

***New American Science* interviews K.T. Reid, author of POWERBALL 310**

New American Science magazine (NAS) recently caught up with Powerball 310 author K.T. Reid at an exclusive resort on the Island of Eleuthera in the Bahamas.

NAS: Thanks for the interview, although I have to say, it's a little unusual to speak to someone who doesn't exist.

K.T. Reid: (laughs) Well, K.T. Reid is a pseudonym. *New American Science* magazine doesn't exist either, so this interview is all about fiction.

NAS: Okay, getting down to fiction, this is quite an interesting book you've put together. A bit of a thriller, but different from most, maybe more realistic. You've got a murder mystery spiced up by some police procedural, but it's not just a whodunit. And you've got a multi-million dollar heist. There's a lot going on here; tell me what kind of a book were you aiming to write.

K.T. Reid: That's a good place to get started. Major crimes grab the reader's attention, so there is murder and a lot of money at stake. I take the reader abroad, but I definitely didn't want to do another international thriller, so no global spy rings, no plots to overthrow the presidency, no ticking bomb. I did want a crime that a lot of people could relate to, so stealing a Powerball lottery jackpot just seemed a natural.

NAS: In the book they use a computer for the theft.

K.T. Reid: Yes, large sums of money only exist as numbers in a machine; if you want to steal hundreds of millions, you can't just drill into a vault. The high-tech bank heist has been done, like in *Ocean's Eleven*. But a crook doesn't have to go to a bank anymore. For *Powerball 310*, all it took was a regular convenience store lottery machine, insider access, and some far out mathematics.

NAS: What about the math part of it. That is a bit esoteric. It is interesting to my journal, but most people have never heard of Riemann or his hypothesis, or of the Clay Mathematics Institute.

K.T. Reid: That's actually how the whole story began. There are a handful of famous problems in mathematics that get some exposure in the popular press, thanks in part to the Clay Mathematics Institute, which offers big prizes. Of these, the Riemann Hypothesis is a real peach: the underlying concept is simple, but the actual work is probably one of the most obscure problems for anybody to understand. I was reading up on Riemann and talking to like-minded friends when I wrote the limerick that shows up in *Powerball 310*. The limerick, by the way, is a quintessential description of the Riemann hypothesis and very clever. Somehow I got the idea to base a crime novel around it because of the obvious tie-in to computer security.

NAS: How did you plan to weave the limerick into the story?

K.T. Reid: Originally, the limerick was supposed to provide specific clues to solving the mysteries in the story, but that proved to be too contrived. Instead, the limerick serves more as a lucky charm that simply guides the protagonists on the right path, almost by accident.

NAS: The protagonists. Your main character, Keith Evans, plays more like a hometown college kid than a superhero like Jason Bourne in the Ludlum novels, or Alex Cross in James Patterson's work. Was that intentional?

K.T. Reid: Absolutely. Keith Evans and Melissa McCormack are young people thrown together by fate and pulled into a web of dirty dealings. They are really just a couple of kids completely unprepared for what happens, who have to make the best of a bad situation and who try to come out on the right end of it. They both grow up in the process. The story really is much larger than just the young couple and their problems. It's just as much about the fate of this gang of experts who have the confidence to think they can pull off a major scheme. They aren't prepared for what happens either. That's what makes the story a lot of fun.

NAS: Yes. It does keep you engaged with all the twists and turns and new developments. There is also a lot of rather dry humor in the story.

K.T. Reid: There are some good one-liners and a lot of inside jokes: characters make off hand comments that presage future events or are ironic in the context of what is happening elsewhere in the book. I didn't want Powerball 310 to be the very dark thriller with the ultra evil villain – there are too many crime fiction novels like that. I wanted this to be about real people, greedy like all of us, who just get in a bit too far over their heads. In essence, this story is a caper. You get to sit back and just watch how Lady Luck plays havoc with these characters. It's a refreshingly different story.

NAS: Why is this set mostly in Philadelphia?

K.T. Reid: The shortest answer: Philadelphia is great place to be murdered. I wanted an urban East Coast venue that is not as overexposed in fiction as New York or Washington D.C. I start Keith Evans in D.C., but soon drop him unsuspecting into Philadelphia, into a world unlike anything he knows. Philly is a nice place, actually. I even miss the steak sandwiches sometimes.

NAS: A moment ago you mentioned the obvious tie-in to computer security. Could someone actually pull off a caper like this? Did this happen?

K.T. Reid: (coughs) No, no, of course not. It's all fiction. Pure fiction. Look, it's lunchtime. I picked up a couple of spiny lobsters out snorkeling this morning; Cook will be serving a Caribbean specialty. Come on in, and we'll talk about it all you want...