

Winning the Lottery

by Marilyn Reeves

I held the five tickets in my hand, along with a notepad to jot down the numbers as they read them off, one by one, on the National Lottery Show. Of course I had no hope of winning the Grand Prize – the \$300 million dollar prize – as you had to get all seven numbers, but thought maybe I might have a chance at a one-million dollar one, as they gave out a hundred of those as well, and you only had to match five numbers to win. If nothing else, the rest of the money people spent on the Lottery helped pay down the national debt (people hated paying taxes but enjoyed buying lottery tickets).

Oh, there he is ... Uncle Sam, dressed in his top hat and striped suit, spinning the wheel! The first number: 27 (I jot this down); 43 (okay); 24 (oh yeah!); 13 (hope that's not unlucky); 12 (two in a row – that happens so often); 55 and 36.

I don't pay much attention to the rest of his spiel, as I'm checking each ticket against all seven winning numbers and it takes all my concentration. Well, here's one that has a 24 and a 55 ... but that seems to be it. Here's another one: 13, 55, 43, 36, 12, 27 and 24. What? 13, 55, 43, 36, 12, 27 and 24. Yes that's right. No, it can't be! My heart races as I check and re-check the numbers. Not all seven! No way! Oh my God, I must be seeing things! My hands are trembling as I re-write the numbers on my ticket in the same order that they were read off. I'm holding my breath! No, I can't believe this!

There must be some mistake.

I rush to the phone and call my son. "Tom, did you get those winning lottery numbers written down?" "No, Mom," he says, "but they should be posted on line within the hour."

I run into the office and open the National Lottery website, and sure enough, there's a message that says the numbers will be posted at precisely 9:00 P.M.

What an agonizing hour! I wait and wait, pace the floor, check the clock, make a cup of coffee – spill it – make another cup of coffee ... and leave it sitting there. Pace the floor. Look at the clock. Oh my God, I can't stand this! What if it's true? What if I really won? What if I won \$300 million dollars? What will I do with all that money?

Pay off my bills, of course ... and my family's bills. And then what? Take a trip around the world? Yeah, sure – why not? Buy a beautiful mountain house? – no I wouldn't want to live alone in the mountains. Give most of it to charity? – oh gosh! I'll be hounded by all those charities wanting donations. And my friends and family will start resenting me and demanding a bigger and bigger share. And the media! Oh, I forgot about all those cameras and reporters – I won't have any privacy at all any more! I won't be ME anymore!

I tore up the ticket and turned off the computer and went to bed. They never did figure out who the Big Winner was, and neither did I – not for sure – but I slept like a baby that night and I never bought another lottery ticket in my life, National or otherwise.