“LOTTERY PLAY”

A PLAY BY SAM GRABER

ESTIMATED RUN TIME – 80 MINUTES

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SUMMARY

What would happen if you won the lottery and then lost the lottery and then won the lottery again…all on the same card?

Bob Sherman is the owner of a small carpet cleaning business which is long on laughs and short on profit. After Bob scratches off a winning state lottery card, he prepares to claim the big prize, but a mishap destroys the card, spurring schemes of desperation. When a way appears to revive the card back to life, Bob and his family must reconcile if winning it all is truly the American Dream.

And what happens next is anyone’s luck.

CHARACTERS (4M, 3F)

BOB SHERMAN, 64 to the day
AGNES SHERMAN, early 60s, Bob’s Wife
NATHAN SHERMAN, early 20s, Bob’s nephew
GUNTHER, 40s
NORMAN, 40s
VOICES, RISE & WHINE, two radio announcers, female

TIME

Memorial Day weekend.

SETTING

A carpet cleaning warehouse, Minneapolis.

SCENES

ACT I. Friday.

ACT II. Saturday.
THE STAGE

The stage is the industrial insides of the Sherman carpet cleaning warehouse.

Water tanks, split hoses, steam canisters, colored cartons, gasket caps, plastic tubs, cloths, mops, brushes, used tires, suds and spills, and storable unit containers. All stacked high. All old equipment. Some might consider it junk. And it’s been piling up for years.

A shop radio sits atop one of the storable unit stacks.

A table is at stage right. At the start of the play, the table is covered by a tarp, under which rests both the card table and three box crates substituting for seats.

Towards stage left, atop another storable unit stack, is a small chemistry workstation. Many liquid-filled vials are perched atop soiled carpet scraps.

A dangling light fixture hangs capriciously from the ceiling.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Lottery Play was first staged at the New York Theater Festival at the Hudson Guild Theater (NYC) during August 2016 as directed by Victoria Grazioli, with costume design by Traci DeAngelis, sound design by Tom Slot, and stage managed by Krystal Wilson, and with the following cast:

BOB SHERMAN, Marc Gettis; NATHAN, Matthew Dean Wood; AGNES, Sue Ellen Mandell; NORMAN, Larry Gutman; and GUNTER, Bill Barry.
For my uncles Al and Paul, who ran the family business and lived to tell.
ACT ONE: FRIDAY.

ACT I. SCENE 1.

Friday morning.

BOB enters, in uniform work shirt and an old fur coat. He whistles, exhibiting a happy morning dance.

As BOB turns on the shop radio, RISE and WHINE appear.

RISE
Rise and Whine, Minneapolis! Seven and change in the ante meridian and you’re waking to a gusty greet of wind and sleet!

BOB opens the warehouse back door to a gusty greet of wind and sleet.

As RISE and WHINE continue, BOB turns on the light fixture hanging from the ceiling, which is non-cooperative, flickering in and out, agitating BOB.

RISE
Yes, the hysterical folks at the Gopher Weather Service predicting nonstop sleet through morning rush. Looking at a high of thirty-five with winds blowing the same!

WHINE
Nice start to Memorial Day weekend.

RISE
And that’s the state of our beautiful May weather, which has nothing on the state economy! Latest report has Twin Cities unemployment up another…oh, God.

WHINE
One of these years we’ll get something fun to report.

RISE
Let’s go to break.
WHINE
I’m moving to St. Paul.

RISE
Keep it tuned to Rise and Whine here on WWTF, your Minneapolis home for—

Bob turns off the radio.

Bob
Ear vultures. Agnes! Agnes!

Agnes
[Entering] I heard you the first time. Quit shouting. You’ll wake up Nathan.

Bob
The light’s flickering again.

Agnes
Maybe you should shout at it some more.

Bob
What are you doing?

Agnes
Getting messages off the machine but the tape got wound up.

Bob
Let me fix it.

Agnes
You don’t know how to fix it.

Bob
The machine works fine when I fix it.

Agnes
I don’t want you shouting and fixing on every machine we’ve got left in here that still barely works. We should listen to Nathan and get that digital voice.

Bob
Oh, no. Not today. I don’t want to hear from little Nathan about anything new or modern today.
AGNES
Of course, because today is about old and decrepit. Happy Birthday.

BOB
Thank you.

AGNES
Sixty-four.

BOB
Remarkable, huh?

AGNES
That you made it, yes.

BOB
What needs making is my cake. The boys are coming to give cards at seven-twenty. Birthday cake at seven-twenty-five. Then little Nathan and I out the door by seven-thirty. We’ve got a schedule to keep and customers need their carpets cleaned!

AGNES
You’ll be lucky if the boys show with this weather. They don’t have to walk down a flight of stairs to get here like we do.

BOB
We never miss cards on our birthdays. [Grabs a small, cracked plastic snow shovel] Gonna get out there and clear a walking path.

AGNES
With that thing?

BOB
Ever hear of Paul Bunyan?

AGNES
Ever hear of John Deere?

BOB
Nothing’s going to ruin my birthday, Agnes. Not sleet. Not machines half-working. Not even talk from little Nathan.
AGNES
I’m saying, with your health, shouldn’t Nathan clear the path?

BOB
My health is fine. Besides, the more little Nathan sleeps, the more I don’t have to listen to him.

NATHAN emerges from behind the workstation, wearing a wrinkled t-shirt, science goggles around his head half askew.

NATHAN
Start the world. I’m up.

AGNES
Morning, Nathan. Just in time.

BOB
You’re up late.

NATHAN
Because I was up late.

BOB
How many times I gotta tell you no more falling asleep playing science with your potions. Fatiguer reflects on customers, the ones who pay us to clean their carpets.

NATHAN
Relax, Uncle Bob, I’m young. I’ll sleep when I turn sixty-four.

BOB
Ha ha.

NATHAN
Happy Birthday.

BOB
Thank you.

NATHAN
What’s with the…[coat and shovel]?
BOB
He’s got his sleep-depraved brain so deep in play science—

NATHAN
[Correcting] Deprived.

BOB
I’ll have you know I’ve had this since your Aunt Agnes and I got married forty years ago, ain’t that right?

AGNES
As hideous today as it was then.

BOB
I thought you liked this coat.

AGNES
I’m talking about you.

NATHAN
Why the shovel?

BOB
Memorial Day slizzard.

NATHAN
You’re kidding.

BOB
This is Minnesota. We never kid about the weather. We may complain about it but we never kid.

NATHAN
But I put the snow tires in storage.

BOB
The backup van will be fine.

NATHAN
Aunt Agnes—

AGNES
I’ve got enough to worry about fixing this tape.
NATHAN
If we still had the main van, we’d be fine. The antique auxiliary backup van can’t even stay straight in the rain. Uncle Bob, we can’t live in the dark ages anymore.

BOB
Hey. Today is my birthday. On my death-day you can squawk all you want about little science ideas. But today will be a No-Nathan-Idea day. We’re going one whole day without digital this or potion that. All that noise, all that chirping in my ears, rattles my Euthanasian tubes.

NATHAN
Let me at least shovel. You’re not in your sixty-threes anymore.

BOB
Nonsense. I shovel, you load the backup steamers in the backup van, Agnes fixes the backup tape, we’ve got a schedule to keep! Hi-ho, May snow!

BOB is out the warehouse back door.

AGNES
[Handing NATHAN the tape] Here.

NATHAN
Yet another thing that needs fixing.

AGNES
Well, you won’t have to fix Bob. He doesn’t know it but I’m giving him his first day off in sixty-four years.

NATHAN
What’s wrong.

AGNES
Why does something have to be wrong?

NATHAN
Is something right?

AGNES
I’ll work the office, you handle the schedule.
NATHAN
Gee, a whole day alone in the field. You know when he drives us around he doesn’t talk to me. Like if he talks to me it’s going to unleash something. He just shifts the radio between weather and…weather.

AGNES
Bob talks to you.

NATHAN
He talks at me. When I started here, he promised I’d be made a partner. It’s been five years and nothing. Now it’s him saying I’ll become part of the business when he dies. Meanwhile, what’s left of the business is…[the tape]…getting wound around itself.

AGNES
Nathan, I won’t play broker anymore between you and Bob. This is something the two of you have to work out for yourselves. But I will say you still need to learn the most important lesson about family business: honest and direct.

NATHAN
Honest and direct.

AGNES
Yes.

NATHAN
Like you hiding from me what’s wrong with Uncle Bob.

AGNES
…

NATHAN
He’s been coughing a lot. Wheezing.

AGNES
Bob’s always been a strong man.

NATHAN
He can’t lift the equipment anymore.

AGNES
He just gets tired more easily.
NATHAN
Aunt Agnes, what’s wrong with him.

BOB
[Re-entering] That’s not sleet!

AGNES
His sense of timing.

BOB
You call that sleet! That’s rain with a jealous streak!

NATHAN
I’m getting the snow tires. To ensure at least one van is still around whenever I happen to get my share of the business.

BOB
The hell’s gotten into you? I’m trying to be punctuous so we can arrive at the Showers house on time, first stop on the schedule, sleet be damned!, and your still filling// my ears with…

AGNES starts sneezing, brutal sneezing.

BOB
Oh, no. The potions again?

AGNES
I’m fine.

BOB
Nathan, she’s allergic to your potions.

NATHAN
Aunt Agnes, I’m sorry, I’m still working out the mixture levels.

BOB
That’s it, I want those things out of my warehouse.

NORMAN enters, wearing a coat and yarmulke.

NORMAN
Shalom Shermans! You believe this? You believe this weather?
BOB
Hey, Norman! You made it!

NORMAN
Spring is a tease. A wicked tease. She baits you with a tug of sunshine. Come outside, Norman. Revel in earth’s glory, Norman. Forget your problems, Norman. And once you start feeling the strange sensation of happy she unfurls her sleety wickedness and turns everything back to dark and mournful. Happy Birthday.

BOB
Yeah, well, it’ll be the happiest of them all once I get my birthday cards.

NORMAN
Wait until Gunther comes in. He’s just about finished shoveling your walkway.

AGNES
Oh he is, is he.

NATHAN
Say Norman, how were the roads?

NORMAN
Perfect if you like bumper cars. I’ve always wanted to live someplace where the temperature’s higher than the speed limit. Ah, figure I’d stop by, hand over Bobby’s birthday card and reminisce about the good old days.

NATHAN
Which days were that?

NORMAN
Beats me.

GUNTHER enters, wearing a cheap suit, wet with sleet. He carries a real shovel.

AGNES
Oh Gunther, look at you! Get in here.

GUNTHER
Yah, morning.

AGNES
You didn’t have to shovel our walkway.
GUNTHER
Yah, you’re letting me live in your back office. Figure I can be a full-service tenant and make a good shovel. Happy birthday ‘dere, Bob.

BOB
Get on down here, Gunther! Time’s wasting and Sherman’s Cleaners has a tight schedule. Cards at seven-twenty. Cake at seven-twenty-five, then Nathan and I hit the road to clean the land’s carpets of dirt. Those orders will be blasting through our phone!

AGNES
Once we get the answering machine fixed.

NATHAN
And the backup van.

AGNES and NATHAN go to off.

BOB
C’mon boys, grab a seat and prepare to lay those cards across the lifeline!

BOB whips off the cover from the table, revealing as seats three box crates.

GUNTHER
Vacuum store closed today?

NORMAN
I wish. My tyrant boss, the Hoover queen herself, wants me there. Bob’s been to the store enough for repairs, you’ve seen her in action. As if customers would actually show in this mess.

BOB
Sure they’ll show! You miss one day and the dirt of the world piles up that much higher. We’re the cleaners, they all need us to keep the world clean!

GUNTHER
I hope I’m still needed when I make the big six-four.

BOB
Sixty-four years old and I still put the F-U in fun.
GUNTHER
Actually…[revealing a bottle]…the fun is bringing along a touch of the Old Buck.

BOB
That’s my Gunther! Hurry up and pour before Agnes comes back. She’s been on my case lately about my health.

GUNTHER
This will not please her then. Alcohol de’ leading cause of Finnish deaths. Old Buck de’ leading Finnish alcohol. You figure it out.

NORMAN
What should we toast?

BOB
The two great things life offers at my age: peace and quiet. Clink and drink!

_They tap shop cups and guzzle, then wince,
GUNTHER rapping his knuckles on the table._

NORMAN
Don’t knock too hard there, Gunther! Keep those knuckles fresh for the doors.

GUNTHER
Ah, d’ese knuckles barely knock anymore. Used to be rapping front doors all week long, cleaning people out ‘dere homes. Courts got ‘de banks for illegal foreclosures. Now could take banks sixty-four years before ‘dey get around to repossessing properties. Bank laid me off. Sheriffs felt sorry for me, got me cleaning out bail skippers, alimony evaders, dangerous misfits, who don’t take kindly to seeing d’ese knuckles. I don’t know how long I can do this anymore. I don’t know what’s going to happen.

NORMAN
Same with my insurance company. Hey everyone, it’s the poor vacuum repairman who thinks we actually approve his mother’s operation! This May feels like the longest year I’ve ever had.

BOB
C’mon, let’s take a small pause from our worries, huh? One person complains, the second person complains, and before you know it we’ve got ourselves a bitch-and-moan orchestra. All we need’s a little positive thinking!
NORMAN
What I love about you Bob, always polishing the bright side of life. Customers always leave loose change jingling about the vacuum bag. Maybe if I started keeping some of that change…

GUNTHER
Dat’s not against your…?

NORMAN
Like the Lord says, don’t do anything dirty. But if you happen to do something dirty, take off your yarmulke.

Which NORMAN does, placing it on the table.

BOB
Ah. Agnes is worried, too. She doesn’t say it but I can tell. She’s been potioned by my nephew. Kid thinks he’s got the world figured out. These kids, all ideas, no experience. All day long I’m swinging the cleaner and he’s lying on customer floors dabbling liquid nonsense. With a big smile on his face. And when he’s not mixing potions that cause Agnes to sneeze half to death he’s talking to me about what if we changed this or what if we tried that. This is carpet-cleaning, it ain’t that complicated. The way it’s been since his grandfather started this business.

GUNTHER
Bob, seriously, you okay?

BOB
If you think everything’s fine try skipping a debt payment.

GUNTHER
Everything’s down it seems.

BOB
I’m telling you, one news report, two people bitching, a whole country feels like it’s lost. But look at us, we’ve got it good enough, don’t we? We may not be the investment class but we got it good enough.

AGNES and NATHAN reenter. NATHAN carries several note cards. AGNES carries a small wrapped box.
AGNES

Alright, here we go! Cards first!

NORMAN and GUNTHER each take out a lottery card.

NORMAN

From me and mother.

GUNTHER

Picked this baby out myself.

BOB

[Fingering the two cards] We keep buying lottery cards for our birthdays. We never talk about what happens if one actually wins.

NORMAN

You can’t talk about it. Otherwise, you face statistics which give a one in no-way, no-how, never in a million years’ chance.

BOB

This is what I’m saying, though. Everybody spends their life expecting that rainy day in April, that slizzard in May. Well, not me. I ain’t living the deficit mentality. C’mon, what would you boys do if we won the lottery?

NORMAN

Pay for mother’s operation.

BOB

That’s it?

NORMAN

Seeing with how much operations cost, I’d probably still have to borrow money from your winnings to help pay for it, yeah.

BOB

What about you?

GUNTHER

Stop knocking down doors and deadbeats. Find something that suits my suits. What about you?
BOB
Clean carpets. What else is there?

AGNES
Here you go, dear.

BOB
This a lottery card?

AGNES
Doctor’s appointment. You’re overdue on getting checked for a lot of things…[as BOB unwraps to reveal a white plastic glove]…Doctor said to bring your own glove.

NATHAN

BOB
What needs cleaning is my gene pool.

NATHAN
I propose to transform the family business into an industry-leading force by creating new product for untapped demand.

BOB
I don’t know what you just said but I bet there’s medication for it.

AGNES
Bob, please.

NATHAN
[Grabbing a test tube] The Lusty Steamer! My newest invention which extracts dirt faster and better than any rinse in the market.

BOB
Uh-huh.

NATHAN
We license The Lusty to large distributors. Then sell this place and get a fulfillment center.
BOB
Alright, that’s enough! I will never sell this place, you understand? NEVER. See, this is why I can’t talk to you because when I do you start playing potions with reality. This place makes money when real people spend real money on real us cleaning real carpets. See this? First nickel I ever made in business.

NATHAN
You mean the first nickel my grandfather made.

BOB
I was born into this business, kid. Riding ‘round the back of your grandfather’s van since the day I was born. I’ve been on the ride the whole time, sixty-four years. How long you been doing this?

NATHAN
Long enough to know that’s the only nickel we got left.

NATHAN tosses on his coat, storms out the warehouse door.

GUNTHER
Well.

NORMAN
Yeah, I should, uh, open the vacuum store.

GUNTHER
Happy birthday ‘dere, Bob.

NORMAN
Yeah. Happy birthday.

GUNTHER and NORMAN go out. NORMAN has left behind his yarmulke.

AGNES shakes her head and goes, leaving BOB with his cards.

BOB
At least I get the peace and quiet.

Lights shift.
ACT I. SCENE 2.

RISE and WHINE appear.

RISE
Say Whine, here’s something to report.

WHINE
What’s that.

RISE
The great state Eight-by-Eight lottery scratch-off! On each eight-by-eight lottery card are sixty-four covered squares. Only eight of those sixty-four covered squares contain hidden gopher heads. Scratch off the eight hidden gopher heads before scratching one empty square and win top prize: eight million dollars and eight cents!

WHINE
If they don’t slide off the roads first. I bet it never sleet’s in St. Paul.

RISE
You’re somehow still listening to Rise and Whine!

A bumper jingle plays: ‘W-W-T-F’

Lights shift.

BOB alone at the table. He holds the two birthday lottery cards in one hand. In the other hand he holds the first-ever nickel.

BOB
Lord. If you’re there. I’m sure plenty of the world’s evils have your attention. War. Famine. Little Nathan.

AGNES [OFF]
Bob!

BOB
But if you could somehow see it in your heart to guide my hand.

AGNES [OFF]
Bob!
BOB
To scratch eight hidden gopher heads.

AGNES [OFF]
Robert!

BOB [TOWARDS OFF]
What?

AGNES [OFF]
What are you doing?

BOB [TOWARDS OFF]
Scratching!

AGNES
Well don’t scratch off anything the doctor can’t fix!

AGNES enters, dressed in outerwear, and carrying a covered tray platter.

BOB
You know I don’t hear you when you talk nag.

AGNES removes the cover off the platter.

BOB
This isn’t cake.

AGNES
Oatmeal. Doctor bend-and-poke says.

BOB
A doctor’s appointment and oatmeal. Gee honey, you really went out of your way.

AGNES
You eat. I’m getting the mail.

AGNES opens the warehouse door to a gusty greet of wind and sleet, goes through and out.
BOB
Sorry God, I didn’t mean for you to hear all that. Sometimes I wish you’d put back the rib.

AGNES back on, covered in sleet, reading an opened letter.

BOB
Fan mail?

AGNES
From the bank. A customer check bounced.

BOB
Damnit.

AGNES
Nathan’s been telling you to start taking credit cards.

BOB
The last thing we need.

AGNES
These modern phones can now accept credit right there at customer homes.

BOB
So we can be charged ungodly fees by some vultures from New York? Why should New York be collecting my crumbs? This is Minnesota, I collect my own crumbs! I’m going over there.

AGNES
You are going to your doctor’s appointment.

BOB
We can’t let the account go under.

AGNES
It’s already under.

BOB
I’ll straighten this out.
AGNES
You’re getting something straightened out alright and it’s what you’ve been keeping under far too long. Your back, your knees, your coughing, your…pain. You can’t put this off anymore. I’m worried.

Beat.

BOB
You tell little Nathan?

AGNES
I didn’t have to. He can tell something’s off.

BOB
Yeah, well, that’s what I got insurance for.

AGNES
What good’s insurance without the health?

BOB
Insurance means we don’t pay for it.

AGNES
We’re always paying for it. Look at Norman. He’s still fighting with insurance to pay for his mother’s operation.

BOB
Poor guy’s probably stowing away everything he makes and it still ain’t enough. That’s what’s unhealthy, debt! Splinters a man’s mind knowing he’s always behind. Filling one hole just to dig another and running out of dirt in between. No matter what you do, how fast you dig, how much you shift between one hole to another, you keep falling further behind. Told Nathan we sold the main van. He doesn’t know they took it. And still too young to collect social security! Too old to try and regroup. No doctor’s appointment can fix this.

AGNES
Maybe we should think about selling.

BOB
You know I can’t do that, Agnes. I promised my Dad. And Tom. They’re both still here.
AGNES
The city’s trying to clean up this block.

BOB
Clean us out. For condoms.

AGNES
[Correcting] Condominiums.

BOB
I may not be who’s who but I know what’s what. Tom said to buy, to take over the lot and never let it go. He had this whole place running like a charm. Profitable.

AGNES
Your brother isn’t here to boss you around.

BOB
But his son is. With potions. What we need are customers.

AGNES
[ Holding a lottery card] What would you do?

BOB
Don’t tease yourself.

AGNES
What happened to mister no-more-deficit mentality?

BOB
Missus bank-sent-a-letter showed up.

AGNES
Someone has to win, right? It’s always some custodian or librarian popping the Powerball.

BOB
How do you know all that?

AGNES
Been through enough birthdays, haven’t I? C’mon, this card. This scratcher right here wins it all. What would you do?
BOB
Pay off those S.O.Bs. I know how I’d do it, too. I’d march right into their fancy office, stride across their level loop carpet and dump buckets of pennies right on their greedy little heads. Paid in full.

AGNES
What about Nathan?

BOB
Guess I’d need him to carry the buckets for me.

AGNES
Bob.

BOB
Give him the business, I guess.

AGNES
The business is rightfully his.

BOB
The business is a dead anchor tied to a sinking ship.

AGNES
You used to talk about your ideas. As if every sunrise was a winning ticket. Every afternoon the prize. And now we’re hearing it from Nathan. When customers call, they request him, you know. Send the funny boy with the potions.

BOB
Hmpf.

AGNES
You don’t remember but you used to be just like him.

BOB
He and I are nothing alike.

AGNES
We never see ourselves as we used to be. We only see ourselves as we want to be. Even if they’re the same thing. All I ever wanted to see is you a success.
BOB
That’s all you’ve ever wanted, huh? All these years of answering phones. Sleeping upstairs. Dealing with pains. Nothing for yourself.

AGNES
My reward will be seeing all the years of your hard work finally pay off. Always putting customers first, always putting the positive first.

BOB
So if this lottery card won.

AGNES
You pay off those S.O.Bs. I wouldn’t want a dollar.

BOB
But if there did happen to be a little extra lying around…

AGNES
We can’t leave this place. Just go to the doctor’s, okay?

BOB
Alright. Just…let me have my birthday card moment.

AGNES goes.

BOB
Hi, God. I’m back.

BOB takes one of the two birthday lottery cards, undergoes a series of physical movements, a pre-scratch superstition, then scratches with the first-ever nickel.

BOB
One little gopher head!…two!...empty square.

Crumbles the first card, tosses it to the floor.

BOB takes the second birthday card, scratches.

BOB
One little gopher head!...empty square.
Crumbles the second card, tosses to the floor.

BOB
Well, God, that’s why I always buy my own.

BOB pulls out a third lottery card from his pocket.

BOB repeats the physical movements, begins scratching.

BOB
One little gopher head!...two!...three!...four!...

Pause. Another scratch.

BOB
Five.

Pause. Another scratch.

BOB
Six.

BOB stops. Looks up. Takes NORMAN’s yarmulke and puts it on his head.

Leans over to scratch again...

Lights shift.
**ACT I. SCENE 3.**

*RISE and WHINE appear.*

WHINE

Hey, Rise.

RISE

Yes, Whine?

WHINE

I’m so bummed.

RISE

Why.

WHINE

I’m so depressed.

RISE

Why.

WHINE

Ask me why.

RISE

Why.

WHINE

I caught a bad case of life.

RISE

Then buy a lottery card! The Eight-by-Eight scratch-off game from the *hilarious* folks at the state lottery. Odds improve if you play!

WHINE

Ah, what’s the use, if I won I’d give half to my favorite charity.

RISE

Who’s that?

WHINE

The IRS. I bet there’s no taxes in St. Paul.
RISE

More swell vibe and May gaiety after this!

*We hear a van approach outside, rickety noises. Sound of the van door shutting.*

*Lights up on BOB alone as NATHAN enters, totally disheveled, hair a complete mess.*

NATHAN

Well. Uncle Bob. Guess what? There I was, out driving in our May slizzard, the antique auxiliary backup van wheels barely staying straight, the steering handle barely holding steady, the horn going off every time I hit an ice patch, the largest of which causing me to start heading sideways, across oncoming traffic until a nice little guard rail saved me from bounding onto still-frozen lake number ten thousand and one. Should I wait for a tow? Sorry! Uncle Bob says I have a schedule to keep. So I hop out of the van to make sure nothing underneath fell off, when I realize the gear shift never made it from drive to park. How do I know this? Because the van is starting to drive away from me. Yes, the backup van moving along with me still standing there. I start panic running and just barely grasp the rear panel, which falls off as I haul myself into back storage. I scramble up to the driver’s seat just in time to swerve-avoid slamming into many Minnesotans ransacking some jackknifed beer truck blocking the whole freeway. Should I stop and see if anyone needs help? No time! Uncle Bob says I have a schedule to keep! Miraculously, the backup van is still drivable, sort of. The crash only shorted all dashboard electronics. No front wipers. No heat. So I physically force down the driver window and stick my head out the side with a Memorial Day slizzard firing into my face. I make it to the Showers house. I lug our backup steamers to the front door. What’s that, Mr. Showers? You don’t have a scheduled cleaning? Showers doesn’t have a scheduled cleaning. He has a daughter. Her name is April. Her name is April Showers. Did you or did you not conspire with Showers telling him I was coming to rescue his daughter from her surname? Turns out April’s hot. Guess I can’t be that furious at you for setting me up with her on your birthday, except my face is thawing and my clothes are ripped and my hair is frozen back and April is scared of my presence and meanwhile this is all happening while we’re incurring revenue loss at thirty cents a square foot which means our business continues to lose money and backup vans and backup van electronics by the minute. So this is what I want to tell you. I’ve been here for five years. Five years ago I decided not to go to college. Five years ago against my dead father’s wishes I came into the family business. To help Aunt Agnes. And you. And for five years I’ve taken no vacation, no sick, nothing. [CONT.]
NATHAN [CONT.]
Work all day and sleep on the floor in back at night. For five years. I haven’t seen
an April Showers or even a May slizzard because this is all I’ve had. And now I
want what you said. What you said. A stake in the business. A real stake, as
partners, okay? How’s that for honest and direct? And I’m fine, thanks for asking.

BOB kisses NATHAN on the mouth.

BOB
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

NATHAN
You just kissed me.

BOB
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

NATHAN
What’d that doctor do to you?

BOB
Squares. Scratch off squares. Eight gopher heads before empty square wins big
prize. Eight million dollars and eight cents.

NATHAN examines the card.

BOB & NATHAN
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

Crazy victory dancing all over the
warehouse.

AGNES enters, carrying answering machine
tape.

AGNES
Why all the shouting? Did the doctor say you’re going to live? What. What are
you showing me? What am I…count the card? One, two, three, four, five, six...

AGNES counts the rest of the way.

BOB & NATHAN & AGNES
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!
More crazy victory dancing. They crash.

Oh, boy. Bob

Out of breath. Nathan

Forgot what that felt like. Bob

Better than sex. Agnes

Way better. Bob

You sure? Nathan

Oh, I’m sure. Agnes

I mean the card. It’s for real? Nathan

Very real. Bob

This is incredible! Nathan

Spectacularable! Bob

That, too! Nathan

Honey? Agnes

Yes? Nathan
“LOTTERY PLAY” – ACT ONE

AGNES
Sorry: ugly?

BOB
Yes?

AGNES
Get ready for sunny and warm!

BOB
Where’s that?

AGNES
Who cares as long as we’re gone by tonight!

More cheering.

BOB
Right now we’re not rich anything. Don’t you see? This is paper, a token. We’ve got to cash this in or who knows what could happen to it. The card gets lost or destroyed and we lose it before we win it! We’ve got to get to a lottery counter.

NATHAN
The backup van!

BOB
Yes! Is the backup van going to make it?

NATHAN
Snow tires.

BOB
Think Nathan! A random second slizzard could be on its way from St. Paul to wipe us out while we’re sitting around monkeying with snow tires instead of cashing in the winning card.

AGNES
Will the two of you SHUT UP. [Grabs one of NATHAN’s test tubes] Roll the card up and shove it in here.

NATHAN
How do we get it out?
AGNES
Break it when you get to the lottery counter.

BOB
Genius. If there’s one thing about the Shermans it’s that we’re a bunch of winning-lottery-card-protecting geniuses! Eight million dollars and eight cents!

NATHAN
Seed capital. Our share of the winnings can put my business plan in motion.

AGNES
After Bob pays off all the debt.

NATHAN
What debt?

BOB
I’ll hold the potion tube. You drive.

NATHAN
What debt?

BOB
Oh, this is it! I can’t wait to see the boys’ faces when I bring back the money!

AGNES
Right…Norman and Gunther…their birthday card.

BOB
Actually…it wasn’t their card.

AGNES
How do you mean.

BOB
I mean…I bought it.

Beat.

AGNES
Your card.

BOB
Yeah.
You bought it.

AGNES

Yeah.

BOB

*Beat.*

You technically bought that card.

AGNES

Yeah.

BOB

With your own technical money.

AGNES

The pennies we have left, yes.

BOB

Where’d you technically buy it?

AGNES

Povlitzki’s.

BOB

Povlitzki’s.

AGNES

Yesterday.

BOB

So where’s Norman’s card?

AGNES

Crumpled up.

BOB

And Gunther’s card?

AGNES

Crumpled up.

BOB
AGNES
So… the money’s all ours.

*Beat.*

BOB
Well, wait—

AGNES
You said that’s your card. Not theirs. So the money is ours.

*Beat.*

BOB
Look, we don’t have money yet. We have a flimsy little helpless card.

AGNES
That you bought.

NATHAN
What debt?

BOB
C’mon, Agnes! All this talk about who bought what card means bupkulus unless we somehow make it to Povlitzki’s in the backup van and cash it in. Otherwise, the world is gonna end and centuries from now apocalyptologists are gonna dig up our bones and go, gee, look how the ancient human stood around in old warehouses holding worthless pieces of paper.

AGNES
But you’re not going to tell them until we cash it in, right?

BOB
C’mon, Nathan! Stop moping and get the backup van ready already! We’re going back out there! The end of average awaits!

*Lights shift.*
ACT I. SCENE 4.

AGNES alone at the card table, surrounded by fashion magazines, talking into a phone.

AGNES
You only have it in a five? I’m more…five-and-a-half. It’s the first new dress I’ve bought in years. Oh, uh, I don’t have one of those, my husband doesn’t believe in New York. But I did just win the lottery. Hello?

GUNTHER enters.

AGNES
Gunther!

GUNTHER
Yah.

AGNES
You’re here!

GUNTHER
Yah, hi.

AGNES
Again!

GUNTHER
Oh, yah.

AGNES
Why is that!

GUNTHER
‘De party.

AGNES
What party.

GUNTHER
‘De surprise birthday party.

AGNES
For who?
GUNTHER

Bob.

AGNES

There’s a surprise party for Bob?

GUNTHER

‘Dat you wanted.

AGNES

Oh, yes! I’m sorry, when was that for?

GUNTHER

Tonight.

AGNES

Yes, tonight!

GUNTHER

You okay?

AGNES

Yes! No. I mean, nothing’s happened, really, since we last talked.

GUNTHER

Norman spilled, huh?

AGNES

Oh, no. No-no-no-no, I think the secret is still very-very-very intact.

GUNTHER

Yah.

AGNES

Yes, fantastic!

GUNTHER

‘Dis is weird.

AGNES

Weird? No. It wasn’t weird until you said this is weird. Now it’s weird! I was just cleaning.
GUNTHER
You never clean.

AGNES
Gunther, just because you don’t see me cleaning doesn’t mean I don’t clean. I mean, we’re the cleaners!

GUNTHER
So.

AGNES
So.

GUNTHER
So I’m here to help set up for ‘de party.

AGNES
Oh, you didn’t have to do that.

GUNTHER
You asked me.

AGNES
Right! My mind must be whoo!, but, um, since we last talked, since we last spoke to each other about the…

GUNTHER
Party.

AGNES
Since we spoke about it something unexpected happened.

GUNTHER
What’s wrong with Bob?

AGNES
He’s coming home, soon! That’s all. Here.

GUNTHER
After ‘de doctor’s.

AGNES
Something like that.
GUNTHER

‘Be Rich & Stay Rich’… ‘Retired & Sexy’… ‘Live Like A Queen While Putting Up With ‘De King’…

AGNES grabs the magazines.

GUNTHER

Somethin’s off.

AGNES

Not at all! Cards at seven twenty. Oatmeal at seven twenty-five. And then another machine-breaking and pain-filled day here at nothing much happening Sherman’s Cleaners!

GUNTHER

You seem skippy. I knock down skippy for a living, Agnes. Like this one vagrant from last week, tried to skip out on obligations owed to people, friends actually. I found him. Bottom of the Mississippi. Want me to hang some streamers?

AGNES

Bob probably won’t be feeling up for a surprise.

GUNTHER

Yah. I guess ‘dese kinds of parties can sometimes remind us how little we got. I remember ‘de first time I met Bob, knocking on your door. Nicest guy, made you forget your troubles. Felt so bad for feeling so good I misreported to the collector. And now I’m living in your back office. Funny how things work out. And now look at ‘dese, huh! A man’s story is his hands. Scrapped fingers ‘de crumbling walls, split webbing ‘de cracked blacktops, knuckles ‘de grime and palms ‘de crime. Bought Bob his lottery card then myself fifty more. Scratched ‘em off with what’s left of my nails. Don’t ‘dese say it all! You ever think about packing up? Running away, saying forget who I owe, hoping people like me never find you.

AGNES

Bob’s coming home.

GUNTHER

Probably stopping at Povlitzki’s first.

AGNES

…
GUNTHER
To buy some more cards.

AGNES
Right.

GUNTHER
Does Norman know? About canceling ‘de party?

The sound of a van outside.

AGNES
Gunther, please. There’s a small family thing we’re dealing with.

BOB and NATHAN enter, NATHAN’s hair and face even more warped.

BOB
The heroes have returned! What a scene! Oh Agnes, you should’a been there at Povlitzki’s!

AGNES
[Gunther is here] Bob!

BOB
Total and complete madhut. I mean, nobody knew how to handle it, craziest thing I bet to ever happen to that place!

AGNES
[Gunther is here] BOB!

Beat.

BOB
Hey. Gunther.

AGNES
Yes! Gunther is here!

BOB
Gunther. Buddy.

GUNTHER
Told you he’d hit up Povlitzki’s.
BOB
You told him?

AGNES
Never mind, where are the buckets?

BOB
What buckets?

AGNES
The buckets full of...

BOB
So there we were, the backup van sliding and bouncing and the skies sleetiing and howling and little Nathan halfway out the passenger’s window giving me directions, and I’m spinning the wheel with one hand, the other hand cradling the potion tube. We make it to Povlitski’s. We slide into the parking lot. I keep the van running while little Nathan slides oh so delicatessenly through the lot, other cars spinning out all around him. Nathan slides through the door and sloshes his way to the lottery counter…

AGNES
Yeah? And?

BOB
Lottery retail can only pay out to six hundred dollars.

GUNTERH
Is this about ‘de surprise party?

AGNES
Where does ours pay out?

BOB
Lottery headquarters.

AGNES
So you drove to headquarters.

BOB
Not at first. I made Nathan slide back in and get me something ‘cuz I started to feel a little chest pain.
AGNES
Never mind that, what happened when you drove to headquarters?

GUNTHER
You got a winning card?

BOB
We sure did.

GUNTHER
Who’s we?

AGNES
Who’s we?

BOB
Me and Nathan.

AGNES
Right! Nathan!

NATHAN
Hello.

AGNES
So what happened at headquarters?

BOB
Closed for Memorial Day weekend.

AGNES
No.

BOB
Gotta wait ‘til Tuesday.

AGNES
That’s…that’s four days.

NATHAN
Maybe my face will thaw by then.
BOB
Hey, how many times I gotta tell you to stop with all this negativitization! I mean, the world just woke up and turned itself on and RSVPed for the first-ever Shermans have won party!

GUNTHER
So ‘de party’s back on.

BOB
The challenge we’ve all faced our whole life. The world laughs at you, then fights you, then forgets about you, and then you win. In spite of it all, or maybe because of it all, this card!

GUNTHER
Good for you, Bob. After all ‘dese years, finally somebody won a little something. What’d you get, a couple gopher heads? A thousand bucks?

NATHAN
Eight million dollars and eight cents.

*Long beat.*

GUNTHER
What.

*BOB shows GUNTHER the card.*

GUNTHER
HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA!

BOB
What can I say, Gunther? A man gets to a certain age and knows just where to scratch.

GUNTHER
I don’t believe it! Does Norman know?

BOB
Ehh...

AGNES
You told him.
BOB
Maybe a smidge.

AGNES
Define smidge.

BOB
You know, come on over, wear something to celebrate.

AGNES
But you didn’t tell him why, right? You didn’t tell him why?

NORMAN blasts in through the warehouse door.

NORMAN
SHALOM, BITCHES! HAHAHAHAHAHAHA! I quit my job, I quit my job, I quit my job! You know what I told my boss? I told her: you can take this vacuum and suck where I’ve had to kiss for all those years!

AGNES
No.

NORMAN
You’re right. What I said was…I need to take a leave of absence…FOR INFINITY! You hear stories of people crashing out before cashing in? Guilty! You know what I did? Right after I told that tyrant the next time I’ll see her is when my chauffer pulls up before I’m off for a bite of pheasant?

NORMAN/GUNTHER
Haha! Oh, yeah!

NORMAN
Booked a Jews Cruise. Oh, yeah. A loooong Mediterranean cruise to the promised land for me and mother. Show her a slice of the international nice and then come back home and pay for her operation.

AGNES
You didn’t.

NORMAN
Did! Told Mother the news and said don’t bother packing your bags…I hired someone to do it for us!
NORMAN/GUNTHER
Haha! Oh, yeah!

NORMAN
Tell you, I’m already getting used to this!

NORMAN/GUNTHER
[Touching the card] Ooohhhhhhhhh.

GUNTHER
How much is eight million and eight cents split three ways?

NORMAN
Two million, six hundred sixty-six thousand, six hundred sixty-six and nine cents. Not that I was counting!

NORMAN/GUNTHER
Haha! Oh, yeah!

GUNTHER
Can you believe it? Our card!

AGNES
Actually, it wasn’t your card. Or [to NORMAN] your card. It was Bob’s card.

GUNTHER
What’re you talking about?

AGNES
This isn’t your card.

Beat.

NORMAN
What’s she…what’s she talking about.

AGNES
It’s a personal card.

NORMAN
That we bought for Bob.

AGNES
That Bob bought for himself.
GUNTHER
Bob? What’s she talking about?

Beat.

BOB
Yeah. Um. Boys. Men. This winning card, see, it’s, it’s not ex-spically one of the birthday cards. It’s a card I just happened to buy for myself.

Beat.

NORMAN
I’m seeing your lips move but I’m not hearing what you’re saying.

BOB
This winning card wasn’t one of the birthday cards you gave me.

NORMAN
Where’s my card.

BOB
It wasn’t a winning card.

NORMAN
Where is it?

BOB
The loser card?

NORMAN
Yeah. The loser card.

GUNTHER finds a crumpled up card in the corner of the room.

BOB
See?

GUNTHER
Yah. I tracked it down. What about my card?

BOB
It was another, you know, loser card.
GUNTER picks up the second card.

BOB
See, I scratched your card first and then Gunther’s card next and then I took out my own card and this won.

NORMAN
But that’s still the birthday card, right? I mean in spirit it’s still…

GUNTER
My way out.

NORMAN
Mother’s operation.

AGNES
Bob’s card.

NORMAN
I just quit my job. I just told my boss to go suck herself.

GUNTER
How do you know this isn’t my card? Did you switch the cards?

AGNES
Hey, back off! This is our card! The Shermans!

NATHAN
Uncle Bob, this card can save the business! We can use this money to turn the business around!

They all start talking to BOB at once. It grows to a din.

NORMAN [TALKING OVER]
What am I supposed to tell Mother? How am I going to pay for her operation?

AGNES [TALKING OVER]
You’re not his wife. And you’re not his wife! And you’re not his wife! We’re going someplace sunny and warm!
NATHAN [TALKING OVER]
This can save the business! We can use this money to turn the business around! I have ideas!

GUNTHER [TALKING OVER]
Don’t be trying to hide anything from me! I know people who can put you at the bottom of the river!

BOB shuts it down.

BOB
ALRIGHT, STOP EVERYONE. JUST STOP. You know what’s missing around here? A little integrity. Should be a wanted sign with the national border outlined around that word. You’ve all known me a long time so when I say I will make it right for all of us that’s just what I mean. Because what happens next is Tuesday morning. Agnes and I holding up the big winning check on TV. All the customers will see me standing there and say: Bob Sherman, that’s how it’s done. He worked hard right up until the day he got lucky.

AGNES
I’ll be on TV?

BOB
And into the camera we’ll say something about Norman and Gunther. Who also reached the American Dream, even though nobody really knows what it is.

AGNES
I’ll be on TV.

BOB picks up NATHAN’s vial of liquid.

BOB
And to Nathan. Whose grandfather started this business. Whose father Tom and I rode side by side in the back of the original van. And while Tom is no longer with us, his son still is. So it’s time for the family business to succeed to the next generation. Today, I am selling my entire interest in Sherman’s Cleaners to you.

NATHAN
I’m going to have a stake in the business?

BOB
Not a stake. The whole thing. For one nickel.
NATHAN

The whole thing?

BOB

Everybody here is a witness. Do you accept?

NATHAN

Yes. Yes!

BOB

Then give me a nickel and shake. There. Sherman’s Cleaners is now in your hands. As for me, I don’t need to get super rich. I just got super enough. And so did my boys.

NORMAN

This is true divinity! Let’s get a picture. Agnes, hold The Lusty Steamer. Nathan, hold the card. Bob, hold the nickel! Gunther, hold your knuckles. Everybody flash that winning smile!

BOB

Here’s to the American Dream!

*AGNES sneezes, upends the vial, spilling its liquid contents all over the lottery card, creating a smoldering fissure.*

ALL

AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.

*The light fixture begins to flicker, flicker, flicker…*

Blackout.

RISE

And we’ll be back right after this!

**END OF ACT I.**
ACT TWO: SATURDAY.

ACT II. SCENE 1.

We hear a sound collage, an audio melding of various lottery advertisements, brash and gaudy.

ADVERTISEMENT [OVER]
Play the lottery, the big state lottery, have you played today?, can’t win unless you play, win hundreds, mega-hundreds, mega-thousands!, odds improve if you play, mega-record payouts!, kids play free!, someone’s gotta win it might as well be you, I played every day for thirty years, got wallet envy?, buy your future…

As the audio fades, RISE and WHINE appear.

RISE
…just tipping sixty-four degrees as the Saturday sun lights up the Minneapolis skyline! Any sleet hanging around from yesterday is hereby…

WHINE
What’s wrong?

RISE
This just in: a winning Eight-by-Eight card was spotted at Povlitzki’s. According to our insider source—

WHINE
Which source?

RISE
Random person.

WHINE
Very reliable.

RISE
Was at Povlitzki’s yesterday when some kid with sleet-for-hair shattered a test tube containing the winning card but then left and then sloshed back in to buy aspirin and then left again.
WHINE
Where’s the card?

RISE
Nobody knows. The general peace-loving public is now being asked by authorities to find that card.

WHINE
Which authorities?

RISE
Us!

WHINE
Finally some real news!

RISE
So keep it locked on WWTF, your Minnesota home for puzzling antics and lottery whodunits!

*The light fixture flickers on.*

**BOB** sits on one of the box crates, staring at the covered tray platter.

We see the chemistry workstation evincing activity. More vials, more tube holders, more scrap carpet parts littering the area.

**BOB** un-lids the tray and peels off from the platter the partially dissolved lottery card.

**NATHAN** enters from the warehouse door, wearing chemist smock and goggles. He holds a smoldering vial.

**NATHAN** goes to the workstation and taps a second tube. **NATHAN** pours liquid from the smoldering vial into the second tube.

**BOB**
You gonna leave the door open?
NATHAN

Whooooaaa!

BOB

I said: you going to leave the door open?

NATHAN

Think I got it!

BOB

You’re letting sunshine in.

NATHAN

[More to himself] It’s working.

BOB

See you grew more potions. Now that Uncle Bob’s forced into early retirement, now that you own the place, all yours for a nickel, you just couldn’t wait to mark territory with more potions.

NATHAN

It’s really working.

*BOB knocks over one of the vials.*

BOB

Oops. Did I do that? Mess of a shop you’re running. I’m out one day and this place turns into an above-ground landfill. Sloppy wasn’t how I ran things. Things might have been broken, things might have been unfixable, but they weren’t a mess.

*NATHAN pours again, one tube into another.*

NATHAN

Ohhh, yeah.

BOB

The messes you don’t even know about. Debt. Managing debt. Consolidating debt. Reconnoitering the books.

NATHAN

Nobody uses books anymore.
BOB
Oh, he is listening! Must be those ears. Given our genetics, I just assume you suffer from the same blockage.

NATHAN
What I’m suffering from is a series of loud screech.

BOB
Well, get used to it. The screeches you don’t even know about. Banks, collectors, nephews.

NATHAN
I’m not talking to you when you act like this.

NATHAN back to pouring.

BOB
Say Mister CEO, are guests of your little establishment allowed to use the facilities?

NATHAN
Bathroom’s half-busted.

BOB
I’ll just go in one of your tubes, then.

NATHAN
Good luck.

BOB
I’m not that old. Although, sixty-four and a day, could fall off at any moment. Where should I toss it when it falls off?

NATHAN
We don’t have a trash can. We don’t even have a van.

BOB
The backup van works fine.

NATHAN
That’s a lilac-colored deathtrap without brakes and you know it.

BOB
It’s not lilac, it’s mauve.
NATHAN
Nobody works in these conditions.

BOB
We do. Excuse me, you do. The armpit of life sans deodorant! Got a complaint form I can fill out?

NATHAN
I’m sure there used to be some in the main van.

BOB
Before they took it. Yep. A tragedy unfolds. A tragedy because this place managed to survive this long on my hustle and lower back. Nice job, one of us.

NATHAN
[The tube] Amazing.

BOB
Hey ears, you open?...for business?

NATHAN
I’m working on something.

BOB
I don’t know what you’re working on but it sure ain’t what customers pay for. So you better figure out another way to survive. Maybe you could arrange tours, a living museum, come see the withered old man and his broken dream! Charge at the door that’s still open and still letting in sunshine!

BOB knocks over another vial, lumbers back onto the crate.

NATHAN
Can you stop acting this way so we can get back to work?

BOB
I don’t work here anymore.

NATHAN
Yes, you do.

BOB
You took the business and left me with nothing.
NATHAN
I didn’t take anything. You asked for a nickel. You shook my hand.

BOB
On good faith.

NATHAN
And bad debt.

BOB
Your problem now.

NATHAN
I want to show you something.

BOB
No, thank you.

NATHAN
Can you hold this?

BOB
Lot of liability asking random strangers to help.

NATHAN
C’mon.

BOB
You need me to help, you’re gonna have to hire me. You even know anything about hiring people?

NATHAN
I’ll figure it out.

BOB
Yeah? It’s been five years and you haven’t even figured out you’re in the business of cleaning carpets.

NATHAN
You always said we’re in the business of helping people. That it’s more than carpets. That we’re there to wash the stains and spills from their life.
BOB

That’s nice. That’s what I’ll say to the state unemployment office where first thing Tuesday I’m filing.

NATHAN

First thing Tuesday we’re going to the lottery office.

BOB

With what? A half-dissolved backup piece of paper, a former lottery card now caked with potion juice? First thing Tuesday you better get some people hired because second thing, I’m finished. We’re all finished.

NATHAN

You’re not finished, Uncle Bob.

BOB

Terrible thing to put a man on the street, Nathan. Putting a man on the street is putting a man in the ground. I told customers you’ll get me until I’m an obituary. You’ll know I’m retired when I’m dead! And they’d come from all over, the first Minnesota funeral in state history where the weather didn’t keep people away. In droves they’d flock through the sleet, to line up at the open door, to stand right here at the holy hole of dirt and say: Bob Sherman, he spent his whole damn life preserving this...business.

NATHAN

Which is hiring you back.

BOB

You don’t know how.

NATHAN

I now pronounce you hired, okay?

BOB

That’s not how it works.

NATHAN

Of course that’s how it works.

BOB

You have to interview.
NATHAN
I’m not interviewing you.

BOB
Because you don’t know how. You better learn, you’re running your own shop. You have to sit at a table. You have to ask a candidate questions. If you want me to help.

NATHAN
Fine.

BOB
Gee, Mister CEO, terrible shack of despair you’ve got going here. I think I’d fit right in. Is there an opening for a guy like me?

NATHAN
Uncle Bob, you don’t have to—

BOB
Uh-oh! No standard application!

NATHAN
Would you stop being such a weirdo?

BOB
Nathan, that’s not the first question you ask. A business owner has to look at physical appearances and make split-second decisions on whether there’s a fit. In my case, you should see someone clearly too old, too outdated, someone who couldn’t possibly function in today’s world. You ask: how old are you? ASK.

NATHAN
How old are you?

BOB
ERRR! Age discrimination! Oh, I’m so sorry, but I’m now going to have to sue you for eight million dollars and eight cents!

NATHAN
With my ideas we could be making so much more.

BOB
Your genius which fizzled our fortune in one sneeze.
NATHAN
I didn’t plan for Aunt Agnes to spill my invention all over the lottery card.

BOB
Of course not! It just worked out that way for good reason. Fine, Bob Sherman, you’re hired. Come here, you sick old man, let’s put you on answering machine duty! You know how to work a basic machine? What about computers? The only thing I’ve double-clicked is my heels, waiting for something good to happen. Well, maybe you could just clean carpets since you’re here just for the health insurance anyway. And even then, too late! Insurance can’t save you now!

NATHAN
Why are you acting this way?

BOB
Wake up, Nathan! The world’s a dirty place! You’ve going to have to start cleaning it by letting me go! Forced out for the second time in as many days! Good for you, showing some early promise as a man of commerce. In business you gotta be focused on cleaning straight down to the bottom line.

NATHAN
You always talk about focusing on the top line.

BOB
Will you stop contradicting me?

NATHAN
I would if you ever made any sense!

BOB
DAMNIT, TOM!

BOB inhales in shock, then succumbs to a coughing spasm.

NATHAN
Uncle Bob? Uncle Bob. I’m…I’m sorry.

BOB
What are you sorry for?

NATHAN
[Grabbing a different tube] Here.
BOB

The hell is that.

NATHAN

Something else I’ve been working on. For you.

BOB

Looks like Old Faithful met a Smurf.

NATHAN

Drink it.

BOB

Kill me off like you did the lottery card.

NATHAN

Just drink it.

BOB drinks.

BOB

That’s...that’s better.

Beat.

NATHAN

You never really talked about him.

BOB

Hope you’re not angling for the ‘gee you remind me of your father’ thing ‘cause you can forget it.

NATHAN

Aunt Agnes never talks about Dad, either. I tried a couple times, asking her, but it’s like she’s afraid talking about him might bring him back.

BOB

Fear is nothing but a painful memory. We got plenty of those around here.

NATHAN

I’m asking. I’m asking.

Beat.
BOB
Your Dad was a driven man. And your grandfather was stuck in second gear. Tom walked up to your grandfather one day and said: the business is mine, old man. Took the keys right out of your grandfather’s hands, literally. Put us in overdrive, figurative. There were rough patches, of course, but Tom never faltered. Never listened either. Didn’t care much about what I thought. Or what I had to say. All Tom saw was that prize, the illusive prize, and he never wavered. Kept going right up until the day he died swinging a cleaner.

NATHAN
I thought Dad died from a heart attack.

BOB
Technically he died from a heart attack but that’s not what killed him. Wanting more killed him. Resenting me killed him. We’re all so angry while we’re alive. Tom and I, did we ever fight. Really fight. Often at the customer’s. Agnes used to wonder why we’d sometimes come back bloody, the steamers busted. Tom and I never realized we were probably fighting over something that happened when we were kids riding around your grandfather’s van. Maybe it was over this nickel. It was at the old Foshay Tower where I found him, the sun setting behind him, filling up the city behind him, and Tom was kind of leaning, gripping onto his steamer, like he knew what was happening and wouldn’t go down. Agnes and I took over. You think you’re handed things. You think you end up where you end up because where you end up is where you’re supposed to be. I always said they were gonna bury me here. But not like this. Not as a failure.

NATHAN
You’re not a failure.

BOB
What else do you call this place?

NATHAN
Everybody knows you. You’re like a local celebrity.

BOB
Only to the people who know me. Tom measured success by one scoreboard: money. All those thousand-dollar nickels wadding up his ears. By that standard, if Tom were here today, he’d call me a failure. But then maybe Tom is here, watching, still trying to get at me, offering the golden promise. One lottery play. Overnight reversal of the score. Just kidding, Tom says, as he spills his son’s potions over my escape card.
NATHAN

Stop talking like this.

BOB

We have to accept fate.

NATHAN

That’s fatalism.

BOB

Funny how fate works that way. You got all these ideas for how to make money. That’s the Tom in you. But if I could get a little Bob in you then stop thinking about how you can make a living and start thinking about how you can make a life. Don’t overcommit like your Dad and I did.

NATHAN

This is all I care about. Everything I care about is here.

BOB

This place? Nathan, wake up! There are no more Edisons, Picassos, nobody willing to devote their every everything to a single purpose. The world now has sweetened upgrades and right-now enjoyments and eight million other instant happinesses that I’ve been too focused to enjoy. It takes a rich man to work a poor job. You can’t do something like this alone. Get what I’m saying?

NATHAN

That why you married Aunt Agnes?

BOB

If I didn’t marry her she’d have divorced me.

NATHAN

Dad was never really there. He divorced me for this place. But…five years of driving around with you. Cleaning with you. Sharing every meal. You’re not just my Uncle, you know, you’re like…my only friend. But you kissed me yesterday and that was a little weird.

BOB

Tom didn’t want you to go into the business because he wanted you somewhere else. For years I figured Tom wanted you to stay away because he never liked me. But I’ve come to realize Tom wanted you to stay away because he didn’t want you to die here. You see, I still carry a promise. A promise that I would never sell this place.
NATHAN

Okay.

BOB

But now that the business is yours…you know where your Dad is? Where he’s buried?

NATHAN

The graveyard?

BOB

That’s his marker, sure, but not where his body is. His body’s here. We buried him here. Tom’s below us. So’s your grandfather. Spend our whole life working a place, tending to it, occupying it, and then get dumped into some spot we’ve never been? Everything that I’ve done, everything I’ve worked for isn’t just to protect the business. It’s about preserving our spot, where they still are. This place is our family. Anyway. Before I die, before this place becomes a bunch of condoms…I need to show you exactly where to dig.

NATHAN

Stop talking like that.

BOB

Nathan.

NATHAN

This place isn’t going anywhere. You’re not going anywhere because I need you here. You’re going to be part of what we do next.

BOB

Your potions.

NATHAN

Money’s only important to money. Money’s only important to me because it lets me do what’s important, to me. My mixtures have become like extended family, little Shermans. With their own personalities. See this one? He’s shy. This one’s, he’s temperamental. This guy, he’s explosive.

BOB

How come all your potions are guys?
NATHAN
Aunt Agnes sneezing on the card yesterday made me realize: what if I have the right solution for the wrong problem? I’ve been trying all this time to create a solution that takes out. Reverse the purpose: what if The Lusty Steamer isn’t an extract but a restorant?

BOB
A restaurant.

NATHAN
A restaurant. Not just for carpets, but any surface. Even scratch-off cards. I think I can get the card back.

BOB
By pouring this on it?

NATHAN
More like timed layers of application. In the sunlight.

BOB
Nathan, messing with a lottery card is forgery.

NATHAN
It’s not forgery. We’re just getting it back to how it was before you first scratched it.

BOB
We can’t go to the lottery with a bogus card.

NATHAN
It’s your original card. Restored. As long as the card doesn’t change from current shape or form.

BOB
It’s crime.

NATHAN
It’s two of us, working together. One holding, the other mixing.

BOB
Tom is definitely in the room! Where are you, Tom? Is this you? You still laughing at me?
NATHAN
Uncle Bob—

BOB
Nathan! *It’s over!*

NATHAN
You’re the one who talks about integrity. I’m trying to make things right.

BOB
Frauding the state lottery is not integrity. Integrity is what you do with your life when facing the odds.

NATHAN
Like sitting here at night and wondering about tomorrow? I’ve been here, right here for five years, trying to restore this place. Let me get back your card.

BOB
Agnes put you up to this.

NATHAN
No. I’m doing this for you.

BOB
I never asked you for anything. And neither has Agnes. She’s perfectly fine the way things are.

*AGNES enters. Her hair vigorous and uncivilized. Slinky dress. Gaudy jewelry. Heels. Sucking on a lollipop. Who is this woman?*

AGNES
Enrique! The best hair stylist in town! With a six month waiting list! Well, Agnes got ole’ Enrique on the phone and I said: lottery winner! Going on TV. Enrique says: mi amor.

BOB
Where did you go.
AGNES
Lair O’ Hair, top floor of the I.D.S. A man in a special elevator pushes a gold button that whisks me to the top. That’s who I’m dealing with, a hair stylist with his own elevator.

BOB
So you paid for that?

AGNES nods, hair flailing.

BOB
How?

AGNES pulls out a credit card.

AGNES
Went to the bank first and said: Sherman’s Cleaners won the lottery. Get me a credit card. And a lollipop.

BOB
But we lost the lottery!

AGNES
The name alone sounds glorious: Master. Card. Swipe now, pay later.

BOB
How much did you pay…[her hair]…for that?

AGNES
Lottery winners don’t ask price. Enrique explodes your scalp and then hands you an embossed receipt and you sign with a stroke of the manicured hand.

BOB
But you signed next to a number.

AGNES
Long, curvy words. The first word was one. The second word was thousand.

BOB
This isn’t happening.
AGNES
And then I saw. What I’d done to myself, what I’d let happen to me. And when the tears ran out, when the heaving sobs ended, I knew there was only one place in the world that could return peace to my follically-devastated soul.

BOB
The electric chair?

AGNES
The mall.

BOB
Oh, no.

AGNES
Oh, yes! Retained the services of a personal shopper. Whipped out Mastercard and said: this baby goes to eight million. Nathan, you’re still a young man, but let me ask you: how many purses are too many purses?

BOB
Agnes, what have you done?

AGNES
What all rich people do when their lives fall apart: express sadness through grotesque levels of shopping.

BOB
But that’s all you bought, right?

AGNES
On the first Mastercard. The bank didn’t expect to see me again so soon. Anyone can be poor, Bob, being rich takes practice.

NATHAN
It’ll be okay, Aunt Agnes.

AGNES
You’re a science person, Nathan. Can you make it Friday morning again? Friday morning we were poor but happy. Today we’re fake-rich and miserable. I have to go lie down. I have Georgina at three for a massage.

AGNES goes.
BOB

This new Lusty Steamer?

NATHAN

Yeah.

BOB

Show me how we do this.

*Lights shift.*
ACT II. SCENE 2.

RISE and WHINE appear.

Sounds of a big crowd, mob noise.

RISE
And we are coming to you live from Povlitzki’s, the center of lottery madness! Thousands have come direct from ransacking a jackknifed beer truck to join the most extensive missing item search in state history!

WHINE
Let’s find that card!

RISE
Minneapolitans are overturning garbage dumps, tearing apart frozen foods sections—

WHINE
And even speaking directly to each other!

RISE
Causing leering, jeering, and even sneering!

WHINE
And that’s just between you and I!

RISE
At the nexus of delirium, this is the all-new weather-free Minneapolis home for total lottery chaos!

Crowd noise fades.

Lights flicker to NORMAN alone, seated at the table, on his cell.

NORMAN
Boss! Norman here! Figured I should probably follow up from the last time we spoke. Which wasn’t really speaking, more like exclaiming. At you. Some might call it taunting. No.

Punches a button on the cell.
NORMAN

Boss-ette! Sorry to call you on a Saturday, the Sabbath, which my people consider the day of forgiveness. No.

Punches a button on the cell, waits.

NORMAN

Hel-lo lovely! I…uh-oh…um…not sure if this is the first or third message you’re getting, not that I’ve left three, unless you’ve gotten three, and then maybe you could disregard the previous two, except what I said about forgiveness, that was kind of…um…I’d like to have my job back? This is Norman.

Hangs up. NORMAN takes the cover off the tray platter to reveal Bob’s lottery card, still a drippy mess, but an intact drippy mess.

NORMAN

I was gonna be cleaning the big machines. Brand-name. My own shop. I’d have comfort money. The kind you take for morning walks, the kind you tuck in at night, count when no one’s looking. Mother would have been proud. I was young enough not to know any better. Now I’m old enough not to know any worse.

NORMAN accidentally rips the card. It tears into two pieces, and then as he tries to contain the mess it rips again, crumbles into many pieces.

Oh. Uh...

GUNTHER

[Entering] Yah! You’re here!

NORMAN scrambles to conceal the card crumbles by slamming the lid on the platter.

GUNTHER


Beat.

What.
GUNTHER
Nathan’s chemicals. Restore Bob’s card. To the way it was before.

NORMAN
Before...

GUNTHER
Bob scratched it off.

NORMAN
So...

GUNTHER
Bob can scratch off again.

NORMAN
Which...

GUNTHER
We’ll then take to ‘de lottery.

NORMAN
For...

GUNTHER
Eight million dollars and eight cents!

**Beat.**

NORMAN
Interesting.

GUNTHER
Yah! Nathan’s testing it on our two loser cards before he does it for real on Bob’s card in the tray there. I tell you, felt like the world collapsed on my head. But that was yesterday!

NORMAN
Yeah.

GUNTHER
You know the first thing I’m gonna buy? I don’t even know, what is there to buy with that much money! What about you? I mean, after your mother’s operation?
NORMAN
You know, Gunther, I’ve been thinking. Don’t you feel restoring the card carries a certain moral...what’s the word?

GUNTHER
Stinking richness?

NORMAN
Tearing! A certain moral tearing.

BOB enters, with NATHAN behind.

BOB
It works! I can’t believe it, but it really works!

GUNTHER
So what’s ‘de word, Nathan?

NATHAN
I think we got it.

GUNTHER
You hear that, Norman? We got it.

BOB
Norman, good, you’re here to see the revival of Sherman’s Cleaners! We’re gonna take my card from inside that platter—

GUNTHER
Apply Nathan’s potion—

BOB
And once the card is dried—

GUNTHER & BOB
Scratch it off again!

NORMAN clutches tighter the covered tray.

GUNTHER
Maybe we should note where you scratched first. So you don’t forget where ‘de gopher heads are.
BOB
Don’t worry about that, Gunther, I got a photogenic memory.

GUNTHER
We only get one chance, right Nathan?

NATHAN
One chance.

GUNTHER moves to take the tray but
NORMAN avoids.

NORMAN
You know! Have we really thought this through? About what we’re doing here?

GUNTHER
We’re about to win the lottery, can we have ‘de card?

NORMAN
I mean, is this the world now? One scam follows another?

GUNTHER
We’re getting ‘de card back to where it was before Agnes sneezed. Nathan’s potions took out and now his potions are about to put back in.

NORMAN
But that’s what cheating cheaters do, right? And we’re not cheating cheaters. I mean, you know what happens if you visit lottery headquarters with this card?

BOB
Norman, if it was any other card I wouldn’t even think about doing this. But in there’s the original card. The one I bought. The one that’s still intact. What Nathan’s done, you can’t even tell.

NORMAN
Yes, but, what-what-what-what is money anyway?

GUNTHER
Something all of us never had.
BOB
We all got debts, Norman, and mine’s to Agnes. I’ve been borrowing from her dream long enough. What’s in that tray is gonna give back everything she gave up sticking with me all these years. I’m doing this for her.

NORMAN
Yes, but greed doesn’t make you rich, right? Greed makes you convicted.

GUNTHER
It sounds like someone’s against us.

BOB
Hey, don’t start that talk in here.

GUNTHER
Give us ‘de card.

NORMAN
But it’s not our card anymore. I mean, isn’t it Nathan’s card?

BOB
That I bought.

NORMAN
And then sold! For a nickel. Everything in here was sold to Nathan so…Nathan should decide. Nathan, surely you see the proper choice here.

NATHAN
Sure I do. We cash that baby in for eight million dollars and eight cents!

ALL BUT NORMAN
Yeah! Right on! Let’s roll!

NORMAN
Then what? Then you’ll walk into lottery headquarters. Some receptionist will say in that money tone: can I help you? You’ll stammer out in practiced speech about how you just happened to scratch off that winning card, the missing winning card that everyone is looking for. A stern looking man who doesn’t give his name will come out and take the card. He’ll say: why don’t you sit down while we examine this card? After an hour waiting you’ll think, what’s wrong? Why aren’t they handing you your money? [CONT.]
NORMAN [CONT.]
And now these people, these evil lottery-doers have your card, the rebuilt tampered card somewhere deep in their fortress while you’re alone, waiting, with their lottery cameras focused on your every expression. Have they discovered something strange? Are the police on their way? Maybe it passes the test, you win!, hooray! All the ex-people of your life return to beg for handouts, even interrupting the vows given on your wedding day. And April and you are tormented by it, your generosity up against the inability to help others. So to save the world you burn what remains of your winnings on even more lottery cards while your debts pile higher, while your potions wither in an abandoned warehouse, while Gunther comes to knock with the sheriffs and drag Uncle Bob and Aunt Agnes to the street. I mean, you don’t want all that to happen, do you?

NATHAN
Wow. Hearing you talk about it that way, I guess my vote is…we cash that baby in for eight million dollars and eight cents!

ALL BUT NORMAN
Yeah! Let’s go! Let’s do this!

*BOB takes back the covered tray platter from NORMAN’s hands.*

*BOB takes the cover off the platter.*

ALL BUT NORMAN
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.

*Lights flicker to out.*
ACT II. SCENE 3.

Night.

AGNES alone at the table, with the bowl of oatmeal. She wears a robe and slippers, her hair now more contained.

AGNES takes a bite of oatmeal. Not good.

AGNES opens the platter tray and sees crumbled pieces of the card. AGNES takes these pieces and sprinkles them on top of the oatmeal. Takes another bite. Not bad.

BOB enters and turns on the light fixture hanging from the ceiling, still non-cooperative.

Hey.

AGNES swallows.

Feeling better?

Not really.

Feeling worse?

Feeling hungry.

Feeling worse will do that.

Then I’m feeling pretty hungry.
BOB
Want me to get you something to dr—

AGNES takes the Old Buck and splashes the oatmeal, continues eating.

BOB
I actually like your hair.

AGNES gives a look.

BOB
I can get the backup steamers from the backup van to clean it. If you want.

AGNES
I’m coping.

BOB
Mind if I cope with you? I’m a good coper.

AGNES
Yeah?

BOB
Yep. Some might say an expert.

AGNES
Hmm.

BOB
Got a lot of experience with coping. Forty years to be exact.

AGNES
Forty years.

BOB
Forty years of you and I.

AGNES
That’s a lot of coping.
BOB
I know it. But not all bad. There’s the year we first met. When I screwed up and discolored your Dad’s whole downstairs. How I kept coming back over and over to clean it until you finally talked to me. There’s the year we got married. Right over there. Then the year you first came to work for the business. Also the year we’d take the original main van and go out at night. Get lost on a frozen lake under the northern moon. Get lost in the back of the van on the frozen lake. Scramble out of the back of the van just before it fell into the frozen lake. Probably still buried down there.

AGNES
The year we found out we couldn’t have kids.

BOB
The year Tom died.

AGNES
The year Nathan came to us.

BOB
Well. In my defense. I told you. Before we got married. I said this is gonna be it. Cleaning. This is all it’ll ever be. You still said I do.

AGNES
Yes I did.

BOB
And you’ve been waiting this whole time, Agnes. I know you have. Coping along until the moment where maybe all this becomes all that much…cleaner. But if you knew then. That it would be this life.

AGNES
What else would it have been?

BOB
All I know is cleaning.

AGNES
Could have been windows.

BOB
I don’t do heights.
Clothes.

You’ve seen me do laundry.

Air ducts.

Gutters.

Dishes.

Cars.

Hotels.

Pipes.

Cells.

Teeth.

Still like carpets. Least we’re not irrelevant.

Yet.

No machine to do it all. Yet.

But you know, I’m starting to see things. After forty years it takes the last two days to really see things. Like when I clean the I.D.S. downtown, how the tall and tan workers at their handsome desks just lift their pressed pants and polished shoes when I swing by. Like I could be gone tomorrow and it wouldn’t matter.
AGNES
You sound like you could use some oatmeal.

BOB
Would you miss me.

Beat.

AGNES
You still haven’t gone to the doctor’s.

BOB
Agnes: would you miss me.

Beat.

AGNES
I’ve loved two men in my life. Nathan. And your Dad.

BOB
Here I thought I’d make the list.

AGNES
Business, family, fights, success, aches, pains, the slow days, the fast years. All forty of them. All with you. There isn’t a word for it. It’s more than love. But I do miss your Dad. I used to play the lottery with him. You didn’t know that. Every year on my birthday while you and Tom were off cleaning your Dad would grab his lucky nickel and I’d put the calls on hold. And we’d walk the winter streets, staring for signs on the way to Povlitzki’s. We’d see ice patterns on crystal tress. How the snow curves off that branch, like a three! And that cloud, a nine! How old are you today, Agnes? Thirty. Good. We’d go see Povlitzki himself. Card three-nine-thirty, please. And your Dad and I would scratch my birthday card. The first number, we got it. The second! The third! We could pay off bills, repair the van, get my hair done. But then we’d scratch the fourth number. Every year the numbers appear before our eyes before getting scratched away, a promise, an escape. Next year we’ll win, your Dad said. He never made it to my next birthday. But you always did.
BOB
The last two days has really made me see things, Agnes. Things I never saw before. And I’m starting to see what Tom and I were always fighting about. All those years, rug to rug, steamer to steamer, we were fighting about what I had and he didn’t. I had you. No matter how bad things got I had you.

AGNES
Well…[sliding the bowl and spoon towards BOB]…you can cope with me over a nice stale bowl of oatmeal.

NATHAN enters.

NATHAN
Hey!

AGNES
Hello, Nathan.

You told her?

BOB
We’re coping.

NATHAN
So she doesn’t know?

AGNES
Forty years later I know all there is to know. I know we won then lost then won then lost the lottery.

NATHAN
But Gunther and Norman are on their way!

BOB
Listen kid, you know what we got here? We got ourselves a little peace and quiet. When have the three of us ever had that? Just sitting, you know? Taking time to see all the things we’ve been too angry to really see.

NATHAN
On the radio they’ve got Povlitzki’s torn to shreds, the National Guard called out, total panic in the streets.
AGNES

All because I sneezed.

NATHAN

The state lottery just announced they’re planning special hours tomorrow. For the winning card to show up.

AGNES

Won’t they be disappointed.

NATHAN

You really didn’t tell her.

BOB

I’m trying to tell about the things I’m seeing. You wanna run a business you gotta learn when to share information!

NATHAN

Apparently Norman told his ex-boss we have a winning lottery card that got sneezed on, spilled over, then torn apart. Turns out Norman’s ex-boss has a lead on some special recovery tool for documents shredded by vacuums. Foolproof. Norman and Gunther are heading there now, with the sheriffs giving an escort. Get that recovery tool, bring it here, and put the lottery card pieces back together!

AGNES

The torn card pieces.

NATHAN

The ones in the platter, yes. Once back together we pour the Lusty Steamer on it. Then Uncle Bob scratches off again. Bam! Then we win the lottery!

AGNES

…really…

BOB

Really.

AGNES

Stop eating the oatmeal.
BOB
But that’s what I’m trying to tell you, I’m seeing the future! Not the lottery winning tomorrow morning future, I mean the real future. Never been able to see that before. Know what I saw? I saw the present. And it made me see that what we got here, now, how we didn’t need the card to get there, then. No really, the three of us, the Shermans, with our [NATHAN] brains, our [AGNES] heart, and our…[BOB]…what the doctor’s gonna grab. We got that now. We’re like a cause. And I’ll tell ya’, causes never die!

NATHAN
Preach, Uncle Bob!

BOB
Oh, I saw the future!

NATHAN
Tell it, Uncle Bob!

AGNES
Please stop eating the oatmeal.

BOB
I saw one year from today! And it was like the card never got recovered, like it was really torn and gone forever!

NATHAN
No.

AGNES
Yes.

BOB
Yes! And I saw this place still here. I saw over there a long and beautiful workstation, like a monument over the place where Dad and Tom are at rest. And I saw little Nathan in a new science uniform holding shiny silver tubes. And next to him I saw Gunther, his knuckles clean and smooth, the two of you arguing, but good arguing, about Gunther tracking down, knocking down the big sale! And doesn’t Nathan want his new fiancée to have it all?

NATHAN
This oatmeal’s pretty good.
BOB

And I saw you burst through the door, Agnes, saying how you need to look sharp for TV. How politics is for rich folk when they get bored with all their money!

AGNES

Oh, God.

BOB

And then I saw Norman. Visiting from Florida, back to see if everything’s he’s heard about our place is truly true. Mother’s recovering, Norman says, and wouldn’t you know his new document recovery shop is taking off? Norman hardly has a minute to sleep with all the orders coming in! And to mark the occasion Norman gives me our old lottery card, saying Happy birthday, old friend!

AGNES

The lottery card.

BOB

I saw how Norman pieced it back together, as a memento, the bits in that platter he accidentally tore apart.

NATHAN

The bits in that platter we’re about to win with!

BOB

But are we though?

AGNES

No.

BOB

Exactly. I mean, look at us. We never got tore apart, did we? We’re still here. Our place for family. Even with all the years of losing, all our dirt under the hood, we’re still here. Winning the lottery makes it sweeter of course, a lot sweeter, but I see the important thing. I see us like we already won, like we’ve always had what it takes to win. That we can win at anything. Without having to scratch off to get there. I never said it before, but…I love you guys. But I have to tell you…

BOB reaches to take the cover off the platter tray.

The light fixture begins to flicker.
BOB

I love this, too!

_They all reach for the platter tray cover as…_

_Blackout._

ALL

_AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH._

_END OF PLAY._