

LOTTO LENYA

A comedy in one act
by
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PREVIEW ONLY!

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SYNOPSIS

A neurotic finance manager is trapped in a broken elevator with his kooky German neighbor who refuses to stop scratching lottery tickets. When a sudden mechanical plunge convinces them they are about to die, the mismatched duo is forced to confess their deepest secrets. It turns out that a lifetime of cautious planning is completely useless when you're trapped a confined space with an elderly woman who prefers her drama, as well as her cigarettes, completely unfiltered.

CHARACTERS

(1m, 1f)

JOE (40s, m)	Hard-working professional who is usually very patient, unless pushed to the brink.
LENYA (80s, f)	His neighbor. No filter, zero self-awareness, with an incredibly thick German accent.

SETTING

A cramped elevator of an old apartment complex.

RUNNING TIME

10 minutes.

(AT RISE: JOE stands in the corner of an incredibly small elevator in an old apartment building, clutching a briefcase to his chest like a shield. LENYA stands aggressively close to him, wearing a bright track suit. She holds a massive stack of scratch-off lottery tickets in one hand and a lucky coin in the other. The elevator lights flicker. A loud, mechanical clunk echoes. The elevator jolts violently, then stops. JOE and LENYA stumble. The emergency light kicks on. JOE frantically slaps the elevator panel, in a panic.)

JOE

No. No, no, no. Don't do this to me.

LENYA

(Unfazed, scratching a lottery ticket)

Aha! *Wunderbar*! The universe has granted us an intermission.

JOE

It's not an intermission, it's a mechanical failure! I'm hitting the call button.

LENYA

Don't bother, Joseph. The super is ninety-four. If he hears a bell ringing, he just thinks it's time for his soup. Relax! Breathe in my aura.

JOE

(Chokes on the air)

I can't breathe anything but your perfume. It smells like a chemical plant in Munich. And how do you know my name?

LENYA

Please. I have lived in apartment 21B since before the concrete was poured. I know everyone. I know you have lived in 9F for seven years, and I know you run down the stairwell like a frightened gazelle every morning at 7:42am just to avoid making eye contact with me.

JOE

(Stunned)

I don't... that's not... the stairs are good for my cardio.

LENYA

You are a terrible liar, Joseph. Your face goes all pinched, like you

just swallowed a wasp. But look! Fate has trapped you in my web! You cannot run now!

JOE

(Bangs on the wall)

Help! Help! I have a presentation this morning with the regional directors! My entire promotion relies on this!

(LENYA gleefully blows scratch-off dust from her lottery ticket into JOE'S face.)

LENYA

Shhh! You are ruining my concentration. I am one number away from the Mega-Mega-Millionaire-Jackpot. If I hit the lucky number seven, I am buying this entire building just so I can evict the screaming toddler in 3A.

JOE

(Coughs)

You're scratching gold tickets that are a complete waste of money! They're just... shiny paper!

LENYA

(Gasps dramatically)

Do not insult the golden tickets! They are blessed by the lottery gods! I buy fifty a day from the Korean market around the corner. The man at the counter, Jin, he tells me, "Lenya, you are a psycho, please go home." But I see the respect in his eyes.

JOE

He's not respecting you, he's pleading with you! You're wasting your time! You're never going to get rich this way. The odds are one in a hundred million!

LENYA

And what are the odds of a boring man in a beige suit getting rich by staring at spreadsheets all day? Zero! Zero point zero!

JOE

It's called working! The hard way! Earned income! I put in sixty hours a week so I can gradually build wealth like a responsible adult!

LENYA

Scheisse! Boring! You sweat for pennies. I sit in my armchair, drink schnapps, and wait for destiny to shower me in gold coins. Who is the real genius here?

JOE

The lottery is a tax on people who are bad at math! You used to be a school teacher, shouldn't you know this?!

LENYA

(Waves her hand dismissively)

Ach, yes, thirty-five years of teaching elementary school mathematics. A complete and utter waste of my grand theatrical essence.

JOE

You think teaching children was a waste of your life?

LENYA

Total garbage. I taught hundreds of those little monsters. "Oh, Frau Lenya, look at my fractions!" "Frau Lenya, I am going to be a doctor!" Idiots. Every single one of them. Not a single one of those ungrateful brats ever made a million dollars and bought me a villa in the South of France. Failed investments, all of them!

JOE

(Horrified)

They were children! You were supposed to enrich their minds, not use them as a venture capitalism scheme!

LENYA

(Laughs uproariously)

Ha! You are so rigid, Joseph! Look at your posture, it's like you have an ironing board shoved up your bum! I think it is hilarious. I gave them all D-minuses and look at them now. Probably working in middle management, just like you!

JOE

(Proudly)

I'm the Senior Vice President of Risk Assessment.

LENYA

Same difference. No villa for Lenya. So now, I play the numbers! Because in this life, Joseph, it is all about the money. Either you win it big and live like a queen, or you die in an elevator smelling like toxic perfume.

JOE

You have thirty seconds to stop scratching that ticket before I throw your lucky coin down the elevator shaft.

LENYA

(Delighted)

Ooh! The gazelle is showing his teeth! Fantastic!

JOE

I'm not a gazelle. I'm a professional. I'm going to stand in this corner, I'm going to look at my phone, and I'm going to pretend that I'm currently anywhere else on Earth.

LENYA

Good luck with the phone, darling. This elevator is a lead box. A tomb for cellular data. So, tell me, Senior Vice President... you have a woman in your life? A man? A very expensive cat?

JOE

I'm not discussing my personal life with you.

LENYA

Why so secretive? What are you hiding? Are you a spy? An international assassin? No, look at those cuticles, you are definitely not an assassin. Is she blonde?

JOE

Stop it.

LENYA

I bet she is one of those women who makes you put your keys in a designated bowl and doesn't let you eat Goldfish crackers in bed. I hate her already. You need a woman with fire! A woman who smells like history!

JOE

(Waves his hand in front of his nose)

Speaking of smells... what is that? It's like a stale bowling alley.

LENYA

(Proudly)

Ah! *Eau de Nicotine*. It is my signature. Forty years of unfiltered Menthols. It gets into the marrow of your bones, Joseph. It stays with you forever. Like a beautiful memory.

JOE

It's not a memory, it's third-hand smoke. Please tell me you haven't smoked inside this building since the ban.

LENYA

The ban? Pooh! Rules are for people who don't know how to bribe the super with homemade strudel. In fact, all this talking about my youth is making me parched.

(She shoves her lottery tickets into her pocket and digs around until she pulls out a crumpled pack of cigarettes and a gold-plated lighter.)

JOE

(Eyes widening in horror)

No. No, no, no. Don't do it. Put that away.

LENYA

(Places a cigarette between her lips)

Just a little puff to calm the nerves. The elevator excitement is giving me palpitations.

JOE

Please. We're in a three-by-three box. The ventilation system is currently dead. I'm asking you, politely, to put the lighter down.

LENYA

(Flicks the lighter)

You worry too much, Joseph. Look at the flame. So dramatic. So full of possibility! Just like the lottery!

JOE

(Grits his teeth)

I'm breathing through my mouth. I'm visualizing a peaceful meadow. I'm a patient man... I'm a patient man...

(LENYA inhales deeply, then blows a massive cloud of smoke directly in JOE'S face. He coughs wildly.)

LENYA

Ahhhh. *Wunderbar*. Now, tell me about your mother. Did she smother you? Is that why you are like this?

JOE

My mother was a lovely woman who understood the concept of personal space! Which is clearly a concept that never made it across the Atlantic!

LENYA

(Dismissively waves her cigarette)

Mothers are always lovely until they force you into a box. Let me tell you about a real life, Joseph. A life of passion! Tragedy! Theater!

JOE

I didn't ask for a biography --

LENYA

Quiet! You will listen and you will learn! When I was a girl, I was the toast of Dusseldorf! I played the third witch in "Macbeth" with such erotic ferocity that the mayor had a stroke in the front row! I was a vision! Men threw bratwurst at my feet!

JOE

Bratwurst?

LENYA

It was a very prestigious theater! But then, I met a man. A man with a moustache and a wallet full of lies. He told me he was a big-shot executive with the Stratford Festival. He said, "Lenya, come to Canada, I will make you the greatest Lady Macbeth North of the border! You will be the darling of Canadian Theater!" So, what did I do? I stole my aunt's inheritance, bought a plane ticket, and when I arrived in Toronto, do you know what he was?

JOE

(Exasperated)

Not a producer.

LENYA

He was a manager at a bowling alley! But did I cry? Did I crawl back to Dusseldorf with my tail between my legs like a sad dachshund? No! I divorced him after two weeks, took his lucky lottery coin, and realized I needed a brand new stage. And what is an elementary school classroom if not a theater filled with a captive, deeply hostile audience? I became a second grade math teacher because numbers are pure drama, Joseph! The betrayal of long division! The tragic mystery of the variable X! For thirty-five years, I stood at that chalkboard like a mad queen, screaming at children about the hypotenuse while screaming inside for the spotlight! They didn't need to learn geometry. They needed to witness me!

JOE

That is... deeply disturbing.

LENYA

It is art, Joseph! It is a life lived on the edge! And now look at me! Sitting on a goldmine of lottery tickets, waiting for my grand finale! I gave you my soul, Joseph! Now give me yours! Tell me one deep, dark, pathetic secret about your spreadsheets!

JOE

No! I'm a private person! I don't do "passion," I do infrastructure!

(Suddenly, a terrifying screech grinds through the shaft. The elevator drops. They fall to the floor. The light overhead dies, plunging them into a flashing red emergency light. JOE screams and drops his suitcase.)

JOE

OH MY GOD! WE'RE DROPPING! WE'RE GOING TO DIE!

LENYA

(Clutches JOE by the lapel)

Ach du lieber! The cables are snapping! The final curtain is falling!

JOE

(Hyperventilating)

I haven't updated my will! My retirement plan isn't consolidated!

LENYA

(Stares intensely into his eyes)

Joseph! Look at me! Look into the eyes of Frau Lenya! We are plummeting into the abyss! In thirty seconds, we will be nothing but a smear of beige suit and a track jacket at the bottom of the shaft!

JOE

(Sobbing)

I don't want to be a smear!

LENYA

Then do not die a coward! Do not go into the afterlife holding back your secrets! The universe demands truth before the crash! Tell me! Who is Joseph?! What is the thing that makes your heart beat?! Tell me or we will haunt this elevator together for eternity! Do you want to spend forever smelling my perfume?!

JOE

NO! NO, I DON'T!

LENYA

THEN OPEN THE FLOODGATES, YOU BEAUTIFUL, BEIGE MAN! TELL ME EVERYTHING!

JOE

FINE! YOU WANT THE TRUTH?! I'm terrified of being broke, okay?! I grew up so poor we didn't even have a kitchen table! We ate dinner off a cardboard box from a washing machine!

LENYA

(Gasps)

A Whirlpool or a Maytag?!

JOE

A Kenmore! And it was soggy, Lenya! Every time my mom spilled her water, the dinner table melted! I wore my cousin's hand-me-down shoes that were far too small, and my toes curled up like cocktail sausages! Kids at school called me "Twinkle Toes Joe" because I could barely walk! I swore to God that when I grew up I'd make so much money my table would be solid oak, my shoes would be Italian leather, and I'd never have to wonder if the lights were going to turn on when I flipped the switch!

LENYA

Das ist furchtbar.

JOE

I crunch numbers because numbers don't lie to you! Numbers don't leave you in the dark! I'm not rigid because I want to be. I'm rigid because if I let go for even one second, I feel like I'm going to sink right back through that soggy cardboard box!

(The flashing red light turns off and the emergency light returns. LENYA looks at JOE, his chest still heaving. She considers the glowing cherry of her cigarette, then deliberately drops it to the floor and crushes it beneath the heel of her shoe. JOE blinks slowly, surprised.)

JOE

You... you put it out.

LENYA

(Shrugs, trying to look casual)

Do not make a big deal out of it. If you die of an asthma attack, who is going to hold my tickets?

JOE

Thank you. Seriously. Thank you. My dad used to chain-smoke in the living room. Two packs a day. The windows were always shut, and the air was just this thick, grey cloud hanging over everything. I used to lie on that Kenmore box at night, gasping for air, convinced my lungs were collapsing. I even developed this chronic asthma. The doctors gave me several different inhalers.

LENYA

(Softens)

An inhaler for the little gazelle.

JOE

But the weird thing is, when I finally moved out at eighteen... the asthma just vanished. It wasn't my lungs. It was the house. I was just suffocating inside it. The poverty, the panic, the constant feeling that we were one bad day away from drowning. It's funny... I spent twenty years thinking I couldn't breathe because of the smoke, but I was just suffocating from the pressure of trying to survive.

LENYA

(Quietly)

In Dusseldorf... after the war... we did not even have a box.

JOE

Seriously?

LENYA

We had a cellar. Me, my mother, and my sister. Six months we lived on potato peels and old wallpaper glue. When the Americans came, they gave us Hershey bars. To this day, when I smell chocolate, I want to cry. I told myself, when I grow up, I will never look at a price tag again. I will have a mountain of gold so high that nobody can ever push me down into a cellar again.

JOE

(Softens)

So... that's why you buy fifty lottery tickets a day?

LENYA

Exactly! Because a spreadsheet takes thirty years, Joseph! But the lottery? One scratch, and BOOM! You are invincible! We are not so different, you and I. We are just two scared children running away from the empty stomach.

JOE

Yeah. I guess maybe we are.

LENYA

(Slaps him on the back so hard he gasps)

Wonderful! Now that we are best friends and soulmates, you can help me scratch the next batch. Here, take the lucky coin!

(She passes him the lucky coin. He is bewildered by his own compliance.)

JOE

I can't believe I'm doing this. My regional directors are probably calling right now, and I'm standing in a smoke-filled elevator scratching a piece of shiny paper.

LENYA

(Shoves the ticket in his face)

Less whining, more scratching, Twinkle Toes! Start with the bottom row. If you see three matching symbols, we win the "Life of Luxury" grand prize.

(JOE sighs, then begins scratching the ticket.)

JOE

Fine. Let's get this over with... Okay, first symbol... It's a tiny picture of a yacht.

LENYA

A yacht! An auspicious omen! Keep going!

JOE

Second symbol... Another yacht.

LENYA

(Grips JOE'S arm so tight he squeals) `

Liebe Gott... Two yachts! Joseph, if the third one is a yacht, I am buying you a table made from the finest mahogany in the Black Forest! Scratch it! Scratch it like your life depends on it!

JOE

Okay! Okay!

(JOE scratches, then stops. He stares at the ticket. His eyes go wide. The coin slips from his fingers and hits the elevator floor.)

LENYA

What is it?! What did you do?! Did you ruin it?!

JOE

(Whispers)

It's a yacht.

LENYA

(Freezes)

What?

(JOE holds the ticket to LENYA'S face, shaking.)

JOE

It's a yacht, Lenya! Three yachts! Look at the prize amount. Look at the zeroes. One, two, three... four, five, six...

(LENYA snatches the ticket from his hands, her eyes darting across the paper. For the first time in her life, she's completely silent. Her jaw drops. She looks at the front, looks at the back, then looks up at JOE.)

LENYA

...Five million dollars!

JOE

(Hyperventilating)

Five million dollars. Five million dollars! You just won five million dollars!

(LENYA suddenly throws her hands in the air and lets out a blood-curdling, operatic screech.)

LENYA

AHHHHHHH! I AM INVINCIBLE! I AM THE QUEEN OF DUSSELDORF! JIN, YOU KOREAN ANGEL, I AM BUYING YOUR MARKET!

(JOE jumps up and down, completely losing his professional sanity.)

JOE

OH MY GOD! WE WON! YOU WON! I SCRATCHED IT! I'M NOT BEIGE, I'M LUCKY!

LENYA

Yes! I am lucky! My ticket! My five million dollars!

JOE

(Stops mid-jump, his smile faltering)

Wait... "my" ticket? Lenya, we're partners! We just went through a near-death experience! I bared my soul to you! I literally scratched the winning row!

LENYA

And you did a beautiful job, darling. Your technique was flawless. But my money is my money. I paid Jin for the ticket, not you.

JOE

I can't believe this. You're not going to split it with me? Not even half?

LENYA

Half?! Are you insane? Do you know how many potato peels five million dollars buys? I will not split it.

JOE

(Incredulous)

Lenya!

LENYA

(Sighs grandly)

Fine, fine! Do not get your beige panties in a twist. I am a generous woman. I am a patron of the arts. Because you have a soggy cardboard table and cocktail sausage toes, I will give you... ten thousand dollars.

JOE

Ten thousand? Out of five million?!

LENYA

It is ten thousand more than you had five minutes ago! You can buy a very nice oak coffee table. Maybe a stool. Do not be greedy, Joseph. It makes your face look pinched again.

JOE

Unbelievable. I finally win the lottery, and I get completely fleeced by an old drama queen in a neon tracksuit.

LENYA

It is a beautiful day! The sun is shining on Frau Lenya! I am a multi-millionaire!

(A long pause. The silence of the cramped elevator settles back over them. JOE taps the elevator buttons again, his adrenaline fading.)

JOE

...So.

LENYA

Yes. So.

JOE

You have five million dollars.

LENYA

I am filthy rich.

JOE

And I have ten thousand dollars.

LENYA

You are slightly less pathetic.

JOE

Right... Now what?

END OF PREVIEW

For a complete script, or to apply for production rights:
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