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Dramatic Publishing

A Play in One Act
by
BRAINERD DUFFIELD

The Lottery

Adapted from a Story
by Shirley Jackson



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(THE LOTTERY)

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The Lottery

A Play in One Act

FOR EIGHT MEN, FIVE WOMEN AND EXTRAS AS DESIRED

TOMMY
DICKIE
MARTIN
DELACROIX
HUTCHISON
MRS. DUNBAR
MRS. WATSON
MISS BESSOM
JACK WILKINS
OLD MAN WARNER
BELVA SUMMERS
JOE SUMMERS
TESSIE HUTCHISON
EXTRAS: LITTLE GIRL, DAVY, VILLAGERS

PLACE: *A village square.*

TIME: *This year. The 27th of June.*

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

TOMMY and DICKIE: They are two boys of the village, about ten years of age. They wear overalls, and may be barefoot.

MARTIN and DELACROIX: They are middle-aged men, farmers; both men are agreeable and pleasant-faced. They wear clean blue shirts and dungarees or overalls.

HUTCHISON and DAVY: Bill Hutchison is a bit younger than Martin or Delacroix. He is kindly and affable, and wears a clean shirt and neat khaki work pants. DAVY is about six or seven. He has no dialogue to speak. He wears a play suit.

MRS. DUNBAR and MRS. WATSON: They are typical small-town farmers' wives, neatly dressed in gingham or cotton house dresses.

MISS BESSOM: Miss Bessom is older than Mrs. Watson or Mrs. Dunbar, and a trifle spinsterish. Her clothes are a little fussier than those of the other women.

JACK WILKINS: He is a good-looking, somewhat shy chap in his late teens. He wears dungarees, shirt and a light jacket.

OLD MAN WARNER: He is a weather-beaten old farmer of eighty-one, who walks with a cane. He wears work trousers, shirt and an old sweater buttoned down the front.

BELVA SUMMERS: Belva is in her fifties. She is pale of face and wears black, which accentuates her pallor. When she speaks her tone and manner are almost malevolent.

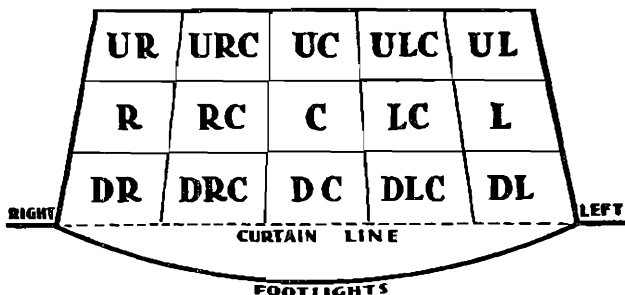
JOE SUMMERS: He is in his middle years, a bluff, hearty man with a ruddy complexion. His earnest striving to be well liked makes him somewhat self-important and even pompous, but he is obviously a favorite among his fellow villagers. He wears neat work trousers and a clean shirt.

TESSIE HUTCHISON: She is pretty and younger than most of

the other women, with an earnest, nervous, almost intense manner. She wears an apron over her house dress.

VILLAGERS: The villagers are a group of farmers, with their wives and children. The grown-ups are typical small-town citizens. Most of them wear neat, clean work clothes and give the impression of being rather spruced-up for a holiday occasion.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Stones of various sizes scattered about the stage.

BELVA: Knitting.

JOE: Large black wooden box containing folded slips of paper, wooden paddle, sheaf of papers in pocket, pencil, handkerchief. **NOTE:** One of the slips of paper in the box has a large black dot on it. This slip should be concealed in the box in such a way as to make certain Hutchison picks it out upon the first drawing, and later, Tessie, when she draws it from the box.

TOWNSMAN: High stool.

NOTE: The throwing of the stones can be "faked" by the villagers as they close in on Tessie.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT *The Lottery*...

“An excellent play for a simple production! The essence of Shirley Jackson’s story is perfectly captured in this one-act play.”

*Meredith Kahn, H.F.C. Humanities Society,
Philadelphia, Pa.*

“*The Lottery* is an excellent play to stage if funds and facilities are lacking. The villagers make it possible to have 20+ students on stage for the majority of the play.”

*Susan Talbert,
McGavock High School, Nashville, Tenn.*

“*The Lottery* proved to be a powerful experience for us. Happenings in our nation and in our town brought this story and its message very close to us. With extras we had 30 actors on stage and each was very involved. The audiences were moved.”

*Cathie Lutgen, Enderlin High School,
Enderlin, N.D.*

“This play is an excellent selection for a student directing project; the pervasive mood and challenging theme provide the perfect forum for exploring beats, characters and clear climax of a dramatic piece.”

*Lauren Tobiason,
Hammond High School, Columbia, Md.*

“...From a casual beginning that is lighthearted to a very dramatic and intense ending, *The Lottery* has it all. The characters are challenging. Before the audience knew it they had been caught up in a play that they didn’t want any part of. It shows you just how deep traditions run.”

*Neil Witte,
RTR High School, Russell, Minn.*

The Lottery

SCENE: *A bare stage with a few stones lying here and there. No scenery whatsoever is necessary, although curtains can be used.*]

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *The stage is in darkness. Gradually a pool of amber light comes up at C stage. Two boys, TOMMY and DICKIE, enter L., looking about on the ground. From time to time, one of them picks up a stone and puts it in his pocket. The search should continue for about a minute before either of them speaks.*]

TOMMY. I'm keepin' the best ones right in my pocket.

DICKIE. Me, too.

TOMMY [*indicating R stage*]. We oughta make an extra pile over here. Then we could take turns guardin'.

DICKIE. Sure. Then if some other kids tried to swipe any, we'll be ready for 'em. [*He and TOMMY cross R and begin to build a stockpile of stones at R.*]

[*A GIRL somewhat younger enters U L and crosses to watch them, but the boys ignore her. During this leisurely pantomime, a steeple bell has begun to chime, and the amber light widens, gradually illuminating the full stage.*]

DICKIE [*muttering*]. Girls always got to be hangin' around.

TOMMY. I know it. They spoil everything. [*The little GIRL has attempted to assist DICKIE and TOMMY by adding a stone or two to pile, but they turn their backs on her and, feeling hurt, GIRL goes out R.*]

[*During the preceding, two men, MARTIN and DELACROIX, enter D L and cross to C, conversing quietly.*]

MARTIN [*glancing over R*]. Children are always the first to gather.

DELACROIX. Sure—but everybody'll be comin' now, soon as they hear the bell.

MARTIN [*scanning sky*]. Beautiful day for it.

DELACROIX. Yes, fine. I don't care if it *is* my hometown, we got the purtiest village green of any in the state.

[*Another man, HUTCHISON, has entered U L, leading his small son, DAVY, by the hand. They cross to join the others at C.*]

DELACROIX [*to HUTCHISON*]. How are you, Bill?

HUTCHISON. Fred. . . . Horace. . . . [*Shakes hands with both men.*] Good to see you. You both know Davy?

MARTIN [*patting DAVY on head*]. Well, I should hope so. How are you, Davy? [*To Hutchison.*] This is his first year, ain't it?

HUTCHISON. That's right. Never seen a Lottery before, have you, Dave? [*DAVY nods.*]

MARTIN. Gonna grow up and be a good farmer like your dad? [*DAVY nods.*] That's the boy.

DELACROIX [*amiably*]. My son, Chester, wants to go off to the Agriculture School and learn a lot of book rubbish. I tell him he'd do better to stay home and learn of his father, same as I did of mine.

MARTIN. That's right, too. Pitch in and help pay the taxes.

DELACROIX. I told him a farmer don't need to develop his mind, long as he builds up his muscles.

HUTCHISON. A strong back, that's what you need when you take up farmin'.

DELACROIX. Where's the wife, Bill?

HUTCHISON [*slight pause*]. Oh, she'll be along. [*Frowns and looks about anxiously.*]

[*MRS. DUNBAR and MRS. WATSON enter D L and cross toward D R C. The men continue to talk in pantomime.*]

MRS. DUNBAR [*as they cross*]. How does the weather suit you, Myrtle?

MRS. WATSON. Couldn't be better.

MRS. DUNBAR. We always seem to get good weather for the twenty-seventh. Never knew it to fail.

MRS. WATSON. Been right cold and wet for June.

[MISS BESSOM enters D R and starts toward D R C.]

MRS. DUNBAR. Oh, that rain done us lots of harm. [*Shakes her head.*] Too much rain!

MRS. WATSON. Guess the Lottery ought to change our luck.

MRS. DUNBAR. That's how the sayin' goes. [*Sees MISS BESSOM.*] Look who's here. Howdy, Miss Bessom. Why, you ain't changed a particle!

MISS BESSOM [*slightly piqued*]. Who ever said I had?

MRS. DUNBAR [*scrutinizing her*]. They told me you were gettin' real fleshy, and it ain't so.

MRS. WATSON. Course it ain't. Hear you had a weddin' in the family.

MISS BESSOM. Yes—my sister Nina's girl got married to young Sam Gilliatt over to Rigby township.

MRS. WATSON. I s'pose that means she'll be drawin' over there from now on?

MISS BESSOM. Oh, sure! She's got to draw with *his* family now. [*To MRS. DUNBAR.*] I declare, Hazel, it's been a month of Sundays since I seen you. Don't you *never* come into town?

MRS. DUNBAR. Not if I can help it. Ain't been further than m'own chicken yard—not since Decoration Day, and that's a fact.

MRS. WATSON. One thing about the Lottery, it does bring everyone out, like it or not.

MISS BESSOM. Well, Hazel's got Clyde to wait on, too. How's he makin' out?

MRS. DUNBAR. Oh, he'll be fine! Except he's terrible mad to have to stay home and miss the excitement.

MISS BESSOM. I'll bet. [*She and MRS. WATSON cluck sympathetically, and the women continue to converse silently.*]

DICKIE and TOMMY have drifted off R by now to continue their search for stones offstage. The group at C stage, conversing in pantomime, have worked down to a position at D L C.]

[Other VILLAGERS now drift in U L and U R, taking positions U L C and U R C. They chat ad lib, building to a general murmur.]

MARTIN [on spoken cue, "I'll bet."]. Now I got that tractor, I was figurin' I might make the switch from grass to hay silage.

HUTCHISON. Costs about the same to harvest an acre, don't it?

MARTIN. Just about. Cattle don't seem to mind what they're eatin', and I thought I could get away from the risk of bad weather—

DELACROIX [slight chuckle]. Don't you fret about the weather, Horace. "Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon."

HUTCHISON [nodding, with a faint smile]. That's what they always told us, ain't it, Fred? [DELACROIX nods.]

MISS BESSOM [glancing about]. Don't see Tessie Hutchison any place, do you?

MRS. WATSON. No, I don't. Bill's standin' right there, though, and little Davy, too.

MISS BESSOM. Got a recipe I borrowed and want to give back to her. It's for the watermelon pickles she won a prize with at the social.

[JACK WILKINS enters D R and nods to the ladies.]

JACK. 'Scuse me, ladies. Hi, Miz Dunbar. How's Clyde doin'?

MRS. DUNBAR. Fine, thanks, Jack. Doctor's goin' to take the cast off next week.

JACK. How's he goin' to get the news today?

MRS. DUNBAR. I promised to send Tommy runnin', soon as the drawin's over.

JACK [grinning]. That's good. [Goes D L C to join other men. Women D R C beam at one another.]

MISS BESSOM. *Such a nice boy—Jack Wilkins.*

MRS. WATSON. He's got his mother's looks and that's a blessin'.

MRS. DUNBAR. So many of the young ones seem to drift away.

This place's gettin' smaller every year.

MISS BESSOM. I know it. Joe Summers told me there's less'n two hundred names on the registration this time.

MRS. DUNBAR. You don't mean it?

MRS. WATSON. Isn't that awful?

[OLD MAN WARNER *has made a slow entrance from U R, crossing to C. The VILLAGERS U R C have a greeting for him as he passes. Now the group D L C hails his arrival.*]

DELACROIX. Well, here's old man Warner, lookin' spry as ever!

HUTCHISON. How're you feelin', Mr. Warner?

WARNER. Not so bad. [*Winks.*] Rheumatism comes and goes.

MARTIN. How's it seem to be the oldest citizen?

WARNER. You don't hear *me* complainin'.

HUTCHISON [*chuckling*]. How many Lotteries does this make?

WARNER. I'm eighty-one last November. Seen my first at the age of five. You figure it out.

DELACROIX. Never missed one in all those years!

JACK. He hears very good, too, don't he?

DELACROIX. Oh, he's a marvel!

WARNER. And I'll be comin' back for a few more!

JACK [*grinning*]. You tell 'em, old-timer!

MARTIN [*calling across to women D R C*]. Hear that? Old man Warner says he's good for a few more! [*General murmur of approval from others on stage.*]

MRS. WATSON. He's seen seventy-six of them.

MRS. DUNBAR. Imagine!

WARNER [*joining group D L C*]. Oh, you fellers ought to been here in the old days. Not like now. Lottery meant some-thin' when I was a boy.

[BELVA SUMMERS *has entered D L and stops just inside the entrance. She wears black, and carries some knitting with*

her, at which she works during the following action. She remains by herself, content to speak to no one.]

MISS BESSOM. Almost time to get started.

MRS. WATSON [*crossing up to R C and looking off toward U L*]. Guess we're goin' to, Miss Bessom. There's Joe Summers now, on the post office steps. [MRS. DUNBAR and MISS BESSOM *join* MRS. WATSON at R C.]

MRS. DUNBAR. He's bringin' out the box.

MISS BESSOM. Where's his sister? She here?

MRS. DUNBAR [*nodding D L*]. There she is. Off by herself, as usual.

MISS BESSOM [*looking at BELVA, D L*]. Beats me how he can stay so cheerful with that one to put up with.

MRS. WATSON. I'd hate to have her in *my* house.

[*The murmur of the VILLAGERS swells. DICKIE and TOMMY have entered again from R. They start to C, see a stone and both grab simultaneously for it. They tussle with each other to gain possession of the stone.*]

TOMMY. You didn't, neither! I seen it first!

DICKIE. You give that back!

TOMMY. The heck I will! [*Shoves him.*]

DICKIE. Cut it out, will you? Watch who you're shovin'—
[*There is a tussle again. MRS. DUNBAR comes forward and grasps TOMMY by the wrist.*]

MRS. DUNBAR. You stop that!

TOMMY. Leggo, Ma! I seen it first, honest!

MRS. DUNBAR. Never you mind. You got stones a-plenty!
[MRS. WATSON *attempts to collar DICKIE, but he escapes to D L C.*]

MRS. WATSON. You come here to me. Wait till I get you home.
MARTIN [*sharply, to DICKIE*]. Obey your mother. Mind what I say.

DICKIE [*dutifully*]. Yes, Uncle Horace. [*Crosses to MRS. WATSON, unwillingly. MRS. WATSON and MRS. DUNBAR move back to R C with TOMMY and DICKIE.*]