



Ritual-The Musical

Music and Lyrics by Terry Morrow

Musical is based on the short story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson

Synopsis

Based on the famous short story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson, "Ritual-The Musical" dives into a conformity driven farmtown, where superstition, sexism, and tradition reign supreme. Tessie Hutchinson and her daughter Nancy discover an unlikely connection in the face of certain disaster, and the townspeople will stop at nothing to maintain their idea of order as they celebrate the annual lottery ritual.

Characters

The Impartial Truth Ensemble (ITE)-

4 male, 4 female singers acting as the narrator throughout the show. The ITE sings only truthful happenings despite the delusions of the main characters. The ITE offers insight to the audience, and steers the story for the viewer/listener.

The Villagers-

4 male, 4 female singers representing the 300 townspeople living in the village. The Villagers embody the practice of ritual and they never stray from their day to day lives, engaging readily in the Lottery, and never questioning the state of their town, or their living practices. They are stuck in their own ways, and fine with it. The men are looked to as the authority, while the women are never taken seriously. Women are treated only as clucking gossips and caregivers to the children.

Tessie Hutchinson-

Female Lead Role. Tessie is unhappy where she lives, she has a family, and a stable place to live, but feels a droning emptiness. She has virtually no relationship with her husband Bill or any of her 3 children. Tessie fantasizes about a more purposeful, fulfilling life, but lacks the confidence to pursue anything other than her typical routine. She's become numb and mentally unwell.

Mr. Summers-

Male Lead Role. Mr. Summers acts as if he is the Mayor of the town, organizing community events, curating the Lottery, and acting as the face of the town, though no one asked him to, and no one cares what he does. The Villagers have grown to tune him out and simply allow him to act on this heightened version of himself, because it's easier to just let him be. Mr. Summers has no children and a wife who despises him. He fills his time planning and working because he really has nothing better to do. He puts on a front that he has authority, and he acts as pleasant as can be, but deep down, he's a sad and lost man.

Nancy Hutchinson-

Nancy is 12 years old and is the oldest daughter of Tessie and Bill Hutchinson. Nancy grows a lot throughout the story. She begins as a shy pre-teen living in a broken home with a distant father (Bill) and a sad and mentally unstable mother, (Tessie). The more the Lottery unfolds, the more Nancy begins to see the urgency and the terror that comes

with it. Nancy grows more and more concerned for her mother and also increasingly critical of the town in which she grew up. She becomes rebellious but all stronger and smarter throughout the show.

Old Man Warner-

The oldest man in the town. Very crotchety and very unpleasant. Old Man Warner frequently voices his contempt for the way things are not how they used to be, and how young people are going to ruin the way things are run. Old Man Warner takes pride in the Lottery and believes that it is essential to the preservation and quality of life. Old Man Warner believes that holding the Lottery once a year assures the Villagers that they will have plentiful crops and a continuously stable life for their families.

Bill Hutchinson-

Tessie's husband. Bill is a terrible and weak person. He is one of many people who dominate the town just because they are male. The men of the town don't have to do anything to dominate. Bill is a terrible husband to Tessie, and he has no respect or compassion toward her. In fact, her very existence annoys and angers Bill on a daily basis. Bill doesn't think anything wrong or questionable is happening, and he blends into the rest of his fellow villagers day to day happenings. Bill has no identity, no confidence, and no heart.

- **Impending Doom**

(Mr. Summers) Looking into a Mirror

(Clears throat)

All right Joe Summers, here.. we..GO!

(Pauses) Wow! that is one REGAL Ceremonial NECK TIE! Makes your shoulders look broad! (Pauses)

This right here is your moment, joe summers. this is your day. The day the whole damn village has been waiting for. You've been doing this for a decade, you can do it again. we been reaping the benefits of this lottery since time began. The lottery keeps our crops growin, it maintains order, and frankly, I hate to imagine where we'd be without it! This here is a time honored ritual.

OK! Good talk!

So let's go knock em dead.

(ITE)

300 people, a small farm town, let's call it "Nowhere Town" for the sake of storytelling.

Who are we? The Impartial Truth. Unequivocally unerring your humble guide through the ritual's impending doom

- **Tessie Hutchinson**

(Tessie)

My name is Tessie Hutchinson and I hate it here

After much deliberation and exhaustive conversations

I've decided that even when I'm thinking clear, turns out my heart is never truly devoid of fear.

I've got this husband Bill who barely has a pulse

I've got 3 children, staring blankly as we numb every impulse and make our way through the seasons as they change

What can I say? We are a product of this place.

Someday, perhaps, I'll be gone without a trace.

(ITE)

Most days she'll fantasize

(Tessie)
and I hear a tiny voice inside

(ITE)
Some days, she'll agonize

(Tessie)
When these sides of me collide

But then I rationalize my role, and I continue to grow old
Nothing profound to behold.
Nothing cherished, nothing sacred to uphold

(Tessie and ITE)
No triumph, no tragedy, no friends, no enemies

- **The Villagers and Old Man Warner**

(Villagers)
This world's a catastrophe spewing blasphemy; hypocrisy
Our town, just like a stone; indestructible, all we've ever known

300 people, a simple town, and that's the way we like it
Who are we? We are the Villagers
Loyal to our structure

(Villager Solo)
You know the time is drawing near
When Old Man Warner appears
The superstitious pernicious representative coot right over there

(Old Man Warner)
I've been around the block more times than you can count
The Lottery ain't never failed, least not on my account
One day a year, when Summer's here, we gather in the square

Some villages no longer hold the Lottery

(Villagers)
Say what?

(Old Man Warner)
Them young folks are a pack of crazy fools, you'd have to be!
It's the only way that we sustain

(Villagers)
This is the only way

(Villager Solo)

Not a bad year for the crops

(Villager Solo 2)

Honest work and a few raindrops

(Villager Solo)

Got my taxes all wrapped up

(Villager Solo 2)

But I've got lots of corn to shuck

(Villagers)

And the chat goes on

(Villager women)

Gossip, small talk

Trading stories, spilling the tea

(Villagers)

Trading stories, spilling the tea

(Villager Woman)

We take pleasure in our hearsay locality

(Villagers)

In our hearsay locality

And the chat goes on

(Tessie)

We don't need this

Where is your humanity?

(Villagers)

Quickly grab your families

(Tessie)

Are we broken

Who are we supposed to be?

(Villagers)

Tessie, hush, just let it be!

(Villagers)

And the chat goes on

(Old Man Warner)

ENOUGH!

You people settle down, you'll make an old man grown

Women collect the kids and kids collect the stones

So stack them high, and if we try

We'll finish up by noon time

- **Nancy Hutchinson**

My name is Nancy Hutchinson and I'm 12 years old

I'm out of school for Summer break so I've been told

I stand near my siblings stacking stones for most of the day

My parents and I don't really have all that much to say

My father, Bill is a farmer a fool, and a spineless tool

My mother, Tessie seems pretty checked out, tired and removed

I don't have the courage to ask if she's ok

She'd treat me as a child and shrug it off anyway

I'm unaware of what exactly this all means

Our town is like a machine

I'm a gear, they are the wheels and we turn in perfect time

It seems it's more convenient to comply

(ITE)

The old black box arrived at 10:00 o'clock

And the winds and dirt conveyed unrest

- **The Old Black Box**

(Villager Children)

The box is here shabby and torn, since I was born

Inside, folded papers, singing a song older than time

In this box, we hold our oneness

Our self, our sole identity

In this box, we know our purpose

Our wealth, it comes from this entity

(Villager Solo)

Mr. Summers spent the evening folding papers with Mr. Graves

Mr. Summers is the ring leader, the card reader, to paraphrase

He's no hero, but he's organized

He's no idol, but he's punctual

He's something of a curator, self-certified

But he's no greater than you or I

(Villager Solo 2)

He's got plenty energy to spare, planning events around the square

No children, and a scolding wife, it's no wonder he's got the time
We, the Villagers await the message, the chatter is thickening
Then Mr. Summers recites the rules, to which we're only half listening

- **Mr. Summers, Leader of the Lottery**

(Mr. Summers)

Soon, I'll read the names, Remember the man of the house always draws the paper first
And don't nobody look at the paper keep it folded til every man has drawn
Did y'all hear me? It's very important that I *recite* the rules before we get started
I took the day off at the coal mine today to do my civic duty
So let me introduce myself

I devote myself to this here town
I devote myself to you
There's a special bond between us all

(Villagers)

Look! He doesn't have a clue...

(Mr. Summers)

Let me be your civic chaperone
I will act as your trustee
I'll relentlessly turn every stone, you can put your trust in me

(Villagers)

He is living in a fantasy, but he is harmless and we choose to let him be

(Villager solo 1)

I heard they sleep in separate beds

(Villager solo 2)

Well that's what Mrs. Martin said

(Villager group)

Mind your manners, he's a good man

(Villager solo 1)

I don't enjoy his energy

(Villager solo 2)

You don't enjoy most everything

(Villager Group)

But what does Old Man Warner think?

(Old Man Warner)

He jokes around too damn much
Young fool can't seem to shut up

(Villager Group)

Old Man Warner grumbles bitterly

(Old Man Warner)

People simply ain't the same

Things most certainly have changed

(Villager Group)

Let's get back to Mr. Summers' ordeal

(Mr. Summers)

It's a pleasure to be in this role

So rewarding so esteemed

I'm fulfilled beyond my wildest dreams

The leader of the Lottery

I'm just a jack of all trades, I suppose!

Your Master of Ceremonies!

(Villagers)

He is living in a fantasy

But he is harmless so we choose to let him be

Dear Mr. Summers leader of the Lottery

(Mr. Summers)

Leader of the Lottery!

- **Roll Call**

Somebody wanna give me a hand with this?

All right!

Anybody ain't here?

(The Villagers)

Dunbar! Clyde Dunbar ain't here!

(Summers)

That's right he broke his leg! So who's drawing for Clyde?

(Janey Dunbar)

It'll be me I suppose

(Summers)

Ain't you got a son who can try?

(Janey Dunbar)

He's only turned 16 I'm afraid

(Summers)

Looks like the wife can draw so we won't be delayed

(All)

Moving on

(Summers)

Is the Watson boy old enough this year?

(Watson Boy)

Yes sir I'm drawing for my mama and me

(Summers)

Nice boy, glad the Watsons finally have a man to draw wouldn't y'all agree?

(Villagers)

Yes we all agree

(Summers)

And Old Man Warner's here!

(Old Man Warner)

This is my 77th Lottery

(Mr. Summers)

Bill Hutchinson, where is Tessie?

- **Nowheretown**

(Tessie)

Nowhere! What's the definition that I'm looking for? This town reeking of monotony that I deplore.

And it's always been this way; the hours of the day crawl by in Nowhere!

Nothing! Nothing could prepare me for a life like this! Housewives incarnate, like the dishes, we repeat and rinse.

We gather in the square, like a colorless nightmare, right here in Nowhere!

I never questioned until now the way they plod, the way they bow

I've never really spoke aloud, not sure I'd even be allowed

This tiny voice inside me cries!

Could freedom be my own demise?

I can't imagine how, I've got to answer it somehow

But there's no time for that now

Right here in Nowhere

(The Impartial Truth Ensemble)

Tessie carries on with her day

After all, she'd hate to be late

- **Tessie's Husband Bill**

(Bill Hutchinson)

Where is my wife? Has anyone seen her?

She knows she's supposed to be here by 10, prolly caught up in the kitchen doing dishes again

But there ain't no excuse for tardiness, the whole damn village comes out for this, in a way we live for this

And yet, no Tessie Hutchinson

(Villager)

(Indistinct Chatter)

Here comes your Mrs. Hutchinson!

(Villager)

She made it after all, Bill!

(Tessie)

Sorry, time must have slipped me

I Clean forgot the day I think, since I been drying saucers in the sink

Did they start yet? Have you drawn yet?

I'll finish up after it's done, I'll finish up after it's done

(Bill) (Interrupting)

Great! Hutchinsons are all accounted for, Mr. Summers

Forgive this minor inconvenience and proceed

(Mr. Summers)

Guess we better get started so we can all get back to work if y'all agree

(ITE)

You now know everything you need to know about Tessie's husband Bill

In two words- indisputably appalling

And it's no wonder she's not exactly fulfilled but rather ill

(Mr. Summers)

Now we're gonna get started

(ITE)

Now they're gonna get started, this is not a drill

- **Begin**

(ITE)

No triumph, no tragedy, no friends, no enemies

And the chat goes on

(Mr. Summers)

Adams

(Steve Adams)

Hi Joe

(Mr. Summers)

Hello Steve

(ITE Solo 1)

The villagers faith is fictitious

But their devotion is precise and it's vicious

The air is parched and still

Deep inside they are terrified, but they continue to recite

(Villagers)

This is the only way

(ITE Solo 2)

And Summers rattles off name after name

(Mr. Summers)

Anderson, Bentham

(ITE Solo 2)

As the man of every house plays the game

(Mr. Summers)

Delacroix, Dunbar, Graves

(ITE Solo 1)

Among the crowd, the children and the wives look on, petrified

(ITE)

But they repeat and emphasize

(Villagers)

This is the only way

(Tessie)

No no no

(Female Villager)

Feels like just last week we were here

(Male Villager)

Barely any time between Lotteries anymore

(Female Villager)

Yet here we are, another year

(Male Villager)

Time sure moves fast, wouldn't y'all agree?

(Villagers)

Yes, we all agree

(ITE)

Pleasantries have dampened
The sun obscured by clouds
The chat dims to a murmur
And then...

(Mr. Summers)
Hutchinson

(Tessie)
Get up there, Bill!

(Villagers)
Chuckle, scoff

(Villagers)
I heard

(Tessie)
Something about a village up north

(Villagers)
What did you hear?

(Tessie)
Well, they don't hold the Lotteries any more

(Villagers)
Say what?)

(Old Man Warner)
Nothing but harm in that! They're just a pack of young crazy fools. There's always been a Lottery

(Villagers)
There's always been a Lottery

(ITE)
There's always been a Lottery

(Mr. Summers)
Martin, Overdyke, Percy
Warner.... WARNER?
Watson

Don't be nervous, Jack
Take your time, son

(Villagers and ITE)
And then

(Mr. Summers)
Zanini

- **Recap**

(ITE)
We could use a recap, there's a lot to unpack
300 people gathered round in a town to draw some papers from a box allow us to break it down

We got
Tessie Hutchinson she hates her life she's been hearing this tiny little voice inside suggesting maybe there's something more but she struggles to make sense of her own internal war

We got
The villagers who seem to be a kingdom of the blind
You've met one you've met them all unremarkable is their a perpetual state of mind,

Ooh
They adhere to a habitual ritual one day a year
And old man warner presides over this colorless nightmare

We got
Nancy Hutchinson discovering she might have more in common with her mama than she's ever imagined
But she's young, meek, and muffled by the dissonance of patriarchal ignorance it's really quite incredulous

Next
Mr. Summers is the self-proclaimed leader of the lottery
But everybody knows he's a sad old soul overcompensating for his bleak identity
But he is harmless and they choose to let him be, you see?
I wouldn't call him harmless, but that's just me

Need we remind you of the dreadful one that's Tessie's husband Bill
In two words indisputably appalling
Summers read the names and the man and every house drew a paper from the box
And now, every man has drawn

And so ends the recap
You're caught up
Let us continue storytelling

- **Unfolded Papers**

(Mr. Summers)
Gentlemen, it's time to move this thing along, remember what happens next?
There's no more names to read so unfold your papers
If it's blank, you're safe, if there's a dot, you're not
We're making pretty good time so let's keep this movin'

Who's got the dot?

(ITE)

Mr. Summers remained in his jaunty foolish state
But the villagers minds flooded with suspicion and dread
A muted panic sets in
And speculation begins

- **Who's Got it?**

(Villagers)

Chatter

(Villager solo)

Who's got it? (Find Anatole vibe)

Is it the Watsons?

Maybe Dunbars?

Possibly the Delacroix's

Nobody knows

Who's got it?

Who's got that black dot the mark that seals your fate
Someone in this village will not make it through today

Perhaps it's Percy, or maybe Warner

Possibly Overdyke, it's better your household than mine

Who's got it?

We the villagers now and forever will remain
Loyal to our structure this is the only way

(Villager)

It's Bill! Bill Hutchinson's got it!

See it? Look at his paper! He's got it right there!

(Villagers Chatter)

(Nancy and Tessie Hutchinson)

I am now aware of what exactly this all means

This town is like a disease

I am a cell, they are the pathogens and they host a certain decline

(Entire Hutchinson Family)

And now it seems we're running out of time, could my life be on the line

- **The Hutchinsons (Reprise)**

(Tessie)

I saw you Summers, you didn't give him enough time to draw
And I know you're a man of honor, but you rushed him, truly, I saw, we all saw
I swear! It isn't fair! Doesn't anyone care?
Can't we start it over and do this right?

(Bill)
Shut up Tessie!

(Summers)
Hutchinsons are all accounted for, is that confirmed Bill?

(Bill)
Yes

(Summers)
Do you have any other households to declare?

(Tessie)
Yes! There's Don and Eva! We should make them take their chance! It's only fair!

(Summers)
You know that daughters draw with their husband's families Tessie, you of all people should know

(Tessie)
(Gasps) It wasn't fair! It wasn't fair!

(Summers)
It's as fair as can be, mam

(Summers)
OK Bill, looks like it falls on you to draw

(Bill)
(Sigh)

(Summers)
How many kids you got?

(Bill)
3 kids, Bill Jr. Little Dave, and Nancy

- **Round 2**

(ITE)
Round 2 round 2
Only the Hutchinsons remain
Round 2 round 2
It's a cold and twisted game

300 people, and not a sound disturbing Nowhere town
Unequivocally unnerving

Ritual of impending doom
For one of the Hutchinsons

Nothing cherished, nothing sacred to uphold
A superstition passed through duplicated generations

When Mr. Summers gives his final cues, the villagers await the news
As the Lottery concludes

(Summers)
Ready Bill?

(Bill glances at family, nods)

(Summers)
Remember, keep the papers folded until everybody has selected one
Mr. Graves, please help little Davy pick his paper if you would

Just take one, little Davy
Mr. Graves, will you hold onto this for him, he's only a young boy

Bill Jr it's your turn, by now I would think you must have learned this is what we do, draw your paper son draw your paper son
And now your sister, Nancy, what are you 12 years now, where does the time go? OK Nancy, draw

(ITE)
Nancy Hutchinson discovered that she does have more in common with her momma than she'd ever imagined
But it's plain to see, she doesn't really have a choice, and she draws reluctantly

(Nancy)
There is something

(Tessie)
Something stirring

(Nancy and Tessie)
Something screaming in my heart
A tiny but audacious voice survived telling me to put my fears aside

(ITE)
Then Mr. Summers proclaims

(Summers)
Tessie, draw

Bill

- **They Couldn't Speak**

(ITE)

There were no further steps to take in the ritual
Tessie and Nancy locked eyes, both of them trembling within
And suddenly, years of distance and cold washed away like dirt from their skin
An unspoken connection muffled their innermost dread
They couldn't speak, but if they could, here's what they would have said

- **Mother's Intuition**

(Tessie)
Dear child, whatever happens next, I will not see you defiled
You mustn't live your life oppressed, you mustn't stay if you survive
All is over, all is reconciled, you must exile yourself and stay alive
Listen to me Nancy, my beloved daughter how I've missed you

Your whole life has past me by

(Nancy)
Mother, I'm afraid but I've grown stronger
You have my word I'll go, first thing tomorrow, not a moment more

(Tessie)
Take my paper, quickly take it now, you must trust me Nancy

(Nancy)
Mother, why? How do you know?

(Tessie)
I don't

- **The Black Dot**

(Summers)
Now the time has come, you must unfold, it's protocol
Mr. Graves please take little Davy's paper and show us all

(Villagers)
(Sigh) It's blank

(Summers)
Bill Jr. show us now, you know how

(Villagers)
(Sigh) It's blank, but what about Nancy

(Summers)
Nancy, give us a look of the paper you took

(Villagers)
(Sigh) Nancy's paper was blank, oh good

(Summer)

That leaves Bill and Tessie, Bill go first

(Villagers)

What's he got? What's he got? What's he got?

(Bill)

It's blank

(Villagers)

(Gasp, chatter)

(Summers)

It's Tessie. Show us her paper, Bill

(Bill holds up marked paper)

(Summers)

Allright, folks, let's finish quickly

- **Death Part 1-Fear and Regret**

(ITE)

Nancy locked eyes with her mother for the last time

Baffled that her mother felt, in her gut, the need to trade papers and save her daughter's life

A moment in time, a moment defined by love

(Tessie)

I am firmly gripped by fear

As I recall my wasted years

Only to awaken

Moments before I'm taken

Though I don't deserve to die I still am guilty

Staying silent while partaking in a ritual where no one is free

Only to unlock my greatest prize

My daughter who can see through their disguise

Where will she be come sunrise?

Could it be my calling to die

To be freed from this body, this mind

Nothing profound to behold

Nothing cherished, nothing sacred to uphold within me

Perhaps my death is my triumph and my life my tragedy

My own flesh and blood look on

And soon I'll be gone

I never loved another, I just spun like a top, tirelessly

Making ends meet in a house on a street

I didn't once stop to breathe
And now it's far too late
My agony unlocked
My life a ticking clock

Shrouded in regret, It's time to let go

- **Death Part 2-Forgiveness and Clarity**

But I absolve myself
My incompetence and lack of confidence
My genuine social awkwardness

I forgive myself for my weakness and my shame
For the agony that is my name
A heart that never felt love, a life that I was never proud of

I forgive myself for trying to belong
When I knew it was all so wrong

I was bound to servitude
Loyal to the structure
And for what?
This town cannot sustain itself
And I cannot sustain myself

Nancy!

I trust that you're on your way
Tell everyone what happened on this day
Make yourself a life somewhere far far away ok?

- **Death Part 3-Let Go**

This silent circus quarantine I called life
Has proven meaningless and void

Like the gossip and the chat
Like the human lives destroyed

And so I let go
And so I let go

Not defeated but completed
The bittersweet heartbreaks
The birth of my children
The guilt of inactivity
The social cues that I denied

Along with my body, let them die

- **Nancy's Retreat**

(ITE)

Lonely broken girl
Shattered by her world

She lie still and shaken, afraid to raise her head
Left alone, broken down and destitute
Consumed by dread

The crowds died down and off they went
No gossip to overhear
Still she sat, with a choice in front of her
Retreat or live in fear

(Nancy)
Billy, Davy, wake up, shhhh,
Come with me
Come on!

When they returned to the square that evening
The sky was at its darkest
The old black box still sat there on the stool, and papers littered the earth
And with her mother's voice inside, she could taste the tears she'd cried
With a match and a branch, she set fire to the box

And with her younger brothers
She began her journey north
Escaping the wretched town in which she lived and walked for 12 long years

A new life born of tragedy, she is terrified but free
A girl who never felt that she belonged, makes the choice to carry on

No one ever questioned, no one ever strayed, not until the day she and her brothers ran away
The memory of her mother she'll defend, how can you start again after the ritual ends?