

It's All About the Numbers

By Jamie Littlefield

I stared down at the piece of paper shaking in my hands. This was the piece of paper that changed my entire life. Or, at least I thought it did at the time. Now, it just seems like a curse. It was my lucky numbers of 4, 16, 21, 37, 44 and 48 that caused this catastrophe, and I had no idea how to fix it.

It started out like any other day for me. I got out of bed, stumbled to the shower, and did the rest of my usual morning routine. At the time, I hadn't expected that this day would be any different. Sure, every once in a while I would buy a lottery ticket, just for kicks. I never expect to win anything though, since there are literally hundreds of people who are all vying for the same thing: money. During my break at work, I went to the nearest grocery store and used my lucky numbers – 4/16, my birthday, 21, my street number, 37, the age of my mother when she had me, 4/4, the day when I got my first cat when I was a child, and 4/8 – my dad's birthday.

The lottery sign signaled to me like a beacon. The prize said 2 million dollars. As I hastily scribbled down my numbers, the man selling me the ticket cleared his throat.

"What do you plan to do when you win?"

"Excuse me? How are you so confident that I'm going to win?"

"I have a good feeling, trust me – my gut's always right."

I glanced up at his nametag, which read Logan. "Well, thanks Logan," I said. He was of average height and build, with baby blue eyes and brown hair that fell just above his eyes, along with one hell of a smile.

"What's your name?"

"My name is Amber. Amber Delaney"

"Well it sure was nice to meet you Amber Delaney. That'll be one dollar please."

I handed him the dollar with one hand and shoved my ticket into my pocket with the other. When our hands touched, I felt a shock run through my body. I must have made a face, because he asked me if I was all right. I said that I was, then made an excuse about having to get back to work, even though I knew that I still had 45 minutes left of my lunch.

"I'll be seeing you around – very soon."

"Uh... okay. Bye!"

As I scurried out of the store, I couldn't help but think about how strange he had acted. Who was this

Logan guy to proclaim that I, Amber Delaney, was going to win the lottery? I was just your average 30-year-old woman with a steady job that I happen to love, but a boss that I can't stand. She was one of the popular girls in my high school, and I was now forced to be nice to her. After she made my life a living hell by mercilessly gossiping about me to everyone in our high school. Was it my fault that I couldn't tame my ridiculous hair? Or that I preferred to hang out with the brainy kids?

I couldn't stand to see Alexis' obnoxious face at work, but I was forced to deal with it, at least until I could get a promotion and take Alexis' spot. This was my dream job after all, training animals at a small animal park, but Alexis was the one that I had to answer to, day in and day out. The lion that I was currently training, Jumbe, happened to be my confidant. Sure, he was 500 pounds, but we had been together since he was born, so I have great confidence that he would never hurt me.

This lottery money could change everything. I could afford to ruin Alexis' life. People with money have power, and with this amount of cash, I could do some serious damage. This money would be able to buy me Alexis' spot at work, and I would finally have the promotion that I deserved. All would be right in my world with this money. I just had to win it first. My feelings of luck intensified, and I wasn't even concerned with that creepy Logan anymore.

The thoughts of what I would do with the money consumed my thoughts everyday until the night that the winning numbers were announced. I was just putting the finishing touches on my perfectly concocted plan to buy my way to Alexis' spot, and get her fired. It shouldn't be that hard to pay off the man higher up.

The news came on the television, and I knew that the money was mine. The newscaster was back, and she was ready to announce the winning numbers.

My heart felt like it was going to beat out of my chest, either that, or I was going to spontaneously combust. I had just won 2 million dollars! This money would be my key to success!

The next day, I made my way down to the lottery office, a tall building downtown that I had never given much notice to before. I walked up the steps confidently, ticket in hand. I strode over to the desk, and attempted to hand my ticket to the clerk on the phone. She held up a finger, indicating that she would finish her conversation shortly. I drummed my fingers on the table, as I listened to a one-sided conversation about ponies. Finally, she hung up and turned to me.

"Sorry about that dear, how can I help you?"

"That's okay. My name is Amber Delaney, and I'm here to collect my \$2 million – lump sum."

I grinned, feeling proud that I had done the painstaking research, and had used the term lump sum

correctly.

She looked at my ticket, an annoyed look crossed her face. She squinted at the numbers, typed a few things into the computer in front of her, and sighed loudly.

“I’m guessing no one told you the rules – or you didn’t read the back of the ticket.”

All I could do was stare at her. I never did well with confrontation. Animals were so much easier than people.

She sighed again, louder this time. As she explained the rule that I had apparently overlooked, my face flushed. However, that wouldn’t stop me from fighting for what I believed was mine. No more meek little Amber from high school. Now was my chance to show this lottery lady what I was made of.

“When you take the lump sum, there is an automatic 50% reduction of money for tax purposes.”

“What? But I wanted all of the money. All of the \$2 million is MINE!”

“Listen... Amber. The most I can give you is \$1 million. In fact, you are quite lucky that you live in a state that doesn’t take out more than the customary 50%.”

“Fine! Just give me my check. And I would also like a copy of my winning ticket.”

When the transaction was completed, I stuffed the check into my purse. The bank visit went smoothly, and I was able to collect my winnings without a hassle. I arrived home, and still fuming, I decided to strategically place the cash in my large underwear drawer, away from prying eyes. If I was going to have the 1 million dollars, I had to know that it would be safe. Besides, I couldn’t trust the bank with this kind of money – not after the fiasco my father had when the bank couldn’t come up with his money he had deposited. Also, I knew that I would have to keep the million on hand, in case I needed it right away for my Alexis scheme.

I went to work the next day, silently plotting every time I ran into Alexis. Somehow, I would have to use my money to expose the real evil that was Alexis. The thought crossed my mind that I should just train Jembe to eat her, but then I wouldn’t get to use my newfound money.

When I arrived home that night, I was surprised to see that my windows were broken. Stupid neighborhood kids hitting baseballs. I walked inside, avoiding the broken glass. What I saw next completely blew my mind. My entire house had been ransacked! Drawers were pulled out of place, and the bathroom was a mess. The contents of my cabinet were strewn all across the counter, and toilet paper covered the floor. I raced up to my bedroom to find it in worse shape than the rest of my house. The bedding was torn off the bed and clothes spilled out of the closet. I screamed, and then frantically went searching for my money in my expertly chosen hiding spot. Every last dollar was gone. I flung myself on to the bed, groaning

loudly. How would I ever get back at Alexis now?

I happened to notice a note that had fluttered to the floor when I had been looking for my money. It read:

I knew you would win.

A year later, and I was still in my same position at work. If I moved up ranks, I wouldn't get to be Jumbe's trainer anymore. He placed a giant paw on my lap, and yawned.

Alexis sauntered over to us. She put her left hand in my face, screeching with delight. I don't think I have even seen her so happy about anything before.

"I'm getting married!"

"Great... who is the lucky guy?"

"His name is Logan. And he's rich!"

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