncontrollable fit?

JOHN: I am not breaking into a fit!

DORIE: A nervous twitch, wouldn't you know it!

JOHN: I'm not twitching! Look.

(She doesn't look)

Don't look. See ...

(He holds his hand out in front of him)

... Steady as a rock.

(His hands start to shake he grabs for the bar.)

Oh God.

DORIE: Oh God. What if they make us climb out on a ladder?!

(panic)

I can't climb out on a ladder. I'm going to be sick.

JOHN: Just take a deep breath. It's mind over matter. Just breathe. Breathe.

*(They both breathe together, she a deep breath and he like he's smoking an imaginary cigarette.)
(then breathing)*

SEVEN MORE PAGES TO THE END

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REVIEWS:

Ferris Wheel

"Extraordinary" - TAKE TEN Eric Lane & Nina Shengold - Editors

"A major success" Los Angeles, CA

"Delightful play" Houston, TX

"Fantastic" Milligan College, TN

"Great audience response" Richmond, VA

"...wonderful play" Clinton, MI

"... one of our favorites..." La Paz, Mexico

"A quiet, short, understated piece, its humor and pathos arising out of character and situation, not out of wisecrack or historical contrivance. The sort of truth and gradual revelation you might expect from Alan Bennett, though this is by an American author. Excellent!" Saltburn Drama Festival, North Yorkshire, England

"...a real crowd pleaser" Hatton, ND

"...part of our annual collection of one acts..." Eden Prairie, MN

"...students had a great time and people loved the show..." Lacey, WA

"...loved it..." Brazil, South America

"...a HUGE success!" Naples, FL

"An American Alan Bennett, *Ferris Wheel* is both moving and very funny." Hong Kong, China

"...I adore *Ferris Wheel*..." La Plata, MD

"...charming play..." Oulu, Finland

"A great play" Rhinelander, WI

"Wonderful writing..." Asheville, NC

"I fell in love with everything about *Ferris Wheel*. The dialogue is sweet and funny. The characters are just a little bit sad; they seem so very familiar to me. The staging is elegant in its simplicity. It is a rare gem."

Jesse Runde, Alchemy Theatre Company, Huntington, WV

"... love your one act..." Johnson City, TN

"...an amazing play..." Crown Point, IN

"... a beautiful script..." Auckland, New Zealand

"*Ferris Wheel* was the standout ...fast and funny.... this is a great comedy." Ridgefield, CT

Best Actor and Best Actress Award Winner - Amelia Earhart Playhouse, Wiesbaden, Germany

"Many thanks..." Victoria, Australia

"...so important now as we all need to laugh, connect, and be moved."

New York City, NY

"...one of our favorites..." La Paz, Mexico

"An amazing piece of theatre!" Eau Claire, WI

WINNER - National One-Act Play Contest, Dubuque, IA

FINALIST - Humana Festival of New Plays, ACTORS THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE, Louisville, KY

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Also by MARY MILLER

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One-Woman Show

Things I Learned in Isolation

NOVELS:

A Christmas House

SELF-HELP:

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