

Lottery Ticket

by Damion Hamilton

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Tony sat down in the hotel room with his back against the wall. He had a handsome face, with three-day stubble growing from it, his pupils very large as if frightened by something, or from deep thought. In his hand, was the winning lottery. Periodically he would get up and check the blinds of the hotel room. It was early Wednesday morning, he was not used to being out of work on Wednesday morning, and this seemed strange to him. He wouldn't have to go back to work anymore. He worked in warehouse for five years, and all the time he was there, he used to fantasize about what it would feel like to not work. Now he was free. The people in the place would never believe his luck. What would he do with his mornings now? All those boys working and sweating and straining to make it through the day, to get a paycheck at the end of the week. At some moments the guys would look so sad while they worked so hard, and everyone would be so quiet while they waited for the end of the day. He couldn't believe he made it through a lot of days. Sometimes he thought he would just collapse from strain or boredom. Now that was over with. But he thought maybe he would miss the old place, a little bit, after you've been around people for so long, you kind of grow accustomed to them, even if you never speak to them. And a lot of people were kind in their own way, and you hate to leave them behind, because you won the lottery and they didn't. He thought this would be easy. He had many fantasies about striking it rich. What did people who didn't have to work do all day? At work he used to fantasize about sitting on beach somewhere in some nice warm spot. Somewhere it didn't get too hot or too cold, and he would be surrounded by pretty young girls, he would look at while he drank and ate the best things. And he could finally read all the books he wanted, without any distractions. He wanted the world and Time. Time was the important thing—he always

seemed to be running out of it. The hours seemed to run into each other while working, and the days, along into the years. Time would be his now.

He got up, and began pacing in circles, my, how he used to pray to God, to help him figure out a way to get rich. Perhaps he was dreaming, and he would wake from the dream soon. That would be too cruel, he reflected. This was real, he remembered pouting like a child, wanting a candy bar, and not getting it, and whining and cursing his poverty. Now he felt ashamed of himself and foolish too. He wanted to apologize to the Gods for cursing his poverty. He had said some cruel things to those who were close to him out of anger, now he wanted to take these things back, but he couldn't.

After learning that he hit the right numbers on the lottery ticket, he left his home as immediately as he could. He couldn't hang around there with his relatives; his life has changed forever. He had been losing for so long, and everyone knew he was a loser, how could he ever handle being a success? And people treating him as if he was success. He got in his car and drove drove drove, into he came across this hotel. He didn't want to see anyone's falsely smiling face, or hear anyone's false tongue. Money changed everything; so few had anything, yet everyone needed it, and would do mostly anything to get. All his life he watched people lie and cheat and work very hard to get it. Now he had it. All the boring and vulgar things one had to do in the world to get it.

He began to feel very sick, and began to roll over in bed clutching his stomach. All his life the rich had seem very evil to him, now he was rich. "It would be easier for the camel to enter the eye of needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." He thought about that statement and knew what the statement meant, but still wandered about it nonetheless. I never treated people unfairly or wished anyone harmed, so why would I not enter the kingdom of God? Is it better to be poor and be in god's good graces?

Well, with money now at least he could travel now, he had spent all his life in the same neighborhood, surrounded by the same people, and driving the same roads. It felt as if he were living in

prison, now he could break through the prison walls. He wanted to see the ocean; it didn't matter which one, and feel warm weather all year round.

This couldn't be happening to him, it must be a dream—a violent cruel dream that he would wake up from soon and be very disappointed. He began to sing old songs to himself, and he remembered the words, so he knew he was not dreaming.

He looked at his clothes now, and there was a hole in his sweater, and a couple of holes in his jeans. He could get new clothes now. Amongst his people appearance was everything. And his appearance was frayed and destitute. Even the poor, tried to appear richer than they were, buying expensive clothes and sneakers to appear as if they belonged to a higher class. The children of the poor would often giggle at his old clothing.

There would be stuff to do now, and places to go. He often spent his evenings alone in a small room, and Friday and Saturday night, and he didn't mind this too much, thinking too one's self was often, more pleasant being around other people. But he often wandered was what going on out there? Why were all the workers always eager to go out there?

He looked out of a window, his car was out there, and it was very bad to look at-- it needed to be washed, painted, the back end was smashed in and the passenger window had plastic covering it. And there was a lot of trash on the inside, he remembered feeling humiliated when hearing someone make a comment such as, "it looks like he lives in that car." And when driving around he couldn't get the plastic tight on the passenger's window, so it would often flap as he drove along, and the noise would be very loud at higher speeds. At work and in most places he would compare his car to the other cars, and it seemed always like he had the worst looking car. One time he got stopped by a cop, he didn't violate in traffic laws, the cop just looked at the car, and said it looked unsafe, and wrote him a ticket. Tony felt as if he was being persecuted, just for being poor. Now he could afford a new car, and not have to worry about it breaking down all the time, which always occurred with old cars

He remembered some of the girls he had known, some he was attracted to, how he wanted to take them out, but he was ashamed to tell them he lived in his parent's basement. One girl in particular, who worked in a coffeeshop, whom he liked very much, but she had a boyfriend who was going to be a lawyer, and how could a minimum wage warehouse worker compete with that? She seemed nice though and seemed as if she liked Tony, but there was always the successful boyfriend. Now he wanted to go immediately to her, and tell her the good news. But how could you tell someone that you just one the lottery? She probably wouldn't believe him. And it would seem ridiculous to ask her to run off with him, just because he won the lottery. But he wanted to see her any way.

He started to make his way to the door, but just as he grabbed the handle, he thought what if someone had followed him, and was waiting outside to take his ticket? What if he got in his car and started driving and ran into someone, or off the road and was killed? That would be just his luck.

So he walked back to the bed and sat down on it. He needed to tell someone, he needed a lawyer, and an accountant some one to tell him want to do with his money. He didn't know how to handle money, someone had to open of up a savings account for him, and he didn't have any real bills, and never bought anything really expensive. His old car was paid for cheaply, without any car payments. He was uncomfortable around practical intelligent people, and lawyers and accountants were practical and intelligent folk. How should he behave around them? They were probably all snakes he reflected, out for the money he had won. He didn't trust many, if anybody.

He got off the bed and went back towards the window, looked out of the window, seeing only the cars of the hotel inhabitants, but he imagined out there was everyone he had ever known, everyone he had ever said hello to, or known casually, well they were out there. And they were all smiling falsely, and they wanted to congratulate him, and they also wanted a piece of the money, thus they were all flattering him. But flattery was so alien to him, he wasn't cognizant

of it; he just remembered the insults and the poverty and disappointment of his life. He wanted to smile, but he had forgotten how to do this. Outside were his people, who all wanted money, who all needed money. And he was one of the few that had it now.

Tony drew away from the window, and was exhausted from nerves; he lay back on the bed, and closed his eyes. He didn't know if he wanted to awaken ever again.

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