

VIRGIL WINS THE LOTTERY

by Eddie McPherson



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VIRGIL WINS THE LOTTERY

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Eddie McPherson

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SYNOPSIS: Everyone dreams of striking it rich by winning the lottery except Virgil's wife, Margaret. Margaret thinks it's a waste of money until Virgil wins the \$10,000 Lickskillit lottery. As soon as Margaret and Virgil get the news, Virgil quits his job, they join the posh (well, posh for Lickskillit) social club and overnight start living in high cotton. And then they get more news: They didn't actually win the \$10,000 lottery. Shamefully exposed, Margaret and Virgil start eatin' crow and learn that life is good, with or without the winnings, and then they get the biggest surprise of all.

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

(9-13 females, 4-7 males)

VIRGIL SLUDGE (m).....	A simple country boy who buys a lottery ticket. <i>(170 lines)</i>
MARGARET SLUDGE (f)	VIRGIL'S wife. <i>(286 lines)</i>
ELLARD (m).....	VIRGIL'S best friend and BERTHA MAE'S fiancée. <i>(82 lines)</i>
BERTHA MAE SLUDGE (f)	VIRGIL'S sister and Margaret's best friend. <i>(93 lines)</i>
MAMA SLUDGE (f).....	VIRGIL'S mother. <i>(93 lines)</i>
PAPA SLUDGE (m).....	VIRGIL'S father. <i>(49 lines)</i>
MAMA HOOPER. (f).....	MARGARET'S mother. <i>(55 lines)</i>
PAPA HOOPER (m).....	MARGARET'S father. <i>(35 lines)</i>

ACTORS WHO PLAY THE FOLLOWING ROLES MAY DOUBLE IF DESIRED

HERMAN (m)	Lickskillit's sign painter. (21 lines)
D.J. WOLF (m)	Lickskillit's radio announcer. (23 lines)
BURMA THANG (f)	Answers the phone at the radio station. (4 lines)
ISABELLE (f)	A friend of the family who becomes their "maid." (11 lines)
GRANDMA (f)	VIRGIL'S grandmother. (32 lines)
EUNICE (f)	Grandma's best friend. (14 lines)
SUE ANN DRAKE (f)	Visits MARGARET and VIRGIL to "check them out." (26 lines)
JOHN DRAKE (m)	SUE ANN'S husband. Henpecked. (11 lines)
FREDA FOUNTAIN (f)	Founder of the exclusive W.O.R.L.D. Club. (19 lines)
DELPHIE RHODES (f)	Calls MARGARET up to ask for money. (17 lines)
MONA GRAVES (f)	Visits to con the SLUDGES out of some of their winnings. (12 lines)
PATSY CLINE RHODES (f)	MONA'S daughter who is a little more honest than her mother would like. (6 lines)

SET

The play takes place in the living room of Virgil and Margaret's modest home. It's a pretty drab-looking living room. Paint is peeling off the walls in some places. The sofa that sits center stage is well worn, as well as any other furniture you choose to add to the stage. An old baby's crib is somewhere in the room.

The front door is stage right and the door leading to the kitchen is stage left. A small table sits somewhere in the room for Papa Hooper to set his CB radio on.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1: Sludge's living room

ACT ONE, SCENE 2: Sludge's living room

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO, SCENE 1: Sludge's living room

ACT TWO, SCENE 2: Sludge's living room

CHARACTERIZATION

Lickskillit is a small rural community in the middle of nowhere. The people who live there are simple country people but aren't hillbillies. Though their qualities are exaggerated, they still need to be played somewhat down to earth and not so much like a melodrama.

COSTUMES

They need to dress tacky and silly, especially on the day Freda shows up. Virgil wears black-framed, horn-rimmed glasses (and so does the "baby"). The latest fashion magazines hardly ever make their way across the town limits of this humble hamlet. Sue Ann and Freda try hard to look and act highbrow when, in reality, they're just as "redneck" as the rest of Lickskillit.

PRODUCTION NOTES

BALLOONS: In order for the balloons to lift the “baby” from its crib, the baby must be very light. One suggestion is for the baby itself to be made from a couple of large, round balloons wrapped in something light, such as brown tissue paper made to look like a blanket. It may need to be anchored with fishing line so it will float to a certain height making it easy for Ellard to retrieve it.

PAPA SLUDGE’S HAMMERING: When Papa Hooper hits the floor with his hammer during the lottery drawing, have a piece of wood concealed for him to hit.

LOPSIDED CAKE: The lopsided cake can be made from cardboard with real or fake icing covering it.

FALLING THROUGH THE FLOOR: When Papa Sludge and Herman fall through the floor behind the sofa, practice this carefully so the fall looks authentic and doesn’t look as if they are simply ducking behind the sofa (which, of course, is what they’re doing). It is in the opinion of the playwright that the sound effect of a loud CRACK followed by the fall and the actors screaming will help to mask the fact they’re merely quickly ducking.

AUTHOR’S NOTE

This is a farce. The action should move quickly to be effective. Slow moments and long blackouts between scenes will be annoying and distracting. Keep it moving and have fun!

PROPS**ACT ONE**

- ☐ A “baby” wrapped in a blanket
- ☐ Another small blanket
- ☐ Lopsided “cake”
- ☐ Hot wheel cars
- ☐ Horn-rimmed glasses (Baby)
- ☐ Pile of clothes
- ☐ Men’s boxers with designs on them
- ☐ Large pair of bloomers
- ☐ Helium balloons on strings
- ☐ Cotton balls
- ☐ Tool belt
- ☐ Hammer
- ☐ CB radio (Real or homemade)
- ☐ Jar of baby food
- ☐ Spoon
- ☐ Wad of fake bills
- ☐ Watch on a chain (Or wristwatch)
- ☐ Bandanna
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Lottery ticket
- ☐ Telephone
- ☐ Coffee cup (Bernice)
- ☐ Piece of paper
- ☐ Tissue or white handkerchief
- ☐ Confetti
- ☐ “No hunting” sign
- ☐ Old camera
- ☐ Paper towels
- ☐ Small bandages
- ☐ Large quilt or blanket
- ☐ Two large checks
- ☐ Fake microphone
- ☐ Box for the remote broadcast

ACT TWO

- ☐ Piece of paper for IOUs
- ☐ Cowbell (Or regular bell)
- ☐ Bag of pork rinds
- ☐ magazine
- ☐ Cane (Virgil)
- ☐ Cheap portable sound device
- ☐ Small writing pad (Sue)
- ☐ Bag of popcorn
- ☐ White glove
- ☐ Tootsie rolls
- ☐ Paper napkins
- ☐ Telephone receivers
- ☐ Broom
- ☐ Purse (Grandma)
- ☐ Candy dishes
- ☐ Rope
- ☐ Basket of “muffins”
- ☐ Rug

SOUND EFFECTS AND MUSIC

- ☐ Banjo music
- ☐ Baby laughing
- ☐ Baby burping
- ☐ Bluegrass music
- ☐ Song such as “Sharp Dressed Man” or equivalent
- ☐ Short fanfare music
- ☐ Loud crack and crash
- ☐ Car horn

DEDICATION

To Levie.

After all, the Sludges winning the lottery was your idea.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *VIRGIL sits on the sofa playing with his new born baby. The baby lies in VIRGIL'S lap wrapped inside a blanket as VIRGIL plays peekaboo behind another small blanket. He holds the blanket up in front of his face.*

VIRGIL: Where did Daddy go? *(Drops the blanket.)* There he is! *(Sound of baby laughing as VIRGIL puts the blanket back up.)* Where did Daddy go? *(Drops blanket.)* There he is! *(Baby laughs.)* You sure are an easy audience, little man.

MARGARET runs in wearing an apron. She has flour on her nose and she's grinning ear to ear. She is holding something behind her back.

MARGARET: Hey, Virgil, what cha doin', sweet thing?

VIRGIL: Spendin' quality time with my first borned son. *(To the baby.)* Want me to tie you to the ceiling fan again?

MARGARET: Virgil Sludge, don't you dare. And what do you mean, again?

VIRGIL: Don't worry, hun, I turned it on medium. *(Rising and approaching her with the baby.)* What you hidin' behind your back?

MARGARET: A secret. *(She presents her lopsided cake which resembles a chocolate ramp.)* And here it is. I made it with my own two hands.

VIRGIL: *(Big smile.)* Weeeeell, with your own two hands, what you know about that.

MARGARET: You look confused. Don't you know what it is?

VIRGIL: *(Trying his best.)* Margaret, you went and built me a ramp for my Hot Wheel collection.

MARGARET: Virgil Sludge, it ain't no Hot Wheel ramp.

VIRGIL: If it ain't, it shore should be.

MARGARET: It's a chocolate cake that took me hours to make from scratch.

VIRGIL: *(Big smile since he knows he's in trouble.)* Of course it's a chocolate cake. I just couldn't see it good without my glasses.

MARGARET: You're wearin' your glasses.

VIRGIL: (*Quickly to the baby.*) Look at that, son, your mama made me a delicious chocolate...lopsided cake. Wasn't that neighborly of her?

MARGARET: (*Plops down still holding the cake.*) I can't do nothin' right.

VIRGIL: Honey pie, that there cake is a work of art. Why, Leonardo Divinity couldn't do any better. But can I ask you just one tiny question?

MARGARET: What?

VIRGIL: (*Tilts his head.*) Why's it crooked?

MARGARET: Because the floor in the kitchen is crooked, that's why. The floor is crooked which means the oven sits crooked which means my food always comes out—

VIRGIL: Crooked?

MARGARET: CROOKED! You been promisin' me for months you'd get floor fixed. I laid the baby down on a quilt the other day and he rolled out the back door.

VIRGIL: (*Baby talk to the baby.*) I bet that was fun.

MARGARET: It was NOT fun, Virgil. If a stray dog hadn't drug him back in, I would have thought he was kidnapped. Virgil, you promised.

VIRGIL: Honey bumpkins, we just can't afford it right now. But as soon as I get that raise, the first thing I will do is jack up that kitchen floor.

MARGARET: No, Virgil. It needs a whole new floor. Look at this place. Plaster comin' off the walls. Cold draft blowin' through the windows. This ain't the house we should be raisin' a little baby in. (*She sits and cries.*)

VIRGIL: Honey bunch, don't cry. (*He places the baby in the crib.*) Once I get that raise, we will fix this place up like we always wanted to. You'll see.

MARGARET: My mama tried to tell me I should have married— (*She stops herself.*)

VIRGIL: Your mama said you should have married who?

MARGARET: Nobody.

VIRGIL: Nobody, huh?

MARGARET: Now, Virgil.

VIRGIL: Your mama wished you would have married somebody else. Who was it, Margaret, Leroy Hudgins?

MARGARET: Law, Virgil, Leroy Hudgins makes you look like a movie star.

VIRGIL: Was it that skinny kid from school with the buck teeth?

MARGARET: That was you.

VIRGIL: Who then?

MARGARET: If you insist. You remember that feller who asked me to the barn dance that time?

VIRGIL: Barn dance. *(Furrowed brow.)* You mean Sam Jones?

MARGARET: Mama liked him 'cause he went to trade school and become a successful mechanic.

VIRGIL: Sam Jones was ugly.

MARGARET: He was not.

VIRGIL: Margaret, Sam Jones could see his bottom lip without a mirror.

MARGARET: *(Scolding.)* Virgil Sludge, be nice.

VIRGIL: So, are you sayin' you're sorry you married me?

MARGARET: *(Feeling bad now, plays with VIRGIL'S ear.)* Of course not, Virgil. I couldn't have married Sam Jones. Too much grease under his fingernails. Watch the baby while I load the clothes dryer. *(She exits to the kitchen as ELLARD and BERTHA MAE enter through the front door.)*

BERTHA MAE: Ellard, I'm sick and tired hearin' 'bout your Hot Wheel cars.

ELLARD: *(Rushes to VIRGIL and shows him a Hot Wheel car.)* Virgil, look what I done found down at the flea market.

VIRGIL: *(Takes it and holds it up to get a good look at it.)* Gollee, Ellard, that's a beauty.

ELLARD: It's a 1970 Chevelle. It's what they call a collector.

BERTHA MAE: *(Picking up the baby.)* Good mornin', you little rascal. It's me, your most favorite aunt in the whole world.

VIRGIL: *(Shouting over to the baby.)* Don't let her fool you, she's your ONLY aunt in the world.

BERTHA MAE: *(Looking at the baby.)* His features change ever' day. That little nose is beginnin' to look just like Margaret's.

VIRGIL: Maybe so, but he's got MY eyes.

BERTHA MAE: You can say THAT again. *(Holds it up so the audience can see the baby is wearin' horn-rimmed glasses like VIRGIL. ELLARD sits on the floor and plays with his car as BERTHA MAE*

sings.) Rock a bye baby in the tree tops. (*Speaks to ELLARD.*) Ellard, does seein' Margaret and Virgil livin' their lives together with a newborn baby put any ideals in your head? (*ELLARD, pushing his car, makes the motor sound with his mouth.*) Ellard!

ELLARD: Yeah, honey?

BERTHA MAE: Are you listenin' to me?

ELLARD: (*He shakes his head.*) Yes, ma'am.

BERTHA MAE: You love that Hot Wheel more than you love me.

ELLARD: That ain't true, I love you exactly the same.

BERTHA MAE: I'm ignorin' you. (*Singing as she rocks the baby in her arms.*) Rockabye baby in the tree tops...

ELLARD: Virgil, you got any cotton balls?

VIRGIL: To polish up your Hot Wheel?

ELLARD: To stuff in my ears. That singin's killin' me.

BERTHA MAE: (*Bends down to ELLARD'S ear and sings loudly.*) IF THE BOW BREAKS THE CRADLE WILL FAAAAAAL!

VIRGIL: I'll get both of us some. (*He exits to the kitchen.*)

MARGARET enters with a load of clothes in her arms and throws them on the sofa and begins folding them.

MARGARET: Hey y'all. Where we eatin' tonight?

BERTHA MAE: It don't matter. Gollee, Margaret, you doin' laundry on a Friday night?

MARGARET: (*Throws the clothes on the sofa.*) It's a never endin' cycle. I just hope that old washin' machine holds up.

BERTHA MAE: I'll help you. Ellard, come play with the baby.

ELLARD: Let me park my Chevelle. (*Making car noises with his mouth, he parks the car.*) I'll be right back! (*He exits through the front door.*)

BERTHA MAE: He's bringin' in a present.

MARGARET: Another present? He's goin' to spoil him rotten.

ELLARD: (*Reenters holding several helium balloons on strings.*) Look what Uncle Ellard got for you.

MARGARET: (*Smiling.*) Balloons, Ellard?

ELLARD: They're for his birthday. He's three months old today.

MARGARET: That's sweet that you remembered.

BERTHA MAE: Now if I can get him to remember MY birthday. Set 'em back there and come get the baby.

ELLARD: (*Crosses and takes the baby.*) Come 'ere you little buzzard. Want to play a game with Uncle Ellard?

BERTHA MAE: Stop sayin' you're his uncle. There's got to be some aisle walkin' 'fore you can claim THAT title if you catch my drift.

MARGARET: (*Pointing to a pile.*) Bertha Mae, you can do the towels. Virgil is funny about people lookin' at his drawers.

*During the girls' conversation, ELLARD plays with the baby. He gets an idea and puts the baby in the crib, crosses and takes the bundle of helium balloons and puts them in the crib and attaches them to the baby. He drops the baby's pacifier and when he bends over to pick it up, the balloons lift the baby up out of the crib into mid-air unseen by the girls. *Check PRODUCTION NOTES. ELLARD can't reach the baby so he quickly grabs a chair and retrieves him, puts him in the crib, and goes back to his Hot Wheel.*

BERTHA MAE: Speakin' of drawers, has Virgil fixed your crooked floor yet?

MARGARET: How did underwear make you think of my kitchen floor?

BERTHA MAE: 'Cause we was talkin' about drawers.

MARGARET: Right.

BERTHA MAE: Where do you keep your silverware?

MARGARET: In the silverware drawers.

BERTHA MAE: And where is your silverware drawers?

MARGARET: In the kitchen. Ohhhhhhhhhh, okay. Well, to answer your question, no he ain't fixed that kitchen floor. There's the proof right there. (*Points to the cake.*) You know what that is?

BERTHA MAE: Shore I do. It's a ramp for Virgil's Hot Wheels. I told Ellard I'd make him one.

MARGARET: It ain't a ramp, Bertha Mae, it's a cake. I just baked it in my lopsided oven.

BERTHA MAE: (*Taps the cake.*) That's solid alright. Make a good paper weight.

MARGARET: I know it ain't pretty, but it's all I got.

BERTHA MAE: I thought Virgil was goin' to fix this place up.

MARGARET: He says he is as soon as he gets his raise at the hardware store.

BERTHA MAE: When will that be?

MARGARET: Never. They have been promisin' him a raise ever' since we've been married. (*ELLARD should have the baby back in the crib by now. VIRGIL enters with cotton balls.*)

VIRGIL: Here you go, Ellard.

ELLARD: Much obliged, Virgil. This should do the trick. (*He sits on the floor and polishes his Hot Wheel. VIRGIL crosses to the balloons.*)

VIRGIL: What are these for?

MARGARET: Ellard brung 'em for the baby.

VIRGIL: That was nice of you, buddy. (*VIRGIL ties the balloons to the back of a chair and notices his underwear and snatches them.*) Margaret Hooper Sludge, a man's underwear is a sacred and personal thing. (*MARGARET and BERTHA MAE look at one another and laugh.*)

MARGARET: (*Sarcastically.*) I don't know why you're ashamed of your drawers, Virgil. They're a work of art. (*She holds up boxers with hearts or smiley faces on them.*)

VIRGIL: (*Holds up a giant pair of bloomers.*) Look, ever'body. Look at Margaret's underwear. See her private bloomers?

ELLARD: (*Looking up from his cars.*) Gollee, Margaret, them are some mighty big bloomers. (*MAMA SLUDGE storms in.*)

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Shouting back through the front door.*) Harley Wayne, their mailbox don't need fixin'! Get in here!

VIRGIL: (*Rushing to her.*) Look, Mama. Look at Margaret's bloomers. I'm showin' the whole world.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Grabbing them and holding them up.*) Whoo wee, Margaret. You put on some serious weight with that baby.

MARGARET: Before you put me on Weight Watchers, Mama Sludge, there's somethin' you need to know.

MAMA SLUDGE: What's that?

MARGARET: Them ain't my bloomers, they're yours.

ELLARD: Mrs. Sludge I didn't know you just had a baby.

VIRGIL: She didn't, Ellard, Mama's always been a little big in the—

MAMA SLUDGE: —shut up, Virgil. (*Snatches the bloomers.*) Ain't anything sacred no more?

MARGARET: (*Laughing.*) You must have left them here last time you stayed over. (*PAPA SLUDGE enters. He wears a tool belt and carries a hammer.*)

PAPA SLUDGE: Well, y'all won't be havin' trouble with your mailbox no more.

VIRGIL: Why's that, Daddy?

PAPA SLUDGE: 'Cause I accidentally knocked it over.

MARGARET: You knocked over our mailbox?

PAPA SLUDGE: I was fixin' it with my heavy duty hammer and I guess I hit it too hard. Don't worry, I'll fix it.

MAMA SLUDGE: Law have mercy, Harley Wayne, I told you and I told you to be careful with that thing. It's like I always say, today is the first day of the rest of my miserable life. And why did you bring your tool belt on our Friday night outin'?

PAPA SLUDGE: You never know when a good hammer might come in handy. (*Pointing.*) See? See that nail right there? (*He bangs the hammer against the wall.*) Problem solved.

VIRGIL: Daddy, I put that nail there to hang my jacket on.

MAMA SLUDGE: We'll get you another nail, Virgil. Where's your folks, Margaret?

MARGARET: Mama said they'll be late 'cause Daddy was playin' with his new CB radio.

VIRGIL: Where are we goin' to eat tonight? Daddy, it's your turn to pick.

PAPA SLUDGE: In that case, let's go to the Catfish Cabin.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Is helping MARGARET fold clothes.*) We always go to the Catfish Cabin. Can't we go someplace that's more suffocated for a change?

BERTHA MAE: There ain't nothin' suffocated in Lickskillit.

MAMA SLUDGE: Let's live a little and head over 'cross the bridge and eat over in Gobbler's Crossin'.

PAPA SLUDGE: Too expensive.

MAMA SLUDGE: Harley Wayne, don't you think I'm worth splurgin' on ever' now and again?

PAPA SLUDGE: It's logic, sweet pea. If I splurge on you tonight how can I splurge on a new power drill next month?

VIRGIL: Don't start, you two. This is supposed to be our weekly stress-free fun night.

MARGARET: I just love our Friday nights on the town. I wouldn't trade these times for nothin'.

ELLARD: *(To PAPA SLUDGE.)* I don't think there's nothin' wrong with you gettin' a new power drill 'cause it would bring you pleasure like my Hot Wheels bring me pleasure.

BERTHA MAE: But, Ellard, don't the thought of you settlin' down with a sweet and beautiful girl bring you pleasure too?

ELLARD: Shore it does, who did you have in mind? *(BERTHA MAE grabs his Hot Wheel.)* My car! *(He reaches for it.)*

MARGARET: Mama Sludge, we should be used to our men folk and their toys by now. Papa Sludge has his power tools, Ellard has his Hot Wheels, and Virgil has his underwear. *(She holds up a different pair. VIRGIL grabs them.)*

VIRGIL: This is our FUN night not MY embarrassin' night.

PAPA SLUDGE: *(To his wife.)* I'd like to splurge on you sweet thing, but money don't grow on crab apple trees.

ELLARD: Maybe you'll win the Lickskillit lottery, Mr. Sludge.

MAMA and PAPA HOOPER enter. PAPA HOOPER holds his prize CB radio.

PAPA SLUDGE: Whoooooooooooo, wouldn't THAT be nice?

MAMA HOOPER: Howdy, ever'body. Wouldn't what be nice?

ELLARD: If Mr. Sludge won the lottery.

PAPA HOOPER: Whoooooooooooo, wouldn't that be nice.

PAPA SLUDGE: That's what I said. *(Looking around.)* Let's see, what can I fix next?

MAMA SLUDGE: Try that hole in your head.

MAMA HOOPER: Nothin' never changes. Harley Wayne's still fixin' things and Papa's still playin' with his CB radio.

VIRGIL: *(Crossing to PAPA HOOPER.)* You bought yourself another CB radio?

MAMA HOOPER: No, Virgil, I just said that for my health.

MAMA SLUDGE: But folks ain't owned CB radios for years. Who you goin' to talk to?

PAPA HOOPER: It's a secret.

MAMA HOOPER: I done told him he's crazy, but as long as it keeps him out of my hair.

MARGARET: Mama, be nice. (*Crosses to PAPA HOOPER with the baby and a jar of baby food.*) Here, Daddy, would you feed the baby, please? Y'all need to bond.

PAPA HOOPER: (*Taking the baby.*) Why, I'd be happy to, little girl. As long as I don't have to bond with his other end.

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Looking around the room.*) Since I ain't goin' to win the lottery, I might as well find somethin' else to fix.

MAMA SLUDGE: Even if you DID win the lottery, all you'd do with it is spend it on more tools until you didn't have enough to spend on me.

VIRGIL: Now, Mama, you know if Daddy had the money he'd treat you like royalty.

MAMA SLUDGE: I ain't talkin' 'bout takin' me back to Burger King.

PAPA SLUDGE: I thought you'd like it there 'cause you could have it YOUR way.

MARGARET: If you ask me, buyin' lottery tickets is sinful business.

BERTHA MAE: Sinful is right. (*Her hand up in the air, closing her eyes.*) Ecclesiastes five, verse ten. "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income."

ELLARD: If playin' the lottery is sinful, Virgil, you better start askin' the Good Lord for forgiveness.

VIRGIL: (*Quickly.*) Ellard, play with your Hot Wheels like a good boy.

MARGARET: What did you mean just now, Ellard?

VIRGIL: (*Warning.*) Be quiet, Ellard.

MARGARET: (*Grabs ELLARD'S ear.*) Ellard, you know somethin' and you're goin' to tell me what you know right now.

ELLARD: Ouch!

VIRGIL: (*Grabs ELLARD'S other ear.*) Ellard, I said zip it.

ELLARD: Double ouch!

MARGARET: (*Pulling.*) Ellard?

VIRGIL: (*Pulling.*) Ellard?

ELLARD: (*In pain.*) Virgil went and bought one of them there lottery tickets.

VIRGIL: (*Letting go of his ear.*) Ellard, with friends like you who needs enemas?

MARGARET: Virgil, did you buy a lottery ticket?

VIRGIL: (*Humble.*) Yes, ma'am, but I only bought ONE ticket.

ELLARD: Remember, Virgil, you went last week too.

VIRGIL: (*Giving ELLARD a dirty look.*) What I meant to say was I only bought one ticket LAST week and one ticket THIS week.

ELLARD: For the last two years.

VIRGIL: (*His dirty look grows.*) What I meant to say was I only bought ONE ticket ever' week for the last two years.

MARGARET: (*Shocked.*) Virgil Sludge, what are you tryin' to tell me?

VIRGIL: I wasn't tryin' to tell you a THING. (*Gives ELLARD the dirtiest look of all.*)

MARGARET: You bought a lottery ticket once a week for TWO years?

BERTHA MAE: (*Holding her hand in the air, closing her eyes.*) Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished: but the grass is always greener on the other side of the road.

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Whistles.*) One hundred and four smackaroos.

MARGARET: (*Her mouth falls open.*) Virgil Sludge, do you know how many diapers that would buy for the baby?

ELLARD: Probably a thousand.

VIRGIL: Ellard, I hope the creek floods and ruins your new yard furniture!

MARGARET: (*Backing VIRGIL against the wall.*) Do you know how many shoes one hundred and four dollars would buy for our precious little baby?

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Spit shining the claw of his hammer.*) Do you know how much food we could have ate by now if we left thirty minutes ago?

MARGARET: Virgil Sludge, I thought me and you was a team. You went and bought a lottery ticket without tellin' me? Mama, when Isabelle gets here to sit the baby, tell her she won't be needed 'cause I've lost my appetite. (*She storms out.*)

MAMA SLUDGE: Virgil, son, when you goin' to learn? You should have told Margaret about them lottery tickets.

VIRGIL: It was only a dollar a week.

MAMA HOOPER: It's the principle of the thing, Virgil. Take Papa here for example. He tells me ever'thing when it comes to money, don't you, Papa, hun?

PAPA HOOPER: (*Taking a bite of the baby food.*) Ever'thing I WANT you to know.

MAMA HOOPER: (*Rushing to him.*) What are you doin' eatin' the baby's food?

PAPA HOOPER: Just makin' shore it ain't too spicy.

MAMA HOOPER: They don't make spicy baby food, knucklehead.
And the next time you go to the store, you buy them a jar of sweet peaches baby food.

PAPA HOOPER: I was goin' to pay them for it right now. *(He pulls out a wad of bills.)* One, two, three dollars. Here, this should do it. *(Hands it to MARGARET.)*

ELLARD: *(Seeing the roll of money.)* Gollee, Mr. Hooper, you're richer than clabbered cream.

PAPA HOOPER: That's just my walkin' around money, Ellard.

MAMA HOOPER: *(Hands on hips.)* Where in this world did you get that money from?

PAPA HOOPER: Ohhhh, here and there. *(Pockets the money.)*

MAMA HOOPER: Where and WHERE? *(MARGARET reenters.)*

MARGARET: *(Sarcastic.)* I shore like the way my family rushes to my side when I'm upset.

ELLARD: *(Looking his car over.)* I didn't even know you left the room, Margaret.

MAMA SLUDGE: *(Moving to her and hugging her.)* Margaret, I'm sorry. Are you okay?

MARGARET: Is Virgil still in the room?

MAMA SLUDGE: He is.

MARGARET: Then I'm NOT okay.

MAMA SLUDGE: You don't mean that. Come on back in here and be with your family.

VIRGIL: Margaret, I'm sorry 'bout buyin' them lottery tickets without tellin' you about it.

MARGARET: I don't want to talk about it. Mama, I called Isabelle and told her not to come.

PAPA SLUDGE: Does that mean we ain't goin' out to eat?

MAMA SLUDGE: Yes it does and I don't want to hear a peep out of you about it.

MARGARET: No, Mama, y'all go on. I'll stay here with the baby. *(Takes the baby from PAPA HOOPER.)*

VIRGIL: Margaret, if you don't go, I don't go. Who would I share my tater tots with?

MAMA HOOPER: *(Has been counting the roll of money.)* Papa Hooper, you got over fifty dollars rolled up here.

PAPA HOOPER: Fifty-two smakaroos to be exact. Now, give it to me.

MAMA HOOPER: Don't you remember our weddin' vows? What's mine is mine and what's yours is mine. Yes sir, this will buy me just enough plastic flamingos to fill up the front yard.

PAPA HOOPER: *(Into his CB radio.)* Breaker one, nine, breaker one, nine. Anybody out there want to fix me up on a date tonight?

MAMA HOOPER: I tell you what, Papa, I won't be totally heartless. I've decided to spend it on somethin' we both can enjoy. A second honeymoon.

PAPA HOOPER: That's fine for you, but what's in it for me?

VIRGIL: *(Looks at his watch on a chain and speaks aloud to himself.)* Holy Dukes of Hazard, I almost forgot. *(Heads to the radio as everyone stares at him. He freezes and looks around at everyone, embarrassed.)*

MARGARET: *(Suspicious.)* You almost forgot what, Virgil?

VIRGIL: Uh...I...uh almost forgot that we had a radio. Look at that there radio. Reeaaaaa nice.

MARGARET: That ain't what you forgot.

ELLARD: *(Rubbing down his Hot Wheel.)* You're right, Virgil, it's time for the lottery drawin'.

VIRGIL: It's TIME for Ellard to keep his TRAP closed.

ELLARD: Jokes on you, *(Checks his pants zipper.)* my trap IS closed.

PAPA SLUDGE: Ever'body stand back. Just found a nail stickin' out of the floor. Nobody panic, cause I got my antique hammer. *(Hits the floor with the hammer, stands and wipes his brow with a bandanna.)* Ever'thing's alright now.

MARGARET: *(Stands in front of the radio.)* Your lottery days are over, Mr. Virgil Sludge.

VIRGIL: But honey bunch, puddin' cup, my little daffodil...

MAMA HOOPER: Margaret, Virgil has already bought the ticket. It won't hurt to let him listen to the drawin'.

MARGARET: Am I the only person in this house with scruples?

ELLARD: No, I caught 'em last year and I itched for days.

BERTHA MAE: Shut up, Ellard.

MAMA HOOPER: What'cha say, Margaret? Please, honey?

VIRGIL: Please, honey?

PAPA HOOPER: Please, honey?

ELLARD: Please, honey? *(Everyone is looking at her.)*

MARGARET: I can see I'm the only one in this family who cares that you have bought that sinful ticket.

BERTHA MAE: Like the Good Book says: (*Hand up the air and eyes closed.*) When the goin' gets tough, never bite off more than you can chew.

MARGARET: (*Interrupting.*) Bertha Mae, I know you're tryin' to help, but please be quiet.

BERTHA MAE: Sorry.

VIRGIL: (*Approaches the radio.*) Thank you, honey. I'll change the baby's diaper for a whole week for this. Okay ever'body, listen up. It's time. It's time! (*He turns on the radio and banjo music plays under.*)

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Looks at the floor behind the sofa.*) Wait! Wait! Wait! (*Points to the floor.*) Another nail. (*He bangs on the floor with his hammer. See **Production Notes**.*)

VIRGIL: Daddy, shhhhh. (*Banjo music fades out.*)

D.J.: And that was Rudder Bagwell from down the road playin' his new banjo he got last Christmas. Good job, Rudder.

RUDDER: (*In background.*) Much obliged.

D.J.: Folks, this is Lickskillit's own D.J. Wolf and it's time for the Lickskillit Lottery drawin'. (*A bell is heard. Ding, ding, ding!*) Brought to you by the nice folks over at Ethel's Veterinary and Taxidermy Shop: One way or another, you're goin' to get your dog back. So, here's how it works. Burma Thang pulls a lottery ticket out of the fish bowl and we read it live on the air. Because nobody has had the winnin' ticket in a long time, the dollar amount has climbed on up there.

VIRGIL: Did y'all hear that? The dollar amount has climbed on up there. Shhhhh!

D.J.: Okey-dokey, now, does ever'body have their lottery ticket ready?

ELLARD: Virgil, where's your ticket?

VIRGIL: Got it right here. (*He takes off his shoe and retrieves the ticket.*)

PAPA SLUDGE: (*To himself, looking at the floor and pointing.*) Ah ha! I see you little nail. You cannot hide from the wrath of my hammer foreva!

D.J.: Burma is handin' me the ticket from the fishbowl.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Crossing her fingers.*) Hush up, ever'body, here we go.

D.J.: And the winnin' lottery number is— (*PAPA SLUDGE bangs his hammer loudly on the floor drowning out the D.J.'S voice.*)

VIRGIL: Daddy!

MAMA SLUDGE: Harley Wayne, what in Sam hill?

D.J.: Again, the winnin' number is— (*PAPA SLUDGE bangs the hammer again. MAMA SLUDGE rushes over and snatches the hammer from him.*)

MAMA SLUDGE: Give me that!

D.J.: So, folks, if you have that winnin' number, you got 'til Burma gets back from sneakin' her a dip of snuff to call in 'cause she's the only one who answers the phone.

VIRGIL: (*To the radio.*) Read the number again!!

D.J.: Here's some more of Rudder playin' his banjo and this time without a pick.

VIRGIL: (*Shouting to the radio.*) Read it again. Read it again.

MAMA HOOPER: Law, law, how we goin' to know what that number is?

MARGARET: See there, Virgil, it's a sign sayin' you shouldn't be playin' that immoral game.

BERTHA MAE: Like the Good Book says: (*Hand up in the air and her eyes closed.*) If an ox gores a man that he dies: then the ox shall be surely stoned!

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Rushing to the phone.*) I'll call down to the station.

VIRGIL: You can't call Mama; Burma Thang is out dippin' her snuff.

MAMA SLUDGE: I can try, can't I? (*Phone receiver to her ear.*) Hello? Hello? (*To the room.*) The line's busy.

MAMA HOOPER: (*Grabbing the receiver.*) Let me try. Hello? Hello? (*To the room.*) The line's busy.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Sarcastic.*) Thanks for clearin' that up.

MAMA HOOPER: Well, there's nothin' to do now but wait.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Picking up the phone and dialing again.*) I've never been too good 'bout waitin'.

PAPA HOOPER: Try callin' the station again.

MAMA HOOPER: What do you think she's doin', climbin' Mount Ever-ready?

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Into the phone.*) Hello? Hello? Burma? (*Covers mouth piece and speaks to the room.*) It's Burma Thang. (*The room celebrates.*) Shhhhhh! Yeah, it's Bernice Sludge. (*Pause.*) Bernice Sludge. **SLUDGE!** (*Covering the mouth piece.*) I forgot she's as deaf as a doorknob. (*Back to the phone.*) I was wonderin' what the lottery number is. We missed it. Lottery **NUMBER!**

VIRGIL: (*Becoming impatient.*) Why do they let her answer the phone?

MAMA SLUDGE: No, Burma, we don't need any lumber...**NUMBER.**

Yeah, honey, I know your husband's a plumber but that's not what I'm askin' for. Never mind! (*She slams down the receiver.*)

VIRGIL: Well, it was worth a try. (*Phone rings.*) I'll get it. Hello? Hold on, I'll check. Daddy, it's Rodney Houston down at the radio station.

PAPA SLUDGE: Tell him his chicken coop will be finished next Thursday.

VIRGIL: (*Into the phone.*) Daddy said your chicken coop...oh, you heard him? You're welcome. (*He hangs up.*) He said that will be fine.

MAMA SLUDGE: Virgil, was that Rodney Houston down at the radio station?

VIRGIL: (*Realization.*) That was Rodney Houston down at the radio station! (*He dials the phone.*) Rodney? This is Virgil Sludge again. You just called. I was wonderin' if you could give me tonight's lottery winnin' number 'cause we missed it. (*Quickly.*) No, don't get Burma! Could you read me the number, please? (*Covers the mouthpiece and speaks to the room.*) He says we called just in the nick of time. (*Writing.*) Yes sir. Yes sir. Much obliged. (*He hangs up the receiver.*) I got it! Somebody give me the ticket!

BERTHA MAE: Virgil, YOU got the ticket.

VIRGIL: Oh, yeah. (*Feels his pockets.*) Now, I know it's here somewhere.

MAMA SLUDGE: Virgil, don't tell me you done went and lost it.

ELLARD: Virgil, I swear, if you was a liquid, you'd be drippin' off a toilet brush.

VIRGIL: I just had it. (*Panicked.*) Don't nobody panic!

BERTHA MAE: Virgil, what's that in your hand?

VIRGIL: (*Sees the ticket.*) Never mind, ever'body, I found it. Somebody check it out, I'm too nervous.

BERTHA MAE: I will, Virgil. (*She compares the numbers.*) Let's see, B 3-9 9-3-9-9. Yep, they're shore enough a match.

MAMA HOOPER: (*Calmly.*) Well, ain't that nice, they're shore enough a match. (*Sudden wide eyes.*) What?!

MAMA SLUDGE: They MATCH! Virgil, they match! You won, honey! You won the lottery!

VIRGIL: (*Wide eyes out to the audience, shocked.*) I won the lottery?

MAMA SLUDGE: You won the—

VIRGIL: (*Smiling, in shock.*) I won the lottery! (*He hugs his mother.*)

PAPA HOOPER: (*Into his CB radio microphone.*) Breaker one nine...Virgil Sludge has done won the lottery!

VIRGIL: (*Rushing to his wife.*) Margaret, honey bunch, love of my life, wife of my child, I won the lottery! What do you have to say now?

MARGARET: (*Calmly and smugly.*) If y'all will excuse me, I will put these towels away. (*Everyone watches her exit.*)

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Crossing to VIRGIL.*) Honey, she won't stay mad for long. You'll see.

VIRGIL: How can you be shore? (*Suddenly, we hear MARGARET scream backstage causing everyone to jump.*)

MARGARET: (*Backstage.*) We won! We wooon!

She screams again as everyone hugs and BERTHA MAE switches on the radio as bluegrass music plays and everyone dances. BLACKOUT.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE: *A few days later. The stage is empty as the phone rings. MARGARET enters carrying the baby who is taking his bottle.*

MARGARET: *(Answers the phone.)* Hello?

DELPHIE: *(Steps out extreme stage right.)* Hello, is this Margaret?
Am I talkin' to Margaret Hooper?

MARGARET: This is Margaret.

DELPHIE: This is Delphie Rhodes over in Dog Town.

MARGARET: You mean THE Delphie Rhodes that I went to school with?

DELPHIE: That's me.

MARGARET: The Delphie Rhodes that stole all three of my boyfriends in high school?

DELPHIE: I thought I loved 'em.

MARGARET: The Delphie Rhodes I invited to my weddin' but said she couldn't come 'cause she had better things to do?

DELPHIE: Somebody had to wash my ugly dog.

MARGARET: The Delphie Rhodes that told Bertha Mae that my baby's head was shaped like a watermelon?

DELPHIE: Cantaloupe! I said his head is shaped like a *cantaloupe*.

MARGARET: So, you stole my boyfriends, refused to come to my weddin', and called my only child ugly. So, why in Sam hill you callin' me now?

DELPHIE: I need to borrow some money.

MARGARET: Are you yankin' my chain?

DELPHIE: I heard from Betty Lynn y'all won the lottery. I promise I will pay you back just as soon as Bob gets his new job.

MARGARET: How long has he been out of a job?

DELPHIE: Twenty years.

MARGARET: Twenty years, huh?

DELPHIE: (*Offended.*) Margaret Hooper Sludge, I don't think I like your tone. Shoot, if the tables was turned and *I* won the lottery, I'd—

MARGARET: Keep it all to yourself and never share a penny.

DELPHIE: You know me pretty good. Give me the scoop, how many thousands did y'all win?

MARGARET: I'm shore we didn't wean thousands.

DELPHIE: They ain't told you?

MARGARET: They want it to be a surprise. They're bringin' a check over sometime today. Delphie, the baby's cryin' I got to go.

DELPHIE: I don't hear no baby cryin'.

MARGARET: That's 'cause he fell in a deep well outside.

DELPHIE: I think you're just tryin' to get me off the phone.

MARGARET: Bye, Delphie.

DELPHIE: Bye, Margaret. (*She exits.*)

There is a knock at the door. MARGARET answers it. MONA and her daughter PATSY enter.

MONA: (*Walks into the room holding a cup.*) Good mornin', Margaret. (*Looks around.*) I was wonderin' if I could borrow a cup of flour. (*She opens a door, peeks in then shuts it again.*)

MARGARET: Good mornin', Mona. Shore you can. (*MONA keeps looking around.*) Are you lookin' for somebody?

MONA: Me? Heavens no.

PATSY: Mama wanted to see the giant check the lottery people left.

MONA: Hush up, Patsy. Young'uns are meant to be saw, not heard.

MARGARET: The lottery people ain't come yet.

MONA: I only come to borrow some sugar.

MARGARET: You said flour.

MONA: That's what I meant. I'm goin' to bake myself a lottery cake.

MARGARET: Lottery cake?

MONA: I meant LEMON cake. I'm bakin' a LEMON cake, not a LOTTERY cake.

MARGARET: Mona, I hate to be rude, but I got to get the baby down for his nap.

MONA: Don't mind us, we'll just make ourselves at home while I cry into this here tissue. (*Cries aloud as she wipes away a tear.*)

MARGARET: (*Genuinely concerned.*) Mona, what's the matter?

MONA: (*Stops crying abruptly.*) Well, since you asked. (*Turns to her daughter.*) Patsy, smile at Mrs. Sludge. (*PATSY does, revealing a gap in her front teeth.*) Ain't that the most repugnant sight you ever saw in your life?

MARGARET: Well –

MONA: Honey, tell Margaret how all the kids at school makes fun of that gap in your front teeth.

PATSY: (*No emotion, it's clear she's been coached by her mother.*) They make fun of the hideous gap in my front teeth.

MONA: Read the letter, silly willy.

PATSY: Oh yeah. (*Brings out a piece of paper and reads from it.*) The kids at school make fun of my teeth and call me snaggletooth and it makes me sad so I cry myself to sleep ever' night. (*MONA'S lips move to the words. Apparently, she wrote the letter.*)

MONA: (*Crying into her tissue.*) Don't that just break your heart? 'Course I would get braces put on her teeth but since Elmer left, there just ain't been enough money for such things.

MARGARET: I didn't know Elmer left.

PATSY: He had to leave. Mama forced him to go off to deer camp for a week.

MARGARET: Mona Graves, you have got some gall.

PATSY: No ma'am, she had that took out last year.

MONA: Keep my gall out of this. (*Heads to the door.*) Let's go, Patsy Cline Graves. I guess some folks just don't care that your teeth are ugly enough to scare a crow.

PATSY: (*Waving big to MARGARET.*) Bye. (*They exit.*)

MARGARET: (*Shouting through the door.*) And that ain't a gap in her teeth! You blacked it out with a Sharpie! (*Shuts the door and speaks to the baby.*) My, my, little man. What HAVE we got ourselves into? (*The phone rings.*) Not again. (*Answers it.*) Hello?

DELPHIE: (*Stepping out again.*) Margaret, it's me again.

MARGARET: Bye, Delphie.

DELPHIE: Bye, Margaret. (*She exits quickly.*)

BERTHA MAE: (*Sticking her head through the front door.*) Knock, knock. (*Entering, followed by ELLARD.*) Have the lottery people come yet?

MARGARET: Not yet. What y'all doin' here?

BERTHA MAE: Moral support.

ELLARD: (*Looks like he's harboring some good news.*) Margaret, Margaret, shut your eyes and you will get a big surprise. (*MARGARET does. ELLARD tosses a handful of confetti.*) Surprise!! Okay, open your eyes. (*She does.*) I threw confetti on you.

BERTHA MAE: She didn't see it 'cause you told her to close her eyes, knucklehead.

ELLARD: (*On his knees, raking the confetti back into his hand.*) Let's try it again.

BERTHA MAE: Never mind, Ellard, the magic's gone. So, Margaret, have you decided how you're goin' to spend your thousand dollars?

MARGARET: Nobody said nothin' about a *thousand* dollars.

ELLARD: A thousand dollars could really come in handy. Just think what it would be like to take your truck through the car wash and havin' enough money to push the Deluxe Wash button instead of the Economy Wash button. Or bein' able to tip Skeeter down to the barber shop twenty-five cents instead of the regular nickel. Should I go on or do you get my point?

BERTHA MAE: Ellard, the only point you got is the one on top of your head. (*To MARGARET.*) Where's Virgil?

MARGARET: At work pickin' up nails.

BERTHA MAE: Let me guess, he knocked over the nail barrel again.

MARGARET: Third time this month. (*There's a knock at the door.*) Oh no, that's them, and Virgil ain't here yet.

BERTHA MAE: I'm as nervous as you are, Margaret.

MARGARET: Come stand by me.

BERTHA MAE: Ellard, grab some more confetti. (*He does.*)

MARGARET answers the door and there stands HERMAN, Lickskillit's infamous sign maker. He holds a recent sign he has painted.

HERMAN: Mornin', Margaret.

MARGARET: Herman, what in the world brings you out this way? Shouldn't you be paintin' signs?

HERMAN: That's why I'm here. I finished paintin' that sign Virgil ordered.

ELLARD: Mornin', Herman.

MARGARET: Oh good, let me see it. (*HERMAN sets it on the sofa or the chair so the audience can plainly see it.*)

Private Property?

No.

Hunting Allowed.

MARGARET: How much do we owe you?

HERMAN: Dollar fifty.

MARGARET: The wood cost more than that.

ELLARD: Mornin', Herman.

MARGARET: How in the world are you makin' a livin' chargin' such low prices?

HERMAN: I supplement my income by proofreadin' and repaintin' signs around the area.

BERTHA MAE: But ain't you the only sign painter *in* Lickskillit?

HERMAN: Yes ma'am.

MARGARET: You pay YOURSELF to proofread and repaint signs that YOU painted?

HERMAN: (*Shrugs.*) It pays the bills.

ELLARD: Mornin', Herman.

MARGARET: (*Shaking her head.*) I'll get your money. (*She digs through her purse that's sitting on a table.*)

BERTHA MAE: (*Reading the sign aloud.*) Private Property? No. Huntin' Allowed. Wait a minute, Herman, somethin' ain't right. This makes it sound like it's okay to hunt on their land.

HERMAN: It does?

ELLARD: Mornin', Herman.

BERTHA MAE: The punctuation is all wrong. It should say, (*Pointing to the sign.*) Private Property. No Huntin' Allowed. Do you see what I mean? (*HERMAN stares at the sign, thinking.*) See? Take out the question mark and the period and you'll be fine.

HERMAN: Private Property. No Huntin' Allowed. Boy, am I a knucklehead. I'll take it back to my shop and fix it right up.

ELLARD: Mornin', Herman.

MARGARET: Sorry you have to go to the extr'y trouble.

HERMAN: That's okay. At least it's more money for my proofreadin' business.

MARGARET: Here's two dollars, keep the change.

HERMAN: Pay me AFTER I do it right. Tell Virgil I'll have it repainted by tomorrow. (*Turns and sees ELLARD.*) Mornin', Ellard.

ELLARD: Mornin', Herman.

MARGARET: (*To HERMAN.*) Much obliged to you, Herman. Bye.

He exits with the sign. ELLARD crosses to the door, throws up a friendly wave and shouts.

ELLARD: Bye, Herman! (*MAMA and PAPA SLUDGE enter through the kitchen door. MAMA SLUDGE carries an old fashioned camera.*)

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Looking around.*) We're here, Margaret. Let me see that giant check!

MARGARET: Mama Sludge? Daddy Sludge? What brings y'all over here this time of day?

PAPA SLUDGE: The same '67 Chevy we've had for a hundred years.

BERTHA MAE: Come on, Ellard, let's go rip up some paper towels so you'll have confetti to throw on the lottery folks. (*She pulls ELLARD to the kitchen.*)

MARGARET: But, Bertha Mae!

MAMA SLUDGE: Ain't they been here with your lottery check?

MARGARET: Not yet. What if y'all come back in a couple of hours and you can see it then.

MAMA SLUDGE: Nonsense, I want to be here when you see how much money you've won?

PAPA SLUDGE: Speakin' of how much money you've won, how much money v'you won?

MARGARET: We don't know yet.

MAMA SLUDGE: Law, law, what if it's somethin' as crazy as one thousand dollars?

MARGARET: We don't reckon we're goin' to win a **thousand** dollars.

MAMA SLUDGE: You don't know that you ain't.

MARGARET: (*Hinting.*) Mama Sludge, maybe it shouldn't be real crowded in here when the lottery people get here?

MAMA SLUDGE: Don't worry, honey, it's just the three of us.

MARGARET: Three?

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Shouting back through the front door.*) Come on in Mama!

MARGARET: You brought Grandma with you? (*BERTHA MAE and ELLARD reenter ripping up paper towels.*) We're back, Margaret.

MARGARET: Listen, ever'body, I really think that me and Virgil need to be—

MAMA SLUDGE: Margaret, you got to play like somebody has up and kicked the bucket.

MARGARET: What do you mean?

MAMA SLUDGE: The only way we can get that stubborn mama of mine out of the house anymore is to tell her we're goin' to a funeral.

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Passing out tissues.*) Ever'body's got to act real sad, so start boo-hoo'in'.

BERTHA MAE: Mama, I can't believe you told Grandma somebody died.

MAMA SLUDGE: Desperate times call for desperate maters. (*Turns to PAPA SLUDGE.*) Did you hide her glasses?

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Pats his pocket.*) They're nice and safe.

MAMA SLUDGE: Good. She can't see two foot in front of her without her glasses.

MARGARET: Who does she think passed away?

MAMA SLUDGE: A close friend of yours that just up and killed over while pullin' weeds in her garden.

GRANDMA enters wearing a black dress, black hat with a black veil hanging in front of her face. She's crying into a tissue with one hand and feeling out in front of her with the other.

GRANDMA: (*Singing.*) Shall we gather at the river...the beautiful, the beautiful riverrrrr.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Rushing to her.*) Come on in, Mama, that's right. I know, it's such a sad, sad occasion.

GRANDMA: (*Looking around without her glasses.*) Looks like they redecorated the funeral parlor. (*Hand up in the air.*) May the Good Lord comfort in this their time of need.

MAMA SLUDGE: Amen, Mama. Uh, Mama, Margaret is right here.

GRANDMA: Margaret? Oh, honey I'm so sorry 'bout your friend passin' to the great beyond. What was her name?

MARGARET: Mama Sludge, the lottery people will be here—

GRANDMA: The Lotterys? Oh, yes, I remember them. Nice family. I'm not wearin' my spectacles so you'll have to lead me to the casket.

MARGARET: Casket?

GRANDMA: What you think they laid her in, a wheelbarrow? (*Starts singing "Shall We Gather at the River." While she does MAMA SLUDGE quickly whispers to MARGARET. MARGARET nods in agreement then forces ELLARD to lie down on the sofa. PAPA SLUDGE swings ELLARD'S legs up on the sofa.*)

BERTHA MAE: (*Leading GRANDMA to the back of the sofa.*) Grandma, the dearly departed is right over here.

GRANDMA: This is such a sad time for our community. (*Sings.*) The beautiful, the beautiful riverrrrr. (*MAMA SLUDGE motions for everyone to sing along.*) Gather with the saints at the river that flows by the throne of God. (*ELLARD sits up singing, but BERTHA MAE hits him in the chest and causes him to lie back down. GRANDMA looks down at ELLARD.*) Ohhhhhh, she looks real natural. I'm shore she is up there knockin' at heaven's gate this very minute. (*There's a knock at the door. GRANDMA shouts.*) Open up them pearly gates, Saint Peter, she's a friend of the family!

MARGARET: (*Pulling PAPA SLUDGE to the side.*) Daddy Sludge, I hate to be rude, but that's probably the lottery people.

PAPA SLUDGE: Don't worry, Margaret, I'll get ever'body in the kitchen.

MARGARET: I'm much obliged.

GRANDMA: (*Hand up in the air, in a preachy mood.*) Ashes to ashes! Dust to dust! We never know when death will be knockin' at OUR door. (*Three more knocks at the front door.*) Please tell me somebody else heard that.

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Taking her gently by the shoulders and leading her to the kitchen.*) Come on, Mama, we'll go in here so the family can be alone with the dearly departed.

GRANDMA: (*Hand up in the air, singing.*) Oh when the saints come marchin' in, oh when the saints come marchin' in...

PAPA SLUDGE: Amen. (*They exit to the kitchen.*)

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Rushing to the front door.*) The people's here.

MARGARET: Don't answer the door, Virgil ain't here yet.

MAMA SLUDGE: What you goin' to do leave 'em out on the stoop all day?

MARGARET: No. I mean I don't know.

BERTHA MAE: Come on, Ellard, Margaret wants to be by herself.

ELLARD: I can't get up, I'm dead.

BERTHA MAE: Only from the neck up. Let's GO. *(She and ELLARD exit to the kitchen. There are three more knocks at the front door.)*

MARGARET: *(Straightens her dress.)* Come in!

MAMA HOOPER and PAPA HOOPER rush in. PAPA HOOPER wears a t-shirt that reads "Breaker 4-9."

MAMA HOOPER: 'Bout time, my knuckles was startin' to bleed.

MARGARET: Mama, I thought you was the lottery people.

MAMA HOOPER: You mean they ain't come yet?

PAPA HOOPER: They better be here. I gave up a CB radio convention for this silliness.

MAMA HOOPER: There ain't nothin' silly 'bout winnin' a million dollars.

MARGARET: It ain't a million dollars. Mama, ever'body's in the kitchen if y'all want to join them.

PAPA HOOPER: *(Crossing his arms stubbornly.)* I gave up my convention to see the giant check, so I ain't goin' nowhere 'til I see the giant check.

MARGARET: There's some fried chicken in the fridge.

PAPA HOOPER: So, if anybody needs me, I'll be in the kitchen. *(He exits to the kitchen.)*

MARGARET: Mama, keep him in there 'til I give the all clear.

MAMA HOOPER: Law law.

She exits as VIRGIL rushes through the front door. His fingers are covered with bandages.

VIRGIL: Are they here yet? Am I on time? How much money did we win?

MARGARET: No. Yes. And I don't know. Are your fingers okay?

VIRGIL: Pickin' up nails in a hurry ain't a very smart ideal.

MARGARET: Come to the back, I got a jacket laid out for you.

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VIRGIL: What if the lottery people come?

MARGARET: We're goin' to the next room, not Suburbia Russia.
(They exit. There's a pause then Bertha Mae sticks her head through the kitchen door.)

BERTHA MAE: *(Whispers.)* Margaret? Virgil? *(She tiptoes in.)* Come on, Ellard. Ellard? *(ELLARD crawls in on his hands and knees and stops beside her but she doesn't see him.)*

ELLARD: I'm down here.

BERTHA MAE: You scared me to death. Be quiet and follow me, we can watch the action from over here. *(They tiptoe across the stage and hide underneath a large quilt or blanket. There's a knock at the door.)*

ELLARD: *(Removing the quilt.)* I'll get it.

BERTHA MAE: *(Pulls him back down.)* Sit down! *(She covers them up again. VIRGIL and MARGARET rush in. VIRGIL now wears a blazer. MARGARET holds the baby.)*

VIRGIL: There they are. Where's the baby?

MARGARET: In my arms, knucklehead.

VIRGIL: How do I look?

MARGARET: Truth or a fib.

VIRGIL: Fib.

MARGARET: You look wonderful!

VIRGIL: Much obliged.

He opens the door and there stands HERMAN holding the large check with its back showing, D.J. holding a microphone and BURMA who wears large headphones and holds a metal box.

D.J.: Howdy, howdy, howdy! Is this the Sludge household?

VIRGIL: *(With a big grin.)* It shore enough is, D.J.

D.J.: And are you Virgil Sludge?

VIRGIL: *(Smiling.)* I shore enough am and I'm happier than a dead 'possum baskin' in the sunshine.

D.J.: And is this Margaret Sludge, your little wife?

VIRGIL: Well, my wife, yeah.

D.J.: *(Turns to BURMA.)* Burma, are we on?

BURMA: What's that?

D.J.: *(Shouting.)* Are we on the air, yet?!

BURMA: Yep, we are LIVE and on the air!!

D.J.: *(To VIRGIL and MARGARET.)* Virgil and Margaret, we are live on the air with WYAM radio. Lickskillit's favorite and only comin' at you with 99.9 watts of power. And we are standin' in the livin' room of Virgil and Margaret Sludge, winners of Lickskillit's lottery. How does it feel to win this money, Mr. Sludge?

VIRGIL: You know when you have an itch in the middle of your back and you can't reach it and it's driving you crazy and you go to a door frame and rub your back up and down against it and you hit the spot? It feels just like that.

D.J.: *(Laughs.)* You heard it here first, folks, it feels REAL good. And Mrs. Sludge, how does it make YOU feel?

MARGARET: *(Grabs the microphone and pulls it in to her.)* You know when you have a itch in the middle of your back—

D.J.: *(Takes his microphone back.)* Alrighty then, it feels extry good. And what about you, little feller? *(He puts the microphone inside the baby's blanket. Sound effect: BURP.)* You heard it here first, folks, BURP!

HERMAN: *(Waving at them over the check.)* Hey, Margaret, hey Virgil!

VIRGIL: Herman, what on earth are you doin' here?

D.J.: They let me do the letterin' for the giant check. Sorry that nobody from the lottery committee could be here to present this, but Ethel's on vacation and Melvin tripped over his baby.

HERMAN: He didn't trip over his baby, he tripped on spilled GRAVY. Cracked his fibula. Anyway, they sent us over to do the honors.

D.J.: So, Sludge family, are you ready to see just how many smackaroos you have won?

VIRGIL: Is it a thousand dollars?

MARGARET: *(Clinging to VIRGIL'S arm.)* Oh, Virgil, I think I might just kill over if we won a thousand dollars.

D.J.: Virgil Sludge, Margaret Sludge, you have won yourselves— *(As HERMAN turns the check around.)* Ten thousand clams!

BURMA blows a whistle in VIRGIL'S ear while HERMAN tosses up about five pieces of confetti and a short piece of fanfare music plays. VIRGIL and MARGARET let out happy screams. MARGARET hands the baby to D.J. and hugs VIRGIL. ELLARD and BERTHA MAE are peeping from beneath the quilt. ELLARD throws confetti into the air.

VIRGIL: (*Turns to D.J.*) Let me get this right, did you say ten **thousand** clams?

D.J.: Ten THOUSAND clamaroos! Virgil, Margaret, your lives are changed forever! (*BURMA blows the whistle in D.J.'S ear. He grabs it from her.*) Let's hear from the happy couple.

MARGARET: (*Into the microphone.*) Ten thousand dollars might be a lot of money, D.J., but one thing's for sure, me and Virgil will always be the simple, unassumin' country folk we are right now. (*BERTHA MAE and ELLARD jump out from their hiding place.*)

BERTHA MAE: (*Running to MARGARET with open arms.*) Margaret, I'm so happy for you!

MARGARET: Y'all get out of here, can't you see we're on the radio?

ELLARD: But –

VIRGIL: You heard what she said, GO! (*They drop their heads and exit out the front door.*)

MARGARET: (*Back to the microphone.*) Yes sir, we will be the same sweet people we've always been. And I'll keep on cleanin', bakin' and takin' care of our little baby and Virgil will keep on workin' down at the hardware store just like always.

VIRGIL: (*Grabs the microphone and pulls it to his mouth.*) No I won't, I'm quittin' my job.

MARGARET: You're quittin' your job? (*Beat, then he and MARGARET scream a happy scream, hug, and dance.*)

VIRGIL: (*Into the microphone.*) But Margaret's right, we will always be the simple and lovin' folks we have always been. (*The HOOPERS and the SLUDGES run from the kitchen.*)

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Running for VIRGIL.*) Oh, baby we're so proud for yoooooooo!

VIRGIL: (*Covering the microphone.*) Mama, please! Can't y'all see we're doin' somethin' important here!

MAMA HOOPER: But –

MARGARET: Mama, not now! Take the baby and go to the kitchen! (*MAMA HOOPER takes the baby.*)

VIRGIL: (*Back to the microphone.*) Anyway, as I was sayin' before I was rudely interrupted, we will still be the sweet, friendly and carin' people Lickskillit has always known and loved. Bologna and spam forever!

MARGARET: *(Pulls the microphone to her.)* Bologna and spam and fried cornbread. *(They dance with one another as HERMAN dances behind the giant check. While this is going on, BURMA whispers into D.J.'S ear.)*

D.J.: *(To VIRGIL and MARGARET.)* Wait a minute! Hold your horses! *(To BURMA as everything grows quiet.)* Burma, tell me you're joshin'. *(BURMA shakes her head and shouts into the microphone.)*

BURMA: I ain't joshin' a tall, D.J.!

D.J.: Well, flip the switch for Pete's sake. *(Turns back to VIRGIL and MARGARET.)* Okay, ever'body, we wasn't on the air 'cause Burma forgot to flip the switch so get back in your original positions.

VIRGIL: *(Turns to the SLUDGES and HOOPERS as he points to the kitchen.)* GO! *(They sadly do.)*

BURMA: Three, two... *(Flips the switch.)* and we're on the air!

D.J.: *(To VIRGIL and MARGARET.)* Virgil and Margaret, we are live on the air with WYAM radio. Lickskillit's favorite and only comin' at you with 99.9 watts of power. And we are standin' in the livin' room of Virgil and Margaret Sludge... *(Banjo music fades in and the lights fade to a BLACKOUT.)*

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *It's a few days later. We're back inside the Sludge's empty living room. There's a knock at the door. ISABELLE enters wearing a homemade maid's uniform, holding the baby. She places the baby inside the crib and answers the door. There stands BERTHA MAE and ELLARD.*

BERTHA MAE: *(Surprised.)* Oh, howdy, Isabelle.

ISABELLE: Do y'all have an appointment?

ELLARD: Shore do, real nice one over the Crawford's garage.

BERTHA MAE: *(To ELLARD.)* Appointment, Ellard, not apartment.

(To ISABELLE.) Of course we don't have an appointment. I'm Margaret's best friend.

ELLARD: *(Putting his arm around BERTHA MAE'S shoulder.)* And I'm Bertha Mae's duncey yet adorable fiancé'. *(Pronounces it "fee an' see.")*

ISABELLE: Sorry, y'all can't see the Sludge's without an appointment. *(Starts to shut the door again.)*

BERTHA MAE: *(Pushing back.)* You ain't goin' to shut the door in our face are you?

ISABELLE: Only if you keep standin' there. *(The phone rings.)* Hold on a minute.

BERTHA MAE: *(Sarcastic.)* Oh, don't worry, we're a-holdin'.

ISABELLE: *(Into the phone.)* Hello? Just a minute and I'll see. *(She covers the mouth piece and yells toward the kitchen.)* Mar- I mean, Mrs. Sludge? *(Pause.)* Mrs. Sludge, telephone! *(She sets the receiver on the table and turns to BERTHA MAE.)* Y'all stay right there. *(She exits to the kitchen.)*

BERTHA MAE: Can you believe they went and got Isabelle Swat for a maid? And she's actin' so snooty.

ELLARD: Yeah, she didn't say one word about my new Hot Wheel.

MARGARET: *(Entering talking to herself.)* Can't get anything done around here without the phone ringin' off the hook. *(She doesn't acknowledge her guests, but just picks up the phone.)* Hey, Mama.

MAMA HOOPER: *(Enters extreme stage left or stage right.)* Well, what do you know, she's alive.

MARGARET: Sorry, Mama, I been busy.

MAMA HOOPER: Dolly said she can do my hair at eleven-thirty instead of twelve tomorrow, so I thought that would give us time to grab a quick bite after she's done.

MARGARET: I plum forgot about your hair appointment. Me and Virgil are doin' a interview at the radio station tomorrow.

MAMA HOOPER: But we always go on Wednesdays.

MARGARET: Hold on. (*Covering the mouth piece.*) Bertha Mae, could you drive Mama to the beauty shop tomorrow?

BERTHA MAE: I promised Ellard I'd take him to get his legs waxed.

MARGARET: (*Into the phone.*) Mama, Bertha Mae said she could take you.

BERTHA MAE: Margaret Hooper Sludge!

MAMA HOOPER: But Margaret, Wednesdays are mine and your day.

MARGARET: We'll go next week after me and Virgil get our picture took for the Lickskillit Monthly.

MAMA HOOPER: Ever since y'all won that money, y'all been actin' –

MARGARET: So, I'll talk at you later, Mama, bye. (*MAMA HOOPER exits.*)

BERTHA MAE: (*Rushes to MARGARET.*) Why did you do that? Call her back and tell her I can't take her.

MARGARET: (*Picking up the receiver.*) Okay, but if you don't want to earn ten dollars.

BERTHA MAE: (*Crosses quickly to MARGARET and hangs up the phone.*) Ten dollars? Just to take your mama to the beauty shop? In that case— (*BERTHA MAE turns to MARGARET and holds out her palm.*) I'd like my money right now, please.

MARGARET: Bertha Mae, I'm offended.

BERTHA MAE: And I'm broke, so pay up, sister.

MARGARET: (*As she sits on the sofa and picks up a small writing pad off the coffee table.*) Greedy, greedy, greedy. You know what the Good Book says about greed, don't you?

BERTHA MAE: Of course I do. A greedy man brings trouble to his family, but she who does a favor, shall get paid up front.

MARGARET: (*Handing her a piece of paper.*) There.

BERTHA MAE: What's this?

MARGARET: I.O.U. As soon as we get our first lottery check, you'll get your ten dollars. (*She rings a cow bell.*) Isabelle!

BERTHA MAE: And that's another thing. I can't believe you hired Isabelle Watts to be your maid.

ISABELLE: *(Entering.)* Yeah?

MARGARET: *(Attempting sophistication.)* Bring us some pork rinds and bean dip to munch on, please.

ISABELLE: *(Gives a clumsy curtsey.)* Okay, but you're out of bean dip so I'll just mush up some pork and beans with a fork. *(She exits to the kitchen.)*

MARGARET: *(Shouting after her.)* Okay, but add a smidge of mayonnaise to it this time. *(To BERTHA MAE.)* Good help is so hard to train. *(Shouting again to the kitchen.)* And would you check on the baby while you're in there?

BERTHA MAE: *(Pointing to the crib.)* The baby's right there.

MARGARET: Oh, I forgot. *(ISABELLE enters with a bag of pork rinds.)*

ISABELLE: Here, get started on these while I mush up the beans. *(She throws the bag on the coffee table.)*

ELLARD: *(To ISABELLE.)* You got any Kool Aid in there, Isabelle?

MARGARET: We don't drink Kool Aid anymore, Ellard. We can afford the good stuff now.

ELLARD: You mean...?

MARGARET: *(Nodding.)* Hawaiian Punch.

ELLARD: I can't drink Hawaiian Punch, I ain't wearin' a coat and tie. *(ISABELLE shrugs and exits to the kitchen. ELLARD picks up a pork rind.)*

MARGARET: Wait! I got to show you how to eat it first.

BERTHA MAE: We KNOW how to eat pork rinds.

ELLARD: Here, I'll show you. *(He pops a pork rind in his mouth.)*
Mmmmmm, nice and fresh.

MARGARET: No, Ellard, that's what fancy folks call tacky. You're supposed to eat it like this. *(She takes a piece of pork rind in her hand, holds out her pinky and takes a teeny bite of it.)*

BERTHA MAE: Law, Margaret. That would take all night. There's only one sensible way to eat a pork rind. *(Pops one in her mouth.)*

MARGARET: No, no, no! If you're not goin' to dress right, then you're at least goin' to eat in a suffocated manner.

BERTHA MAE: What is THAT supposed to mean?

MARGARET: Well, you're not too bad, Bertha Mae, but look at Ellard.

BERTHA MAE: But that's how he always dresses.

MARGARET: Exactly. It's just a little bit (*Opens up her magazine and peeks inside it.*) what they call uncouth.

BERTHA MAE: What does uncouth mean?

MARGARET: I ain't shore, but it DON'T mean suffocated.

BERTHA MAE: Well, if Ellard is uncouth then Virgil is...uncouth-er. (*VIRGIL enters wearing a bright outfit complete with sunglasses and cane and struts around the room as a song such as "Sharp Dressed Man" plays. The music stops and VIRGIL strikes one last pose.*)

VIRGIL: Well, what you think?

MARGARET: (*Crossing to VIRGIL and dusting his lapel.*) Virgil, you look real swave.

ELLARD: Where was the music comin' from?

VIRGIL: That's surprise number two. (*He reaches through the front door and presents a portable sound system and hands it to ELLARD.*) It's a top of the line music machine. I bought it down at the truck stop.

MARGARET: But Virgil, how did you buy all this before we got our first check?

VIRGIL: (*Shrugs.*) I just give 'em I.O.U.'s (*There's a knock at the door. MARGARET peeps out the window.*)

MARGARET: Virgil, it's them.

VIRGIL: They're early.

BERTHA MAE: Who is it?

MARGARET: (*Taking the baby from the crib.*) Bertha Mae, why don't you and Ellard take the baby out back for a walk? (*Handing the baby to BERTHA MAE.*) Thanks a bunch.

BERTHA MAE: Y'all are actin' weird. Let's go, Ellard.

ELLARD: Y'all are actin' weird. (*ELLARD throws his nose into the air in a snooty fashion as he and BERTHA MAE exit with the baby to the kitchen. MARGARET and VIRGIL rush to the front door.*)

MARGARET: How does my hair look?

VIRGIL: A little frizzy.

MARGARET: (*Running her fingers through it.*) Tell me about it, I had to take four aspirin just to comb it.

VIRGIL: Here goes nothin'. (*VIRGIL opens the door. SUE ANN rushes into the room as her husband, JOHN, stands at the door looking a little slouchy, eating popcorn.*)

SUE ANN: (*Writing something on a small pad as she looks around the room.*) I'm Sue Ann Drake and over there is my husband John. We're here to check you out.

MARGARET: (*Taken aback.*) Won't y'all come in?

SUE ANN: Get in here, John.

JOHN: (*Offering.*) Popcorn anybody?

SUE ANN: (*Rubbing a white-gloved finger across a piece of furniture checking for dust.*) John, I thought I told you to keep that in the car.

VIRGIL: No thanks, John.

SUE ANN: That's MISTER Drake.

VIRGIL: It shore is nice to meet y'all. (*MARGARET elbows him.*) I mean, nice to meet YOU. YOU, not y'all. (*MARGARET elbows him.*) Y'all is so redneck. (*MARGARET elbows him.*) I don't mean y'all is so redneck, I mean the WORD y'all is so redneck. (*MARGARET elbows him.*) That's enough Margaret, you're startin' to bruise my ribs.

MARGARET: We got your phone call that you was payin' us a visit. (*To SUE ANN.*) Won't y'all (*Beat.*) YOU have a seat? Excuse all the Hot Wheels on the floor. (*Picks them up as she speaks sharply to VIRGIL.*) I told you to clean up these cars, (*Through her teeth.*) sweetheart.

VIRGIL: (*Picks some up to.*) I'm sorry, honey bunch. (*To SUE ANN.*) Like we say around here: If the floor ain't clean as glass, please don't fall and bust your...head.

SUE ANN: I don't have time for hillbilly poetry, so let me tell you why we're here. Me and my husband—

JOHN: Her husband, that's me.

SUE ANN: (*Fake smile.*) Quiet, John! As I was sayin', we are members of the W.O.R.L.D Club.

MARGARET: I've heard of that, but I can't remember what the W.O.R.L.D. stands for.

JOHN: Well-Off Rednecks Lickskillit Division. (*Pops a popcorn kernel into his mouth.*)

SUE ANN: Well-Off-RESIDENTS pipsqueak, not rednecks.

VIRGIL: Gollee, Margaret, did you hear that? The W.O.R.L.D. Club.

SUE ANN: Our club is what they call exclusive.

JOHN: Not just anybody can be a member.

SUE ANN: Yes, dear, we all know what EXCLUSIVE means. Here's a Tootsie Roll. *(He takes it and unwraps it.)*

JOHN: Mmmmmm, strawberry. *(He spies a Hot Wheel and picks it up.)*

SUE ANN: The Well-Off-Redne—I mean Residents Club is always open to new membership... *(Slaps BILL'S hand.)* put that down. *(He drops it.)*

MARGARET: Ms. Sue Ann, are you askin' me and Virgil to join your fancy club?

SUE ANN: We're just checkin' to see if you MIGHT have what it takes.

MARGARET: *(Getting excited.)* What exactly does it take?

JOHN: First, you have to have at least ten thousand dollars in the bank.

SUE ANN: *(Handing him another Tootsie Roll.)* I'll handle this. *(JOHN shrugs and unwraps it.)*

VIRGIL: That shore is good timin', we just won ten thousand dollars in the Lickskillit Lottery.

SUE ANN: Don't you think I know that?

JOHN: *(Holding up a Hot Wheel and looking it over.)* Don't you think we know that?

MARGARET: Look, Virgil, I'm gettin' goose pimples at the thought of finally bein' somebody in this county.

VIRGIL: Who would have thought this time last week we would be rubbin' elbows with Lickskillit's finest? It makes me want to brush my teeth— *(MARGARET elbows him.)* AGAIN.

MARGARET: *(Changing the subject.)* Would anyone like some pork rinds?

JOHN: *(Holding out his popcorn bag.)* Put 'em right in here.

SUE ANN: *(Taking a pork rind.)* For Pete's sake, John, remember who you are.

JOHN: I'm a man who ain't had no supper! *(SUE ANN elbows him.)* I mean I HAVEN'T had no dinner. *(He takes a pork rind.)* Much obliged.

SUE ANN: Don't forget. *(She refers to her pinky which is sticking out. BILL rolls his eyes and sticks out his pinky and pops the pork rind in his mouth. SUE ANN takes a paper napkin from MARGARET.)* Now, let's talk about Friday night.

MARGARET: Okay, what about Friday night?

SUE ANN: Freda Fountain will be here at seven o'clock for supper.

MARGARET: You mean Freda Fountain is comin' to MY house? THE Freda Fountain is comin' HERE? Did you hear that, Virgil. Freda Fountain is comin' to OUR house for supper.

VIRGIL: I can't believe my ears! Freda Fountain right here in our humble little home eatin' at OUR supper table. *(Beat, still smiling.)* Who's Freda Fountain?

MARGARET: *(Embarrassed.)* Virgil, Freda Fountain is the one who founded the W.O.R.L.D. Club years ago so that Lickskillit's most high-falutin' would have a place to go and feel like a real somebody.

SUE ANN: And ONLY Freda Fountain decides who is allowed to join the club.

VIRGIL: Don't worry, just wait 'til she gets a gander at my new duds.

SUE ANN: *(Heading for the door.)* Friday night it is.

JOHN: *(Following her.)* Friday night it is.

SUE ANN: Hush, John. *(To MARGARET.)* Don't forget seven o'clock sharp.

VIRGIL: Hold on a second, I just remembered that Friday night is when our family always –

MARGARET: *(Stopping him.)* Friday night will be juuuust fine, Virgil. *(To SUE ANN.)* Y'all get Freda Fountain here and we'll show her what we're made of.

SUE ANN: I guess we'll see, won't we? Let's go, John.

MARGARET: It was nice meetin' y'all. *(VIRGIL elbows her.)* I mean nice meetin' YOU. Both of YOU. Not Y'ALL.

JOHN: Much obliged for the pork rinds.

VIRGIL: Any time. *(They exit. SUE ANN returns immediately with a Hot Wheel.)*

SUE ANN: Sorry, he snuck it out. *(She turns and exits.)*

VIRGIL: *(VIRGIL'S big smile disappears.)* Did you hear that, Margaret? She said Friday night.

MARGARET: Of all nights. We ain't missed a Friday night out with our families since me and you started datin'.

VIRGIL: *(Being strong.)* They're just goin' to have to understand that some things will have to be different now, that's all.

MARGARET: I agree, so when you tell 'em, be shore you say that.

VIRGIL: Nice try, honey bunch, but me and you are goin' to break the news together. *(ISABELLE enters.)*

ISABELLE: Ever'thing's cleaned up in the kitchen, guess I'll scoot on out.

VIRGIL: (*Handing her an I.O.U.*) Here you go. You done good work.

ISABELLE: I.O.U? This stinks. I'm takin' my boyfriend to the movies tonight and it's my turn to pay. Thanks for nothin'.

MARGARET: So, I guess that means you won't be interested in workin' this Friday night.

ISABELLE: If you're kiddin', it ain't funny. If you AIN'T kiddin', it ain't funny a TALL. (*She exits and slams the door.*)

MARGARET: (*To VIRGIL.*) Virgil, we got to have a maid if Freda Fountain is comin'.

VIRGIL: If only real life was like one of them there TV shows where somebody says, "Where are we goin' to find a maid before Friday?" and then somebody walks in unexpected and the audience laughs and laughs.

MARGARET: (*Shrugs.*) Might as well give it a shot. Virgil, where in the world are we goin' to find a maid by Friday?

ELLARD: (*Entering.*) Hey, y'all.

MARGARET: It worked...except I thought the audience would have laughed more.

ELLARD: Virgil, I got some bad news, some good news and some more bad news.

VIRGIL: What's the bad news?

ELLARD: I broke your plow.

VIRGIL: What's the good news?

ELLARD: I fixed your plow?

MARGARET: What's the bad news?

ELLARD: I don't know how to fix plows.

VIRGIL: Looks like you might just have to earn a little extra money so you can buy me a new plow, Ellard.

ELLARD: But how? Sell a sow? Milk a cow? How, oh how will I buy you a plow?

VIRGIL: Hold on there, Dr. Seuss, I think we might be able to find you a job pretty quick. (*BERTHA MAE enters.*)

BERTHA MAE: Ellard, I didn't know where you run off to.

MARGARET: Where's the baby?

BERTHA MAE: He was sleepy, so I laid him on the quilt in the kitchen.

MARGARET: You laid him on my lopsided floor? Law! *(She rushes out through the kitchen door.)*

ELLARD: Bertha Mae, I'm gettin' a job.

BERTHA MAE: Doin' what?

ELLARD: Doin' what, Virgil?

VIRGIL: He's helpin' me and Margaret do somethin' Friday night.

BERTHA MAE: Before or after we go eat?

VIRGIL: Ellard, look at that, I think Bertha Mae wants to help you help us.

ELLARD: That shore is sweet of you, pumpkin.

BERTHA MAE: Huh? *(MARGARET enters with the baby.)*

MARGARET: Thank goodness. I caught him just as he was rollin' 'cross the threshold.

VIRGIL: Margaret, I think we're set for Friday night. *(Standing between BERTHA MAE and ELLARD with his arms around their shoulders.)* Ain't that right, my sweet family and friends?

MARGARET: Ellard, Bertha Mae, I am much obliged.

ELLARD: That okay.

BERTHA MAE: Yeah, don't mention it.

VIRGIL: We will need you here by four. *(Ushering them through the front door.)* Bye.

BERTHA MAE: But –

VIRGIL: Sorry, I done said, bye. BYE! *(He slams the door behind them, crosses to the phone, picks up the receiver and presents it to MARGARET.)* Here you go, my love. And while you call the folks, *(Taking the baby.)* we men are goin' for a little stroll to check out that plow. Bye.

MARGARET: But, Virgil!

VIRGIL: Sorry, I done said bye! *(He exits to the kitchen.)*

MARGARET: *(Dials the phone as she sighs heavily.)* Here goes nothin'. *(A phone rings as MAMA SLUDGE enters with a towel wrapped around her head (Or shower cap.) and wearing a fluffy bathrobe and house shoes. She holds a receiver.)*

MAMA SLUDGE: Hello?

MARGARET: Mama Sludge, it's Margaret. *(There's banging back stage.)*

MAMA SLUDGE: Hey, Margaret, I just got out of the shower. (*Shouts to backstage.*) Harley Wayne, quit that bangin' while I'm on the phone! I'm back, Margaret.

MARGARET: Mama Sludge, I'm just goin' to come right out and say it, it seems that somethin' has come up Friday.

MAMA SLUDGE: You mean in your garden? What came up - tomatoes, green beans? (*More banging backstage.*)

MARGARET: No, nothin's come up in the garden yet.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Shouting.*) Harley Wayne, I mean it! If you don't quit, I'm goin' to stick that hammer up your -

MARGARET: Mama Sludge, we won't be able to make it Friday night.

MAMA SLUDGE: You won't be able to bake what? Are you wantin' to bake a cake?

MARGARET: No, ma'am, I was talkin' about - (*PAPA SLUDGE enters.*)

PAPA SLUDGE: Who's that?

MAMA SLUDGE: Margaret.

PAPA SLUDGE: Let me see that. (*Into receiver.*) Margaret, Bertha Mae stopped by and said Ellard busted Virgil's garden plow.

MARGARET: Yeah, Papa Sludge, but Virgil's goin' to get a new one. Could you put Mama Sludge back on, please?

PAPA SLUDGE: Tell him he won't have to buy a new one, I'll fix it with my hammer.

MARGARET: Hold on a minute, somebody else is callin'. (*MAMA HOOPER enters the opposite side of the stage holding her own phone.*) Hello?

MAMA HOOPER: Margaret, I'm makin' meatloaf if you and Virgil want to come over for supper.

MARGARET: I don't know Mama, we got a lot goin' on right now. Hold on a minute. (*Click.*) Mama Sludge?

PAPA SLUDGE: Papa Sludge.

MARGARET: Could you put Mama Sludge back on, please? It's about Friday night.

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Receiver to his chest, shouting.*) Bernice, Margaret wasn't done talkin' with you! (*Into the phone.*) Where y'all plannin' to take us Friday night?

MARGARET: That's what I was callin' about. Hold on. (*Click.*) Mama, you still there?

MAMA HOOPER: Yeah, but I got to hurry, the meatloaf should be about done.

MARGARET: I wanted to talk to you about Friday night.

MAMA HOOPER: Where y'all takin' us?

MARGARET: That's just it. Somethin's come up.

MAMA HOOPER: Already? What was it, tomatoes? Green beans?

MARGARET: No, Mama...hold on, I got the Sludge's on the other line.
(*Click.*) Mama Sludge?

PAPA SLUDGE: Still me. She said to tell you she'll be right back. Did you tell Virgil I'll come fix his plow?

MARGARET: Virgil ain't here. Would it be alright with you if we didn't eat out this Friday night?

PAPA SLUDGE: (*Shrugs.*) Okay with me.

MARGARET: And it wouldn't make you mad?

PAPA SLUDGE: Not a tall.

MARGARET: That shore is good to hear. (*MAMA SLUDGE reenters and grabs the phone.*)

MAMA SLUDGE: Sorry, Margaret, I had to hide Harley Wayne's power tools.

MARGARET: Did Papa Sludge tell you what I was callin' about?

MAMA SLUDGE: Hold on. (*Covers the mouthpiece.*) What's Margaret callin' about?

PAPA SLUDGE: Says she wants us to come to her place and eat Friday night instead of goin' out.

MAMA SLUDGE: (*Into the phone.*) Yeah Margaret, he just told me.

MARGARET: Are you okay with that? (*Crosses her fingers.*)

MAMA SLUDGE: Law, yeah, it will be nice to stay in for a change.

MARGARET: Oh, good. Hold on a minute. (*Click.*) Mama?

PAPA HOOPER: Nope, this is your daddy. She's checkin' her meatloaf.

MARGARET: Oh, hey, Daddy. The reason I was callin' –

PAPA HOOPER: Hold on, I'm gettin' a beep. (*Click.*) Hello?

MAMA SLUDGE: Papa Hooper is Louise there?

PAPA HOOPER: She's in the kitchen.

MAMA SLUDGE: Well, tell her Margaret just called.

PAPA HOOPER: I got Margaret on the phone right now.

MAMA SLUDGE: So she told you she's cookin' Friday night instead of us goin' out?



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