

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Copyright Protection. This play (the “Play”) is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, and the Berne Convention.

Reservation of Rights. All rights to this Play are strictly reserved, including, without limitation, professional and amateur stage performance rights; motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video, and sound recording rights; rights to all other forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction now known or yet to be invented, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, photocopying, and information storage and retrieval systems; and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

Performance Licensing and Royalty Payments. Amateur and stock performance rights to this Play are controlled exclusively by Playscripts, Inc. (“Playscripts”). No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this Play without obtaining advance written permission from Playscripts. Required royalty fees for performing this Play are specified online at the Playscripts website (www.playscripts.com). Such royalty fees may be subject to change without notice. Although this book may have been obtained for a particular licensed performance, such performance rights, if any, are not transferable. Required royalties must be paid every time the Play is performed before any audience, whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. All licensing requests and inquiries concerning amateur and stock performance rights should be addressed to Playscripts (see contact information on opposite page).

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Playscripts, as well; such inquiries will be communicated to the author and the author's agent, as applicable.

Restriction of Alterations. There shall be no deletions, alterations, or changes of any kind made to the Play, including the changing of character gender, the cutting of dialogue, or the alteration of objectionable language, unless directly authorized by Playscripts. The title of the Play shall not be altered.

Author Credit. Any individual or group receiving permission to produce this Play is required to give credit to the author as the sole and exclusive author of the Play. This obligation applies to the title page of every program distributed in connection with performances of the Play, and in any instance that the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing, or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and of a font size at least 50% as large as the largest letter used in the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the author. The name of the author may not be abbreviated or otherwise altered from the form in which it appears in this Play.

Publisher Attribution. All programs, advertisements, and other printed material distributed or published in connection with the amateur or stock production of the Play shall include the following notice:

**Produced by special arrangement with Playscripts, Inc.
(www.playscripts.com)**

Prohibition of Unauthorized Copying. Any unauthorized copying of this book or excerpts from this book is strictly forbidden by law. Except as otherwise permitted by applicable law, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including, without limitation, photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Playscripts.

Statement of Non-affiliation. This Play may include references to brand names and trademarks owned by third parties, and may include references to public figures. Playscripts is not necessarily affiliated with these public figures, or with the owners of such trademarks and brand names. Such references are included solely for parody, political comment, or other permitted purposes.

Permissions for Sound Recordings and Musical Works. This Play may contain directions calling for the performance of a portion, or all, of a musical work, or performance of a sound recording of a musical work. Playscripts has not obtained permissions to perform such works. The producer of this Play is advised to obtain such permissions, if required in the context of the production. The producer is directed to the websites of the U.S. Copyright Office (www.copyright.gov), ASCAP (www.ascap.com), BMI (www.bmi.com), and NMPA (www.nmpa.org) for further information on the need to obtain permissions, and on procedures for obtaining such permissions.

The Rules in Brief

- 1) Do NOT perform this Play without obtaining prior permission from Playscripts, and without paying the required royalty.
- 2) Do NOT photocopy, scan, or otherwise duplicate any part of this book.
- 3) Do NOT alter the text of the Play, change a character's gender, delete any dialogue, or alter any objectionable language, unless explicitly authorized by Playscripts.
- 4) DO provide the required credit to the author and the required attribution to Playscripts in all programs and promotional literature associated with any performance of this Play.

For more details on these and other rules, see the opposite page.

Copyright Basics

This Play is protected by United States and international copyright law. These laws ensure that playwrights are rewarded for creating new and vital dramatic work, and protect them against theft and abuse of their work.

A play is a piece of property, fully owned by the playwright, just like a house or car. You must obtain permission to use this property, and must pay a royalty fee for the privilege—*whether or not you charge an admission fee*. Playscripts collects these required payments on behalf of the author.

Anyone who violates an author's copyright is liable as a copyright infringer under United States and international law. Playscripts and the author are entitled to institute legal action for any such infringement, which can subject the infringer to actual damages, statutory damages, and attorneys' fees. A court may impose statutory damages of up to \$150,000 for willful copyright infringements. U.S. copyright law also provides for possible criminal sanctions. Visit the website of the U.S. Copyright Office (www.copyright.gov) for more information.

THE BOTTOM LINE: If you break copyright law, you are robbing a playwright and opening yourself to expensive legal action. Follow the rules, and when in doubt, ask us.

Playscripts, Inc.
325 W. 38th Street, Suite 305
New York, NY 10018

Phone: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)
Email: info@playscripts.com
Web: www.playscripts.com

Cast of Characters

THE NARRATOR:

A black man in his mid-40s. It is winter and he is dressed in dark, worn clothing—an overcoat, boots but no gloves. The clothing is relatively clean but noticeably worn. He hasn't shaved for several days. He has a brown bag containing a bottle of alcohol in each pocket of his coat, hidden from the audience.

The Narrator plays all the roles and changes his voice for different characters. He is a natural-born storyteller.

Scene

An urban park in Philadelphia. A park bench is on the stage, just left of center. Behind it is a chain link fence, lighted sharply by a single street lamp. The rest of the stage is dark.

Time

The present.

Author's Notes

Frank X created the roll of The Narrator and I'm grateful for his work and dedication to the play.

Louis' Lottery was first produced by The Independent Eye in Philadelphia.

LOUIS' LOTTERY

by Joseph Sorrentino

(At rise: THE NARRATOR enters, sits on the bench. A soft light slowly comes up on his face and he begins speaking with a hint of sadness in his voice.)

NARRATOR.

(Calm, tired. Not really drunk:)

Yeah Louis man, he sure got into some strange shit all right. Like this one time...New Year's Day it was...he decides he's gonna kill hisself. Holidays got him kinda depressed or some shit... So he lays out in the middle of Broad Street...just lays out there waitin' to get run over... Only he don't know the street been closed on 'count of the parade and it's so early, no one's around to tell him...he falls asleep...right there in the street. Man, he woke up hearin' all that music...figures he must have died and went to heaven...gets his ass off the pavement so fast... I ain't never seen him move like that...Just a-praisin' the Lord, cryin' and carryin' on 'bout Kingdom Come. Then the goddamn fool...he's so happy he's just gotta kiss someone and with all these angels rollin' past him, he reaches out and grabs one. Only it ain't no angel. It's a Mummer...a big Mummer. Sommabitch went upside Louis' head so hard, his ears was ringin' for a week... And that ain't nothin' man...there's that time he decided he just had to visit Wilmington...you know, Delaware. I don't know why, but he was always talkin' about goin'. It wouldn't be my first choice of a place to go... I'd be lookin' for something a little more...exotic...say, Atlantic City. But not Louis. No, he wants to visit Wilmington and he just gotta go by train...I don't know...ain't never been on one or somethin'. Anyway, it don't seem like it would be all that difficult, right? Just go to the station, catch the train, get off in Wilmington...seems pretty easy. But ain't nothin' easy for Louis. He starts off all right...gets on the train...gets himself a cup of coffee...sits down...then he gets into a conversation. Gets so caught up in it he forgets all about Wilmington. Just zooms right by it. So you figure, me and you, we miss a stop, we get off the next one, come back and get it right on the sec-

ond try. But we're talkin' 'bout Louis here and like I said, ain't nothin' easy when he's involved. He does get it part right. He gets off at the next stop, catches the next train back...gets himself a cup of coffee...sits down...gets into *another* conversation (*Nods.*) misses Wilmington on the way back, too...gets off in Philly ravin' about the pleasures of train travel and the sights in Wilmington and never leaves the city again.

(Chuckles, then sad, almost wistful:)

And then...then there was this time his number was picked in the lottery.

Man, I found him in the middle of the street and he was stinkin' with alcohol.

(Gives a small laugh.)

Now there was a couple times he jumped into the street tryin' to kill his damn self...but he was lucky in them days...like someone was lookin' out for him or somethin'. He never even came close to bein' hit. But all them people yellin' at him...he never could unnerstand why they was so upset. I mean, after all he was only tryin' to kill his damn self. Most of them people in the cars...you'd think they'd be happier if he did kill hissself. Anyway, all that yellin' seriously discouraged him from jumpin' in the street for a long time... But this one time...this one time was different. It wasn't like he was tryin' to kill hissself. He was out there in the street and it was like he was tryin'...tryin' to dance or somethin'. But it was like his legs couldn't decide which way they wanted to go so he was just kinda standin' in one place, his legs goin' this way and that, him occasionally stoppin' to bow to cars as they sped by. I watched him for a minute or two... I gotta admit he looked pretty funny...but then I figured I better get him out the street 'fore he gets hurt. I called out to him

(Stands.)

Louis! Hey Louis! Get your crazy ass out the street!

(Pauses and looks into the distance before sitting down again and shrugging.)

But he was always kinda stubborn. Once he made his mind up to do somethin', ain't no way in hell you're gonna talk him outta it.

But I figure I gotta get him outta the street 'fore he gets hisself killed for real this time. I wasn't drunk...not yet anyways...so I wait 'til the light turns red 'fore joinin' him in the street and...

(Stands again.)

I tell him that standin' in the middle of the street in your condition is damn stupid and you should come with me. Besides, *(Chiding him)* it's startin' to rain, damn cold and if you wanna get sick fine but I ain't takin' care of you if you do.

(Pulls a bag with a bottle of alcohol from his coat pocket and prepares to drink.)

Oh...you don't mind if I...you know...got a little cough. *(Drinks.)* Anyway, he was in a pretty good mood that mornin' which was kinda unusual. So I says, "What the hell got into you? I thought you wasn't drinkin' no more."

(THE NARRATOR changes his speech when speaking for Louis. Louis is a nervous person. He chews at his upper lip and grinds his teeth as he speaks. He stutters slightly, especially when he's excited or upset but he doesn't speak slowly.)

And Louis says, "I ain't drinkin'. I'm celebratin'."

"Celebratin'? What you celebratin'?"

"My n-number come up in the l-lottery."

(Pause as he lets this thought sink in.)

Now it's hard to unnerstand Louis 'cause he mumbles, stutters and generally don't make much sense when he talks. And with them cars zoomin' by, I ain't sure I heard him right. So I asks him again what he said.

"My n-number come up in the l-lottery. My n-number come up. Whatsa matter, you deaf?"

For a minute I don't know what to do. Louis is standin' there swayin' from one side to the other, people honkin' at him and cursin'. And Louis, ya know, he's just givin' it right back to 'em. Finally I grab a hold of him. "Hey, you hit the lottery?"

"My n-number come up! It c-come up!"

“Ah, you’re outta your mind, ”I tells him. “Let’s get outta the street ‘fore you get us both killed. You’re crazy.”

“I kn-know,” he says. “But my n-number come up. Go ‘head and ch-check it. Three-two-five-four. Go ‘head and check it.”

I tells him I’m *gonna* check the damn number but we gotta get out the street first.

(He reaches out as if to grab Louis.)

I try to grab him but he’s a slippery little sucker and I can’t get a hold of him. It ain’t until a cop pulls up next to us and threatens to take us both down to the roundhouse “Lottery or no lottery” that Louis decides he’s finally done dancin’ for the day.

(Takes a drink.)

So I gets him to the sidewalk and I start shakin’ him tryin’ to knock the liquor outta him. It ain’t like I’m a big guy who goes ‘round shakin’ people alla time...I ain’t. It’s just that Louis, well he’s a real skinny guy ‘cause he don’t hardly ever eat. Even since he stopped drinkin’ he didn’t put on no weight...Anyway, there I am, shakin’ him and tryin’ to get him to make some kinda sense. “What you mean you won the lottery?” I says.

And Louis man, he’s like tryin’ to play it real cool. “What’s your problem? I said my n-number come up...in the lottery. I play the same d-damn n-number every day. Every day the same damn n-number. It come up. Only c-costs a buck. Every day I got one, I play.”

“Shit Louis. You tellin’ me you won the lottery? The goddamn lottery?” He just nods and starts to dancin’ again but I don’t let him. “Wait a second. What’s that number?”

“Three-two-five-four,” he says. *(Explaining:)* That’s his birthday.

“Lemme see that ticket.” He digs in his pocket and pulls it out.

(Looks at his hand.)

That’s the number all right. But I wanna make sure it’s the *right* number so I grab Louis and drag him to that Wawa to check it out.

They list the winnin' numbers in the window. And I'll be damned if...

(Pointing, slow.)

...three-two-five-four ain't a-hangin' up there, just a-hoverin' like some angel in that damn window. I go in to get him a cup of black coffee to sober his ass up but I practically gotta tie him down to get him to drink it.

"Come on Louis," I says. "Drink the damn coffee. We gotta get sober you up. Lady in that store says this thing's worth a million bucks. A million damn bucks. Know what that means?" He looks up like he's gonna say somethin' but I don't let him. I just push his head back into the cup. "Yeah, yeah, yeah...now just shut up and finish the damn coffee."

(Reminiscing:)

Now I've known Louis a long time, somethin' like five years in fact. I used to bump into him in soup kitchens and shelters once in a while but Louis...well, he's one of them people you notice but don't really see.

(Sits and leans back and crosses his legs, preparing to give some background on Louis.)

He'd be standin near me or sittin' alone at a table in some soup kitchen readin' or mumblin' to hisself, his food gettin' cold. Most times it seemed like he never did eat nothin'. When the place was closin', he'd just get up and walk out without sayin' a word...they'd toss his food. They toss a lotta food in them places and it's a shame but ya know, seems like some of them places, all they serve is...

(Pause, Spit out:)

...casseroles...Now...now I know I shouldn't complain...they doin' the best they can...and it ain't like I'm choicely but I have had casseroles three times a day for longer than I care to remember...man gets tired of casseroles after awhile. And I have seen the strangest combinations... somethin' that might be chicken mixed with somethin' that might be pork or it might be fish...maybe it's really beef...you never can tell...a few of them tiny hot dogs...one or two

peas ...a couple of carrots...You eat in soup kitchens long enough, you find out what America ain't eatin'.

(Drinks.)

But about Louis...Tell ya the truth, I didn't bother with him none at first...maybe nod "hello" sometimes, that's about it. It wasn't 'til we was in this shelter up at Broad and...Broad and...damn, I forget which one it was. Oh, it was...no, no, no...that ain't the one. I been in so many, I can't tell one from the other no more. Anyway, first time I talked with him was in this here shelter. He come up to me...I guess he musta recognized me or somethin'...He comes up real nervous like and says "I'm go-gonna get robbed." I didn't say nothin', I figure a man's gonna get robbed, that's his business. No sense me gettin' my ass kicked for somethin' that ain't none of my concern, right? But Louis, he kept on 'bout it. "I'm gonna get robbed" he says. "I'm gonna get robbed 'cause I got money." And he takes out this bunch of bills...It was check day and he had some little bit of cash. Now I know for a fact if he goes wavin' that money around he will most certainly get robbed. It don't take no genius to figure that out.

(Slow, as if explaining to a child.)

"Put that away," I tells him. "And don't show no one else. If ya don't show no one, no one's gonna know ya got it. And if they don't know ya got it, they ain't gonna rob ya. Dig?" And Louis man, it's like he never thought about it that way. So he's all happy and everythin', thankin' me and I'm like "Yeah, yeah, now shut up and get your ass in bed so's I can get some sleep." But damn if a couple of punks don't try and roll him.

They come in and it's like...

(Whispering and pointing:)

"Hey, ain't that Louie over there?"

"Yeah, yeah. That's him."

"And ain't it check day today?"

So they walk over and start grabbin'at Louis and he's tryin' to smack them away...and I'm watchin'...like I says, I ain't about to

get my ass kicked over somethin' that ain't none of my business. I ain't no hero, that's for damn sure...but Louis, he was all alone...there was two of them... No one else there was gonna help him...and damn it, I just hate it when some punks hassle someone ain't able to defend themselves. So I sneaks up behind one of 'em and *(Stands, acts out tapping someone on the shoulder and then punching:)* Bam!

(NARRATOR acts out this fight which is more slapstick than anything dangerous.)

I whack him good upside the head and down he goes. And Louis man... surprised the shit outta me...this other dude turns on me, right? Big hairy guy. And I'm like, "Uh oh. Now what do I do now?" And I start seein' parts of my life start flashin' in front of my eyes and I'm like "Wo, this is it, man." And Louis just jumps on him, I mean right on the dude's back and he's whackin' at his head with a book. Just beatin' on him. Dude starts yellin' and turnin' in circles, tryin' to get Louis offa him and Louis is still wailin' on him with the book and he's yellin' so I figure, what the hell and I jump in and start yellin' and poppin' this dude. All of a sudden there's like security guards everywhere and they're yellin' and grabbin' at us and we're all rollin' 'round on the floor, grabbin' and punchin' and yellin'.

(Laughs and takes a drink.)

Sons a bitches tossed me and Louis out. Cold as shit it was that night too but they didn't care. Them other two dudes got to stay in...said *we* jumped *them*. OK. But I didn't care. It was worth it...even if I didn't get no sleep that night.

(Sits.)

After that, I started seein' Louis more...seem like every time I turn 'round, there he is. He started talkin' like we was old friends and I felt kinda sorry for him. He needed someone to look after him, know what I mean? Tell the truth, I kinda liked havin' him 'round. At first I thought he was retarded or somethin' 'cause of his stut-terin' and all. But he ain't. He knows lotts a stuff 'cause he's always goin' to the liberry. Most guys just go there to hang when it's cold but Louis...Louis actually reads when he goes there. Only problem

with him readin' is that if somethin' really grabs his attention, he just got to talk to you 'bout it whether you're innerested or not. Now most times it's innerestin' stuff and a man can learn a lot just by lissenin'. But sometimes he can go on for hours 'bout a book whether you're innerested or not. Ever once in awhile somethin' really gets a hold of him and there ain't no way of shuttin' him up. Like when he gets one of them pamphlets 'bout bein' saved. Man, that really sets him off. Turns him into some kinda evangelist or somethin'. "Praise Jesus...Praise his holy name.

(Apologetic:)

Now don't get me wrong...it ain't like that's necessarily bad. But me, I ain't all that innerested in bein' saved, all right? I'm just basically innerested in survivin', know what I mean?

(Drinks.)

So anyway, me and Louis, we started hangin' together. Got kinda tight. Decided we had enough of the streets and made up our minds to go detox. Then we was put in this boardin' house up on 56th street. Place ain't bad... Lady runnin' it ain't half bad either. She ain't like the rest that just take your monthly check and don't give ya nothin'. Oh sure, she takes the check...

(Speaks like landlady, somewhat motherly and overbearing:)

"...law says I can. That pays for your rent and for your food. You get your breakfast and dinner here. Breakfast's at 8, dinner's at 6 and I don't do no reheatin' or servin' after that. Kitchen's off limits to everyone 'cept me. Meals is simple 'cause most of my men's got sensitive stomachs...ruined by the drinkin'. You don't like the food, eat somewheres else, it don't bother me in the least. You're out after breakfast and no comin' back in 'till dinner. That is, unless of course you're sick. If you're sick you stay in long as you need. *(Sternly:)* But you'd better not try fakin' it. *(Gentler:)* Now, any money left from your check...and believe me, it ain't gonna be much...is yours. Buy you some cigarettes or whatever but smokin' is allowed on the front porch only. Nowheres else in my house...And another thing..."

Yeah, yeah, yeah...blah, blah, blah.

(Drinks.)

She go on like that for hours if you let her. But she all right. See, you ain't supposed to be drinkin' if you wanna stay there but Mrs. White, she know what time it is. Ain't no way she gonna let no bottles in her house and if you been drinkin', you're supposed to stay out 'til you sober up. But what she don't know is...

(Leans forward as if to tell a secret, pointing:)

...that lock on the second floor window? It's broke. All's ya gotta do is climb up the drainpipe and you're in. It's easy once you get up that drainpipe but climbin' up is a helluva challenge 'specially when you're drunk. If you're too drunk, then you better find yourself some place warm to keep your ass 'til mornin'. No sense even thinkin' 'bout sneakin' in 'cause she will have the cops on you so fast you'll swear she called to tell 'em she was givin' out free coffee and donuts.

(Speaks as if condemning people who might not agree with him.)

Now there's some people be bitchin' and moanin' 'bout all her rules...say she got too many. I admit it, I did too at first but then I got to thinkin' 'bout all the places I slept. Like that goddamn subway with the cops bangin' on your bench ever' five minutes tellin' you to move on. Or that goddamn park. I don't care how drunk you are, you sleep there you be wakin' up one, two o'clock inna mornin' a-shakin' and a-shiverin'. Shit, I'll take her rules hands down any day. And man, let me tell you, she was on me and Louis like a fly on shit from day one 'bout the drinkin'...always on us 'bout goin' to meetin's, goin' to AA...but when I first come in, I didn't want no AA, no NA... I didn't want no triple A...I didn't care nothin' 'bout no A, no B, or no C. I didn't want no letter of any kind. But damn, we was goin' on 30 days sober when that number was picked. Somethin' she said musta worked.

(Takes a drink, pensive.)

Either that or we got tired of climbin' up that goddamn drainpipe.

Ya know, it's funny when you ain't drinkin', ya start thinkin' 'bout things again...start plannin'...me and Louis...he'd to come to my

room most ever' night and he'd start in 'bout this house we was gonna get...

(Sits.)

...how we was gonna get one of them handyman specials and fix it up. It wasn't gonna be nothin' big, nothin' fancy...just a small place woulda been OK. I done some construction before and it ain't nothin' to fixin' up a place. It's a lotta hard work but it don't take much brains. Ya might say it's somethin' I'm particularly well suited for. We're gonna get us get some furniture...look in them second-hand stores. You can find some good deals in them, if ya know where to look...find stuff that ain't too beat up. Louis, now I know he ain't gonna be much help on the construction end of things but he was always tearin' pages outta magazines gettin' decoratin' ideas for the place. I tells him I didn't care what the place looked like, long's it's neat, clean and has enough room for a dog. Far's I'm concerned, a house just ain't a home unless you got a dog. I always had a dog.

(Starts getting more excited:)

Had one when I was married...kids loved him. It was one of them big black German Shepherds... I'm gonna get me another one just like him...feed him good, brush him every day. His fur will shine. And he'll be smart, real smart. I'll run him in the park 'cross the street from the house but when I whistle

(He whistles.)

'Here boy!' he'll come racin' right back.

(Smiles sadly.)

Yeah, me and Louis, we used to dream a lot I guess...Hell, it don't cost nothin' to dream.

(Pauses and takes a drink. He remembers the story he was telling:)

But about that lottery...

(He sits.)

There we was outside that Wawa.

"Louis," I says, "where'd you put that ticket?"

(Points to shirt pocket:)

“Here.”

“Louis, you got to keep quiet 'bout this. I know people and you tell them 'bout this, you're gonna get robbed, hear? And then we ain't gonna get nothin' outta it.”

Louis, he just sorta smiles and says, “Gonna get a house.”

“Yeah,” I tells him. “We're gonna get that house. All's you gotta do is keep your mouth shut and we'll get ourselves that house.”

(To audience:)

But it don't gotta be no small place now, do it? I mean, now that we got that money...ain't no need for it to be small...before...sure ya dream about small things when ya got nothin'...small things look big when ya got nothin'. But first I gotta figure out how to cash that thing in without attractin' too much attention. I'm tryin' to figure out what to do next when Louis starts shoutin', “Hey Jim! Hey Jim! C-come sh-shake my hand. My n-number just come up in the l-lottery!”

(He leans forward and speaks softly again, disgusted:)

Jim owns this bar where me and Louis used to spend some of our nights when we was drinkin'. It's a dark, dirty, run-down little shit-hole of a place. I'd call it a dive 'cept I don't want to pay it no compliments. You gotta watch when you go in there 'cause Jim overcharges, 'specially when you're drunk. But what the hell, it beats the shit outta drinkin' on the streets and there ain't a whole lotta places that'd let the likes of us in... Now I ain't sure, but I always thought that Jim watered down his drinks. I asked him 'bout this once and he said it was 'cause I was used to drinkin' that cheap wine. But I swear I could sit at his bar all day long and spend all my damn money and never get the slightest satisfaction outta his drinks. I kept on him 'bout this once

(Speaks teasingly:)

'C'mon Jim, tell me the truth. You water them drinks down, don't ya? Huh Jim, don't ya? You can tell me, I won't tell no one... He an-

swered by grabbin' the back of my neck and tossin' me into the street. I ain't asked him 'bout it since, but I been meanin' to.

(Leans back and drinks.)

So here's Jim now, makin' his way 'cross the street fast as his fat little legs can carry him. As usual, he's chompin' on a big, cheap cigar, wipin' spit from the side of his mouth with that dirty handkerchief of his. He jumps up next to me and Louis, his beady little eyes sizin' up the situation.

(When speaking Jim's part, the NARRATOR uses an overbearing baritone, lips pursed, rubbing stomach that sticks out.)

What you mean, you hit the lottery?" he says to Louis. Louis just look up at him with this blank stare and 'fore I can say anythin', he says, "My n-number come up."

Jim turns to me. "What the hell he talkin' 'bout? He for real or what?"

"Ah Jim, you know Louis, he always sayin' stuff" I says.

(Takes a few steps.)

Jim's on his way but Louis just gotta try one more time.

"Jim...my number..."

(Stops, rubs chin.)

"What's that number?" Louis tells him and Jim hustles his fat ass to the window that's got the number in it. Man...when he turns around you can tell he's already got that pea brain of his workin' at fever pitch on some kinda scheme. Son of a bitch got a grin stretchin' from ear to ear and he's just beamin' right at Louis. It musta been near freezin' but Jim's got these beads of sweat poppin' outta his forehead. He's just heatin' up with ideas. So he slides up next to Louis and throws one of his paws on Louis' shoulder, like all of a sudden they're best friends.

"Hey Louie, you a lucky man, you know that?" Louis he's happy as shit to have someone puttin' their arm 'round him, even if it is only Jim. "Yessir, born under a lucky star, my man. What say I open my

place up early—just for you—and you come in and celebrate your good fortune?”

Louis, well he's got his bags packed and he's already there but I see the plan and says to Jim, “No way man. I know what you got goin' on in that gutter you call a mind. You gonna get him drunk and steal his ticket. Well, it ain't gonna work. Not while I'm around. Louis ain't goin' and I ain't leavin' him.”

Jim turns on me, suckin' hard on that cigar of his. “What the hell you talkin' 'bout? You stay outta this, hear? I just wanna help my friend Louie here celebrate his good fortune. Ain't that right, Louie?” Louis is sittin' there starin' into his coffee cup, prob'ly wonderin' where in the hell all his coffee went to. Truth is, most of it went down his coat. And Jim's just nudgin' away at him, “C'mon Louie, how 'bout it? Just one drink...to celebrate.”

Like I said, ol' Louis is all ready there but I try and stop him one last time. “Hey,” I says, “you ain't supposed to be drinkin' no more.”

“Shit,” Jim says, “looks like he done been drinkin' to me. Besides, this ain't drinkin'. This is celebratin'. C'mon man, lighten up. We just gonna have one drink...to celebrate. How often a man hits the lottery anyway?”

(Making excuses:)

I have to admit, he had a point there. And one drink...just to celebrate...

(Takes out bottle but doesn't drink.)

So we grab Louis by his arms and make our way to Big Jim's Boogaloo Lounge. The coffee has had no affect whatsoever on Louis who's singin' and yellin' and generally carryin' on. When we finally get there, Louis got to lean on me to keep from fallin' down while Jim opens the door.

(There is a lighting change and the stage is bathed in a red light. The Narrator speaks slowly and sadly:)

We go inside and daylight is barely filterin' in through them dirty little curtains Jim's got over the windows. The place is even more run down and depressin' in the daytime and it is smellin' violently

of ol' beer and pee. Me and Louis pull up a couple of chairs while Jim squeezes hisself behind the bar.

Jim grabs some liquor bottles and shakes them at Louis. "So what's it gonna be Louie?"

Louis looks up and I can see he ain't focusin' too good.

(Angry:)

"Hey, why don't you put up some coffee for him? He got to sober up some before he does any more celebratin'." Louis just kinda smiles at me. "There," I tells Jim, "that's what he wants. Put up some coffee for him."

Jim ain't pleased at all at this suggestion. "How the hell you know what he want and don't want alla sudden? What, you his babysitter or somethin'? How 'bout it Louie? Wanna shot? How 'bout a cordial?" He knows Louis likes that sweet stuff. Louis looks at me and he musta seen I wasn't lookin' too thrilled 'cause he says "C-Coffee."

This doesn't do nothin' to cheer Jim but he do get the coffee goin'. "That's the problem today, everybody stickin' their nose in where they don't belong. Nobody mindin' their *own* damn business."

I figure Louis is my business and I ain't never been one to keep my mouth shut when someone's bein' taken advantage of, 'specially if it's a friend. That's just the way it *is* with me.

(Drinks.)

Anyway, ol' Jimbo puts the coffee up and we're all waitin' on it when the door opens and these three guys walk in. One of 'em makes this grand entrance, like, "Hey Jim, what you doin' open so early? You musta knowed we needed a drink."

(Act as if removing hat, toss it.)

Now normally Jim would be thrilled to have any kind of business but that ain't so this particular time and he's on 'em like a shot.

(Gingerly ushering them out.)

"Listen," he says, "this here's a private party. Why don't you just go back outside and come back later durin' regular business hours?"

(Stops as if staring at Jim.)

“Now Jim, that ain’t no way to treat your reg’lar customers.”

(As if looking at the NARRATOR and LOUIS, suspicious:)

“What they doin’ in here? You throwin’ a private party for these two bums?”

Before I can say anythin’, Louis is off his chair and marchin’ right up to the dude. “Name’s Louis. My n-number was picked in the l-lottery. In the l-lottery today.”

Jim’s rollin’ his eyes to the ceilin’ and I’m thinkin’, “Lord we got trouble now.” And this guy, well Louis really got his attention now, man.

(Degrading Louis:)

“Oh yeah, man? And how much you hit for?”

“A million bucks.”

This guy’s eyes get big as saucers and his brain—which he ain’t used in years—has actually kicked in. All them rusty gears just a-startin’ to work...all that squeakin’ and squealin’... smoke pourin’ out his ears. “No shit...No shit...well you a lucky man, baby. Shake my hand.” Dude calls his friends over and they’re all shakin’ hands and slappin’ Louis on the back and doin’ their best to make him feel like he’s a reg’lar celebrity and they his best friends; Louis just lovin’ it. But Jim ain’t.

“All right,” Jim says. “let the man have his coffee for Chrissake. Give him some breathin’ room.” And Jim sets the cup down but all Louis can do is stare at it a minute like he’s tryin’ to figure out what it is.

“Hey Louie,” says one of ’em. “What you gonna do with all that money?”

“Buy a house. Gonna buy a house.”

And the guy with the big mouth gotta pipe up.

(Sarcastically:)

“Now that’s a good idea, gonna b-buy a house. What else?”

“A—And a dog.”

“A dog. Now lemme get this straight. You got all this money and all you gonna get yourself a house and a dog. Is that right? And you be thinkin’ it’s gonna be some million dollar house and some goddamn pedigree dog, too I bet.

(Angry:)

Man, you ain’t gonna get nothin’ but some cheap little row house and some damn mutt you ain’t never gonna train right. It’s gonna shit all over your goddamn house ’til it stinks so bad you can’t live there no more and you wind up back on the street which is where you belong anyways. Man, you ain’t gettin’ no house, no way, no how...

(Looking up:)

Lord, why you always pickin’ fools to win? Why can’t you give it to someone who knows what to do with that kinda money? Someone... Like me?” I started to say somethin’ when Jim actually pours me a drink.

“I ain’t drinkin’” I tells him.

“Man, this ain’t drinkin’. This is celebratin’”

And I look at these guys drinkin’ it up with Louis and slappin’ each other on the back...Louis just diggin’ it...”Yeah,” I say and I grab that glass from Jim. “This is celebratin’”

(He takes a long drink, emptying the bottle. He throws it into the garbage can. Something in it catches his eye. He hesitates, looks up at audience, uncertain, then quickly sifts through the trash. It’s nothing. Annoyed and embarrassed, he takes out his second bottle of alcohol and drinks.)

All day, people be stoppin’ by at the bar. I stop tryin’ to shut Louis up ’bout his lottery. The harder I try, the louder he shouts it. And all his new friends are just itchin’ to tell the newcomers ’bout his luck. Seem like he got plenty of friends now. But I don’t let him alone, not for a minute ’cause I know they’ll try and steal that ticket first chance they get. I even go to the bathroom with him whenever he got to go and he got to go pretty often. I’m tryin’ not to drink too

much 'cause I got to watch out for Louis but Jim seems awful anxious to keep my glass full. And you know what? That day was the first day I don't think Jim watered down his drinks.

Sometime in the afternoon, the guy with the big mouth gets the bright idea to call the TV station. Me and Jim argue against it...probably for different reasons...but we can't talk the guy outta it.

"Think 'bout it," he says, "Whatta story. Some ol' bum livin' on welfare hits the lottery. TV gonna eat that shit right up. Maybe he can even get a book or somethin' outta it." He walks up to Louis who got his head on the bar and says, "What ya say, Louie? Wanna be famous?"

Louis is barely able to lift his head off the bar. "Yeah I w-wanna be famous. D-Don't you?"

"Hell yes. You damn right ol' Mike wants to be famous."

"I don't think it's a good idea." I tells him

He turns and looks at me, sizin' me up, right? "Oh no?" he says. "And who the hell are you?"

"I'm his friend. I don't want too many people knowin' 'bout this. I don't think it's a good idea if too many people know."

"Oh no? It ain't good if too many people know, is that right? What about all these people, my man?"

(Waves his hand in a broad circle:)

They all know. Who's gonna stop them from tellin' their friends? You? That's a pisser, Some ol' wino gonna protect some ol' bum."

I'm about to say somethin' to him but he turns away just in time and tosses a quarter to his friend to call the TV station. By this time, Louis got his head on top of his arms on the bar and he's just driftin' off. He's lookin' so innocent and childlike...this small smile on his face, like he knows somethin' you don't.

(He reaches for the bottle and takes a long drink and continues:)

Anyway, the guy calls the station and tells ol' Mike that they sendin' over a crew and everythin'. That really gets his attention.

“Well now,” he says, “I got to go clean myself up. Got to look good when the TV gets here...got to practice my smile.

(Gives an exaggerated smile.)

And you see he got these yellow teeth...half of ‘em missin’...then he runs off laughin’ and his friends laughin’ with him.

Now we got ourselves a real fine mess. I don’t know what we gonna do when along comes Jim and he’s all kindsa pissed off.

(Whispering:)

“What the hell? Ain’t this some shit? Ain’t this some damn shit? All these guys that don’t know Louie from any other bum on the street in on it too. Ain’t that some shit? Here me and you, we his friends...we got this thing all to ourselves...now these good for nothin’s in on it too.”

I look up at Jim and notice there are several of him weavin’ in front of me. I try to focus on the one that’s most likely him. “What you mean? What we got to ourselves?”

(Whispering, almost a confessional:)

“Come on man, don’t play that shit with me. I know what you been thinkin’. You out to get that ticket. That’s OK. Man’s gotta look out for hisself these days. And I’ll be honest with ya. I’m out to get it too, OK? But with all these other people here, we gotta work together now.”

“Work together?” I says.

(Like an older brother:)

“C’mon man, Louie don’t know what to do with that kinda money. He’s just gonna piss it away. He ain’t gonna get no house, you know that. And even if he did, his ass will be back on the street in no time, just like the man said. He can’t hardly take care of hisself, let alone a house. Now me and you, we know what to do with that kinda money...We know how to handle it...We’ll split it right down the middle. Fifty-fifty...Man, I’m finally gonna get me a decent place...somethin’ with a restaurant...nothin’ like this place. None of these low-lifes in it. Get me a El Dorado Cadillac... maybe

two...head down to Atlantic City...all them women just waitin' to be spoiled.

(Looks uncertainly:)

Course, we can give Louis somethin'. I mean, it is his ticket."

"You're damn right it's his ticket," I tells him. "And that's why I'm stayin' with him so none of ya'lls steal it. I ain't after his money. I just wanna make sure he don't get hurt. 'Specially by the likes of you." I'm tryin' to fix him with one of my cold stares but there's just too many of him and they all weavin' 'round in front of me. "Now gimmee another drink."

And Jim, he screws the top off the bottle real slow and says, "I hate to ask you this, my man, seein' how's we're good friends and all but...you got money, don't ya?"

"Nope," I tells him.

"Then I guess you ain't...celebratin' no more" And he walks on down the bar to clean some of them filthy drinkin' glasses. You ask me, he should throw all them damn glasses away. Ain't no way they ever gonna come clean no matter how much he tries. They too greasy...like him. But he won't toss 'em. He too damn cheap.

(Takes a drink.)

Anyway...Mikey Mouth comes outta the bathroom, hair 'bout same as it was only wetter but he do got his greasy ass smile firmly in place. He walks over to Louis who's still head-down on the bar. "OK Louie, it's showtime." And he shakes him kinda rough.

"Leave him alone," I says.

He turns to me real slow, his smile fadin' like the color on a cheap suit.

(Looks down his nose, getting angry:)

"You again?" he says. "I'm gettin' real tired of you brother. Why don't you just slide off into the gutter where you belong?"

"Why don't you go to hell brother?"

All of a sudden, the place gets real quiet. Mike come over to me...I ain't afraid of that sommabitch. "You got some balls for a ol' drunk. But why don't you just stay outta this? It ain't none of your business."

"It is my business," I tells him.

(To audience:)

If I don't watch out for Louis and take care of him, who will? Him? He don't give a damn 'bout Louis. None of them new friends give a damn about him. Where they gonna be when the money's gone? They be gone too. Where were they when he was out on the streets? Just steppin' over him and cursin' him for gettin' in their way.

(Takes a drink.)

Now Mike thinks he's gonna charm me...slides onto the chair next to me and puts his hand on shoulder...like we good friends...looks at me real close... tryin' to figure out what I'm gonna do.

(He speaks slowly here, offering an olive branch:)

"Lissen, my man," he says, "Why you gettin' involved with this? Huh? We got no quarrel...least not yet anyways. He ain't nothin' to you. Why you gonna get hurt over him?"

"We're friends," I tells him.

"Friends? You ain't friends. You just a couple ol' drunks that's hangin' together. It don't make no kinda sense you gettin' hurt over somethin' like this. Tell me...I really wanna know, my man... why does some dumb nigger like you wanna get his ass kicked over some worthless honkey?"

(Very angry, act out smacking hand away:)

"He ain't worthless!

(Point, hand shaking.)

Don't you put your hand on me. Don't you never put your hand on me."

(Anger is still there, speaks slowly:)

Ain't no one ever done that to Mike before and for a minute he don't know what to do.

(Acted out:)

Then he backs up, his eyes gettin' larger and larger. And they starin' right at me. Slowly he reaches for the leather pouch on the side of his belt. Without takin' his eyes off me, he pulls out the knife. The blade shoots out and I'm starin' at it. I hear people sayin', "Leave him alone...Leave him be..." I know they must be talkin' real loud but it's like they a thousand miles away, whisperin'.

Mike ain't in no mood for advice. "Shut up!" he says. "This ain't none ya'lls business. Anyone thinks it is can see me right after I takes care of *this* fool." It gets real quiet and I can hear myself breathin'. "Get up," he says. "Get up or I'll kill ya right where ya sit."

I stand up real careful...

(Act out:)

...movin' real slow...the fear drove that liquor outta me and I'm clear-headed. I got my eyes fixed on his. I can see his nostrils flarin'. He's grinnin'. We both know what's gonna happen. I back away and pick up my chair.

(Teasing:)

"That's right, my brother," he says. "protect yourself. That's a real good move. Real smart." He starts slashin' at me with his knife. I keep swingin' the chair at it. It's a long time since I been in a fight. I keep missin' him. "That's good. That's real good, my brother."

He's comin' in at me. Nothin' I do even slows him down. The blade's cupped in his hand and it lashes out when he whips his arm at me. He just keeps comin'. I can't stop him. And then I'm against the wall. Trapped. When I try to move either way, he slashes at me, takin' little pieces of flesh outta my hands. But I can't drop that chair. I'm dead if I do. There's nowhere for me to go and his smile's gettin' larger and larger. Then he stops. "Now I'm done playin' with you," he says. He gets up on the balls of his feet and he's ready

to finish the job when behind him the door swings open and this guy shouts, “Hey, someone here call the newsroom?”

Mike turns. I got my chance. I swing the chair as hard as I can...

(Swings like he's swinging a baseball bat.)

...and hit him right across the head with everythin' I got. Mike sorta hangs there for a second, lookin' like ‘What?’ Then it's “Bye-bye Mikey” and down he goes. His friends rush over to him but he ain't goin' nowhere. He's out before he even hits the ground. Dude at the door's all nervous, he's like, “Is this the right place?”

“Yeah baby,” someone shouts from the back, “this here's the right place.” Dude ain't too sure, and he is definitely not thrilled 'bout bein' in there alone so he goes back outside.

Meantime, a couple guys drag Mike to the bathroom and I sit down at the bar. Jim comes over and pours me this big-ass glass of whiskey.

(Nervous:)

“This one's on the house. Enjoy it. It's probably your last.”

(He pretends to look closely at a glass in his hand.)

I reach for that glass and notice my hands is bleedin' a little but shakin' like crazy. And it ain't the liquor that's makin' 'em shake this time...

(Drinks.)

So now the TV crew is pilin' their stuff in the bar, just unloadin' cameras, settin' up lights all over the place...talkin' to each other...that lady that does the news in the back just a-combin' her hair and preenin' away like it's nobody's business...guys just clobberin' each other for a better look at her. She just goes on prettyin' herself up like there's nobody in the place...which to her mind is pretty much accurate.

Then she's ready. “OK, now who's the lucky man?”

The crowd parts like she's Moses and they the Red Sea. She's starin' right down at where me and Louis are sittin'. Her smile loses a little of its enthusiasm.

(Not at all pleased.)

“You’re the lucky man?”

“No. This here’s your lucky man. But he done too much...celebratin’.”

“Oh...Oh God...uhm...Well...

(Looks around nervously, not knowing what to do. Lets out small laugh.)

“Who are you? Do you know him?”

“Yeah, I’m his friend.”

“Oh...Oh...well, can I interview you?”

“Sure, I don’t mind.” So we get ourselves ready. You know, neaten up our clothes, fix our hair...check our makeup. The rest of them knuckleheads is doin’ whatever to get on TV. Ol’ Jim, he’s the worst of em’, wavin’, jumpin’ in front of the camera. You ever wanna get people to act like complete fools, just bring a TV camera into the joint. It is somethin’ to watch.

Finally she’s ready. “All right, all right. Let’s have a little quiet in here please people. I have an interview to do...Thank you...Thank you so much. Ready?” OK then...How long have you known Louis?”

“’Bout three, four years...No, no, gotta be longer than that...Let’s see...”

“When did you find out he won the lottery?”

“Oh, this mornin’. I found him dancin’ in the street, drunk as shit”

“Hold it...stop...uhm...you can’t say...uh...”

“Shit?”

“Exactly.”

“How ’bout...Drunk as a skunk.”

“Let’s leave drunk out all together, shall we? Fine. OK. Going on...When did you find out...?”

“This mornin’. I found him dancin’ in the street, dr...dancin’.”

“And you were you excited?”

“Me? Well, OK. But Louis, he’s real excited as you can...uh...see. But me ...I mean it’s Louis’ lottery, not mine.”

“What does he intend to do with the money?”

Before I can answer, Big Jim just gotta jump in. “Better pay me for all the damn liquor these two bums been suckin’ down. Hi, I’m Big Jim. This here’s my place.”

“Oh...oh how...nice...kind of...homey. Now would you mind stepping back? Out of the way? Just a little more that way...that’s it. Thank you...thank you so much...Now where were we?”

“You was askin’ what’s Louis gonna do with the money?”

“Oh...right...What is Louis gonna...” *(Pauses to collect herself.)* What is Louis going to do with the money?

“I don’t know for sure yet. Says he just wants to get a house and a...and a...dog...But a million dollars...I mean...a million dollars. We could finally get ourselves somethin’...nice, know what I mean?”

“I told you he better pay me...”

“Would you please?”

“I’m just tryin’ to help...”

“Get back...just get back.”

This poor lady...this is the last place she wants to be. All she can do is look at her crew. “This isn’t working.”

And one of her guys says, “Why don’t we just film you with the ticket...you know, just you talking about it. This story is too good to pass up.”

(Accusingly, to audience:)

Yeah, people just love to hear heart-warmin’ stories ’bout the homeless, don’t they? They just eat that shit right up.

“Oh...oh that’s a great idea.” Yeah, right. It’s a great idea ‘cause it’s gonna get her outta there.

She looks at me. “Do you have the ticket?”

“Nah, I ain’t got it. Louis does.”

(Caustically:)

“Well, can you get it?”

Well, I’m always willin’ to help a lady outta a jam, so I walk over to Louis and try and wake him.

(Calls softly:)

“Louis? Louis?” But he don’t move.

(Louder:)

“Louis. Louis, wake up.”

(Getting more nervous.)

He still don’t move. “Louis! Louis.”

(Begins to shake him, put mouth right next to his ear.)

“Louis!”

(Louis wakes, smacks NARRATOR’s hand away.)

“What? what?” But he ain’t no help. I still gotta dig into his shirt pocket to get that ticket. He’s got a wad of papers...gum wrappers, social security card, medical card... finally...the ticket. “Here it is,” I tells her. She takes it and turns to the camera.

“OK, let’s get this thing done.” Lady is definitely in a hurry to get the hell outta there.

(He folds his hands into a tube and pretends to film.)

So the guy comes in with the camera, zoomin’ in real close, holdin’ the shot...holdin’ the shot. Then he looks up.

“Hold it. What’s today’s date?”

(Newswoman:)

“The eighteenth.”

“That’s from the sixteenth. It’s two days old. It’s no good.”

She turns the ticket to her and takes a long look at it. “It’s from the sixteenth. It’s no good.”

“Hey, don’t tell me lady. Tell Louis. It’s his ticket.”

“Come on,” she says. “Let’s get out of here. There’s no story here. They’re just wasting our time.” She throws the ticket on the ground and just misses steppin’ on my hand as I go to grab it up. And man oh man, they had that equipment packed up and outta there in a flash. Soon’s she slams the door, everyone in the place is laughin’ and yellin’ at the same time. Most of ’em think it’s real funny but Jim don’t see nothin’ funny in it at all.

“Hey,” he says to me, “you get your friend and get the hell outta here. And don’t neither of you show your faces in here again. Hear me? Just get the hell out and stay out. I don’t want you round here no more.”

“Fine with me,” I tells him. I shake Louis awake and drag him out the door. “And Jim, I’m real sorry about that fancy restaurant and all them women.”

(The lighting changes from red to a light that denotes a gloomy, late winter afternoon.)

It’s a cold afternoon. The laughter from the bar fades as we walk. It ain’t late but the winter sun’s already down and a light rain’s fallin’.

“Louis, button your coat,” I says.

He starts buttonin’ it but then searches his shirt pocket. He’s pullin’ out papers and sortin’ through ‘em

(Panicking:)

“My t-ticket. Wh-where’s my ticket? Someone stole it.”

(Just a little angry:)

“Ain’t nobody stole it,” I tells him. “I been with you all day. I never left your side. You musta lost it somewheres. Ain’t no way you can find it now.”

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

In order to protect our associated authors against copyright infringement, we cannot currently present full electronic scripts.

To purchase books with the full text, and to apply for performance rights, click ORDER or go back to:

www.playscripts.com