

The \$4 Million Dollar Giveaway

All are gathered to eagerly hear their bequeaths from the will of Jesse. Each with his or her own, mostly desperate need. Two of them are going to get checks for \$2 million each. Which will it be? Just one problem - - - Jesse is not dead!

And for the audience, that is not the only surprise in this engaging tale with many twists. Ironic, amusing and poignant. Your audience will be riveted to the well-drawn characters.

4M, 3F

Great Stage Publishing

The \$4 Million Giveaway



*A mysterious rich man offers
\$4 million to his "friends", but - -
there's a catch!*

by
Art Shulman

Great Stage Publishing

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THE \$4 MILLION GIVEAWAY

by

Art Shulman

**Perusal
Only
NOT FOR
PRODUCTION**

THE \$4 MILLION GIVEAWAY was first produced on January 18, 2008 at the Lonny Chapman Group Repertory Theater, North Hollywood, California.

It ran for eight weeks, and was the theater's most profitable play per performance over the most recent three years.

The play was directed by Kristina Lloyd. Set design was by Chris Winfield, Kristina Lloyd, and Nick Leland.

The play opened with the following cast. In order of appearance:

JESSE MORGAN	Chris Winfield
KIMBERLY FARRELL	Alyse Courtney
JENNIFER SCOTT	Renee Gorsey
KEN LARRICK	Charles O'Hair
KARL BENSON	Richard Tirrell
WOODROW PARIS	Disraeli Ellison
EMILY SCOTT	Trisha Hershberger

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

JESSE MORGAN	Age 45-55. He is quite thin, and has lost hair.
KIMBERLY FARRELL	A very attractive attorney, age 28-30.
JENNIFER SCOTT	A woman about Jesse's age, or a few years younger, who drinks too much
KEN LARRICK	A charmer, Jesse's age
KARL BENSON	A man in his 60's who has supposedly found religion
WOODROW PARIS	A streetperson, age 30-70
EMILY SCOTT	Jennifer's slightly retarded daughter, age 24

SETTING: A suite in The Knickerbocker Arms, a five star hotel in New York City. There is an elegant living room, a bathroom, and a connecting bedroom with a television.

On a table in the living room is the remnants of a leftover turkey sandwich.

TIME: 1:45 pm on a rainy Thursday afternoon in March. The present.

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ACT 1

AT RISE: In the bedroom, JESSE is on the phone, in his underwear.

JESSE

I give up. What is the difference between a snowman and a snow woman?... Very clever... Your son told you this riddle?... I know he likes me... Tell him that if he wants, I'll have a catch with him when I get back. I used to play football.

(KIMBERLY enters from the bathroom in her slip, holding JESSE's shirt, and playfully tosses it at him. SHE points at her wrist, indicating HE needs to get going. SHE exits to the bathroom.)

Tim, does the judge know I'll actually lose money on this project? ... Well, would you tell him I'm in New York and we'll fly back tomorrow... Also, please ask the head of the Zoning Board to call me here at the Knickerbocker Arms... I'm feeling well enough. Thanks for asking. Goodbye.

(KIMBERLY re-enters and starts to dress. HE does as well.)

Tim says the Zoning Board has filed for an injunction to stop the project. A small group of rich bastards, afraid low income housing anywhere near them will destroy "the quality of life as they know it".

KIMBERLY

What do you have against rich folks?

JESSE

Nothing. I'm a rich folk myself, aren't I? And I didn't get rich by allowing investments to go down the toilet.

KIMBERLY

You are losing money on this project.

JESSE

Building decent housing for those who can't otherwise afford it is not throwing money down the drain, even if I lose money. I'm allowed to use my money for pro bono purposes once in a while.

KIMBERLY

If they stop the project in the next few days you stand a chance of losing most of your fortune. You're overleveraged at the moment.

JESSE

I wouldn't worry.

KIMBERLY

Why don't you forget about the project? It'll take years before it's completed.

JESSE

I should compromise my principles because my time's running out?

KIMBERLY

Are you spearheading this project out of principle, or out of spite because they voted you down for membership at their country club?

JESSE

Because of all the liberal causes I support. Who is the largest contributor to the Sierra Club in the county? Kimberly, do you know the difference between a snowman and a snowwoman?

KIMBERLY

Snowballs?

JESSE

How did you know?

KIMBERLY

I was a juvenile at one time.

JESSE

Now for your reward.... Bzzzz...

KIMBERLY

They'll be here any minute.

JESSE

It takes but a moment to play Buzzer-Buzzer.

KIMBERLY

Jesse, I am a grown woman and your lead attorney, not your plaything.

JESSE

Kimberly, you are my personal attorney and my dearest... girlfriend. Not to mention masseuse.

KIMBERLY

And your valet.

JESSE

A good friend will humor her good friend when he requires it. Especially when he won't be around that much longer. Today I feel like enjoying life. I've been looking forward to today.

KIMBERLY

You are acting very frisky.

JESSE.

You beat me at Buzzer-Buzzer last time. Now I'm gonna win.

KIMBERLY

You get more fun from Buzzer-Buzzer than from making love.

(KIMBERLY raises her arms straight up. JESSE makes a buzzing sound as he slowly moves a pointed finger to KIMBERLY. Finally, he tickles her..)

I win again. Didn't laugh before your buzzer touched me. I haven't lost in weeks. Shall we play a different game next time?

JESSE

A different game shall be played here shortly. Now, why don't you go out there so we can check the set up again.

(KIMBERLY goes to the living room and walks about as JESSE turns on the television with a remote controller.)

Okay, walk around. That's it.

KIMBERLY

Testing, testing. One.

(SHE crosses to an area where a microphone is hidden.)

Two.

(KIMBERLY looks into the camera hidden in the track lighting, and pulls up her blouse.)

Three!

JESSE

I can see everything.

(JESSE enters the living room, looking at his pocket watch. KIMBERLY notices.)

KIMBERLY

I haven't seen that watch before.

JESSE

I've had it a while. I just haven't worn it recently.

KIMBERLY

It makes you seem older.

(JESSE places the pocket watch in his pocket.)

JESSE

It makes me feel like I'm in control.

KIMBERLY

I don't consider your `game' very admirable.

JESSE

How can you not admire a man for seeking to win inner peace?

KIMBERLY

That sounds sanctimonious.

JESSE

I mean it, Kimberly. I've carried grudges too long. I've got to rid myself of the poisons.

KIMBERLY

And just what is "inner peace"?

JESSE

It's the calmness that comes from attaining a sense of resolution with your life.

KIMBERLY

And exactly how are you going to win inner peace today?

JESSE

The winning is in the playing.

KIMBERLY

The playing?

JESSE

Just seeing them together... interacting... will satisfy me.

KIMBERLY

I'm not sure I like the part of you that thinks that's winning.

JESSE

You like that part of me as well as the rest of me. You admire my mystery.

KIMBERLY

No I don't! And I don't think you're all that sure about what you want from today.

JESSE

I am sure. You want a drink? I do.

KIMBERLY

You have no appetite for food.

JESSE

You should be glad I have the appetite for anything, given my condition.

KIMBERLY

Jesse, the doctors say you shouldn't have alcohol.

JESSE

If the doctors knew what they were talking about I wouldn't be in the condition I am. Alcohol is no more poisonous to my system than the chemicals they're already shooting through me.

KIMBERLY

Help yourself! Be right back! Gotta pee!

JESSE

What did you say?

KIMBERLY

"Gotta wee-wee."

JESSE

It's more...

JESSE AND KIMBERLY

...delicate sounding.

(SHE exits to the bathroom.)

JESSE

Where is it?

KIMBERLY (o.s.)

Where's what?

JESSE

The tequila. Where did you hide it?

KIMBERLY (o.s.)

(Teasing)
You can't find it?

JESSE

It's not easy to find something you hide, Kimberly.

KIMBERLY (o.s.)

I'd say you're the one good at hiding things. You haven't told me all you could about your guests today.

JESSE

I told you enough. You'll learn more about them soon.

KIMBERLY (o.s.)

You'd think after three years, you'd trust me more.

JESSE

If I didn't trust you, you wouldn't be here.

KIMBERLY

(Entering)

I may not be here as long as you think. The things you ask me to do and accept...

JESSE

What are you talking about?

KIMBERLY

The fact that if you can't trust me enough with your major secrets, then I may not be the right person for you.

JESSE

I've told you the most important things. And you are the right person for me.

KIMBERLY

Then you may not be the right person for me.

(JESSE nears where the tequila is hidden)

JESSE

This is all nonsense. Where's the tequila?

KIMBERLY

You're getting hot.

JESSE

I am not. We just made love.

KIMBERLY

I'm talking about how close you are to the tequila. Hot, cold.

JESSE

Would you please tell me where it is!

KIMBERLY

The desk.

(JESSE finds a deck of cards in the desk and leaves it out. HE finds the tequila, then notices the leftover sandwich.)

JESSE

What should we do with this sandwich?

KIMBERLY

Why don't you finish it?

JESSE

I don't eat other people's leftovers.

KIMBERLY

Why did you let the security guard eat here, anyway? You are not required to feed the security, especially from room service.

JESSE

He was hungry and I can afford it.

KIMBERLY

What if some of your guests don't show?

JESSE

They'll be here. Our invitation clearly said to be here promptly at 2 o'clock.

(A knock on the door. KIMBERLY takes the drink from JESSE before HE enters the bedroom, and sets it down. After JESSE exits, KIMBERLY opens the door to JENNIFER. Meanwhile, JESSE lies on the bed, and observes what happens through closed circuit television.)

KIMBERLY

Hello.

JENNIFER

I'm Jennifer Scott. Am I in the right place for the reading of Mr. Morgan's will? I left the "invitation" at home.

KIMBERLY

It's the right place. Come in please. I'll take your coat and umbrella.

(KIMBERLY hangs up JENNIFER's coat, and puts away her umbrella.)

JENNIFER

The rain's fierce out there. Why is there an armed guard stationed at the door?

KIMBERLY

There are some valuable items here. By the way, I'm Kimberly Farrell.

JENNIFER

My husband's personal secretary?

KIMBERLY

His attorney. And he's your ex-husband.

JENNIFER

My former ex-husband. I have a new ex-husband. Perfect record -- two marriages, two divorces. I'd die to have some of this furniture in my apartment. Sometimes I feel sorry for myself. Champagne taste and table wine budget. (*Beat*) You must be a good attorney. Jesse must have been rich enough to have hired someone top notch.

KIMBERLY

Top five percent of my class. Law Review.

JENNIFER

And you're so young, hardly older than my daughter.

KIMBERLY

(Suppressing surprise)
You have a daughter my age?

JENNIFER

Jesse didn't tell you?

(JESSE, watching the TV, reacts.)

KIMBERLY

No... *(Changing subject)* Care for something to drink? Coffee? Soft drink? Tequila?

JENNIFER

(With the impulse to accept, then thinking better of it)
Uh... no, thanks. Not just yet. I was surprised to learn of Jesse's passing, though to me it's as if he's been dead since he left me. Where is my... ex-husband? His body, where is it buried?

KIMBERLY

Your ex-husband's body is in the bedroom. You'll see his... body in a while.

JENNIFER

His ashes are in the bedroom?

KIMBERLY

Mr. Morgan hasn't been cremated. *(Looking into the hidden camera)* Yet!

JENNIFER

Why is his body in the bedroom?

KIMBERLY

That will become clear in a while.

JENNIFER

For eighteen years I had no idea where he was, if he was even alive... I was wondering why we're not reading the will at your office.

KIMBERLY

Mr. Morgan's wishes. Besides, my office is in California. Please have patience.

JENNIFER

I have patience. I also have a hell of a lot of anger toward him. He did desert us. I'm here only because of that ten thousand dollars, with a letter advising there was a lot more money to come. Why did it insist that I come alone, warning disinheritance if I brought someone along? Not that I had anyone to bring along.

KIMBERLY

Your daughter?

JENNIFER

She wouldn't have been interested in a reading of his will. I haven't even told the poor thing her father's actually dead. Is he laid out on the bed? Or is he in a coffin?

KIMBERLY

Right now I expect he's on the bed.

(JESSE laughs to himself.)

JENNIFER

Fine place to see my ex-husband for the first time in all these years -- a corpse in a hotel room.

KIMBERLY

A suite at the Knickerbocker Arms.

JENNIFER

We never stayed in places like the Knickerbocker Arms when we were married.

KIMBERLY

Jesse... Mr. Morgan didn't have money then?

JENNIFER

No. He must have lived in a mansion.

KIMBERLY

Depends on your definition of mansion.

JENNIFER

Any house with more than two bedrooms seemed like a mansion when we were married. Things have changed and my standards have modified. Gone down, actually. Now any apartment with more than one bedroom's a mansion to me (*without pause*) how rich was he?

KIMBERLY

You'll find out more once everyone's arrived.

JENNIFER

Who else...

(A knock on the door. KIMBERLY opens the door to MR. BENSON)

KIMBERLY

Hello. You must be Mr. Benson.

(JENNIFER crosses to the tequila.)

My name is Kimberly Farrell. I'm Mr. Morgan's attorney.

BENSON

Counselor. Why is there an armed guard?

KIMBERLY

Matter of security. Come in, please. May I take your raincoat and hat?

(After BENSON enters, KIMBERLY hangs up his raincoat and hat.)

BENSON

I'm here for the reading of Mr. Morgan's will, God rest his soul.

JENNIFER

Mr. Benson.

BENSON

Jennifer.

KIMBERLY

You know each other, of course.

JENNIFER

Of course. The last time we saw each other we were on opposite sides of a courtroom.

BENSON

How are you, Jennifer? And how is your daughter?

JENNIFER

We're surviving just fine, Mr. Benson.

BENSON

I'm very glad to know that. God takes care of his own.

JENNIFER

There was a time when you didn't think of me as one of God's own.

BENSON

Christians learn to forgive. I've become a good Christian.

JENNIFER

A friend showed me your picture in the newspaper last month, with the Bishop.

BENSON

I just help out once in a while on some of his projects.

JENNIFER

He gave you an award for working with his fund for the indigent. Nice of you to be concerned with the poor.

KIMBERLY

Care for some refreshment, Mr. Benson? Any sort of drink?

BENSON

No thank you, Kimberly.

JENNIFER

I'll have something, now.

KIMBERLY

Your preference? Soft drink? Coffee? Tequila?

JENNIFER

The tequila'll do. Get yourself a \$10,000 check from good old Jesse, Benson? Do you need the money? *(Beat)* Same as me. Surprising, that you need the money.

BENSON

I don't need any money. It was curiosity...

(A knock on the door. KIMBERLY crosses to the door and opens it to KEN as JENNIFER pours herself a drink.)

KIMBERLY

Hello.

KEN

Hello! This the right place?

KIMBERLY

It is if you're Ken Larrick. Come in. I'm Kimberly Farrell, Mr. Morgan's attorney. Can I take your coat?

(KEN enters, removes his jacket, and hands it to KIMBERLY.)

KEN

It's dismal outside, but dismal weather days often are my lucky days.

(KIMBERLY turns to hang up KEN's jacket as HE looks at her.)

Impressive!

(KIMBERLY turns and shoots him a glare.)

That security guard. Heavy duty gun.

JENNIFER

You haven't changed at all, have you, Ken?

KEN

Hello, Jennifer. I thought I might see you here. If Jesse was to bequeath me anything, I was sure he'd leave you something as well. We were connected, so to speak, in his mind.

JENNIFER

How long's it been -- sixteen years?

KEN

I wasn't keeping track. You still are very attractive.

JENNIFER

Thank you. Still keeping the old equipment busy?

KEN

Frankly my dear, it's none of your business.

JENNIFER

Any more. None of my business any more. It was my business for a while.

KEN

Or rather it was your pleasure.

JENNIFER

Yes it was, wasn't it? Pardon me, I have to go to the ladies room, which is...

KIMBERLY

Over there.

(JENNIFER exits to the bathroom.)

KEN

Hello, Boss Benson. Nice to see you.

BENSON

Good afternoon, Ken. You needn't call me Boss.

KEN

But you were my boss. Until you fired me.

BENSON

I fired you because you were just a little too lazy, and occasionally a wiseass, pardon the expression.

KEN

After working for you I was forever cured of the desire to work for someone else. I'm a freelance writer.

BENSON

What do you write?

KEN

Children's books.

(A knock on the door. KIMBERLY crosses to open it.)

KIMBERLY

Hello.

(WOODROW slowly peeks his head in.)

WOODROW

Hello ma'am. I was asked to be here at this time. Room 2-6-zero-7.

KIMBERLY

Come in, Woodrow.

(WOODROW enters and looks nervously inside the room.)

Can I take your jacket?

WOODROW

(Reluctant to part with it) It's my only one.

KIMBERLY

You'll get it back, Woodrow.

(WOODROW removes his jacket and gives it to KIMBERLY)

Would you like anything to drink?

WOODROW

An alcoholic beverage? I don't want none. Not me.

KIMBERLY

How about a soft drink? Or some coffee?

WOODROW

I'm not going to be asked to pay for any of this, am I? I hear some of these places charge as much as three dollars eighty-five cents for a cup of coffee.

KIMBERLY

No Woodrow, you don't have to pay.

(WOODROW takes a folded check from a pocket and shows it.)

WOODROW

Oh, I can afford it. I just figured no one would have change if I gave them a \$10,000 check. Even if they did, I'd be stuck trying to find room for all that change in my pockets.

(JENNIFER enters, sniffing and slightly spacier than earlier.)

KIMBERLY

Ever heard of cashing checks at banks, Woodrow?

WOODROW

Yes ma'am. That might be a good idea.

JENNIFER

And who might this be?

KIMBERLY

Jennifer Scott, this is Woodrow Paris. Like the city.

JENNIFER

Woodrow? Should I remember you from my past life?

WOODROW

I don't think so ma'am. I don't remember ever meeting you.

KIMBERLY

Woodrow, this is Kenneth Larrick. And Mr. Benson.

WOODROW

Pleased to meet you all, Woodrow Paris. Never been to Paris, France though, despite my name.

KEN

Glad to meet you, Woodrow. You work the streets?

WOODROW

Yes, sir.

KEN

I might have given you some change.

WOODROW

I don't recall that, Sir.

KEN

Well, maybe someone that looks like you. Ever give money to Woodrow, Mr. Benson?

BENSON

I tithe my church. Any extra I have for charity goes to charitable groups.

KEN

Woodrow must have been one of Jesse's more recent acquaintances.

JENNIFER

Woodrow, what sort of relationship did you have with Mr. Morgan?

WOODROW

Some time ago this young lady (*referring to KIMBERLY*) was walking through the park with a gentleman. I was about to ask if they could spare some change when I noticed some hoodlum kids were about to grab her purse, maybe take his wallet. I chased them away. Then, a few days ago she finds me and hands me a \$10,000 check and asks if I'm free to come here this afternoon. Told her hell yes. Didn't really have much else to do, aside from watch the dogs run in the park. Even in this weather a dog's got to have his time in the grass.

KEN

Who was the gentleman?

KIMBERLY

A friend.

WOODROW

But I am a little suspicious. Getting a check for \$10,000. Something like this happens only once or twice a year.

JENNIFER

Somebody giving you a \$10,000 check happens once or twice a year?

WOODROW

No ma'am. Somebody giving you something valuable and then asking something of you in return later on. One time a lady gave me fifty dollars and asked me to come to her house to do yard work. It wasn't yard work she wanted. If she just wanted me to do yard work, why did she ask me to take a shower first? I just didn't have the stamina for what she wanted.

JENNIFER

Ken, you could have taken that job.

KEN

I was never paid in money for that type of labor. Very perceptive, Woodrow, about wanting something in return. I wonder what we'll be asked to do.

WOODROW

That's why I'm a little suspicious.

JENNIFER

So you think there'll be some catch to Jesse's will?

KIMBERLY

Well, lady and gentlemen. I believe it's time for you to hear Mr. Morgan's terms.

(The bedroom door opens. JESSE enters.)

JESSE

Hello all!

JENNIFER

Jesse!

BENSON

You're supposed to be dead.

KEN

Touché. Great touch, Jesse. I thought you were dead too.

JENNIFER

(To KIMBERLY)

You lied to us!

KIMBERLY

I never said Mr. Morgan was dead. You just assumed.

BENSON

It's a reasonable assumption that when a person's will is to be read that that person is dead.

JESSE

Don't everyone rush to hug me at once! I gather you've all met Ms. Kimberly Farrell, my attorney. Also does a little nursing on occasion. I am fatigued most of the time. But not today, seeing all of you here. Today I have energy! Hello Jennifer. You haven't aged as much as I thought you would.

JENNIFER

I can't say the same for you. Hello, Jesse. You're so gaunt. Look at you!

JESSE

Lost a little weight. Lost a little hair. Some unnaturally, through the miracles of modern medicine. But I'm not dead. And there's enough of me left so we can meet today.

JENNIFER

So all these years you were just hiding out. In California, I take it?

JESSE

Successfully. And my mentor, Mr. Benson. That's what you made us all call you. Not Karl, but Mr. Benson. Even me, your assistant store manager. Of course, if someone said, "Sir", you didn't mind that either.

BENSON

I'm still Mr. Benson at the stores.

JESSE

And to your children too, I'll bet. Oh, yes, you have two stores now.

BENSON

Those that honor God know it's sensible to demand respect for authority. No one ever complained to me that I wasn't fair.

JESSE

They'd have been fired.

BENSON

No they wouldn't. I've always been fair.

JESSE

Yes. And how many employees do you have now, Mr. Benson?

BENSON

More people seem to need computers. I now have a hundred and forty employees.

JESSE

Do you call taking funds from your employees' pension plan being fair?

BENSON

Where did you hear that?

JESSE

From the reports of private investigators.

JENNIFER

Is that how you know how your daughter is, from the reports of private investigators?

(JESSE avoids her question.)

BENSON

God put the fate of my workers in my hands. Do you think I used the money to buy luxury cars and take exotic vacations? I used it to buy inventory, except for a small sum I contributed to the Bishop's fund.

JESSE

Trying to justify your theft with the Almighty? Or buy respect from the Bishop and your fellow churchgoers?

BENSON

I work with the church because of my faith. Besides, if I didn't use that money to buy inventory the store would be out of business. One hundred and forty people would be on the street, and their families.

JESSE

Yes, but it's against the law. What'll they do now, when you end up in prison for misuse of pension funds and the store goes under, and the pension fund is gone?

BENSON

Careful, Jesse. You're subject to arrest as well.

JESSE

For what I stole from you? I don't think you'll want me arrested. Especially since I'm offering you a chance to save your skin. I hear you're scheduled to be audited by the Feds next week.

BENSON

I...

JESSE

Ken. My best high school buddy. You the star quarterback, me your reliable receiver.

KEN

You did run those tricky patterns.

JESSE

We did a lot together through the years, didn't we Ken?

KEN

I bought you your first beer.

JESSE

We both got drunk on just two, didn't we?

KEN

We left the bar singing...

(Together, THEY sing a short verse from an oldie type of rock song.)

JESSE

You were the one who introduced me to Jennifer.

KEN

You couldn't thank me enough.

JESSE

Jennifer, you had an odd way of thanking Ken... for introducing us.

JENNIFER

Jesse, please don't.

KEN

We shared... lots of experiences.

JESSE

We did share, didn't we? Even our distinguished employer here, Mr. Benson.

BENSON

I hired him on your recommendation.

JESSE

Yes, my recommendation. One of many favors I did for you Ken. I also helped you get the house next door. You and Rebecca. Me and Jennifer. Who cheated on who first, Ken?

KEN

You did.

JESSE

You were sleeping with Jennifer way before I had my affair with Rebecca.

KEN

Well, maybe I did.

JENNIFER

You had an affair with Rebecca?

JESSE

A one-afternoon stand. Both of us getting back at our unfaithful spouses. Evening the score, so to speak. How is Rebecca, by the way?

(JENNIFER makes herself another drink.)

KEN

I don't know. We've been out of touch since the divorce. Sixteen years ago. I have a new wife.

JESSE

I know. Laurie. Also a boy, a toddler now. You and Jennifer ever get together anymore?

JENNIFER and KEN

No.

JESSE

What a pity. I remember the stories you used to tell me about your love... lust life. What was your line? "Hi, my name's Ken. Would you like to go to bed with me?" I asked what woman would say yes to an approach like that. You said one in a hundred women is horny and desperate enough, and if you ask enough women sooner or later...

KEN

...with perseverance, the odds for scoring are pretty good.

JESSE

There now, Jennifer, you were the lucky one in a hundred.

JENNIFER

It wasn't like that.

JESSE

I bet. Or rather, Ken, you bet. You always bet. I heard you were beaten up two years ago when you couldn't pay your gambling debts. You had to sell your house to pay them off. But did you learn your lesson? No no. You're about to get beaten up again. Maybe killed, since you have no house to fall back on this time. How much do you owe them?

KEN

Your PI didn't tell you?

JESSE

I know it's in the six figures, unless you had a good weekend.

KEN

Nearly broke even, as a matter of fact.

JESSE

How long did they give you?

KEN

Until 6 o'clock Saturday. But my luck may be turning. I recently received an unexpected stake of ten grand. Even with minor losses so far this week I still have \$9,000 to play with.

JESSE

With more to come, if your luck holds. You are a lucky man, Ken, being asked here today. And Woodrow. Nice to see you again, Woodrow.

WOODROW

Thank you, Sir. Nice to see you too, Mr. Morgan.

JESSE

Well, let me explain why we're gathered here today.

BENSON

We came for a reading of your will. But I expect we were misled.

JESSE

You all came here because you figured there was something I'd give you. Which I shall. But I thought I'd reward you in person, before I go.

JENNIFER

Are you really that sick, Jesse?

JESSE

Yes, Jennifer. I have a kind of disease that travels fast and is incurable.

KEN

Tough luck, Jesse.

BENSON

I'm sorry, Jesse.

JENNIFER

You don't look that ill.

JESSE

Thank you, Jennifer but I am.

JENNIFER

How long... did they say...

JESSE

A few weeks, a few months. They don't know for sure. But I do have special energy today, with so many of my old "friends" visiting.

JENNIFER

So you came home to die?

JESSE

No, we're going back to California tomorrow.

JENNIFER

Jesse, I'm sorry about your disease. But are you really going to "reward" us, or did you want to toy with us?

JESSE

I wouldn't call giving each of you at least fifty thousand dollars, and a couple of you two million dollars, toying.

JENNIFER

You're going to give away two million dollars?

KEN

To a couple of us. A couple is two, generally. That's four million dollars.

BENSON

Which two of us?

KEN

If Jennifer had waited to divorce you she might have been entitled to half of what you own.

JESSE

Not really. She would have been entitled to half of our mutual "wealth" the day I left, which consisted of a checking account overdrawn in the amount of \$168. Then again, she could go after the \$5,000 in cash I took from Benson. Her share of that would have been \$2,500. Of course, that would make her an accessory to the crime. Let's check with an attorney.

KIMBERLY

He's right.

BENSON

Now let's check if it's robbery or embezzlement, when your assistant store manager runs off with your cash proceeds when he's supposed to deposit it in the bank.

JESSE

Kimberly?

KIMBERLY

I wouldn't know. I'm not really a criminal attorney.

JESSE

I'd say robbery. Embezzlement implies deception, covering up. I blatantly took the money in cash and ran off with it.

BENSON

What did you do with it?

JESSE

I used a couple of thousand to get to California. Then I found work in a small town electronics shop. I knew something about computers. The rest, I invested. I bought a little lot outside town. I worked and bought more. The town grew. I borrowed on the value of those lots and bought new land in a new section that was becoming very desirable. And so on. Before you knew it, I was rich.

JENNIFER

Why did you leave, Jesse? We might have worked it out.

JESSE

Because I would have killed you and Ken if I'd stayed in New York.

JENNIFER

So you ran away and left behind a six year old daughter.

(JESSE is silent)

So why are you back now? Do you want us to forgive you before...

JESSE

No. It's I who want to forgive you. A man shouldn't go to his grave with anger in his heart. I'm searching for inner peace.

BENSON

A man should make peace with his Maker before he passes on.

JESSE

And even with those in his life who have betrayed him.

BENSON

Cut the bull, Jesse.

JESSE

You say cut the bull to a man willing to give you two million dollars? You invested \$5,000 in me, unwittingly of course, and you'll end up with at least fifty thousand dollars and as much as two million. And I'll hand it over today.

KEN

What's the catch, Jesse?

JESSE

No catch! Please show our guests the checks, Kimberly.

(KIMBERLY retrieves eight checks from a folder in the desk, and shows them to each person.)

As you'll see, I've prepared two cashier's checks for each of you, one in the amount of \$50,000 and the other in the amount of two million. Look at them. Make sure your names are spelled correctly.

JENNIFER

You should know how to spell our names. Except possibly Woodrow.

BENSON

You know us, but Woodrow... Why's he included in this?

KEN

Maybe you want us all to beg.

JESSE

Woodrow is here because he saved my skin, which is more than I can say for any of you.

BENSON

So, you were the man in the park.

JESSE

There'll be no need to beg. But there are some ground rules.

KEN

The catch.

JESSE

Ground rules. First, I'm not going to decide who gets two million dollars. You all are.

BENSON

We're going to decide on who gets two million?

JESSE

Exactly. By vote. Here's how it works. There will be two rounds of voting. Since two of you will get the two million dollar grand prizes, in the first round each person gets two votes, which he or she must cast. No abstentions allowed. Of course, if you feel you are the most deserving, you can cast one of your votes for yourself, but only one. The winner is the person with the most votes. If two of you tie for the most votes, then both will win and there will be no reason to go on to the second round of voting. If there is no winner, or winners, then you keep on voting until such time as there is. Clear so far?

KEN

Perfectly!

BENSON

And what about the second round?

JESSE

I'll explain the second round when we get to it. You may use these ballots for recording your votes. Are there any questions?

JENNIFER

What's to keep us from dividing the money evenly amongst ourselves later on?

KEN

My guess is mutual distrust.

BENSON

I'm trustworthy. I am on the church board.

JESSE

You are free to try to divide the money amongst yourselves.

JENNIFER

What's to keep me from dashing out the room with this cashier's check and cashing it?

WOODROW

Your high heel shoes?

KEN

The armed guard at the door.

(KIMBERLY collects the checks.)

JESSE

Room service is at your disposal should you need bodily sustenance. As for your spiritual sustenance, that's up to you. Oh, please don't tip the room service waiter more than 20%. No use in just throwing money away.

JENNIFER

You must be getting a big kick out of this.

JESSE

I am. If there are any further questions, Ms. Farrell and I will be in the next room. Please let us know once you've selected the first... winner.

(JESSE and KIMBERLY exit to bedroom and look at the television.)

KEN

Well, all this is quite unconventional, don't you think?

JENNIFER

I think Jesse is having fun with us.

BENSON

I have a mind to just walk out.

JENNIFER

I do as well.

(A long beat. No one moves)

KEN

Hard to walk out on your retirement, isn't it Jennifer? On your restitution, Benson? Or, a warm comfy room, Woodrow?

WOODROW

Yes, Sir.

BENSON

Well, what do we do now?

JENNIFER

Why don't we each make a speech on why we deserve the money. I'll start.

(JENNIFER stands.)

I deserve the two million dollars because I goddamn need it.

(JENNIFER sits.)

KEN

We all goddamn need it. Me worse than you.

BENSON

I (*reluctant to say "goddam"*) g...g..... need it.

JENNIFER

Well, that's that. Now what do we do?

KEN

Let's take a vote. Who gets two million? I cast one vote for myself.

BENSON

We all vote for ourselves. Where does that get us?

KEN

That depends on who else votes for us. Remember, we each must cast two votes.

KIMBERLY

Jesse, why didn't you tell me you have a daughter?

JESSE

Jennifer has a daughter. A few years younger than you.

JENNIFER

The second vote will not be an easy decision.

BENSON

Now hold on, Jennifer. I have one hundred and forty people working for me. If I don't get that two million dollars there'll be lots of people out on the street, without jobs. They have kids.

JENNIFER

Do you really care about them, Benson?

BENSON

Yes, I do. When you own a business, it's a big responsibility knowing the welfare of others depends on you.

JENNIFER

I promise to vote for you if you promise to vote for me.

KEN

Consider the worth of your mutual promises.

JENNIFER

You need the full two million dollars, Benson?

BENSON

Only about a half million. That's what I owe the pension fund, But that's way more than fifty thousand.

KEN

Almost three times what I need.

JENNIFER

How much do you need?

KEN

Oh, one fifty, two hundred thou.

(KIMBERLY crosses to the foot of the bed and takes the remote.)

KIMBERLY

Why the secretiveness?

JESSE

Emily is not a secret.

KEN

Look, Benson, if I win, I'll give you a half million.

JENNIFER

Consider the worth of his promise, Benson.

BENSON

I am being audited next week. I'm not looking to get away with anything. I just want to take care of the folks who work for me.

KEN

A vote for Benson is a vote for the common man. Would you put it that way, Benson?

BENSON

Your sarcasm aside, yes.

KEN

And with that payback to the pension fund your conscience will be soothed, while you're in the hoosegow.

JENNIFER

A man like Benson doesn't get sentenced to the hoosegow. He gets to do community service. Maybe you could work in a soup kitchen. They need more people at the soup kitchen, Woodrow?

WOODROW

Would make the line go faster, ma'am.

KIMBERLY

If Emily isn't a secret, why didn't you tell me about her?

JESSE

It wasn't important.

JENNIFER

How about me, Benson? I should vote for a highly deserving man like you? The man who tried to sue me after Jesse took off. As if I were responsible for Jesse's dishonesty. As if I had anything for you to take from me, even if you did win the case. Pure vindictiveness, it was. I was more Jesse's victim than you.

BENSON

You were his wife.

JENNIFER

The case was dismissed before it ever got to trial. But by that time I had nothing left, except a young daughter to feed. You'll forgive me if I don't find you a highly deserving man.

BENSON

I agree with you. It was not the right thing for a God-fearing person to do. I sent a letter to you afterward, apologizing.

JENNIFER

Well, I threw it in the trash, unopened.

BENSON

Jennifer, I apologize to you. But at the time you didn't seem trustworthy. Everyone knew about your... `arrangement'... with Ken.

KEN

Except Jesse.

JENNIFER

He found out by dumb luck.

KEN

Yes, by dumb luck he came home early one day and found us with no clothes on. In the same bed.

JESSE

Turn up the sound, would you, Kimberly?

KIMBERLY

It's loud enough.

JESSE

Humor me. When a man ages he loses his hearing.

(KIMBERLY presses the volume button on the remote control.)

BENSON

Let's just vote.

KEN

Yes, it's time we started our little election. Why don't we all fill out our little ballots here, and see where we stand.

KIMBERLY

You're enjoying this, aren't you?

JESSE

Immensely.

KEN

Okay, mark down two names.

KIMBERLY

Emily is important! Jesse, I am not only your "friend" but your attorney. The attorney who drafted your real will, which must acknowledge the fact that you have a daughter. You don't have to leave her anything, but you must mention her name.

(JESSE is silent)

Jesse, trust me in this.

JESSE

Then we'll revise my will when we get back to California. Now, let me hear what's going on.

KEN

Okay, everybody done? Now fold your ballots and place them in this bowl.

(The folded ballots are placed in the bowl.)

Jennifer, why don't you open the ballots. Benson, do you mind keeping a tally?

(JENNIFER opens the first ballot.)

JENNIFER

One vote for Jennifer, one vote for Woodrow.

(JENNIFER opens the next ballot)

One vote for Jennifer, one vote for Karl Benson.

JESSE

Something's going wrong. This isn't what I expected. *(NOTE: This is because he expected each ballot to include one vote for Woodrow.)*

KIMBERLY

You didn't expect...

JESSE

Shh.

(JENNIFER opens the next ballot)

JENNIFER

One vote for Ken, one vote for Woodrow.

(JENNIFER opens the final ballot)

One vote for Benson, one vote for Woodrow.

KEN

So, what's the outcome, Benson?

BENSON

The tally. Jennifer, two. Me, two. Ken, one. And Woodrow, three.

KEN

Congratulations, Woodrow. You are now a double millionaire.

WOODROW

I don't think I'm deserving... I shouldn't be selfish.

KEN

Don't be foolish, Woodrow. Why should you be less selfish than the rest of us?

WOODROW

To me, fifty thousand dollars is the same as two million. What would I do with either one?

JENNIFER

Clean yourself up. Buy some clothes. Find a place to live.

WOODROW

I have a place to live. A bench suits me fine.

KEN

On a miserable day like today, when the benches are wet, and the rain and chill will seep through your clothes?

WOODROW

There's always the shelter.

KEN

But now you can rent yourself an apartment.

BENSON

With a shower.

WOODROW

I believe Mr. Morgan said we should call him in when the first round of voting was over.

JENNIFER

So he did. Would you mind doing the honors?

WOODROW

No ma'am. I mean, yes ma'am. I mean I'll knock on the door, ma'am.

(WOODROW crosses to the bedroom door.)

Sir, we're finished voting.

(JESSE and KIMBERLY enter the living room.)

JESSE

So, who's the big winner. Or are there two big winners?

KEN

Woodrow's the only winner.

JESSE

Woodrow, what a surprise!

KEN

Is it?

JESSE

I had no idea you'd reach a consensus so quickly.

KEN

You didn't?

JESSE

No. And the voting didn't go as I expected.

KEN

Who did you figure would win?

JESSE

Let's just say I was surprised. Woodrow, Kimberly will give you a cashier's check in the amount of two million dollars.

(KIMBERLY gives the check to WOODROW.)

KIMBERLY

Woodrow Paris.

WOODROW

Paris. Like the city. My goodness. Two million dollars.

BENSON

Woodrow, this one I suggest you put in the bank.

KEN

Do you have a bank account, Woodrow?

WOODROW

Yes, sir, come to think of it. I have a savings account in case I ever need money for a rainy day. Not a rainy day like today, but in case something bad happens. It has over sixty-two dollars in it. And hey, it's the same bank as the one on this check.

(WOODROW starts toward the door.)

JESSE

Woodrow, I would like you to do me a favor.

WOODROW

Yes sir, I'll do you a favor.

JESSE

I'd like you to stay until the voting is completed. There's still one more round to go.

WOODROW

You mean I can't leave yet?

JESSE

As a personal favor to me I'd like you to stay.

JENNIFER

To settle the runoff between Benson and myself.

KEN

I don't think so.

JENNIFER

Don't think what?

KEN

That there'll be a runoff between you and Benson.

JENNIFER

Benson and I each received two votes. Tied for second.

BENSON

There should be a runoff.

KEN

Jesse didn't say there'd be a runoff if two people tied for second. Isn't that right, Jesse?

JESSE

You were always good at playing games, Ken. Your downfall was thinking that because you could play them, that you could succeed on betting on them. Ken is correct. For the next round, you go back to scratch, with Woodrow ineligible to win, but eligible to vote. Of course I am willing to amend the rules so that Woodrow is eligible to win this second round as well.

BENSON

That won't be necessary. Can we all agree on that?

JENNIFER

Yes, we can.

KEN

Far be it from me to change the rules in midstream.

WOODROW

I'll stay, Mr. Morgan. But will I be able to leave so I can be in time to get to the bank?

(JESSE takes out his timepiece. KEN notices it, but JESSE puts it back in his pocket.)

JESSE

You have an hour before the bank closes.

WOODROW

I've never cashed a check for two million dollars.

KEN

I suggest you deposit it, rather than cash it.

JESSE

On this round each person gets just one vote. There will be no winner until one person has the most votes.

KEN

I prefer this system of voting. Somehow being able to cast two votes just seemed undemocratic.

JESSE

Congratulations on your speed so far. Let us know when you're done with this second round. Remember, this time, just one vote each.

(JESSE and KIMBERLY exit to the bedroom.)

Now for the fun part!

WOODROW

Well, I guess I can get me some new socks.

JENNIFER

How humble!

WOODROW

I am a humble man, I suspect.

BENSON

One of God's creatures, right Woodrow.

WOODROW

How did you know that's what I was going to say?

JENNIFER

How tender!

KEN

You shouldn't speak so sarcastically to Woodrow. I'm not jealous about Woodrow winning this popularity contest. It was predictable. Didn't you figure that Woodrow was the only person each of us would vote for? And that Jesse knew it.

JENNIFER

I wasn't being sarcastic. Woodrow is humble and tender.

WOODROW

You mean, Mr. Morgan intended for me to get the two million dollars?

KEN

Precisely. Or at least he intended for none of us to get it on the first round.

BENSON

What I can't figure is, if everyone voted for Woodrow, how come he only got three votes?

KEN

He didn't vote for himself. Isn't that right, Woodrow?

WOODROW

Yes sir. I thought I wasn't as deserving as any of you.

KEN

The only thing I don't understand, Woodrow, is why you didn't vote for me?

WOODROW

It was nothing against you, sir. I voted for her out of respect for women, and for him on respect for age. And he believes in the power of the Lord.

KEN

Did I forget to say that I do too? Religiously. Every day I believe in Him. Who doesn't?

JENNIFER

Hallelujah!

JESSE

You'd almost think they're going to break into a revival meeting!

BENSON

Thank you, Woodrow, for the respect you've shown me.

JESSE

This is fun, isn't it Kimberly?

KIMBERLY

For you, I suppose. Is that your purpose, to have fun?

KEN

With all due respect, I think I'm a victim of reverse discrimination. Not to unduly influence you for the next round of voting, but I don't think you should vote strictly on the basis of gender or age. A more meaningful consideration might be who will best be able to survive life if they had the two million.

JENNIFER

You can always use the \$50,000 to take it on the lam, buy a disguise, take on a new identity in a distant city. Like Jesse did. Maybe one day you'll make something of yourself and be able to give away millions to significant others in your past life.

KEN

Be careful in what you say about Jesse, Jennifer. I bet he's watching.

JENNIFER

He's in the other room.

KEN

No doubt watching us on a webcam. Benson, it's sort of like those cameras you have in your stores.

BENSON

That equipment's there to monitor for shoplifting.

KEN

By your customers or your happy employees?

BENSON

I can see you've never run a business. There are certain precautions you need to take.

JENNIFER

Hotels don't have cameras like that.

KEN

A man who can afford to give away millions can also afford the of installation of a closed circuit tv system or webcam in his hotel suite.

(KEN waves at the camera.)

Hi Jesse, hi Kimberly!

(JESSE returns the wave.)

JENNIFER

I need a drink.

(JENNIFER pours herself a drink.)

KEN

OK. He wouldn't. He wouldn't want to miss the fun of observing his... old pals making fools of themselves. Right, Jesse?

(JENNIFER partially plays to a camera as SHE says...)

JENNIFER

Wanting money to provide for his daughter... I am not his adversary. I've always liked Jesse. Even if I was angry...

KEN

Getting excited over Jesse again? Is it his money, or his control over us, or is it the glamour of his having lived the romantic life of a desperado?

JENNIFER

I am not getting excited over Jesse.

KEN

You should concentrate on getting excited about Woodrow, because he's the one to decide which of us walks away with the big prize.

WOODROW

I see what you mean. If you each vote for yourselves, than my vote'll be the tie-breaker.

KEN

Exactly.

(Beat)

JENNIFER

Woodrow, I was not being sarcastic before. Don't let Ken make you think I was. I truly thought what you said about being one of God's creatures was a very tender phrase.

BENSON

We're all God's creatures, Jennifer. And we thank Him for his blessings.

JENNIFER

And some of us are weaker than others, and need compassion to help us through life.

KEN

You can live for weeks without receiving compassion. I, on the other hand, may actually be killed in the next few days if I don't receive "compassion" of the right sort.

BENSON

Which is a suitcase full of cash to pay off your bookie?

KEN

He doesn't accept checks. Paper trail. That sort of thing. I don't actually need two million. A couple of hundred thousand will do. How about it, Jennifer? You vote for me, I win the two million, take a lousy ten percent and give the rest to you.

JENNIFER

Why don't you vote for me and I'll give you the ten percent?

KEN

I'll take my chances with Mr. Park Bench.

JENNIFER

Why don't you just bet the \$9,000 in cash you have left on some long shot. Maybe you'll be lucky.

KEN

A long shot?

JENNIFER

That's when the odds are strongly against something happening.

KEN

Profuse thanks for the definition.

KIMBERLY

Is this what you expected?

JESSE

More or less.

(KEN crosses to the telephone, and presses in numbers)

Who would you pick?

KIMBERLY

Jennifer. Of course, maybe it's just a sympathy thing with another woman.

JESSE

Which do you think will be her downfall, drugs or drink?

KIMBERLY

Drugs. It takes a long time to go through two million dollars on either. But it can be done.

KEN

(Into the phone)

Maury, Ken Larrick.... NBA. How many games are scheduled for tonight?... Five, including the Knicks... I'll take a parlay – all the home teams, nine thousand... I have it, in cash... Screw that limit crap. You took my bets last week... How do you expect me to pay you back if you won't let me bet?... (As if he's been threatened) Yes, I understand.

(KEN hangs up)

Shit!

JENNIFER

You were listening when I suggested betting on some long shot, weren't you?

KEN

Sometimes a long shot makes the most sense as a bet.

JENNIFER

(JENNIFER picks up the bottle of tequila)

Woodrow, can we drink a toast to your good fortune?

WOODROW

Certainly, but don't include me in the drinking part. I give it up. Makes you into something evil, when you drink too much.

JENNIFER

Ken?

KEN

No thanks. I'm a gambler, not a drinker. And I'm not evil.

JENNIFER

Benson?

BENSON

I gave up alcohol when I found religion.

KEN

If I recall, stealing's against your religion. Your religion does recognize the Ten Commandments?

BENSON

I was not stealing. I was just borrowing the money until I could pay it back.

KEN

Gambling you wouldn't be caught?

BENSON

I wasn't gambling. Only ungodly fools like you get into trouble from gambling.

KEN

There is no Commandment that says, "Thou Shalt Not Gamble." There is a Commandment that says, "Thou Shalt Not Steal."

BENSON

I need no Bible lesson from you.

JENNIFER

Keep it down. I'm getting a headache.

JESSE

To go along with your drippy nose. Ha-ha! This is what I call entertainment!

(WOODROW picks up the receiver and reads the instructions printed on the phone.)

KIMBERLY

You are a strange man, Jesse Morgan.

JESSE

But you like strange men, don't you, Kimberly?

JENNIFER

What are you doing, Woodrow?

KEN

Placing a bet on the Knicks?

WOODROW

I was thinking of calling room service.

KEN

Hungry?

WOODROW

No, Sir. I just want to order peanuts, to feed the pigeons. And between my \$10,000 check and the two million dollar check, well I don't think the fella at the snack stand would take either one.

KEN

(Handing WOODROW a bill) Here's a dollar. Treat the pigeons on me.

BENSON

(Handing WOODROW a bill) Here's five dollars, Woodrow.

(WOODROW, after checking whether JENNIFER will chip in, pockets the money.)

KEN

Well gang, what do you say? Shall we each make our personal appeal to Woodrow?

WOODROW

I don't know if I'm going to care for this.

KEN

Jennifer, why don't you start trying to make Woodrow like you.

JENNIFER

I don't care if Woodrow likes me! I just want him to see that a single mother with no hope of acquiring any form of real wealth, who has a child to support...

BENSON

How old is she now?

JENNIFER

Twenty-four. And she is... not able to care for herself. Emily is the sweetest girl in the world. She just has... lapses of attention.

KEN

Lapses of attention? Jennifer, she's retarded.

JENNIFER

For eighteen years I've taken care of her alone! Do any of you know what it's like to have a child like Emily, and arrange everything for her? Trying to find friends for her. Dropping her off, picking her up at special schools. My life on hold. Until when? Until forever.

BENSON

You're not the only single mother.

JENNIFER

Look, Jesse left me with nothing, and my most recent ex-husband requested alimony from me. As hard as I work, I cannot make a decent living as a department store furniture buyer. I can afford a one bedroom apartment in Brooklyn. It is not in the best neighborhood. I do my best, but I live on my paycheck. If I were sick for a month and unable to work, I'd be out on the street. And so would Emily.

BENSON

Instead of being responsible for the welfare of one person, I'm responsible for a hundred forty.

KEN

You expect us... expect Woodrow, to believe you really care about those hundred forty people?

BENSON

Every man leaves a legacy. I don't want mine to be that I let down people who relied on me.

KEN

Your situation is not life and death.

JENNIFER

I lost my job, dammit! I was laid off. It'll be hard for me to find another one. Impossible.

KEN

Laid off, or let go?

(JENNIFER doesn't answer. Beats. Then, there is a knock on the door)

WOODROW

Should we answer it?

BENSON

Must be the security guard.

KEN

Or room service.

WOODROW

I never ordered.

JENNIFER

I'll get it.

(JENNIFER opens the door. EMILY stands there)

Emily!

JESSE

Emily?

EMILY

Hello Momma.

(Lights fade)

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