

# Unlucky Winner

t'Sade



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# 1

Randall unscrewed the gas tank to his battered Honda. Setting the cap down on the trunk, he reached over and grabbed the dispenser nozzle. With a bored sigh, he jammed it into place and squeezed the handle to lock it open. The hose jerked as fuel poured into the car, but a heartbeat later, the handle clicked in his hand and the fuel stopped. Automatically, he released the lever and tried again, but the pump stopped just as quickly. He resigned himself to keeping his hand on the lever instead of cleaning the windows like he planned. With an annoyed sigh, he released the lever and held it down halfway, feeling the nozzle vibrating as fuel poured into his vehicle.

He felt the car shake and looked up to see Mary, his girlfriend, getting out of the car. In the late spring air, she wore a white tank top that strained over her breasts and left her belly bare. The straps of her black bra peeked out from the spaghetti straps of her top, a casual look he already knew took hours to perfect.

Mary pushed her blonde hair over her ear and gestured to the convince store with her chin. "I'm heading in, want anything?"

Randall said, "Get me a chocolate pretzel and a diet?"

She grunted in acknowledgment and headed into the store. Randall turned to watch her, swapping hands wrapped on the nozzle as he focused on her blue jeans and leather thigh-high boots. A smile crossed his lips, only to drop when he remembered something.

"Oh, and a lottery ticket!"

Mary stopped, turning around with a quizzical look on her face. "What kind?"

"Ultra Billions, and get the doubler."

Her entire face lit up. "What's the pot?"  
"161 million dollars."  
"I'll get two."

—  
Sitting on the couch, Randall flipped through the channels. His eyes rose up to the clock on top, then back down. Three minutes to go until they announced the lottery numbers. He continued to cycle through the channels, not really stopping long enough to identify any of them.

"Stop flipping channels, Randall!"

Randall sighed and flipped the channel to the local news channel. Hitting the mute, he tossed the remote on the cushion next to him. Lifting his hips, he dug into his pocket and pulled out the two lottery tickets. The printed numbers on thermal paper didn't look like much, but he couldn't help feeling a surge of anticipation as he looked down at the six numbers.

A one in a billion chance.

He toyed with the tickets until the minutes passed by. As soon as he saw the lottery selection show up, a large device with ping-pong balls in it, he grinned. He held one ticket in each hand, eyes fixed on the screen.

"Randall, come in for dinner."

A flicker of frustration filled him. "Just a minute, the numbers are coming up."

"Well, hurry up."

Randall made a grunting noise. He held his breath when he saw the first number come up.

1.

Both tickets had a twelve and he grinned.

1.

One ticket had the number. He held both, knowing he was one number from getting a few dollars.

1.

The same ticket had three numbers. His brown eyes scanned the other. When he didn't see any of the numbers, he let it slip from his fingers so he could hold the promising ticket with both hands.

1.

Four numbers matching. Randall felt his breath growing shorter and a strange, heated tingling filling his gut. The world around him spun, everything shifting except for the ticket and the television.

The vague hope of getting a few dollars turned into the choking desperation of winning thousands. His vision blurred and suddenly couldn't see the screen. Panicked, he wiped the tears from his eyes and read the next number on the screen.

1.

Seeing the same number printed on his ticket he gasped. He tried to call out to Mary, but his throat refused to make any noise. He flailed out for her, waving his hand even knowing that she couldn't see him from the couch.

1.

Randall's breath stopped as he stared at the last printed number. He won. He just won 161 million dollars. And he couldn't breath. His mouth gaped desperately as the part not entirely raptured by the winning numbers tried to breath. His blood pounded in his ears, deafening him.

"Randall!"

He jumped as Mary leaned over the back of the couch. The ticket fluttered from his hand and he pawed at it, clawing at the couch cushions until he captured the tiny piece of paper.

"Randall!? Are you okay?"

"I-I-" He tried to talk, but when he couldn't, he lamely held up the piece of paper.

Mary's dark blue eyes flickered down to the paper, then up. "What, did we win something?"

Randall nodded, his dark hair fluttering.

She rolled her eyes and snatched the paper from his palms. He let out a squeaking noise, trying to encourage her to be careful of the precious piece of paper. Mary didn't seem to notice as she crawled over the back of the couch. Her cotton shorts caught on the back of the cushion, riding up until she settled into place.

"All right, let's see what we won."

She grabbed the remote with her other hand and rewound the television. Seeing the numbers, she paused.

"Okay. Six. Twelve. Thirty..." Her voice trailed off and she looked over to Randall with that look of dumbfounded surprise. "Randall?"

Gulping, he gestured to the television.

She took a deep breath and continued. "Twelve, yes. Thirty-seven. Fifty. Oh god. Fifty-three? Thirteen?" She turned to him, the paper shaking in her hand. "E-Randall, did we just win the lottery?"

Words finally came back to him. "I think we did."

"We're millionaires? Oh, my god. We're rich!" Mary squealed and threw herself at him.

Randall's eyes widened as he saw the winning ticket in her hand. He reached up with both hands to grab her wrist. Mary's shoulder twisted and her head crashed into his chest as she slumped to the ground. Gingerly, he plucked the ticket from her fingers and set it down on the coffee table.

Mary whimpered softly as she pushed herself up and rubbed her forehead. "I'm sorry, I got excited."

Randall grunted, his eyes not moving from the piece of paper. Mary settled down next to him and rested a hand on his leg. He looked up and smiled, then returned to the piece of paper.

Mary reached over and picked up his glass of diet pop, setting it on the floor. She giggled. "We should put this in a safe or something."

"Good idea. First thing tomorrow, I'll get a bank deposit box."

"I can't believe we just won a hundred sixty million." Her voice came out in a whisper.

"I know."

"Randall?"

Randall looked up to see Mary staring at him, her eyes smoldering. "Yes?"

"Fuck me."



—  
Two hours later, Randall rested on the bed, his body covered in a thin sheet of sweat. His cock ached from coming three times in a short period of time, but he didn't think he could go a fourth round, even with the adrenaline of winning millions.

Mary giggled and panted next to him, her sweaty leg draped over his own. She arched her back and pulled her blonde hair away from her face. "That was... fantastic."

Randall groaned and rolled over, sliding away from Mary just to avoid the heat rolling off her naked body. Turning his head, he saw her black panties hanging from a lamp and, in the mirror, his shirt spinning on the ceiling fan above him. He turned back over to admire her.

She smiled at him, shifting her body so she could look at him.

"I can't wait to tell the others."

Randall didn't need to know who she spoke of. Mary's friends didn't like him any more than he liked them. In fact, Randall considered most of them to be snippy, manipulative, self-centered bitches and the men who made the mistake of marrying the bitches. His mind spun furiously, trying to find some way of keeping Mary's friends from his winnings.

"I don't think that is a good idea," he said in an attempt to stall.

Mary's face darkened and a frown crossed over her brow. "Why?" she asked in a dangerous tone.

"Because..." an idea came up, "I heard that you should really get a tax accountant handling it long before you even pick up the ticket. Otherwise, you can pay millions in taxes."

"And why can't I tell my friends?"

"Because," he swallowed hard before speaking, "because if we plan this out and have everything arrange before we cash the ticket, we have some defense against everyone and their brother asking for money, requests for donations, and end up blowing it on stuff we don't need. I heard somewhere, most lottery winners are bankrupt within a year."

She thought for a moment. Randall, seeing her consider it, reached out and took her hands in his own. He could feel the softness of her skin and the slightly tacky sensation of her sweat, but he still pulled them to his chest.

“Do you want to have twenty years of having everything? Or a few years of partying and being broke?”

Mary’s eyes slide to the side. “I’d rather be rich.”

“Then, just give me a few days before you tell anyone. Not even your mother, okay?”

“I... suppose...”

“Mary, we won a hundred sixty one million dollars. I’m sure you can keep it a secret for a few days, can’t you? I mean, we’ll be getting millions in the first check.”

Her discomfort faded from her face. She grinned and rolled over on him, straddling his hips. He groaned at the feeling of his naked cock against her slick sex.

Mary leaned over him, her nipples resting against his chest. “Let’s fuck.”

—

Randall’s Honda pulled into the garage and came to a stop. Inside, Randall turned off the car and listened to the engine popping a few times before turning to the passenger seat. He grabbed an accordion file and pulled the elastic off. Opening it, he flipped through the dividers a few times until he found the latest addition, a proposal from a CPA firm recommended by his father.

Pulling out the papers, he paged through them. He was happy with the two CPAs proposal and thought their rates were very reasonable giving the amount of money he needed to manage.

He paused on the second to last page, where they gave options comparing a single up-front payment verses annual payments for twenty years. The second, the annual payments, was highlighted. He read through the options again, both happy and depressed by their recommendations. He would get more reliable money if he got annual payments, but only one person could be the legal owner of the payments. That means it would be his or Mary’s, but not both. A lump sum payment could be split between them, but it also put him at risk since he would be responsible for investing it. The CPA firm offered to help, as part of their services, but the idea of so much money in one place made him nervous.

Randall couldn’t imagine life without Mary, but he also knew that she gave money to anyone who gave her a sob story or showed up at the door. They already had four magazine subscriptions that neither

read, just because she couldn't say no. He looked down at the page, wondering if he could somehow justify to her keeping the money under his name and doling it out for a comfortable living.

After a moment, he sighed and shoved the papers back into the file. Snapping the elastic into place, he crawled out of the car and stood up. His eyes scanned around the garage, pausing only briefly on the shelves in the corner. Buried inside one of the toolboxes was the key to the deposit box. He got it the day before and hid it before Mary came home.

He felt guilty about not trusting Mary. Sighing, he circled around the car and into the house. Shutting the door behind him, he headed straight for the kitchen to set down the according file on the counter.

His eyes slid to the side where he saw a set of keys next to the kitchen sink. The rabbit foot on the chain startled him. It looked familiar, but he knew that Mary would never have fur hanging from her keys. Frowning, he reached for the keys.

The bedroom door slammed shut. Randall froze as a cold sweat dripped down the back of his neck. Heavy footsteps came down the hall. He knew instantly that it wasn't Mary. When a man's voice carried through the house, he felt his heart skip.

"Candi, it isn't in the bedroom."

"I know," came Candi's voice right behind Randall.

Randall gasped and spun around, his fingers accidentally pushing the keys into the sink. Leaning against the garage door was Candi, one of Mary's friends. She wore a tight black t-shirt and black jeans. She wasn't smiling as she focused on Randall, her arms folded tightly over her chest.

He gulped, trying to calm his pounding heart. "Candi, you surprised me."

Candi looked at him through her blonde bangs and took a step forward. She glanced across the kitchen where her husband, Bill, walked in and stopped with a start. Her brown eyes turned back on Randall and she smiled.

"I can't imagine why, you didn't exactly invite us." She held up Mary's keys and spun them around her finger.

“Where is Mary? Why are you here? What is going on?” Even as he asked the question, he had a bad feeling he knew the answer: the ticket.

Candi rolled her eyes. “Are you really that stupid, Randall?”

Bill chuckled and leaned on the other door frame, mimicking Candi’s posture. “You know what, Candi? I have an idea.”

Candi glared over to her husband, but said nothing.

Randall looked back and forth between them. It didn’t take long to realize that Bill and Candi stood in the only exits from the kitchen, leaving him trapped. Looking at their faces, he felt a cold fear wash over him. He glanced over his shoulder at the window leading into the back yard, trying to figure out if he could scramble through it in time.

He cleared his throat and turned back to Candi.

“What do you guys want? Mary isn’t here.”

Candi said, “The lottery ticket, idiot. We know you have it.”

“How?” he asked, already knowing the answer.

“Mary told us last night. We went for drinking since you were so,” she paused and shook her head, “so busy with things.”

Randall worried his lip. “Where is Mary now?”

Candi gestured with one hand out the front door. “Out shopping. You’ve been so stingy with money that she borrowed a couple hundred from us for a little fun time. And she asked us,” she lifted her other hand and spun Mary’s keys on her fingers, “to check on the house.”

“The ticket isn’t in the house.”

Candi cocked her head. “I’m not sure about that, but that isn’t going to stop me from looking. A hundred sixty million is a lot of money.”

Bill chuckled.

Randall looked back at the window again, then over to Bill. Bill just shook his head and gave a “go ahead, try it” look. Randall gulped and focused back on Candi.

“Don’t do this, Candi.”

She pushed herself off the door frame and took a step toward him. “Where is the ticket, Randall?”

Randall stepped away from her, but stopped when he saw Bill walking toward him. Candi’s husband had his arms spread out,

trying to block Randall's escape. Spinning around, Randall grabbed the front of the kitchen sink and hauled himself on it. The stainless steel edge dug into his knees, but he ignored the pain as he tore away the Venetian blinds and tossed them over his shoulder. Fingers squeaked on the glass window but he couldn't slow down enough to release the window lock.

Gasping for breath, he grabbed the hand soap dispenses, a heavy porcelain bottle, and slammed it against the kitchen window. A spiderweb of cracks spread out and he drew back to break the window.

Hands, both Candi's and Bill's, grabbed him from behind. Randall let out a shriek and grabbed at the windowsill. They hauled him off the kitchen counter and he collapsed to the ground, flailing around. He felt his foot slam into something soft and solid.

"Damn it," screamed Candi, "he kicked me!"

There was a moment of silence. Then, Bill's shoe slammed into Randall's rib cage. Randall let out a groan and curled up in a fetal position.

"Get the idiot in a chair," commanded Candi.

Bill grabbed him and pulled him up as Randall heard a chair scraping on the floor.

Randall struggled violently but Bill bore down on his shoulders, forcing him in the chair. A foot kicked at his ankle, forcing it underneath the chair.

Bill grunted with his efforts, "I'm having trouble keeping him still, Candi."

"Hold on, I have an idea!" Candi, her hair a wild mess, ran out of the house into the garage.

Randall whimpered and reached out for the kitchen table. He caught it with his fingers, but Bill slammed his fist down on Randall's fingers, nearly breaking them. Randall yanked them back.

Bill circled in front of Randall and his fist pulled back.

Randall looked up to see it and cringed before Bill punched him in the stomach. The impact of the fist felt like it drove his spine into the back of the chair. Randall folded in half and choked. When he managed to push himself back into a sitting position, he saw Candi coming back into the house with a bundle of twine. His blood ran

cold when he realized she grabbed it from the same shelf as his toolbox, with the safety deposit key in it.

He struggled with Bill and Candi, but it didn't take long for the married couple to tie him down in the chair. They bound his wrists and ankles to the chair. He struggled with the bindings, wincing as they dug into his flesh.

"Comfy?" asked Candi in a sardonic tone.

"No," snapped Randall, "let me go!"

"Give me the lottery ticket, Randall."

Randall shook his head. "I can't, Candi. It is my ticket and I won't have you—"

Bill interrupted him. "Can't we just beat it out of him?"

Randall clamped his mouth shut.

Candi shrugged, then she noticed the accordion file on the counter. Without a word, she walked over to it and picked it up. "What do we have here?"

Randall's jaw tightened as Candi opened the folder and flipped through it. It didn't take her long to go through the file, pulling out papers at a time. She finally stopped on the CPA's proposal. With a triumphant grin, she set down the accordion file and quickly read through it.

"Oh, considering cutting Mary out of this? Payments for twenty years without her on any paperwork? Oh, naughty, naughty Randall, she isn't going to like this."

Randall turned away, feeling guilt spiking inside him.

She walked back over to him, dropping the proposal on the table in front of him. She sat back on the table next to the papers.

"Just tell me where it is, Randall."

"No."

Candi sighed before she groaned. She looked up at Bill. "All right, go get a hammer or something."

A knocking noise filled the kitchen. Randall's head snapped up and he looked out the curtains to see someone standing outside of the side door, rapping on the frame. He inhaled sharply to yell for help.

Candi and Bill responded as one. Candi lunged from the table to slap her hand across Randall's face. The impact stung, but not as much as when Bill's hand also came across his face, planting his

larger hand and crushing Candi's against Randall's face. Their palms stopped his breath and he drank in the sudden scents of Candi's perfumed, softer hand and the sweatier scent of Bill.

Randall knew that Candi had small hands, but they felt large across his face. He could feel the bones at her joints and between the soft pads of her fingers, but the pressure came from the top of her hand, the line where her fingers joined the palm. The bony ridge, and the wedding band right above it, crushed his lips. On the other side, the heel of her palm smashed his cheek, angling the pressure right on the bottom edge of his jaw. At the center of his lips, there was the smallest of spaces, where his lips only ground on the skin of her palm. With the pressure there, he could feel the tiny ridges of her skin and the lines across her palm.

The knocking continued as Mary's voice drifted through the door.

"Randall? Let me in? Candi has my keys."

Randall tried to scream, but it only came out as a muffled, pitiful whine. Bill responded by crushing Candi's hand against Randall's face, his hands stretching past his wife's to grip Randall's face. The difference was startling. Bill had rough hands that felt like sandpaper across Randall's face. They were also stronger as they dug into the side of his head, holding tightly to Randall's face. At the same time, Bill also crushed Candi's hand up against him. He could feel the softness of her palm suffocating him, a delicate grip turned steel.

When he kept struggling, Candi hissed in his ear. "Be quiet!"

"Randall!? Are you in there?" came Mary's voice.

Candi's and Bill's hands tightened across Randall's face, cutting off his breath. He tried to breath in through his nose, but no matter how much he inhaled, he couldn't get any air into his aching lungs. Panicking, he tried to suck the air between their fingers and his lips, but he couldn't move them away from the soft, delicate hand holding him so still. He was terrified that it took Candi and Bill so little effort to silence him.

Bill whispered sharply. "What do we do? She'll freak out if she sees him here."

"Shut up," hissed Candi, "and give me a chance to think!"

The knocking continued. Randall focused on it, his heart pounding twenty times for every knock, but he desperately strained to break free. He only needed a millisecond of freedom and he could call out to her. If he could only alert her.

“Candi...”

“Shut up!” hissed Candi.

Mary’s knocking stopped. Randall strained to hear it, wondering if it was a trick of his ears, but Mary’s shadow disappeared from the door as she walked away from the house. Tears ran down Randall’s cheeks as he stared at the empty door frame, wondering if he just lost his last chance at freedom.

Candi released her one hand. “She’s gone.”

Bill whispered, “I thought you said she’d be gone all day!”

“I thought she was, Bill, but obviously that girl can spend five hundred dollars faster than I thought.”

“Will she be back?”

“No idea, depends on if Randall here,” she shook Randall’s head, “has been throwing money at her or she’s broke like she claims.”

Bill chuckled. “Mary has a job, maybe she has money?”

Candi looked at him with disgust. “Have you see how much she drinks? No chance. Let’s hope she’s going back to our house. We better start-”

The word died in her throat when the sound of a key in the lock rattled through the kitchen.

Bill swore and Candi whispered, “Oh crap, you had a spare key!?”

Randall let out, or tried to, a gasp. He forgot about the key hidden under the rock in the back yard. He started to struggle again, desperate to free himself as he screamed into the hands plastered to his face. Candi’s fingers dug into the side of his jaw, nails almost breaking the skin. Bill’s own hand clamped even harder, grinding Candi’s palms into Randall’s face.

“Give me a second,” whispered Candi frantically, “and shut up, Randall! Bill, stall her!”

“How?”

“Just do it!” snapped Bill’s wife.

With a dramatic sigh, Bill slipped his hands out from between Candi’s.



Randall tried to jerk his head away to escape, but Candi slammed his head back, wrapping both hands around his mouth. Her slender fingers threaded together to form a tight seal across his mouth. She surprised Randall by her strong grip. Her soft hands, hands of an accountant, felt like silken steel as they pressed against him. She leaned into him, whispering in his ear.

“Now, be very quiet, Randall, otherwise you’ll regret it for the rest of your life.”

To empathize her point, she yanked his head back against her chest. His skull hit the soft mounds of her breasts. He didn’t have a chance to even enjoy it before his head rapped against her sternum, sending an instant headache sparkling through his mind. He tried to pull away from her, feeling both embarrassed for the purely masculine enjoyment of her body and the growing fear boiling inside him. Her hands flexed across his face, squeezing his jaw from the sides until he felt the ache dominating his thoughts. He tried to twist away, but she easily held him place, pinned by her breasts and her hands.

His shoulders jerked to the side, but she yanked him back into position. He tried one more time, twisting his head. Surprisingly, she let him and he felt her breast on the side of his face as he looked up into her brown eyes.

Candi’s eyes were focused on the door. He saw a hard look on her face, a flashing intelligent of someone planning terrible things. Her eyes flickered down to him and she regarded him coldly.

“You say anything, even a peep, and the second she turned her back, you will die.”

The kitchen door opened as Mary stepped into the kitchen. Bill, caught halfway between the door and Randall, came to a shuddering stop. Mary walked into the kitchen, holding a single bare keep in her fingers, and stopped. Her blue eyes took in the scene: Randall tied to the chair, Candi crouching behind him and gagging him, and Bill standing in front of her. A quizzical look crossed her face, starting with an initial confusion and then settling into something between curiosity and distrust.

“What is going on here?”

Bill held out his hands. “Mary, we weren’t expecting you here.”

Randall tried to turn his head to look at Mary, but Candi clamped down on him, smothering him with her breast. He struggled more, trying to make a noise, but only the faintest of noises slipped past Candi's fingers. Candi, her hands barely moving, dug her nails deeper into the side of his jaw, locking it into place and sending bright tendrils of pain coursing through his senses.

"Candi, what are you doing to Randall?"

Candi inhaled sharply. She stood up, but didn't remove her hands away from Randall's mouth. With her movement, Randall finally managed to turn his head toward his girlfriend but Candi ground him back against her stomach, her palms grinding down on his lips until he could feel the flesh being crushed into his teeth. He let out a whimper of pain but when he didn't hear anything but the pounding of his ears, he felt panic growing.

Randall tried to jerk his head away, but Candi forced it back, her palms muffling his efforts to make a noise. He jerked, but Candi bore down on him, crushing his body into the chair and his head into her stomach. Her hands tightened on his face and even his desperate sounds faded into silence.

But, when she spoke, her words came out cheerful and perky. "Mary, it isn't exactly what it looks like."

Mary stepped back and rested her wrists on her waist. "Really?" she said in a sarcastic tone, "because it really looks like some kinky little play going on here."

"Yeah, I'm sorry, I guess it is exactly what it looks like. You see, Randall asked--"

Randall thrashed in his bounds, trying to break free and explain himself.

Mary interrupted Candi. "Don't even bother. Randall doesn't have a single perverted bone in his body. That boy is so vanilla you could make a cupcake out of him."

"Mary--"

"No! You are going after the ticket, weren't you?" Mary gasped, her hand pressing to her mouth, "You didn't lend me five hundred at all, did you? You were just getting me out of the house so you could rob us. You're my best friends--"

Bill stepped forward. "Mary..."

Mary stepped back, digging in her pocket. “No! You were friends!” She sniffed back her tears and fumbled with her cell phone. “I told you that in secret and what did you do? You are trying to rob me!”

Bill looked over his shoulder at Randall and Candi. Randall felt Candi gesturing with her chin, an obvious order. Turning around, he cleared his throat.

“Don’t call anyone,” he said.

Mary yanked out of her phone. “Fuck you! You were going to rob me!”

Candi spoke up. “No, I’m trying to save you. We weren’t going to keep... all the ticket, I just didn’t want Randall to do what he planned.”

Randall frozen, confused and frightened. Mary stopped, her cell phone balanced on her fingers and her thumb hovering over the keypad. Slowly, she stepped sideways to look carefully at Candi and Randall.

“What are you talking about?”

“He was cutting you out of the ticket. To save money, he was going to keep it himself. And,” a faintest of pauses, “that way, it would be easier for him to run off with Susan.”

Susan, one of Mary’s other friends. A hyper-critical bitch who found fault in everything Randall did, just because he called her fat once in some forgotten memory. Randall hated spending time with Susan since she took personal pleasure in making his life hell.

“Susan?” scoffed Mary, “Are you kidding?”

“No!” cried Candi quickly, “I’m serious. Look at that paper on the table.”

Bill hurried over, grabbing the paper and delivering it to Mary. Mary took it, confusion on her face, and peered down at the paper. Randall watched as she read over the pages, taking a long time to read.

The seconds passed by and Randall trembled in Candi’s grip. He watched Mary’s blue eyes moving up and down. She let the paper drop as she focused accusing eyes on Randall.

“Randall, what is this?”

Randall tried to yell out, but Candi clamped down even tighter. Randall felt his breath being cut off and a dull burn began to sear his

lungs. He jerked in her grip and twisted his wrists against the twine. A trickle of blood dripped down his hands, but he couldn't break himself free. And his desperate cry turned into a barely audible whimper that he could barely hear. He tried again, heaving his chest to make a much noise across his vocal cords, but the faint noise that escaped humiliated him.

"Candi, why aren't you letting him speak?"

Candi ignored Mary's question and asked a question of her own.

"Remember when he and Susan got stuck out on I-80 all night? You were worried about him and he just said he had a flat tire?"

Mary didn't seem to notice Candi's refusal to answer the question as she responded warily, "Yes?"

Randall screamed into the hand, trying to explain himself. But, the noises that escaped her hands was only the faintest of whispers, a tiny squeak noise that sounded more like Bill breathing heavily than Randall's desperate explanation. Candi yanked his head back, bumping his head into her chest. He tried to twist away, but Candi bore down, preventing his head from even turning away.

Susan still blamed him for getting a flat tire thirty miles away from the nearest service station and without cell phone service. She made him walk back to the station and get a new tire that cost three times as much as normal.

"Well, they weren't repair a flat like they said. Susan said they were just pulled on the side, fucking like rabbits."

Mary gasped. "But, I saw the receipt. He bought a tire."

"And returned it a few days later. Bill, go get that file from the cabinet. Labeled 'Car Repairs' near the front, top drawer."

Bill quickly left the room and came rushing back with the folder. A few pieces of paper fluttered from the folder and he stopped to scoop them up. With the edges sticking out of the side, he handed the entire folder to Mary.

Randall held his breath, remembering how he returned the tire the next day after picking up a cheaper one at a station he trusted. But, he stapled the three receipts together and he knew as soon as Mary saw it, she would know Candi lied to her.

Bill turned away from Mary to give Candi a grin. He patted his pocket, then returned to watch Mary paging through the folder. It only took a few seconds for her to find the receipt, a bright pink

piece of paper. Holding the folder in one hand, she held the receipt up for everyone to see.

When Randall saw only two receipts stapled together, he realized that Bill removed the second purchase. Candi confirmed it by leaning forward to whisper in Randall's ear. "She'll never believe you now."

Randall begged Mary with his eyes, pleading for her to listen to him. She focused on him but all he saw was hurt and rejection in her blue eyes. A single tear welled up under her right eye, his heart tore in two. He tried to scream out for her, but his cries didn't escape her hands. Only damning silence.

He thrashed violently as he tried to break free of Candi's grip, but Candi held him against her chest, pinning him down. He felt her muscles tensing to hold him still. He strained against her but she held him easily in place.

But, Candi wasn't done. "Don't forget that time you caught him coming out of the women's bathroom? That was Susan too? She gave him some head back there."

Randall tried to turn his head to stare incredulously at Candi, but she forced his head still. "If you remember, she grabbed a beer before even sitting down. You know that she hates swallowing, but Randall here came in her mouth. His pants were wet, remember?"

Desperate to break free, Randall thrashed at his bounds. The incident at the bar was when Talia, another of Mary's friends, and Susan threatened to flush his cell phone down the toilet. He went after them and they held the stall door shut, laughing the entire time, before letting him go. Now, it just looked like he was cheating on her.

Mary opened her mouth to say something, then closed it. More tears ran down her cheeks.

"Look, Mary, we aren't going to do anything bad. We're just going to prevent him from hurting you. Look, we'll give you a third... no, half of the ticket if you help us get it."

Randall tried to plead with his eyes, his only way of begging for help. He had trouble breathing through Candi's grip.

Mary shook her head slowly, tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Please, Mary? Just help us and we'll let him go."

A painful silence filled the kitchen, punctuated by Randall's muted whimpers. When a loud whimper caught Mary's attention, Candi squeezed down on Randall's face, crushing his cheeks with her palms and grinding the back of his head into her chest. She squeezed tighter, cutting off the noises until not a single peep escaped from Randall's throat.

Mary focused on him for a moment, then slowly peered down at the folder, receipts, and the CPA's proposal. The papers slowly cascaded down from her hands, spreading out on the floor with a whisper louder than the noises Randall could make.

When she spoke, it was a broken whisper, "He usually puts things in his toolbox in the garage. He said he was going to get a safety deposit box, probably at the 13th National Bank he uses. I could check those two places."

"Could you check? We'll keep looking here."

Mary wiped the tears from her eyes and nodded.

"What about Randall?"

Candi spoke softly. "We'll take care of him until you get back."

"O-Okay," said Mary. She shoved the cell phone back into her pocket and pulled out her keys. She looked up, then held out her hand to Candi, "My keys?"

"Oh!" gasped Candi. She released one hand from Randall and dug into her pocket.

Randall tried to trash free, but Candi knocked his head against the back of the chair and held him tightly. He heard the keys jangling in her hand, then a flash of metal as Candi tossed it to Mary.

Mary caught it smoothly. She looked down at the keys, then sighed.

"Don't you dare hurt him."

"We won't. I promise."

Mary spotted the Candi's keys on the floor. She walked over, her shoes rapping on the ground. Crouching down, she picked them up.

"I want you to be here when I get back," she said in a soft, almost threatening voice.

Candi: "O-Of course."

The three of them watched as Mary left the kitchen. A moment later, the engine of Randall's Honda roared. The garage door

rumbled closed and Randall felt his last chance for escape fading away.

Bill looked at Candi. "Do you think he has it in the bank deposit box?"

Candi peeled her hands away from Randall's face. "Of course not, but it gets her out of our hair. Well, my hair, you're going bald because of that stupid hat of yours."

Randall gasped for breath, drinking in the cool air. He looked up to see Bill frown at his wife, but Candi wasn't done speaking.

"Get the spare keys out of that magnet box on the car's bumper. If we find the ticket, I want to be out of here before Blondie comes back."

Her husband grunted and headed out of the house. Candi padded around to stand in front of Randall and sat back on the table.

"Mary isn't really bright, is she? Perfectly willing to abandon you just because a few pieces of paper and some lies. Thought, when I was rooting around your desk, I got the idea. Never thought I would use it. Though," she grinned, "your desk is so clean, doctors could use it for a surgery table."

The side door banged and Bill came back, hefting a key in his hand. With a grin, he tossed it on the counter. It hit the back wall with a ring and spun to a stop.

Candi grinned and rocked her legs back and forth. She slipped off the the table and straddled Randall's lap. Settling down, she reached up and grabbed Randall's face, holding it still.

"Now, Randall, where the fuck is that lottery ticket?"

Randall considered telling her that Mary would find the ticket, but when he looked into Candi's brown eyes, he saw something that scared him. A hardness behind her calculating gaze. He wondered if she had something else in mind if he told her and suddenly, he was afraid to give her an answer.

Gulping, he cleared his throat. "I won't tell you."

He cringed at the look Candi gave him.

She leaned forward, her lips inches away from him. Her brown eyes looked terrifying, more so by the closeness of their bodies.

"Tell me, Randall, or you'll regret it."

"I-I," he shook his head, "I can't."

She looked around, then she lifted her hand. Randall frowned for a moment, unsure of what she planned. Candi answered him by pressing her palm against his mouth. At first, it was a soft touch, almost like a lover, but he felt no love. The pressure on his mouth increased and he tried to turn away, but she dug her other hand's fingernails into his jaw, forcing him into position. Randall whimpered, his breath coming hard and fast as she gagged him. It sounded like a whistle, breathing through his noise, and the tiny hairs on her hand shivered.

He could feel the softness of her palm, but the bones at the base of her fingers dug into the side of his mouth. He could feel it crushing his lips, forcing them against his lips and grinding into his gum. Candi didn't let up and he felt her lifting up as the pressure increasing against his face. He tried to shift his jaw, but she held it shut.

"Now, if you don't tell me where the ticket is, I'm going to have Bill close your nose."

Bill raised his voice, "How can he talk? You're gagging him, Ann."

Candi glared at her husband, but the hand on Randall's mouth didn't shift. She glanced around the kitchen, then gestured to the flatware drawer with her chin.

"Go get a wooden spoon. Put it in his hand. If he wants to give up, he can hit it on the chair arm."

Bill grunted but obeyed his wife. A second later, Randall felt the smooth handle of the spoon being pressed into his palm. Randall held it tightly, tears welling in his eyes.

When he felt Bill's arm sliding around his neck, his heart gave a start. He considered blurting out the answer, but he couldn't look away from the hard, cruel look in Candi's eyes. He knew giving up the answer would be bad and he only hoped he could last long enough to survive until Mary returned.

Candi commanded her husband. "Do it."

Randall inhaled sharply before Bill could pinch his nostrils shut. Randall felt claustrophobic between the married couple, with Candi straddling his legs and Bill pressing up against his back. But, then his focus turned on their attempts to smother him. His senses focused on the hand across his mouth, the soft skin gagging him so easily. It humiliated him that she didn't even strain to hold him



shut, but when he tried to open his mouth, he encountered resistance.

Candi shifted her position closer and she released the side of his mouth to layer her hands together. The heat from her palm mixed in with his breath which already started to turn foul. A panic started in the back of his mind, the knowledge of their attempts to smother him setting off a primal fear deep inside. His hand clutched the wooden spoon tight enough his knuckles cracked as his lung burned with the ache to breath.

Tears rolled down his cheeks as he thrashed back and forth, but no matter how much he moved, he couldn't escape from the married couple holding his head. He tried to pry his mouth open, but Candi's fingers spread out and she let out a grunt as she bore down. He felt pain radiating from his face, blinding him as spots crawled across his vision.

Randall sobbed as he tried to count the seconds, to force himself to last. He struggled to holding on for the moments, praying that he could make it, but the desperate, primal need to breath made it difficult for him to think of anything but the hand across his mouth and the suffocating burn in his lungs.

Finally, he couldn't make it any more. He tried to tap the spoon but his hand wouldn't work. He glanced down at it, but even watching his hand, he couldn't get it to move right. It was clumsy and sluggish. He tried to force it to move but the spoon slipped from his fingers, clattering loudly to the floor.

Candi leaned back. "Was that you going to answer us?"

Randall sobbed, or tried to. The pain hurt so much and he would say anything to escape being smothered. He tried to nod and Candi felt the tiny, pathetic movement underneath her soft, deadly palm.

Candi didn't move for a moment, then she released her hand, slowly peeling it away from his face. Randall gasped at the first breath, but only sobs came out. It hurt to breath, even with air. Every part of his body seared from the inside. He gasped for breath.

"Randall..."

He ignored her, trying to breath. Candi repeated herself, but when Randall still didn't respond, she pressed her hand lightly against his mouth. His breath drew through her fingers, bringing

the smell of her perfume into his lungs. He let out another sob before he looked at her through tear-filled eyes.

“Randall? Where is the ticket?”

Looking into her hard, brown eyes, Randall couldn't answer. His mouth worked silently, trying to find some way of stalling.

Bill grunted, “Where is it?”

Candi rolled her eyes. “He's fucking with us.”

She squeezed her hand over his mouth, clamping down across his lips. Randall tried to open his mouth and he managed to part his lips, but her fingers dug into the groove in the opening, pressing right to his teeth. She stopped and looked at him hard.

“Thinking about biting me, Randall? That would be a bad idea. Bill, get a knife. If he tries to bite me, cut his throat.”

Randall whimpered and clamped his mouth shut. Candi grinned and let him, then sealed her palm across his mouth once again. With Bill still pinching his nostrils shut, the familiar burn of suffocation came quickly.

It took less time before he couldn't take the pain anymore. He slapped at the chair, trying to free them, but Candi shook his head.

“Not this time. You got your chance and you didn't tell me. I'm going to wait until you are fading before I...”

Her voice trailed off as the garage door rumbled. She looked toward the side door, then let out a sigh. “Damn it, Blondie is back.” She glared back at Randall. “She better have the damn ticket.”

As Mary came up to the door, Candi stood up from Randall's lap. She knocked Bill's hand away and Randall fell forward, coughing violently. Saliva dripped from his mouth as he tried to regain his breathing. He hated the humiliation of the tears that poured down his face, splashing in his lap.

The door opened and Mary came cautiously inside. Her eyes locked on Randall's, but he couldn't form the words as he struggled with breath. Her voice filled the kitchen, hesitant and frightened.

“I have it.”

Randall, still coughing, looked up to see the precious lottery ticket in her hand. It was still in the plastic sleeve he bought from a collectible card game store.

Mary gasped and ran over to Randall. Her knees hit the ground as she slid the last foot. Her fingers grabbed his legs. He stared at her

face, still panting, and gazed into her tear-filled eyes. She clutched his leg tighter.

“Randall, honey, tell me this isn’t true. Were you going to keep it? Away from me?”

Randall struggled to breath, his mouth hurting. He caught motion in the side of his vision and watched as Candi paced around the kitchen, stopping at the knife block to pull out a long butcher knife. The blade sparkled in the sunlight streaming through the window.

Candi’s brown eyes were hard and calculating as she walked up behind Mary who didn’t notice her. Randall saw her pantomiming the knife in his girlfriend’s back and Candi mouthed “say yes” to him.

Randall looked in shock, his breath coming raggedly. He could speak again, but he couldn’t find the words as Candi pantomimed her commands, including cutting Mary’s throat. And, deep inside, he realized that Candi would somehow find a way to blame him for everything.

As if seeing his realization, Candi smiled. She lowered the knife, then quickly hid it behind her back when Mary turned around to look at her.

“Candi, what were you doing? It looks like you were suffocating him!”

“Just teaching him a lesson,” growled Candi, “I’m not going to let him cheat you out of your money.”

Mary sniffed and turned back. “Randall, please? Tell me it isn’t true?”

Randall watched as Candi lifted the knife again, holding it with both hands. The muscles tensed her arms. Then the blade came rushing down right toward Mary’s back.

“Yes!” He screamed so loud that he felt his vocal cords tearing.

Candi stopped with an evil grin, then hid the knife behind her back.

Randall stared down at Mary’s face, watching the betrayal and despair fill her expression. It broke his heart to see it, but the mental image of the blade pushed everything back. Tears ran down his own face and he shook his head, trying to say the things Candi wanted him to say.

"I'm... so sorry, Mary. It was just easier and... more money this way." As he spoke, Candi stood behind Mary and mouthed everything, "And I was so... ashamed of me and Susan. I know..." he choked and Candi brandished the knife again, "it was wrong, but we always faked how much we hated each other, just so no one suspected."

Mary's tears flowed even more. "You... bastard."

Surging to her feet, Mary slapped him hard. "You god-damned bastard!"

She turned around and lurched into Candi. Randall held his breath, but when Candi wrapped her arms around Mary, there was no knife in her hand. He gaped, then saw Bill leaning on the counter, the opposite side of the room from a moment ago. The other man smiled and showed the knife before leaning back.

Mary's cries fill the room and Candi gave Randall an approving nod before she comforted her friend. "That's okay. It will be all right. We are just going to teach him a lesson and let him go. And, if he is smart, he'll never show up again."

Randall's blood ran cold at the look in Candi's eyes. His shoulders shook as he sobbed. Candi's words just slashed him in the heart, the cruel words making every moment passed. He was almost thankful when Candi guided Mary to the door.

"Don't worry, honey, I'm going to just get a little bit more paperwork from him and you don't have to worry ever again. And you'll get half, just like I promised."

Mary gasped, "Y-You won't hurt him, right?"

"I promise."

Candi gestured over her shoulder to Bill. With a start, Bill pushed himself from the counter and over to Randall. One hand set down the knife on the table in front of him while the other rested heavily on Randall's shoulder.

Randall's body continued to shake as he lost everything in his life. Everything was horribly wrong, and as much as he loved Mary, the idea of his own suffering seems just slightly better than watching his loved one die in front of him. He closed his eyes tightly to stop the tears, but they continued to pour down his face.

He felt a movement in front of his face. Looking up, she saw Bill's hand poised over his mouth. Gasping, he looked up to see Bill

staring at the door, waiting for the moment it closed. Randall glanced over to see Candi blocking Mary's view of him, as she gave a last few things.

"Just head on home, I'll bring everything over in an hour. I promise."

Mary's voice drifted through the room. "What are you going to do to Randall?"

Then, a long pause.

And, in horrible clarity, Mary answered herself. "I don't want to know, do I?"

Candi: "It's for the best."

The door clicked loudly. A heartbeat later, Bill's mouth slapped across Randall's face, cutting off the scream already rising in his throat. Candi turned around enough to hush both of them, then watched Mary's shadow through the door. Randall's girlfriend stopped, her body silhouetted against the curtain for a long moment.

Randall thrashed violently, trying to escape, tried to call her back. He knew that Mary may have already damned him, but maybe just one scream could give him a chance. But, his voice refused to escape through the thick, meaty fingers plastered to his face. Bill had none of the softness of Candi; his fingertips dug into Randall's face and the sweaty palm sealed his lips. Randall breathed in through his nose, choking on the smell.

Bill grunted and shifted his hand, pressing the meaty part of his hand up against Randall's nostrils to cut off his breath.

Randall panicked, his body thrashing. He knew that he wasted his air, but the feeling of suffocation drew up some primal part of his brain, trying to survive.

Candi hissed without taking her eyes off Mary's shadow, "Quiet, damn you!"

Bill moved his hand down and Randall breathed deeply, a whistling noise filling his ears. He sobbed and more tears ran down his cheeks. He inhaled to scream but Bill moved his hand back up, cutting off his breath.

"Stop struggling, idiot," growled Bill.

Randall closed his eyes, but let his breath out in a slow hiss.

Candi grunted. "Finally, she's gone."

Footsteps crossed the kitchen and Candi planted herself back on Randall's lap. Her hips squeezed his legs together and he felt his limbs aching from the ropes and her weight. Her voice came in a hard growl, "Now, Randall, if you just told us where the fucking ticket was, we could have been gone before Mary ever showed up. And I wouldn't be pretending to stab my friend in the back so her idiotic boyfriend would get rid of her."

Randall gasped, his eyes locked on Candi's hard brown gaze.

Candi gestured for Bill to release Randall's face.

The sweaty hands peeled back, giving Randall a chance to breath. He drank in the cooler air. Before he could regain his breath, Candi pushed his head back and wiped his face with a bit of cloth.

"Seriously, Bill, your hands are gross."

"I'm nervous!"

"Fine," muttered Candi before finishing wiping Randall's face. She looked into Randall's eyes, "Now, Randall, what do we do with you?"

At the dangerous tone in her voice, Randall gulped. He watched as she pressed both of her hands against his mouth, gagging him. The delicate touch of her skin against his lips felt electric and her movements were sure instead of Bill's frantic slap. But, somehow, the calculated way she held her palms firmly over his mouth told him that she had horrible things in mind.

He breathed in deeply, preparing for them to suffocate him again. The smell of her perfume and natural scents teased his senses, adding a horrid contrast to the fear he felt coursing through his veins. He could feel her palm lightly on his face: the ghost-like touch of her fingertips tickling the side of his mouth and the gentle pressure from the base of her palm on the other side.

Candi watched him with a smile, her head cocked at a slight angle. She changed her grip slightly, intertwining her fingers together so both palms pressed him along his jaws, but she managed to keep him from being able to open his mouth. The pads of her palms ground into the side of his jaw, pressing right at the junction of his jawbone and the delicate nerves of his gums.

Randall whimpered, the anticipation killing him.

Candi smiled and lifted her gaze to her husband. "We can't let him go, you know. As soon as he can, he'll be running to the police."

As she spoke, she increased the pressure minutely. The folds of her skin ground down on his lips, turning the electric touch into a pressure that built quickly. He could feel the joints of her fingers grinding into his lips and skin. The pressure continued to build, the soft, delicate hands of his capture turning into steel-like strength. He felt fear rising up inside him and tried to pull open his jaw, but it was too late. His muscles strained to pry open his mouth, but she bore down on him, her breath coming in a short, angry hiss.

"I don't want to go to no prison," muttered Bill, "even for one hundred sixty million dollars."

"Only eighty now, because Randall here didn't speak up."

"Do we really have to pay her?"

Candi thought for a moment. "Yes, otherwise she'll finger us. Eighty million for her silence. And Randall here," she gave Randall an evil grin, "needs to be very quiet."

"Dead men tell no tales."

Randall inhaled sharply and shook his head. He tried to plead for his life, but the words wouldn't escape the hand over his mouth.

Candi, on the other hand, knew exactly what he asked for and leaned forward, smiling as she whispered. "What was that, Randall? Choke the life out of you and leave your corpse in some ditch?"

Randall thrashed his head back and forth. He managed to break her gag for a moment and inhaled, but Candi caught him, plastering her hands across his face. She pressed down sightly, grinding the flesh of her palm along his lips until he could feel the bones grinding together. He tried to pry his jaw apart but only inched his lip up.

He redoubled his efforts to break free, but Candi bore down, holding him with surprisingly strength. He couldn't even move his head. When he tried, her arms twitched and she forced him back into place, pinning to the chair. He let out a scream, but only the faintest of sounds escaped her fingers.

Candi hissed at his efforts, then looked at Bill with a surprised smile.

"Oh! Remember that cabin up in the mountains? The one we brought Susan and Joseph?"

"Yes, it was a rental, so?"

“Why don’t we take him there? The owner said that no one ever went there because the roads were so bad.”

“But, we’d be renting.”

“Not when we get the cash. Then, we can buy it out from underneath him.”

Bill shrugged. “Why there?”

“It had that cave underneath the old rail bridge? Remember, and the shed with that huge ass lock?. We can keep him there for a while until everything blows over. If he screams, no one will hear him.”

“Why not just kill him?”

“Because I don’t think either of us are good enough to dispose of the body. And, besides,” she smiled evilly at Randall, “I bet Randall here would do anything,” she almost purred, “to save his life.”

Bill’s growl filled the room. “Candi?”

Candi’s eyes flashed up, the amusement fading in an instant. “Bill, we are getting that cabin. And we are taking Randall with us.”

“What if he escapes? One phone call and we’re in prison for life.”

Randall squeaked and yanked to the side. Bill grabbed him and grunted as he righted the chair. His sweaty hands slapped across Randall’s face; the grip crushed his nose and cut off his breathing. The other hand crossed over Randall’s eyes, blinding him.

“See what I mean, Candi?”

Candi breathed deeply for a minute. “Come on, didn’t you want a slave? He’ll do anything to stay alive.”

“And escaping?”

“I don’t know, we’ll break his ankles. It worked for Misery.”

“Not really. That Kathy lady got it in the end.”

“Fine, we’ll keep him in cuffs and chained up. You know how to weld, you could make a collar. Something he’ll never take off. And then chain him to the shed with a padlock. That way, there is no chance he’ll escape.”

Bill thought for a moment. “Yeah, that could work.” A pause, “Yeah, yeah. Okay, but once he’s collared, he won’t ever get it off. That’s it.”

Candi purred. “That’s perfect.”

Randall screamed and thrashed, but between their two bodies, he was utterly helpless to escape. He sobbed, crying into Bill’s sweaty hands and struggling on the fetid breath gathering in his lungs. He



felt weak and helpless and every passing moment increased the searing sensation in his lungs. He wanted to breath, to gasp for air, but he couldn't move his jaw or the hands plastered across his face.

Candi's hands shifted on his face and he bore his strength on his jaw, trying to get some cool whisper of air into his screaming lungs. The pain started to leave him lightheaded and the entire world spun around violently with his utter helplessness and suffocating.

"What," came Candi's whisper, "do you say, Randall? Want to earn your breath every day or do you want to die right here and now?"

Her hands relaxed, her fingers holding his jaw together just to let him part his lips and breath in a few shreds of cool air. He sobbed and he gasped.

She leaned into him until he breathed in her exhalation, the taste of her lipstick staining his senses. He couldn't escape, but he knew that going with them would only be worse. The words, however, wouldn't come as he gasped for air.

"Come on, Randall, want to go now or get a chance? I'm sure we can hide the body for a while, bury you in some ditch. No one will ever miss you."

He wanted to scream that Mary would, but the last words cut through his mind. The acknowledge that she would never see him again. He sobbed and shook violently, trying with his flagging strength to escape even as he knew he couldn't.

She continued to whisper. "Come with us and we'll just make you do chores. Clean the cabin, do some work, maybe crawl around on your belly."

"No fucking," grunted Bill.

Candi chuckled. "No, I want a real man, not one who can't even keep his girlfriend."

Then, Randall felt her leaning into his and a soft whisper, barely heard over the pounding in his heartbeat, "Yet."

She spoke louder for her own husband. "I bet you'd be the greatest slave I always wanted. Someone I can abuse, beat, and do whatever I want. But," her breath tickled his ear, "you'll be alive. You won't die right here in your own house. You'll have a chance. Randall, what do you say?"

Randall sobbed, tears leaking out from the hands across his face and mouth. He saw in Candi's eyes that he had no chance. The hard look she gave him told him everything: he would die at her hands.

"I say," Bill spoke hard, "we give him a demonstration of one choice."

"Good idea... for once."

As one, the two sets of hands plastered against his face. Bill's hand squeezed across Randall's face, digging into his forehead and grinding down on his nose. Randall felt the cartilage starting to crack from the pressure, but Bill held him tightly to his chest. Candi's hand forced his jaws together and pressed her palms tightly together. Her skin felt as hard as steel and she ground her hips down for balance as Randall's struggles shook the chair.

The heat of the four hands, and the inability to move, sent Randall into a panic-fueled thrashing. But, after their tortures for so long, his body barely quivered with weak muscles. Black spots somehow seared in his vision, black on black and somehow blindly bright. His lungs screamed for air, his chest heaving but not bringing in a single bit of air. Instead, he felt the heat and pain only doubling, increasing with every breath that he couldn't draw.

Pounding filled his ears along with a white-hot hissing. He could feel his body starting to shut down, the tremors that coursed through his muscles. The weak, pathetic spasms that did nothing to pry the four palms from his face. He couldn't do anything, he couldn't breathe, he was dying.

In the last sane part of his mind, he begged for death. For them to hold their hands just a moment too long. And he prayed that it would come quickly, even as the agony slowed his sense of time. He could feel every heartbeat slamming into his chest, every pulse of their rapid heartbeats through the hands crushing his face. And, in that infinite slowness of his dying body, he prayed that it would end.

Air.

Cool air drawn through the loosely clasped fingers of his torturer.

He tried to understand their words but he felt dazed and confused.

"Awake?" whispered Candi.

Randall blinked, staring up from the ground. He saw the chair next to him, with twine hanging from the ends. He realized he was

free and tried to move, but his body refused to move. He felt a pressure on his ankles and wrists and frowned.

“Tape and rope,” supplied Candi, “along with a pair of handcuffs. Don’t worry, it won’t be too painful once the circulation comes back. But, you’re going on a trip, Randall.”

She smiled and the cheerful voice sent fear pouring through him. He looked around to see a large duffel bag next to him. It looked long enough for his body and he knew that he wouldn’t enjoy the trip.

“Don’t worry, Randall, you’ll love being my slave. Every day, you get to earn the right to live. And every day, you are going to do such,” she shrugged and smiled, “wonderful things with me telling you what to do. If you misbehave, I get to beat you or suffocate you. And there,” she smiled, “is nothing you can do. You are mine, forever.”

Randall gasped and a raspy word finally escaped his aching throat.

“Why?”

She smiled and cocked her head. Standing up, she gestured to Bill before grabbing Randall’s ankles. Bill grabbed Randall’s shoulders and they lifted him into the duffel bag. As Bill forced him into the bag, Candi reached over to hold it open. Then, Bill walked away as Candi leaned over Randall.

“We have to gag you now. And, you’re lucky. I found this rag,” she held up the old dishcloth from the kitchen sink. Even from his position, he could smell the mildew smell and rotted food coming off the limp, yellow cloth. She grinned. “Ready?”

Randall shook his head, already gagging at the thought.

Candi’s smile brightened as the cruel look came back. “I thought so. Well, I picked up a much better gag just in case you said that.”

Reaching over, she picked up a wadded ball of stained white cloth. It took a moment for Randall to recognize it, but Candi made a face.

“There is something wrong with Bill’s feet, I know. I mean, these things make my eyes water. I tried to get him to use powder on them, but they keep smelling like something died.”

She waved the socks underneath Randall’s nose and Randall almost threw up. The stench that rolled off the socks watered his

eyes and he felt bile rising in his throat. He clamped his mouth shut and looked away, wondering if he could risk opening his jaw to ask for the dish rag.

A hand caressed his jaw for a moment, the ridges of her palm against his sore cheek. She drew lazy circles on his skin, then her sharp fingernail dug into the junction of his jawbone. Her small, delicate hand something created more pain that he ever experienced before. It burnt through his senses while she pried his mouth open, using her finger to jam right into the nerves of his gums. He screamed out, sobbing and terrified.

When Candi shoved the socks into his mouth, he gagged and hacked. The taste, a searing acidic foulness, flooded his mouth. He tried to push it out with his tongue, hating every second as the soft, foul fabric ground further into his mouth. Candi's palm held it in, her fingers gripping the top and bottom of his jaw tightly.

The sound of duct tape being unrolled filled his senses. Randall gagged, trying not to throw up as his saliva soaked the socks and began to drip back down his throat. The taste came with it, the foul stench filling his lungs. He gagged and tears ran down his face.

Candi's hands peeled away, damp with his tears and sweat. He could see a few droplets catching on the bumps between her joints and a few curls of sock fuzz clinging to her palm. Her other hand laid tape across his face, pressing it into place.

Randall tried to pull it open, to push the foul socks from his mouth, but the tape clung to his face too strongly.

Candi wasn't done. She used the rest of the roll to wrap it around his three times, ensuring that he would never escape the horrid taste that flooded his mouth. Tears ran down his cheeks as he gagged on the socks, desperately needing to push it to the front of his mouth to prevent it from pushing into his throat. But, every touch, every taste sent fresh nausea surging through his guts.

Candi zipped up the bag, but stopped when only a small opening remained. She leaned in and whispered cruelly, "To answer your question. You are just unlucky, Randall. You are an unlucky bastard who lost just his entire life because of one lotto ticket."

# About the Author

t'Sade has been happily using third-person singular since the late eighties. Besides that strange quirk, they enjoy writing a brutal combination of sex and violence for decades. Most of their stories explore the fringe edges of sexuality in the epic quest of trying to write a story for every fetish and turn-on known to the human libido.

It's going to take a long time.

Their writing can be found on their website, [tsade.com](http://tsade.com). Most of it is free to read and enjoy.

*t'Sade*

# About the Publisher

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