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# **Dumb Luck**

**A Full-Length Play**

**By**

**BRYAN PATRICK HARNETIAUX**



**THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY**  
**4150 N. Milwaukee Ave. Chicago, Illinois 60641**

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**(DUMB LUCK)**

*To my wife, Sue Ann*

**DUMB LUCK**  
**A Full-Length Play**  
**For Four Women, Six Men, Extras\***

**C H A R A C T E R S**

**SALLY FLYNN** . . . . million-dollar winner, in her late fifties  
**PADRAIC** . . . . her eighteen-year-old son  
**ALOYSIUS** . . . . her "late" husband  
**AUSTIN FLETCHER** . . . . building owner, in his late fifties  
**JACKSON JACKSON** . . . . notary public and seeker of truth  
**AUDREY BALL** . . . . Sally's sister-in-law  
**ARTHUR BALL** . . . . Audrey's husband  
**GRETCHEN GRAHAM** . . . editor of Single Woman's Weekly  
**MALCOLM** . . . . her secretary  
**SUSAN B.** . . . . her daughter

**TIME:** The present

**PLACE:** The second floor apartment of Sally Flynn

**DUMB LUCK** was first presented on April 11, 1980 at the  
Spokane Civic Theatre in Spokane, Washington under  
the direction of Dorothy Darby Smith.

\*Western Union Man, Reporter 1, Reporter 2, Television  
Director, Television Announcer, Press and Media Corp. and  
Crew (approximately six), Process Server, Guard 1, Guard 2,  
Chauffeur, Mariachi Band (approximately five).

**ACT ONE**  
**SCENE ONE**

**SCENE:** Sally's apartment. It is 5:30 a.m. Friday, and the room is illuminated by moonlight.

**AT RISE OF CURTAIN:** SALLY FLYNN is seemingly asleep in an easy chair DR. The picture of her husband, Aloysius, is cradled in her arms. Shortly PADRAIC enters stealthily through the window by the fire escape. SALLY stirs slightly. PADRAIC crosses L toward the hall, but he trips over an obstacle and falls to the floor. SALLY wakes, turns on the light and sees PADRAIC, wearing a backpack, sitting on the floor.

**PADRAIC.** Hi, Mom.

**SALLY.** Good mornin'. What happened, your chute fail to open?

**PADRAIC.** Oh, Mom. What are you doing out here?

**SALLY.** Freezin' to death and waitin' for you. What are you doin,' comin' in that way after dark? (She shivers and crosses to the window.) I ought to drag that wimpy little Scot out of bed by his ears to fix this radiator. (She feels it.) Stone cold. The only place colder than this is the bedroom.

**PADRAIC.** Oh, Mr. Fletcher's awake. He's down there talking to some old man.

**SALLY.** What time is it?

PADRAIC. Oh . . . ah . . . after three.

SALLY. Three? I was sleepwalking at three. How much after three?

PADRAIC (reluctantly checking his watch). 'Bout two and a half hours.

SALLY. Five-thirty. Just a minute. (She opens the window and yells.) Fletcher, you shrimp, turn the heat on! I know you're up down there! (She slams window shut. To PADRAIC.) That man hasn't changed in twenty-five years. He was the same way when your father was alive. Now, what's the idea of wanderin' in here at five-thirty in the morning? You may be an adult tomorrow, Padraic Flynn, but as of this moment I'm still responsible for you. Where you been now?

PADRAIC. Oh, the guys just gave me a birthday party. Jerry just said he wanted to shoot pool to get me over to his house. Sort of a good-bye, innocent, youthful adolescence party.

SALLY. Exactly what aspects of innocent youthful adolescence did you say good-bye to?

PADRAIC. It wasn't anything like *that*. I mean, we just played some poker and had a few beers.

SALLY. Like *what*? What did you think I was talkin' about?

PADRAIC. Oh, I don't know, just *stuff*. Can I have something to eat?

SALLY. Stuff! (To picture of Aloysius.) 'Lo, the boy's going to be eighteen tomorrow and, as you used to say, he don't know heartache from second base. (To PADRAIC, while at refrigerator.) I think I'm going to get you one of those medical books for your birthday. I wish your father was here. This is his domain. How's a liverwurst sandwich sound?

PADRAIC (setting his backpack on the stove). Something like this – (He makes a low guttural sound, imitating a liverwurst sandwich. They both laugh.)

SALLY. Get on with ya.

PADRAIC. Liverwurst's fine.

SALLY. You've got your father's poverty of humor, all right. (She mimics his liverwurst imitation and chuckles as she continues with the sandwich business.) Why don't you turn on the oven – maybe we can heat up this deep-freeze. (PADRAIC goes to the oven, but accidentally turns on an electric burner. In a moment his backpack will start to smolder.)

PADRAIC. Mom, were you sleepwalking about dad again?

SALLY. I guess so. There I was, standing with two raw eggs in a pan at three o'clock sharp. You'd think after nineteen years . . . maybe it was your birthday comin' up. I don't know.

PADRAIC. Mom, what was it like the day I was born?

SALLY. Foggier than blazes. It was the kinda mornin' your father would have stayed in bed and said let the fish come to me. You spent the whole day trying to get your bearings and finally backed out at eight-o-five p.m. (The backpack starts to smoke.) Milk?

PADRAIC. I'll get it, Mom. You'd better go to bed.

SALLY. Bed. I gotta go to work in an hour. (She sniffs the air.) Do you . . . (Sees smoke.) Mother of God! The burner!

PADRAIC. Oh, no!

SALLY. Open the window! Open the window! (PADRAIC rushes to the window and opens it. SALLY picks up the smoldering backpack with a broom handle and slings it out. There is silence.) Yunno, between Fletcher trying to freeze me out and you trying to burn me out, why don't you two just save me all the anxiety and suspense and gun me down in the street!

PADRAIC. I'm sorry, Mom. I turned the wrong knob. Sorry for being so late, too.

SALLY. Oh, it's all right. Come on and eat your sandwich.

PADRAIC. Hey, Mom, let's take tomorrow off. Call in sick.

We can celebrate eighteen years together.

SALLY. Ah, go on with ya. By my count you ate for three of those years, cried and messed your pants for another three, slept for six and was a general pain for two more. I'll celebrate four.

PADRAIC. Really, we can go to lunch and maybe the track. Whaddya say?

SALLY. And right after that we'll hurry home and print some money to cover the rent on this meat locker and a few other necessities like food, clothing and college. Besides, I won't have either one of us cheatin' by claiming we're sick when we're not. We'll just have our little celebration, as usual, tomorrow night.

PADRAIC. What make and model are you getting me?

SALLY. Oh, that again. What do you need with a car? You can barely walk without falling down. And your drivin' isn't much better. You used your uncle's car one time last year for the junior prom and somehow it ended up stuck in the surf at low tide. Do you remember the paperwork on that one? (PADRAIC stifles a laugh.) 'Taint funny, McGee! Your Uncle Arthur couldn't see straight for two months. (Now she laughs.) He found three dead sand crabs under the back seat a month later. You sure don't need a car. (Pause.) It's hard to believe you're going to be eighteen, Pad. I am proud of you. Your father would be, too.

PADRAIC. You really think father would be proud of me?

SALLY. Sure. He'd be especially proud of you wanting to be one of those oceanographers. You still thinking along those lines?

PADRAIC. Yeah, if I can save enough money and get accepted at some place like Scripps.

SALLY. We're doin' all right. But tell me this. How are you going to be an oceanographer if you can't swim a lick? Tell me that, *young adult*.

PADRAIC. Ah, Mom, I'll learn to swim, eventually.

SALLY. Well, you don't become a cabbie without learning to drive.

PADRAIC (accepting the challenge). You don't have to have gone crazy to be a psychiatrist.

SALLY. You don't become an astronaut without learning how to fly.

PADRAIC. Well, you don't have to have wings to learn how to fly.

SALLY. Well, you sure don't become a father without first — (Catching herself.) — we'll finish this tomorrow — when you're older. (She heads toward the hallway.) The heck with oceanography, you ought to learn to swim so you don't drown. Hurry up now and get to bed. (There is a knock at the door.) Who in blazes could that be at this hour?

(SALLY opens the door. AUSTIN FLETCHER appears. He is wearing an ill-fitting tuxedo and carrying a small electric heater. [He might also demonstrate a small tick, i.e., a head twitch.] )

FLETCHER. Good morning — I was in the vicinity and thought I might drop in.

SALLY. Come in, Fletch. Don't just stand out there and get warm.

FLETCHER (enters the apartment). Thank you.

SALLY. Very clever of you to bring your own heater. You just get home from the prom?

FLETCHER. Prom? (Indicates the tuxedo.) Oh, this! No. No, actually I am here on rather a special occasion so I thought I'd dress up a little. Do I smell smoke?

SALLY. It's from the campfire. Helps ward off frostbite. What special occasion?

FLETCHER (awkwardly). Here, I want you to have this.

(He hands her the heater.) It might help a little.

SALLY. Help a little. Okay, Fletch, what's the gimmick?

FLETCHER. No gimmick, just a genuine concern for my tenants. (SALLY registers disbelief.) Now, it's not been that bad, Sally. I've always considered us to be on pretty good terms. I know it's late but I must talk with you for a moment, alone.

SALLY. Alone? Why is it I feel the next event of the de-cathlon is coming up? Anything you have to discuss with me, Mr. Fletcher, can be said in front of my son. He's an adult, almost.

FLETCHER (ceremoniously). Sally Flynn, we've known each other a long time. As the years have passed since your husband, a very kind and good man, and provider . . . ah . . . Aloysius . . . ah . . . passed on, I have grown . . . ah . . . increasingly . . . ah . . . *fond* of you, and the boy . . . ah . . . ah . . .

PADRAIC. Stanislas.

FLETCHER. Of course, Stan. Anyway, these are hard times and the life of a working woman, such as yourself, is not an easy one.

SALLY. You're going to raise the rent. (To PADRAIC.) He's come up here at six o'clock in the morning to raise the rent.

FLETCHER. No, no, no. I wouldn't think of it. Not at all. Quite the contrary.

PADRAIC. You're going to lower the rent?

FLETCHER. No! It has nothing to do with the rent. Only *incidentally*.

SALLY. Ah-ha!

FLETCHER. Now let me finish, Sally. I find, Sally, as we move into late middle age that I am unfulfilled.

SALLY. Fletch — I've got to get ready for work. What are you talking about?

FLETCHER. I am a man of considerable property and

position. You are a sensitive, delicate . . .

SALLY (cutting him off). You are a slumlord, Fletch. I am a medium-sized aging swamper on a produce dock – and this is not nirvana. (She ushers him toward the door.) You are very eloquent, Fletch, but nowhere in the lease does it say I have to listen to this goo before the sun comes up.

FLETCHER (suddenly dropping this his knees). Will you marry me, Sally?

SALLY. What?

FLETCHER. Right away. I know this ship captain – I'm sure he'd be available within the hour.

SALLY. Are you serious?

FLETCHER. Marriage is serious! I am very much serious, too. You've been a single woman, a widow, long enough, Sally Flynn. You've still got a few good years left.

SALLY. Pad, is he saying what I'm hearing?

PADRAIC. Yes, Ma, I think so.

FLETCHER. Of course, you're welcome to live with us, too, boy. Although I expect you'll be going off to college or something like that not too far in the future. (To SALLY.) I'd like your answer, Sally. Never have to pay rent again, worry about bills . . .

SALLY. What's going on here? I'm flattered, Fletch. The tuxedo, the heater, the kind words, you're not raising the rent – but you gotta be kidding. I just can't take you serious, despite the tux. Besides, I don't think I'm in the mood for remarrying. I'm still sleepwalking from the last one.

FLETCHER. I am serious. (Vehemently.) I swear. You know I'm basically a serious, kind, square-headed man. I just felt *inspired*, that's all. It really wouldn't be bad, you and I. We could . . . (There is a knock at the door.)

SALLY. What next?

(SALLY opens the door. There stands JACKSON JACKSON, Notary Public and Seeker of Truth, wearing pajamas and a robe and carrying his notary seal. He looks quite fresh for the hour.)

SALLY. Jackson, what on earth?

JACKSON (entering the room). Morning, Sally. I heard some racket and then some *swearing*, so I thought I'd see if anyone might need me. Hi, Pad.

SALLY. Jackson, I believe you know our landlord, Mr. Fletcher.

JACKSON. Good morning, sir. Jackson Jackson, two fourteen – notary public and seeker of truth. (He hands FLETCHER a card.)

FLETCHER. Oh, yes, you're the one that notarizes his rent checks.

JACKSON. Yes, sir. I was wondering if you could use my assistance. Heard you're swearing to something so I hopped right over. Brought my seal. (Produces the seal.)

FLETCHER. I don't think I'll be needing you, Jackson.

JACKSON. That's *Jackson*.

FLETCHER. That's what I said, Jackson.

JACKSON. But that's my last name. I can always tell when someone's referring to me by my last name. It's *Jackson*.

SALLY. Call him Jack.

FLETCHER. Jack.

SALLY (moving JACKSON toward the door). Jack, it's late . . . ah . . . early. Drop by later. (Sotto voce.) Don't forget Pad's party Saturday night – eight-o-five.

JACKSON. Okay. Sure I couldn't help? Sounded interesting.

SALLY. No. Mr. Fletcher was just leaving, weren't you? (FLETCHER reluctantly takes his cue.) Thank you very much for the heater, it was most kind.

JACKSON. What's with the tuxedo?

SALLY. Oh, he just got back from the landlord's ball.

JACKSON (on exit). That doesn't have the ring of truth to it, Sally.

SALLY. Good morning, boys. (JACKSON and FLETCHER exit.) Well, I'm getting dressed. You'd better get some sleep, young man – you've got to be at the flower shop at ten.

PADRAIC. Mom, would you ever seriously consider marrying Mr. Fletcher?

SALLY. Naw, or anyone else for that matter. Took me too long to learn to make it without your father. I don't think I'm up to any more drastic alterations.

PADRAIC. I think I'll wash up. (PADRAIC exits DR. SALLY picks up Padraic's plate. Momentarily, a knock at the door. SALLY answers it.)

SALLY. Fletch, I said I didn't . . .

(At the door stands the world's oldest-looking WESTERN UNION MAN.)

WESTERN UNION MAN (breathing laboriously). Are you Sally Marie Flynn?

SALLY. Yes, I'm Sally Marie Flynn.

WESTERN UNION MAN. Finally. Western Union. I've got a telegram here for you. I'm supposed to sing it, if you'll just let me catch my breath.

SALLY. Come on in.

WESTERN UNION MAN (entering the room). Thanks. That flight of stairs is murder. I couldn't find the elevator.

SALLY. Don't feel bad. I've lived here twenty-nine years and haven't found it yet. I'm becoming suspicious.

WESTERN UNION MAN. Ah, I think I'm better now. Give me a couple of seconds now and let me look at the wording, get a melody. Oh, by the way, do you know a short baldy type, wearing a tuxedo?

SALLY. Two beady little eyes and the tux looks like an auto

mechanic's hanky?

WESTERN UNION MAN. Yeah, crazy guy. He tried to keep me from coming up here. Said he was your brother and you had a weak heart. Made me tell him what this was about, to check if it was bad news.

SALLY. Baloney. What's that sawed-off Scot up to? Must not be bad news if you're supposed to sing it. (During this the WESTERN UNION MAN is trying to come up with a tune.)

WESTERN UNION MAN. I think I've got one – boy, this is a beast. I'm ready, Mrs. Flynn. Did you already get the phone call?

SALLY. No, we don't have a phone.

WESTERN UNION MAN. Boy, then I think you'll like this.

SALLY. Yes, go ahead. I'm going to be late for work.

WESTERN UNION MAN. Okay.

SALLY. Who's it from?

WESTERN UNION MAN. A Ms. Gretchen Graham, New York, New York.

SALLY. Gretchen Graham?

WESTERN UNION MAN. Well, here goes. (Using a harmonica to get his pitch, he sings, terribly.) "This is to confirm our telephone/call in the S.W.W. Sweepstakes you've won it/all/the million is yours upon/verification/that you are the luckiest single Ms. in the nation." (He ends the singing.) Congratulations, Gretchen Graham. Editor, Single Woman Weekly. P.S. S.W.W. contingent will arrive Friday at four o'clock p.m. for orientation, verification and publicity. G.G." (SALLY sits, dumbstruck. The WESTERN UNION MAN hands her a copy of the telegram.) Well, gotta go. (He eases toward the door.) Congrats on the million. (Cagily.) Don't thank me, it's just my job.

SALLY (snapping out of her reverie). Oh, thank you. What's your name?

WESTERN UNION MAN. Cranch, ma'am.

SALLY. Just a minute, Cranch. (She rifles through her purse in vain.) Darn. (She goes to a bureau drawer and rummages through it with like results. Finally she grabs the toaster, unplugs it and gives it to the WESTERN UNION MAN.) Here. It's brand new. Thank you. (She touches him to assure herself that he is real.)

WESTERN UNION MAN. You're welcome. (On exit.)  
Never got a toaster before. (He is gone.)

(FLETCHER appears, unnoticed, on the fire escape immediately before the Western Union Man's exit.)

SALLY (with increasing excitement). Padraic! Padraic!

(PADRAIC enters.)

SALLY. We've hit the mother lode!

PADRAIC. What is it, Mom?

SALLY (holding up the telegram). Look! Look! (She dances around.) You won't believe it — you just won't believe it!

PADRAIC. Mom, what don't I believe?

SALLY. Whaddy mean, you don't believe it? It says it right here. A million dollars. They're giving us a million dollars. Listen. (SALLY sings the telegram to PADRAIC, much more stridently than before.)

PADRAIC. Gosh.

SALLY. Double by gosh. (She hugs PADRAIC.)

PADRAIC. Well, it's about time you won something.

SALLY. Time — oh, my God. I'll be late for work. (She hurriedly crosses UL to hall, pauses at the door and gives PADRAIC a "thumbs up" sign and exits.)

BLACKOUT