

Title: The Model Millionaire

Adapted from: The Model Millionaire by Oscar Wilde

Available online at East of the Web:

<http://www.eastoftheweb.com/short-stories/UBooks/ModMil.shtml>

Cast of characters and players:

Hughie Erskine	a charming, handsome young man who needs 10,000 pounds in order to marry Laura Merton <i>[played by Camille]</i>
Laura Merton	she loves Hughie, but does not want to disobey her father <i>[played by Samia]</i>
Colonel Merton	Laura's father, a retired soldier who forbids the marriage unless Hughie has 10,000 pounds <i>[played by Constance]</i>
Alan Trevor	a painter and Hughie's great friend, a strange rough fellow <i>[played Sandy]</i>
Baron Hausberg	one of the richest men in Europe, he dresses as a beggar in order to be painted <i>[played by Constance]</i>

Scene 1: the home of the Mertons – the living room, 2 pm

Hughie	[Sound effect: music intro.] <i>(in tears)</i> Mr Merton, you know how much I love your daughter!
Colonel Merton	Don't cry, Hughie. It's not manly. You're a nice enough fellow, but what can you give my Laura? You have no assets!
Hughie	<i>(earnestly)</i> But, Sir. I can give her my love.
Colonel Merton	You need 10,000 pounds! <i>(he stops in pain)</i> Oh ... ooh, <i>(he rubs his stomach)</i> argh!
Hughie	Shall I call the doctor?
Colonel Merton	Just a little indigestion. Excuse me. <i>(he leaves)</i> [Sound effect: door opens and closes]
Hughie	<i>(to himself)</i> If only the Colonel hadn't come back from India!

Laura	[Sound effect: door opens and closes] (<i>Laura enters</i>) Hughie, what did Papa say? Did he ... have you been crying, my dear?
Hughie	(<i>embarrassed</i>) Not at all. I have something in my eye. (<i>he wipes away the tears with a handkerchief</i>)
Laura	(<i>looks closely at his face</i>) Both eyes?
Hughie	It's very dusty in here.
Laura	(<i>she goes to open a window</i>) [Sound effect: window opens] Did Papa tell you to go back to the Stock Exchange?
Hughie	He did.
Laura	(<i>affectionately</i>) Oh, poor you! What's a butterfly to do among bulls and bears? Did you tell him about the tea business?
Hughie	That it went bust? How could I? (<i>looks at his watch</i>) Oh, is that the time? I'm late for Alan. [Sound effect: door opens] (<i>the Colonel has returned</i>)
Colonel Merton	Still here, Hughie?
Hughie	Sorry, can't stay. I'm, err, expecting a shipment of tea. (<i>to Laura</i>) Goodbye, my darling. (<i>to the Colonel</i>) Goodbye, Sir.
Colonel Merton	Give my regards to your aunt. (<i>Hughie nods and leaves</i>) [Sound effect: door closes]
Laura	Papa, it will take Hughie fifty years to save up 10,000 pounds. I shall be an old maid by then.
Colonel Merton	(<i>sympathetically</i>) Oh, Laura. You know I made a promise to your late dear mother that you should be provided for.
Laura	Oh, Mother, (<i>she looks up to heaven</i>) what have you done? [Sound effect: music transition]

Scene 2: Alan Trevor's art studio, 3 pm

Hughie	[Sound effect: a hansom cab - a horse-drawn carriage - stops] (<i>Hughie alights</i>) Thank you, driver. [Sound effect: a door bell, then a front door opens] (<i>Hughie sees a man dressed in rags – a beggar</i>) (<i>surprised</i>) Oh, who are you?
Beggar (B. Hausman)	(<i>he grunts something but it is unclear</i>)

Hughie	I'm Hughie. Alan's expecting me.
Beggar (B. Hausman)	<i>(he grunts 'come in')</i>
Hughie	<i>(he enters)</i> [Sound effect: the front door closes] You must be his latest subject. <i>(he calls out)</i> Alan? Sorry I'm late. <i>(he walks into the studio followed by the beggar)</i>
Beggar (B. Hausman)	<i>(he grunts 'sit down')</i>
Hughie	Yes, I'll sit, thank you. You don't say much, do you? <i>(the beggar grunts and shakes his head, then goes to stand on the raised platform in the corner of the studio)</i>
Alan	<i>(Alan enters)</i> <i>(happily)</i> Hughie! <i>(Hughie gets up and the two friends hug)</i> How's life treating you?
Hughie	<i>(sadly)</i> It's the same old story.
Alan	Love, eh? Who needs it?
Hughie	Oh, it's breaking my heart.
Alan	<i>(indicating the beggar)</i> Now look at that fellow over there. He's worse off than you are! <i>(he laughs)</i>
Hughie	I suppose you're right.
Alan	Isn't he a wretch? I found him outside face down in the gutter. He gets a shilling an hour, but his face shall get me two thousand! <i>(laughs loudly)</i> I know what you're thinking – I should pay him more. But ' <i>Beggars can't be choosers</i> ', as they say! <i>(laughs even louder)</i>
Hughie	Well, I think he should have a percentage.
Alan	Nonsense, nonsense! Painting all day is harder than you think. [Sound effect: a door bell] That must be the frame-maker. Don't go away. Sit down and smoke a cigarette. <i>(he goes away)</i>
Hughie	<i>(to himself)</i> Poor old fellow. <i>(he walks up to the beggar and gives him a sovereign)</i> Take this. You need it more than I do – even if it means no hansoms for a week.
Beggar (B. Hausman)	<i>(he grunts 'thank you' and nods)</i> [Sound effect: music transition]

Scene 3: inside a hansom cab, 6 pm

Laura	[Sound effect: a hansom cab is moving along a street] (<i>Laura and the Colonel are on their way to have dinner having just paid a surprise visit to Hughie's aunt</i>) (<i>complaining</i>) Papa, why didn't you tell me we were going to visit his aunt?
Colonel Merton	(<i>shaking his head</i>) I knew it! And she confirmed my suspicions! The business failed!
Laura	No, Papa. Business is slow right now.
Colonel Merton	No more lies, Laura, please!
Laura	I'm sorry, Papa. (<i>she sobs</i>) But it's my dearest wish to be married to Hughie and to have our own home.
Colonel Merton	(<i>to himself</i>) It can't be easy living with his aunt. (<i>pause</i>) Look, I know of many young fellows who can provide for you.
Laura	Oh, Papa. How can you say such a thing?
Colonel Merton	(<i>guiltily</i>) Will he be joining us for dinner?
Laura	No, Papa. He's meeting Alan at the Palette Club.
Colonel Merton	The Palette Club? One can't make money as an artist! (<i>Laura sobs</i>) [Sound effect: music transition]

Scene 4: the Palette Club, 11.55 pm

Alan	[Sound effect: Club members talking in the background] (<i>Alan is sitting alone when Hughie arrives</i>) You're late. It's almost midnight!
Hughie	(<i>sad</i>) I was just walking around, thinking.
Alan	(<i>muttering to himself</i>) Couldn't get a hansom?
Hughie	What?
Alan	I said did you walk all the way to China and back! (<i>he laughs</i>)
Hughie	(<i>unimpressed</i>) Very funny. By the way, did you get the picture finished?
Alan	Finished and framed! (<i>he clears his throat</i>) You know what? That old model you saw was quite taken with you.

Hughie	What do you mean?
Alan	I had to tell him all about you – who you are, where you live, your prospects –
Hughie	<i>(angrily)</i> You didn't, did you? Those are my private affairs. Seriously though, <i>(earnestly)</i> I wish I could do something for him. I have some old clothes at home.
Alan	You really do possess a kind heart!
Hughie	But not 10,000 pounds!
Alan	Don't worry. I have a feeling your luck could change! Now let's have a drink. <i>(he calls for service)</i> Waiter! [Sound effect: music transition]

Scene 5: the home of the Mertons – the living room, the following morning (7 am)

Alan	<i>(Alan is standing in the living room while Hughie is slumped in a chair)</i> Good morning, my dear.
Laura	<i>(surprised to see Alan)</i> What are you doing here so early? <i>(sees Hughie in the chair)</i> What happened to Hughie!?
Alan	He was drowning his sorrows.
Laura	But why bring him here? If Papa sees him like this –
Alan	Hughie is expecting a letter!
Laura	But why would he be expecting a letter here? [Sound effect: the Merton's doorbell]
Alan	That must be the letter!
Laura	What is going on?
Alan	All in good time, my dear.
Colonel Merton	[Sound effect: door opens] <i>(enters looking down at the letter)</i> <i>(surprised)</i> Laura, I have here a letter addressed to Hughie. <i>(he notices Alan and Hughie in the room)</i> <i>(surprised)</i> What's going on here?
Laura	<i>(looks suspiciously at Alan)</i> Papa, the letter. May I have it? <i>(she takes it and opens it)</i> [Sound effect: opening a letter] It's from a Baron ... Hausberg?

Colonel Merton	Hausberg? Isn't he one of the richest men in Europe?
Alan	Indeed! And a very good friend of mine.
Colonel Merton	But why would he be writing to –
Laura	Hush, Papa. Let me read. <i>"Dear Hughie, I am the Baron Hausberg. We have met before, but you did not know it. I was touched by your generosity. For this, I present a wedding gift to you."</i>
Colonel Merton	A gift?
Laura	<i>"Promise me only one thing: that I may make a speech at the wedding-breakfast."</i> Signed <i>"an old beggar"</i> ?
Colonel Merton	And the gift?
Laura	<i>(astonished)</i> A cheque for 10,000 pounds!
Colonel Merton	This is all very confusing!
Alan	I'm so happy for you, my dear!
Laura	<i>(to Alan)</i> You knew about this?
Alan	I promised the Baron I would not say a word.
Hughie	<i>(is beginning to awake)</i> Did someone say '10,000 pounds'?
Alan	Congratulations, my friend!
Hughie	<i>(confused)</i> For what?
Laura	We're getting married!
Hughie	<i>(still confused)</i> We are? [Sound effect: music to fade]

The End