

## **Revenge of the Numbers**

3<sup>rd</sup> Place

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Grades 7 & 8

Anxiously waiting for the winning Powerball numbers to appear, Harry stared at the television screen hanging above the checkout counter in a Little General BP Station. He glanced down at his ticket; his first and second numbers matched the ones on the bright screen. He felt a twinge in his heart.

He watched as his third and fourth numbers popped up next. After having purchased a single Powerball ticket every week for the past twenty years, he never had four numbers come up. His heart began to beat faster.

The screen flashed and 32 jumped up as the fifth number. He did a double take at his ticket. He thought his heart was going to burst. It seemed like an eternity before the red Powerball popped into place in the lottery machine.

“And the Powerball number is 48,” the announcer said.

Harry closed his eyes. He couldn't even remember what his Powerball number was. He had let the machine do a quick pick. Slowly he opened his eyes to look at the final number on his ticket. The number 48 was now as clear as a supermodel's face. He was the \$350 million dollar winner.

He wanted to scream, but fear suddenly gripped him. At 78, he wouldn't be able to defend himself from an attacker. The cashier was totaling an elderly lady's groceries and the only other person in the store was a businessman in line to buy a newspaper. Harry finally relaxed, yet he still didn't want anyone to know he held the winning ticket in his brown-spotted hands.

Suddenly, images of wealth came rushing in. He envisioned himself on a Royal Caribbean cruise ship sailing south of Jamaica. He was eating medium rare prime ribs with tons of A1 steak sauce, escargot, and a layered cake covered with chocolate mousse. He saw himself lying next to the pool sipping lemonade and watching scantily-clad young ladies splashing in the chlorine-filled water.

The clang of the cash register snapped him out of his trance. Harry's heart rate began to increase rapidly before he tried to imagine what else he could do with his massive fortune.

Next he saw himself traveling around the world, visiting the Seven Wonders. His first stop led him to the Great Pyramids of Egypt. He then traveled to Olympia, Greece, to see the Statue of Zeus. His third stop was the Hanging Gardens of Babylon in Baghdad. Next, he became engrossed by the magnificent Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. He wound up at the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus, Turkey. He sailed across the ocean to see the Lighthouse of Alexandria and finally stopped at the Colossus of Rhodes.

"Sir, are you all right?"

Harry slowly looked up at the cashier. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw that the other customers had left. What he didn't realize was that his right hand, the one that held the winning ticket, was clutching tightly against his chest. His breathing had become shallow. He couldn't speak. The young girl moved as quickly as a gazelle from behind the counter and wrapped her thin arms around Harry. "Are you OK?" she asked again. He looked into her eyes but could not speak. Another worker came from the stock room.

"Call 911!" the young cashier shouted. "I think he's having a heart attack."

The girl was not strong enough, and Harry slumped to the floor, the Powerball ticket still in his hand. He watched through a haze as the paramedics finally arrived and began their work. He wanted to tell them all the things he wanted to do, but the words would not come. Finally, the EMTs placed Harry on the stretcher and began to roll him out the double glass doors to the awaiting ambulance.

The last thing he saw was the bright stars in the dark sky, and slowly his dreams faded to black. As the paramedics rolled his now lifeless body across a bump on the sidewalk, Harry's arm fell to the side. The tight grip released and a sudden gust of wind picked up the tiny slip of paper he held in his hand and carried it off into the chilly night air.