

Excerpt from Powerball 310

Chapter 11: Trevor Harding is the banker laundering the winnings from the rigged lottery ticket. Len Pettigrew is his unfortunate choice for a runner to turn in the ticket.

Trevor's handsome face broke into a broad smile as he clapped Len Pettigrew on the shoulder, but his eyes betrayed displeasure.

"Well, hello, Len. I could almost say I was expecting you. Come in. Come in."

He ushered Len Pettigrew through a steel door into a hallway that led to his comfortable, private office. He waved an electronic key card at the door lock, and they entered. Len glanced around the office and out the massive picture windows that looked down Chestnut Street; he sniffed with contempt.

Trevor Harding waved him into one of three large, heavily padded gray Italian leather chairs. "Len," he said. "To what do I owe the unexpected pleasure of your company this morning?" he forced his lips into a smile. Trevor smoothed his thick, straight, slightly graying hair with his hand. He looked down at his manicured fingernails.

"Oh, cut the crap," responded Pettigrew sourly. "You know why I'm here. What's with my account? You told me the money would be there. You know. One-hundred grand. I got this." He reached in his pocket and produced the receipt. "What is this bullshit? What's with this \$2500 in my account? You double-crossing me?"

"Take it easy, Len," said Trevor in a calming tone. "You remember I told you the money wouldn't all get here at once. It takes the lottery several weeks to transfer the funds. I warned you, you have to be patient."

"A deal is a deal," replied Pettigrew. "I don't understand it. You told me, 100 grand for picking up the ticket. Simple enough. I know how much that jackpot was. Three-ten million. Do you think I'm stupid? You won three-ten million and I get a measly hundred grand. So why should I have to wait for it? Listen, I don't appreciate finding a piddling \$2500 in my account. I'm a business man, you know, I have business to conduct."

"How soon do you need it?"

"Now. Yesterday. You don't need to know. I have debts. Why do you think I took this job? Hey, I still don't understand why you didn't claim this ticket yourself. You know, you said you really needed my help, but why?"

"Len, I told you the truth. You and I have been buddies for a while, right? You grease the skids for me, you get me some luxuries now and then, and it does good for you, right? That's why I asked you to help me. Maybe you weren't the best person for the job. But you pulled it off. I have to grant you that."

Pettigrew scrutinized Trevor with piercing eyes and drummed his yellowed fingernails on his desk. "So what now?"

"You're right," Trevor forced a heavy sigh. "I can't expect you to understand. You've probably never been through a divorce," Trevor noticed Len's smirk, "well, cer-

tainly not a divorce like this one, with the assets involved. You don't know my wife. She won't be happy with the ten grand a month I'm paying her. Women like her, they want it all. You may not believe it but that is really tough for me. I don't make as much as you think in this job."

"Bullshit."

"No, let me assure you, if she got wind of this lottery prize, she'd try to take all of it away from me. Plus she's got a rabid dog for an attorney. So, Bonnie is *not* going to find out about this lottery prize – not if I can help it."

"Well, my heart bleeds for you, but I did the job I was hired to do, and I expect to get paid." He pounded his fist on the desk for emphasis. "Now."

"Yes, of course," Trevor snapped. "You have to be patient. I don't get my money right away and neither do you."

"Well, I need it right away. There are a number of people who are going to give me a bad time if I don't pay up. You see, they all saw my picture in the papers and read the story saying I'd just won \$310 million. I don't know where that came from – you said we'd duck the reporters by going to D.C."

"Yeah, that was the idea."

"Well, now all of a sudden some guys are real worried about the money I owe them. Before, they were willing to wait, you know, when they thought I was just some guy a few steps from the street. But now that they figure I'm a rich son of a bitch, and, well, you know how it is ..." Leering, Len stood up and leaned toward Trevor, resting his hand heavily on his. The bony grip was painful. "They might even kill me." Slowly, he released his pressure on Trevor's hand. "I know you'd hate to have that happen."

"Look," said Trevor, sliding his hand away and then opening his hands in a gesture of conciliation. "I can appreciate the bind you're in, but I already told you, the government doesn't pay the prize money right away. I told

you. It takes a few weeks.”

“Yeah,” but you’re a bank president. You move money around all the time. Hundred grand is chicken feed for your bank.”

Len was growing more agitated. He picked up the heavy glass paperweight from Trevor’s desk and began tossing it from one hand to the other. Embedded in the exquisitely clear glass were brilliantly colored glass bubbles. The paperweight was a work of art Trevor had purchased from the Museum of Modern Art in New York a few years earlier. It was one of his favorite possessions.

“True,” Trevor continued, his eyes following this new development. “But the fact that I handle and have access to large sums of money doesn’t mean I have a license to cheat. These are not my personal funds. There are internal controls, checks and balances, surveillance and so on. I’m not going to do anything to arouse suspicion.”

Len’s green eyes flashed with anger. “Listen, Trevor, I’m getting sick of the run around. You don’t understand; you don’t listen. I told you some guys are out to kill me over these debts and you don’t have any sympathy. Even considering all the good French wine, Italian jewelry, world class art I’ve found for you over the years, at friend prices. Like, for example, the ones here.” His eyes took in the paintings on the walls of Trevor’s office, real paintings, not reproductions. His voice became soft but his tone was menacing. “I want to see you transfer the money into my account right now – while I watch. Or else I might just have to tell my story to the press.”

Trevor nervously eyed Len’s hands juggling his paperweight. Not only was it valuable, but Len could do some serious damage with it. Trevor loosened his collar with a jerk, and mopped his brow with a handkerchief. He sighed. “Okay, Len,” he said at last. “You win. Please put the paperweight down. I can’t exactly say you’re blackmailing

me, just making my life very difficult. But I'll transfer the money now, I'll make a personal advance from my own funds."

Trevor turned to his computer. With the slip of paper showing Len's account number in front of him, he keyed some numbers. They waited several minutes, and then he was able to show Len electronically that his account was funded up to \$100,000.

"Do me a favor," he added. "Don't turn the whole thing into cash right away. Just get cash when you need it. That way the account won't draw any special attention."

"I'll see what I can do," Len assented with a half smile, half grimace. Score one for Lenny, he thought.

Len prepared to end the interview. He said, "Glad to see we're still business buddies."

Trevor returned him a cold smile. "Sure, Len, sure." He opened his office door and ushered Len Pettigrew toward the elevators. Trevor was relieved that his precious paperweight was sitting on his desk and not embedded in his skull.

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