

NBC presents "Short Story" Tonight Shirley Jackson

(music)

She's a novelist and short story writer, master of the sunny mood that turns to terror in a single sentence. But her statements are not dark for the sake of darkness; rather for the bitter truth that's in them. Shirley Jackson. Tonight, one of the most dramatic and horrifying of Shirley Jackson's short stories : The Lottery.

The Lottery will be heard following this announcement from the US Marine Corps....

.....

And now The Lottery by Shirley Jackson

(folksy violin/fiddle music)

Mrs Summers: Floyd, Floyd!

Floyd: Unnh...

Mrs Summers: Floyd Summers you get up outta that bed!

Floyd: Aah, tain't seven yet.

Mrs Summers: Of course it ain't.

Floyd: Unnh...

Mrs Summers: Now you get up, you hear? It's Lottery Day!

Violin transition.

Mrs. Agnes Delacroix: Now Dicky, you eat up your cereal.

Dicky: I don't want no more, Ma.

Agnes: You eat up your cereal because you ain't gonna have nothing but sandwiches til supper time.

Dicky: Sandwiches...

Agnes: You heard me. I'm not gonna cook no three hot meals on Lottery Day!

Violin transition.

Bill Hutchinson: All right, Davey. That's enough for the chickens.

Davey: Shoo! Shoo!

Bill: Come on now, son. We've got to fork down some hay for the cows. We won't be back all day.

Davey: Ma coming, too? Just like Sunday for church?

Bill: Yeah, that's right. All the folks from the town line will be in today for the Lottery.

Violin transition.

Grandsire: I can't find my collar stud... who took my collar stud?

Laura: Ahh, don't you fret, Grandsire. It's around here somewhere.

Grandsire: If I can't find my collar stud, I ain't going. 77 Lotteries I must have been to and I've never missed a one. Laura, you find my collar stud, you hear?

Violin transition.

Narrator: The morning of June 27th was clear and sunny, with the fresh warmth of a full-summer day. The flowers were blossoming and the grass on the town green in front of the bandstand was a nice warm summer green. The folks in the village and the farmers inside the township line began to gather on the square between the post office and the bank by about 10 o'clock. School was out for the summer and the kids came in early to chase around the board sidewalks the way kids will. Bobby Martin and Harry Jones were sitting in front of the post office swapping stones. Bobby had his pockets full already of nice, smooth round ones. The girls stood aside, talking among themselves, looking over their shoulders at the boys, and the very small children rolled in the dust or clung to the hands of their older brothers or sisters.

Floyd Summers: Morning, John .

John Gunderson: Morning, Mr Summers.

Floyd: Nice day for the Lottery, ain't it?

John: Yeh.

Floyd: Had rain yesterday up to the North Village. They got to start the Lottery a day ahead to get it done. 200 families

John: That right?

Floyd: yup. Got to hustle to get the Lottery done with up there. Won't take us more than a couple of hours

John: It seems longer

Floyd: That's the way it is with the Lottery.. I was talking it over with Mrs Summers... it's the suspense that makes time go slow

John: Not slow enough

Floyd: You draw this year don't you?

John: I guess so

Floyd: Yeah, that's the rule all right... stranger in town draws his second year.

Agnes: morning Mr Summers, John

Floyd: morning Ms Delacroix... in early I see

Agnes: Well I don't get up to the village often. George don't like to leave the stock. You going to have the store open after?

Floyd: Most likely. Didn't used to be done

Agnes: Well you've got to be modern I always say... excuse me won't you? The Martins just got in. It's a nice day for it though, you can say that for a fact!

(Hooves)

Tessie: I want to go into Summers Store after and get some patterns. Elsie Dunbar told me he's got some new ones in for shortwaisted figures.

Bill: Let's not talk about it, Tessie.

Tessie: What do you mean? I've got that flowered stuff left over from last year and if I can get a good pattern...

Bill: I don't want to talk about "after"

Tessie: Ohh...

Davey: Come on Pa, can't we go no faster?

Bill: All right. (to horses) Hey there, gid up!

(faster hooves) I was talking to John Gunderson

Tessie: The school teacher?

Bill: um hmm (yes) He's got to draw this year.

Tessie: It's only right, second year in town...

Bill: I told him I was thinking of packing and moving out.

Tessie: Bill Hutchinson! You crazy?

Bill: I told him I was going to pack the wagon and tie the stock on to the end of it and just move out.

Tessie: You mean just -- just leave the farm?

Bill: That's right... I was going to do it before Lottery Day this year.

Tessie: That's crazy, Bill! Where would you settle? Why your folks have farmed that ground since heavens know when!

Bill: Uh huh, I know. I was gonna just move out... It's too late now.

Tessie: Oh Bill, you talk the same way every year...no sense to it.

Bill: No.. there's no sense to it.

Tessie: A woman sees things like this...clearer. You just don't think about it, that's all. You come in for the Lottery then go into Summers and buy something nice, talk to folks... Why don't you look at it that way, Bill?

Bill: Yeah. I suppose you're right.. School teacher agreed with me, though...(to horses) Go on... get on with you!

(faster hooves)

Davey: That's the way, Pa! Hurry up or we'll miss all the fun!(music)

Narrator: Soon the men began to gather, surveying their own children, speaking of planting and rain, tractors and taxes, you know. Dickie Delacroix and a couple of other kids had made a great pile of stones in one corner of the square and they were playing "King of the Hill" on top of it. The men stood together, away from the pile of stones in the corner, watching and their jokes were quiet and they smiled rather than laughed.

(music)

Floyd: They're nice looking folks aren't they John?

John: yeah.. they're nice.

Floyd: You don't see them all together except on Lottery Day. Of course, there's Sunday in church but some go to the Congregationalists and some to the Baptist and folks like the Dunbars don't go nowhere.

Tessie: Morning Mr Summers!

Floyd: Morning Tessie! I've got those patterns in!

Tessie: I'll be over right after

Bill: John

John: Bill

Bill: I want to talk to you uh hello Summers.

Floyd: Morning no worry about me.. I've got to see about the box and all for the drawing.

John: Well, it's the day.

Bill: Yeah. You going to draw?

John: I've got to. That's the rules.

Bill: You said you wouldn't! You sat there in the post office and said you wouldn't!

John: I know, but I'd have to leave town and it's not easy picking up a school this late.

Bill: Well, anyways... you only draw for yourself... Tessie keeps talking about "after" ... it starts me sweating. She keeps talking about buying a pattern up to the Summers Store after... short waisted she says.

John: I suppose you get used to it. I suppose if you've always had it, you don't think about it.

Bill: I don't! I've lived in the village all my life. I don't get used to it.

(boy runs up)

Davey: Pa! Can I stay with Dicky Delacroix? Can I stay with him?

Bill: No. You've got to stay with the family, Davey.

Davey: Awww! All the other kids got all the stones. Can't I stay with him?

Bill: Davey, I said stay here! (Davey runs off) Davey! Come here, Davey!

Look at that... He's having fun... All the kids are having fun. Why? That's what I want to know... why?

John: You're a farmer. You know the answer.

Bill: You told me you couldn't find anything in the book says it has to be...  
It stands to reason you'd find it in the books, don't it?

John: This isn't my part of the country. I don't make the rules.

Bill: It don't stand to reason./ You could try to find out the truth. That's  
all I say.

John: You can't argue with folks about the Lottery. I've tried.

Bill: No, you can't argue with folks...Well...anyways, it's a nice day for it.(music)

Grandsire: It ain't right! I've been telling them for years and years -- it ain't right!

Laura: Now Grandsire, take it easy.

Grandsire: Now you listen to me Floyd Summers, I'm the oldest man in the village.  
77 years I've been in the Lottery. 77 years!

Floyd: I know that Mr Warner, but..

Grandsire: Don't "but" me No sir ! don't but me. I know what's right about the  
Lottery. It ought to be chips of wood! One chip with the name of every family all in  
one big black box

Floyd: We can't do it that way Grandsire, you know that! The box ain't big  
enough

Grandsire: That's the way it was when I was a boy. Chips of wood! None of this here  
bitty pieces of paper! What kind of a Lottery you expect to have with paper?

Floyd: There's too many folks in the village for wood anymore.

Grandsire: Nobody pays any mind to the old ways... there ought to be marching too.  
I remember marching and somebody sort of chanting like! That's what ought to be  
on Lottery Day!

Floyd: That was a long time ago. Nobody remembers that anymore

Grandsire: Yes that's the trouble! Nobody remembers Now you take that black  
box...

Floyd: yes it's cracking. We ought to make a new one.

Grandsire: A new one? Listen to him! A new box? Why they used that box in my  
father's time for the Lottery and he told me it's made from pieces of the box from his  
grandfather's time! Now you're supposed to be in charge of that box... why I saw it  
year before last lying in Graves' barn and this year it sat right on the shelf in your  
store! Now is that any way to take care of that box? They don't run the lottery the  
way they used to and I've been in it 77 years so I ought to know!

(music)

Bill: Tessie.. Tessie come here!

Tessie: What? Oh, excuse me Ms Delacroix.

Agnes: oh certainly Tessie...

Bill: Tessie

Tessie: What is it Bill?

Bill: Where's Davey?

Tessie: playing with the other children there by the stones

Bill: Get him over here

Tessie: Why?

Bill: We're hitching up and getting out.

Tessie: We've got to wait for the drawing! We can't go now

Bill: I said we're going now

Tessie: Oh Bill. Don't be silly First place we came all the way into the village for the Lottery Second place Summers won't be open til after and I want to get those patterns.

Bill: After... don't you understand? Suppose...suppose..

Tessie: Bill I'm surprised at you - why nobody else acts this way! You've just got to take as it comes.. you're a farmer... you know that!

Bill: What's that got to do with it?

Tessie: Well you didn't take on when the hog died of cholera before killing time... you just went on.

Bill: But that's different.. it just happened... you can't help it [now we should just go - garbled]

Tessie: No I won't and neither will you ! I don't get into the village often and Lottery day is one day I can see all the women and talk. I'm not going back until it's over and supper time! My goodness Bill you'd think it was something unusual! Lottery comes every year, it always has...

(music)

Narrator: The lottery was conducted--as were the square dances, the teen club, the Halloween program--by Mr. Summers, who had time and energy to devote to civic activities. He was a round-faced, jovial man, and people were sorry for him because he had no children and his wife was a scold. He was busy in the middle of the square with a little black box, setting it up and balancing it on a 3 legged stool.

(Town voices.)

Floyd: One of you folks want to give me a hand with the box? Mr. Martin?

Martin: all right

Floyd: Just hold it on that corner steady...

Another Man 1: Watch his hands Summers!

Floyd: Now we're going to do this fair and square just like always . Last night up at the coal office Mr Graves and I made up the slips of paper..

Grandsire: I ought to be chips of wood.. what kind of piddling Lottery is this...

Laura: Now Grandsire don't ya interrupt Mr Summers

Floyd:... There's the box here.. anybody wants to can haul them out and check them over Time now for the swearing in. Mr Graves will administer the oath to me, I expect as usual we'll waive the election..

Grandsire: Didn't used to be elections... used to be passed from father to son!

Mr. Graves: All right All right! Do you Floyd promise and solemnly swear to carry out the duties of this Lottery without fear, favor or prejudice, bias or any other untoward acts of omission or commission so help you?

Floyd: I do.

Woman 1: You tell `em, Floyd!

Floyd: Well, I expect now we're ready. We'll proceed as usual, drawing by family according to the rules.

(Calling from off and approaching the mike)

Mrs Martin: Wait a minute, Floyd. Wait a minute!

Floyd: Looks like another interruption...Oh! `Morning, Mrs Martin!

Mrs Martin: How do you like that? Clean forgot what day it was! Hello, Tessie.

(women greet) Thought my old man was out back stacking wood. Then I looked out the window and the kids were gone and then I remembered it was the 27<sup>th</sup> and I came a runnin'! Did I miss anything?

Woman: Oh you're in time. They're still talking away up there!

Floyd: We was just beginning Ms. Martin. Now you just take your place with your family.

Ms. Martin: Hands still wet from the dishwasher!

Floyd: Now, I guess we better get started. Let's get this over with so we can get back to work. Everybody here? ...Now this ain't the drawing. I'm just checking the list...Adams... Adams? Oh, yes. (going off mike: "Good to see you. `Thought I'd see you Saturday".)

Tessie: I guess you made it after all, huh Mrs Martin?

Mrs Martin: Now Tessie, between you and me I knew it was Lottery Day, but you wouldn't have me leave dishes in the sink now, would you? (laughs)

Floyd: Dunbar? Dunbar?

Man 2: Dunbar?

Woman 3: Dunbar? Come on!

Floyd: Who's drawing for Dunbar? Clyde broke his leg didn't he now? Who's drawing for him then?

Mrs Janie Dunbar: I guess I draw

Floyd: That's right that's the rule wife draws for the husband. 'Cepting you've got a grown boy to do it for you haven't you Janie?

Janie: Horace is not but 16. Guess I got to fill in for the old man this year.

Floyd: All right. I've got that checked. Watson boy drawing this year? Charlie? Oh there you are! Good to see your mother has a man to do it for her. I suppose Old Man Warner is here...

Grandsire: You know darn well I'm here Floyd Summers! I was just talking to you! I ain't missed a Lottery in 77 years!

Floyd: All right Grandsire, I was just joking!

Well that gets the list. All the rest of you are families. We're ready for the drawing. Adams? Adams?

(footsteps)

Hi, Steve just draw any one. Don't look at it till later (footsteps away)

Next Adamson? Adamson?

(footsteps)

Right, that does it.

(footsteps away)

Anderson? Anderson?

Woman 4: It seems like they changed the order for drawing this year, don't it, Tessie?

Tessie: Oh no. That's the way it's always done.

Woman 4: It seems like just no time at all between Lotteries any more. It seems like we just got through the last one last week.

Mrs. Dunbar: I declare, the way time flies

Agnes: Time sure goes fast.

Floyd: Delacroix. Delacroix?

Agnes: There goes my old man.

Tessie: Oh, don't worry Agnes.

Floyd: Dunbar? Dunbar?

Tessie: That's you, Janie!

Janie: Well, if you ladies will excuse me...

Floyd: Come on Janie you're holding us up!

Woman 5: There she goes!

Janie: I'm coming, I'm coming!

Tessie: Folks shouldn't hold up the Lottery! It takes up a perfectly good morning as it is. Last year, I didn't get time for half the things I meant to do in town!

Agnes: You're right, Tessie! My old man says he don't like Lottery Day because I always run up the bill at Summers' sky high!

Floyd: Gunderson, John Gunderson?

Agnes: There goes the school master.

John: I'm not going to draw Mr Summers.

Martin: He's got to draw!

(mix in with hubbub about "got to draw")

Floyd: Now John, you know the rules. This is your 2<sup>nd</sup> year in the village.

John: I know, but I'm not going to draw.

Graves: Now don't be contrary, boy.

Woman 6: Everybody draws in the Lottery! What makes you better, Schoolmaster?

John: I don't believe in it.

Floyd: That's not the point, John, and you know it.

Grandsire: Listen to him! He don't believe in the Lottery! You hear that?

Laura: Now take it easy, Grandsire.

Grand: We've always had the Lottery! Everybody knows that! Always have and always will.

John: Over in the North Village, they're talking about giving up the Lottery.

Grandsire: Crazy pack of fools up in the North Village! Listen to this idiot! Nothing's good enough for him. Next thing you know, they'll be wanting to go back to living in caves -- nobody work anymore! Live like that for a while, and ...

John: They don't have the Lottery up where I'm from. Stopped it a long time ago.

Grand: Maybe so, but we ain't fools. Not here. Used to be a saying "Lottery in June, corn'll Grow Soon" You listen to him with his books and ciphering, first thing you know we'll all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns!

Woman 7: You're right, Grandsire!

Grandsire: There's always been a Lottery! Bad enough it ain't what it used to be, what with Floyd Summers up there joking and all. There's always been a Lottery!

John: But why? Why? I tell you they stopped it up north -- more villages every year, and the corn grows just as high!

Grandsire: Nothing but trouble in that! Pack of fools...

Man 3: You ain't no farmer, Gunderson! Old man Warner's right, "Lottery in June, corn'll grow soon". That's the way it's always been.

Woman 8: You can't get around that, school master! "Lottery in June..."

John: Nobody knows! You've never tried. You just go on and on every year the same way!

Grandsire: You're darn tootin', and we're going right on just like we've always done!

What call does a young outsider have to talk that way on Lottery Day? That's what I'd like to know! 77 years I've been coming to Lottery Day...

John: Can't you see that there's no reason for it? Year after year for generations on June 27<sup>th</sup>? if you 'd only think.. if you'd only try! If you were willing to use reason instead of blind obedience to a crazy outworn tradition!

Floyd: That'll be about enough now, John. You've spoke your piece. We better get down to business. Rules say if anybody balks, the committee draws for him. Isn't that right folks?

(crowd)

I'm going to call you again regular and proper and if you stand mute, we'll go right ahead and draw for you... Now, which is it?

John: All right... all right I'll go.

(footsteps up and back)

Floyd: Fine.

(crowd assent)

Now let's get on. Hutchinson? Bill Hutchinson?

Tessie: Get on up there, Bill.

Woman 9: There goes your man, Tessie.

Tessie: Imagine the schoolmaster making such a fuss! He's no better than the rest. Everybody draws on Lottery Day!

(music)

Floyd: All right, sir. Now the last one. Warner?

Grandsire: Yes sir. I'm right here!

(footsteps underneath the next few lines)

Floyd: Take it easy, Grandsire. No rush.

Grand: This makes the 77<sup>th</sup> year I've been in the Lottery. Yes sir. 77 times!

Floyd: Draw your slip.

(footsteps away)

It's all done. Martin, shut the box.

(wooden box shut)

Female 10: Who's got it? What family?

Male 4: I ain't got it.

Laura: Grandsire, let me see your paper.

Grand: Let go of my hand, you hear? I can take of myself.

Kid: Ma, Ma, is it us? Is it us, Ma?

Female: Oh, for goodness sake... What family is it? Who's got it?

Floyd: Alright... alright ALRIGHT folks! Let's do this orderly!

Now what family's got the black slip?

Female 11: It's the Hutchinsons. There -- look! Bill Hutchinson's got it!

Another female: Peggy, you run and tell your father it's the Hutchinson's who've got it.

Tessie: It isn't fair! It isn't fair! Why, Floyd Summers, I saw you! You didn't give him time to take any slip he wanted. I saw it wasn't fair!

Female 12: Now Tessie, be a good sport.

Another female 13: All of us took the same chance

Tessie: It isn't fair I tell you! It isn't fair!

Bill: Shut up, Tessie.

Floyd: That was done pretty fast. Just one hour and two minutes. We've got to hurry to get done before noon.

Tessie: It wasn't fair..

Floyd: Bill, let's see. You draw for the Hutchinson family, don't you? You got any other households in the Hutchinsons?

Tessie: There's Don and Eva -- make them take their chance! Make them draw!

Floyd: Now Tessie, Eva's your daughter but she's married now. Daughters draw with their husbands' families, you know that as well as anyone else.

Tessie: It wasn't fair (crying)

Bill: I guess that's it, John. My daughter draws with her husband's family, that's only fair.

Floyd: Well now, Bill?

Bill: I guess it's just us Floyd... Davey, Tessie and me.

Floyd: As far as drawing for families is concerned, that's you? And as far as drawing for households is concerned, that's you, too?

Bill: Yes, that's right.

Floyd: Martin, give me the tickets for the Hutchinsons, all three of them.

Martin: Got em. They're in the box, Floyd

Floyd: All set then.

Tessie: I... I think we ought to start over!

Floyd: Now, Tessie...

Tessie: It wasn't fair! You didn't give him time to choose. Everybody saw that!

Floyd: We'll have to get on...

Tessie: Listen, everybody! You've got to listen! It wasn't fair -- you could see that.

Floyd: Ready, Bill?

Bill: Ready.

Floyd: Davey picks first, then you, then Tessie. You help little Davey.

Bill: Davey?

Davey: Sure, Pa.

Tessie: Mrs Delacroix, you could see that it wasn't fair, couldn't you?

Agnes: Now don't make a fuss, Tessie, it aint' fittin'.

Floyd: All right now, Bill. You take the slips and keep them folded until everybody picks. Come on now, Davey.

Bill: Go on, son.

Floyd: Now, Davey -- I want you to pick a piece of paper out of this box and hold tight, understand?

Davey: Sure, Mr Summers.

Floyd: All right, pick now. Oh, heh heh -- just one paper, Davey.

Davey: I got one!

Floyd: You better hold it for him, Martin.

Martin: All set.

Floyd: All right. Bill just one paper, that's right. Now Tessie.

Tessie: No... it wasn't fair..

Bill: Tessie, you've got to draw.

Floyd: Come on, Tessie...

Tessie: Alright. Alright.

Female 14: I hope it ain't the child, don't you?

Male 5: I know.

Grandsire: Lottery ain't what it used to be... it ought to be chips of wood. People ain't what they used to be.

(general hub bub)

Floyd: Quiet now, folks. Now let's open the papers. Davey?

Martin: Come on Davy, open your paper.

Davey: There's nothing on it!

(Positive hub bub)

Martin: Well.

Floyd: Bill?

Bill: Mine's blank.

Floyd: Then I guess it's Tessie.

Tessie: Oh! No! No...

Floyd: Show us her paper, Bill. That's the rules.

Bill: Tessie, open your hand.

(struggle)

Tessie: No!

Bill: Come on now. Open your hand!

Tessie: No no no

Floyd: It's Tessie all right.

Dickie: Ma, I'm going over by the pile of stones all right?

Floyd: All right, let's finish this quickly

Tessie: It isn't fair no no Oh Bill no

Bill: It's too late Tessie there's nothing I can do.

Female: Come on, Mrs Delacroix we better go get a good stone before they're all gone.

Agnes: Dickie will save one for me

Female" Hurry up! She'll be running soon.

Tessie: It wasn't fair, there wasn't time Bill! Please

Bill: You hear them Tessie, Lottery in June, corn'll grow soon

Tessie: It isn't true it isn't

Dickie: Ma, here's a stone for you. Ma here

Agnes: That's a nice boy Dickie, what a nice big stone!

Female: You go ahead, I'll catch up with you. Can't run at all with the arthritis in my knees.

Agnes: All right. There's Davey. Davey, Davey come here

Davy: Yes Ma'am

Agnes: Now here's a little stone for you. Take it

Davey: Sure

Agnes: Come along with me now Davey

Davey: yeah, I know We've got to run after Ma now huh?

Agnes: That's right Davy. Come on

Tessie No no it isn't fair Everybody listen

Floyd: Come on everybody!

Agnes: Come on Davey, throw your stone... go on throw your stone!

Tessie it isn't fair it isn't right oh Bill It can't be me They can't do it to ME! Agnes, Emily you can't ! not me!

Agnes: Davey, now throw your stone!

Tessie: no it isn't right! Not the stone Davey! Not my own baby Davey!

Davey: Unnh (throwing effort grunt)

(hear the stone hit)

Tessie SCREAMS

Crowd cheers and throws stones. They sound happy.

(music) (music plays softly under narrator)

Narrator:

It was all over by noon. The sun was hot on the square, the men stood around the blacksmith shop talking about planting, tractors and taxes. The women gathered in Summers' and some bought yard goods and patterns and notions. The little children played in the dust throwing pebbles at each other. The Lottery was over for this year. Lottery in June, corn'll grow soon.

Next year, next June 27<sup>th</sup>... well, maybe we'll learn, maybe there'll be no lottery.

Maybe we'll begin to reason, to find the truth. Maybe we'll find out we don't have to pick our folks in the Lottery just because our fathers and their fathers did it, because it always was that way. Maybe next year there won't be a Lottery. It's up to all of us. Chances are there will be though...

(Music up)

Announcer: You have heard... The Lottery by Shirley Jackson