

DON'T BET ON IT

a novel by

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## ALLEGATIONS OF AN AFFAIR

With only two weeks to go before the election, Senator Jim Collins was leading his rival, Representative Tom Brown, in presidential polls by 10%. The race had been relatively free of dirt, and that was unusual. Many people thought that there would have been plenty of mud slinging, especially since Brown was known for dirty tactics.

I turned on the television to catch up on the news to find a Kathy Pendleton being interviewed by the media. Her voice was completely drowned out by some kind of machinery in the background and, since I can't read lips, I didn't have the slightest notion of what she was saying. Fortunately the interviewer summarized the proceedings and stated that Ms. Pendleton mentioned having had an affair with Senator Collins a few years ago. It was public knowledge that the two had known each other and dated for about a year, but that had been before Collins was married. I figured that this bit of information wouldn't damage the Senator, even if it were true.

I walked into the kitchen to check on the turkey chili and found it just about ready. I sliced some fresh Italian bread and prepared a small salad and opened up the refrigerator to get a bottle of Molson Export Ale.

By the time I returned to the tube with my food, the news was just about over so I changed the station to channel 29 to watch an old episode of Seinfeld. Jerry was recalling his high school days when he beat Duncan Meyer in a sprint. The current day found him in a rematch, proving who was faster. The writers had outdone themselves again.

The chili was as hot as a summer afternoon in Tijuana but the ale helped to put out the fire in my mouth. I finished the salad and brought the dishes back into the kitchen. I would have put them into the dishwasher, but

since I am the dishwasher, they would have to wait until later.

I opened the newspaper and read about some of Tom Brown's promises if elected. He wanted a balanced budget within two years and cuts in taxes as well as building up the armed forces. He also talked about making other cuts to help the country. Rumors were about that some of the victims of elimination might be the school lunch program and all forms of welfare. Also in danger was funding for public radio and television and Brown promised to reduce term limits for those in the House and Senate, but only for newly elected individuals. What some people won't say to be president!

On the other hand, Senator Collins mentioned that since most Americans had been forced to endure salary cuts or at least concessions of some sort, it might be a good idea for Congressmen and Senators to bite the bullet by accepting a salary cut. This would set a great example for all. He also added that rushing to eliminate welfare might not be as prudent as properly administering it, and the same could be said about farm subsidies and funding for PBS. Lastly, he suggested a boycott of major league baseball so as to send a message to both management and the players that the fans were getting upset with the greed of both parties.

Tom Brown had mentioned that the public shouldn't trust Collins because of his questionable moral character. He claimed that the senator was a womanizer and that governing the country was very difficult with your pants off. Finally he suggested that the people should listen to what Collins' lady friend Kathy Pendleton was saying about him.

I didn't have a chance to turn the page of the paper when the phone rang.

“Hello!”

“Did I wake you?” It was my accountant and close friend, Tom Daniel.

“That’s OK, I had to get up to answer the phone anyway. How’s everything with you?”

“I’m doing fine. Was your contract renewed?”

“I got my notice today. At least they gave me a month to find some work, not like my previous contract.”

“Weren't you happy with a day's notice?”

“Actually it wasn’t even that much time as that contract ended on a moment's notice...and I mean that literally. We were told the contract wouldn't be renewed and ten minutes later we were out of the building, never to return. I went back to my desk before leaving and got my stuff together but I didn’t even get a chance to remove my telephone list, which I should have gotten.”

“What did you want with the phone list?”

“Oh, nothing more than the names and phone numbers of people who might have a connection to future contracts. You can’t have too many contacts in this business. Unfortunately the end came so quickly.”

“You’ll be all right, John. I’m sure you’ll find something better and soon.”

“I hope you're right.”

“If you want to stop over for a brew, come on over.”

“Thanks, but not tonight. I'm not up to it, Tom.”

“I’ll talk to you in a few days. Hang in there!”

“So long.”

Such is the life of a computer consultant. Timing is so important. Once I had three job offers but when you need just one place to work, the jobs aren't there. Fortunately I always save for a rainy day so a short stretch with no checks coming in would not pose too big a problem. I just had to make sure to find something as soon as I could. I turned to the want ads and found a few analyst jobs but they all appeared to be full time work, in which I was not interested.

I guess I was going to have to dig out Sunday's classified section. I just didn't feel like bothering tonight.

I spent the next few hours reading the paper and, as I turned the page, I saw an article dealing with the interview of Kathy Pendleton. She mentioned that she was to make a statement tomorrow regarding Senator Collins. She also stated that what she had to say would be damaging to his campaign for president. She said that all the press people would have to wait for further statements and then left with no further comment. Wasn't there a blond named Marilyn in the 60's who had intended to do just this same thing to a politician but her untimely death prevented it?

I turned on the television to see what else was happening and saw that the stock market gained a whopping two points while the NASDAQ lost almost a point. I would have to wait a couple minutes if I wanted to catch up on sports so I figured why not. When the station returned from its commercial messages the lead story was what else but the Bills and their preparations for their archrival Miami Dolphins at Rich Stadium on Sunday. Both teams were almost completely injury free and the game was sold out so there would be TV coverage in Western New York. The next story was on the World Series where game six was still being played in the bottom of the eleventh inning and the score tied at two. I had no plans to switch the channel to watch the remainder of the game so I patiently waited for the end of sports coverage and a few more boring commercials. The weather woman would be on shortly.

I hoped the forecast was better than my day had been. Little did I realize that tomorrow would not turn out much better.

## A MURDER IN BALTIMORE

I awoke the next morning somewhat tired. It seemed I got no sleep whatsoever although I probably got a good five hours worth. I shaved and showered and got ready for another day at the bank. I had toast and hot tea for breakfast and put together a quick lunch. With no contract immediately in sight I could see that I was going to have to brown bag it for now. Otherwise the checking account would soon be depleted.

I got to work and things were the same as usual. I finished doing some changes to my program and was ready to resume testing when the phone rang.

“Systems...John Kuzinski.”

“Is your desk still there?”

“Yeah it is, but just barely. I didn't expect to hear from you so soon, Tom. What's the occasion?”

“Have you read the morning paper?”

“I didn't have a chance. Why? Is there something of importance?”

“A certain Kathy Pendleton was found murdered in her Baltimore townhouse early this morning. Wasn't this the day when she was supposed to make a statement to the media regarding presidential hopeful Jim Collins? Do you realize what this might do to his campaign?”

“Wow! That just might put Brown in the oval office. And Collins seemed to be a shoe-in, at least according to the polls. His political career may be over.”

“Why not stop over tonight for the beer you missed yesterday? If you want I have an extra steak to throw on the grill for you.”

“I can't pass that up. See you then.”

I hung up the phone and went back to testing my program. The day seemed to really drag on. I had plenty of work and no reason to be anything but busy. Somehow time stood still or appeared to do so.

Finally it came time to quit and until then I really believed the day would never come to an end. I drove home and checked my phone messages. The machine's blinking indicated someone had left a message but on playback I heard only an old one. Apparently someone was trying to sell me something. I changed into jeans and a sweatshirt and left for Tom's.

It was unusually warm for a Buffalo evening in October. The sun looked like a pomegranate and I had not seen a sky like this one in some time.

I drove into his driveway and Tom handed me the newspaper heading about the murder. I could smell something out of this world on the grill.

“Hmmm. At this rate I may eat both steaks!”

“You better check your nose. The steaks are on the counter. I forgot to clean the grill from my last cookout. I thought I'd torture you. Would you care for a beer or some juice?”

“I'll have a beer later with the food. So how are things at the office?”

“Same as usual. I should be getting that promotion that was promised me.”

I sat down on a deck chair and asked, “Is there anything new about Kathy Pendleton?”

“I haven't heard much since I talked to you earlier. But the polls indicate that Brown picked up two points today alone. At this rate Brown will overcome Collins in less than a week. What do you know about Pendleton's alleged affair with Collins?”

“If I’m not mistaken Pendleton dated Collins for about a year, but that was long before he and his wife Fran were married. That came out a while ago but there were no ties after the wedding and certainly no affair that was made public. Up until two days ago that was the extent of their relationship and then Pendleton unexpectedly comes out with the acknowledgement about an affair and something even more damaging. That news was so fresh that Collins hadn't even had a chance to refute the claims.”

“Even if it were true that there was an affair, I don't believe that it would have affected the presidential race, unless it was still going on. Heck, even if the affair happened after Collins' marriage a while ago or even just recently, he could still win the election.”

“I have to agree with you.”

“Let me clean the grill and get those steaks going. Can you fix the salad?”

“Sure enough. And I'll put on a CD. Any preferences?”

“You make the selection. Anything you select should be fine.”

The steaks were coming along nicely and Tom had put two potatoes in the oven about an hour ago so they would be ready too. To our delight Candy Dulfer was filling the night air with her magic sax, accompanied by the Tower of Powers horns on the song, ‘Funky’.

The strip steaks were sizzling so we sat down to indulge. The taste was even better than the aroma while they were on the grill. We didn't let the last two days' events interrupt our enjoyment of these culinary delights.

Once dinner was over we piled the dishes into the dishwasher and switched on CNN. The news revealed that Kathy Pendleton was shot twice with no trace of a struggle and no murder weapon found. Two empty glasses were



found at the scene and they were being checked for fingerprints. There were no signs of a break-in to the townhouse, so it appeared that the murderer knew Ms. Pendleton. The police had no suspects yet but were asking for any leads in the case.

Senator Collins was interviewed and said he was shocked to hear of the murder. He sent out his condolences to her family and friends. He seemed quite shaken by the death of Kathy Pendleton. He declined any further comment. After this interview it was time for the latest sports.

I had a glass of cranberry juice and Tom and I talked for a short while and then it was time to leave. The evening air was sixty degrees and I didn't mind it in the least. I drove home, undressed and hopped into bed and made up for the previous night.

## COLLINS THE SUSPECT

Two days later NBC broke the news. Fingerprints on one glass found in the townhouse of Kathy Pendleton belonged to her. That wasn't too startling. The fingerprints on the other glass belonged to none other than Senator Collins. Perhaps the affair had not ended until Kathy Pendleton died from a bullet. Maybe the Senator had permanently silenced her. It didn't look good for Collins and that was reflected in the polls, which now showed the candidates about even. Collins had been in the lead for the entire race and now this one tragedy had suddenly propelled Brown ahead.

Ms. Pendleton was a well-established business executive who lived life to the fullest and commanded a six-figure salary comparable to that of males in the same position. She had been married once but her husband had died of lung cancer five years ago and she remained single after her marriage of ten years. Both she and her spouse had been heavy smokers and that's probably what had killed him. It did set an example for her as she quit shortly after his death and never resumed the nasty habit.

Meanwhile Collins would not comment on any of the events of the previous two days, saying only that he would hold a press conference that evening. NBC did state that the Senator was campaigning in Baltimore and stayed overnight at a hotel in the city on the evening of the murder.

I finished dinner and washed the dishes and let them air dry. The evening paper didn't shed much light on the Pendleton murder but I noticed a small article that had comments from the wife of Senator Collins. Fran Collins mentioned that her husband had never been unfaithful, and she knew of his past relationship with Kathy Pendleton. As

far as she was concerned, there had been no affair as reported by Ms. Pendleton just prior to her death.

The doorbell rang and my friend Tom made an appearance. I let him in and showed him the article with Fran Collins' observations. He read it and mentioned the NBC story of the day.

"I understand that Collins is quite bright, probably not one who would consider going into Kathy Pendleton's home at this time of the campaign. His schedule doesn't allow that luxury," my friend noted.

"You're right about that! It doesn't make too much sense for a happily married man to have an affair with Pendleton. Of course, if the affair took place, the admission would not have hurt his chances of being elected, even if he lost a few votes."

Tom responded, "I don't think I would leave a glass with my fingerprints at the murder scene."

"I agree. If you were going to kill someone, you certainly wouldn't have a drink with that person and then leave evidence. You'd probably have someone else do the dirty work. There is no reason for him to be there in the first place?"

"Good observations. And then why didn't Pendleton make her statements initially instead of saying she was going to make a statement soon?"

"And why did she wait until now to come out with these statements?"

"It seems that all these statements would really benefit no one by themselves. Only her murder would help Brown and destroy Collins."

I interrupted the discussion, "Are you thirsty?"

"A ginger ale would be fine if you have it."

I poured two glasses of Vernor's and continued, "Let's get back to the fingerprints on the glass again. Maybe

the senator stopped in to talk to Pendleton, had a drink and then things got ugly, resulting in her murder. I guess that is a remote possibility.”

“Except the shooting indicates that Collins brought a gun to kill her.”

“But that doesn’t make any sense.”

“So the fingerprints on the glass were planted.”

“Most likely. They had to be to make Collins look like the murderer. He was in town at the time. It wouldn’t take much to get a glass from his hotel or from his campaign scene with his prints on it,” I retorted.

“So you think Kathy Pendleton was paid off to come out like she did?”

“It looks like it but that somehow doesn’t seem to fit.”

“From her status, it is obvious that she hardly needed the money. But then again maybe she had no choice in the matter.”

“It is possible she was forced to do it against her will.”

“That could be but the delay in coming out still puzzles me if that is the case.”

“There’s something else strange that I noticed when Kathy Pendleton was being interviewed. You couldn’t hear her talk over the annoying background noise. Her comments, though sparse, were summarized by the interviewer. Ordinarily you would think that the media would set up an environment somewhat free of this type of clutter.”

“I didn’t notice that but then I didn’t catch her being interviewed.”

I finished my ginger ale and asked Tom if he wanted another or a pale ale. He passed and asked why I didn’t acknowledge him downtown earlier today near the library.

“What time was that?”

“About 11:30 or so.”

“That wasn't me. I was at a meeting from ten until almost 12:30, and a boring one at that.”

“Oops, sorry! It certainly looked like you.”

“They say that everyone has a double.”

We sat talking for a while longer and then Tom departed. I turned on the TV and found Michael Keaton and Andie McDowell starring in ‘Multiplicity.’ It was a flick about a construction supervisor who was so caught up in his work that he barely had time for his family let alone himself. He was really running ragged with only twenty-four hours in the day until he alleviated his problem by having himself cloned. Now he could perform his duties at work, have time for being with his wife and kids and even get a chance to play some golf and do some bungee jumping.

The movie was well done and it wasn't even finished when it came to me. Kathy Pendleton never did say all those things that came out prior to her death, nor was she the one being interviewed by the television reporter. But someone who looked a lot like her did.

## UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

I awoke the next morning to the realization that I had missed the press conference. I wasn't too concerned because the morning news would have all the highlights anyway. One highlight they wouldn't have was that someone was posing as business executive Pendleton.

If my theory was right, it explained a good deal of what had transpired over the last few days. It all fit, too. What a devious plan and execution by the Brown campaign! It certainly was doing Collins in and what could he do about it? Even if he could prove his innocence, it would be much too late for this election. Such is the fate of a politician.

The morning summary of the press conference was not very surprising. Senator Collins did not sound like himself when he sent out his condolences to the family and friends of Kathy Pendleton and mentioned that he had no contact with her and certainly no reason to kill her, completely ignoring any implications of an affair with her. He acknowledged being in the city of Baltimore, but said he didn't even know where Pendleton lived. His wife wasn't with him so he couldn't use her as an alibi, but he did have his associates with him that evening for most of the time. They would testify on his behalf if need be.

I turned off the car radio and headed into work. My days there were numbered even though I still had quite a bit to do. My boss, Madalyn, said to take as much overtime as necessary to finish my assignments. She really didn't care...it wasn't her money. Actually the consulting firm I worked for, the SLZ Group (an acronym for Simmons, Lawson and Zeller) was only getting paid the same rate as my regular hourly billing so the bank could care less. Unfortunately for the SLZ Group, they had to pay me time and a half for any

hours over forty hours and my overtime rate was higher than their billing rate. I'm sure they weren't too thrilled with all my overtime. And yet they had made enough money from my performance to buy their BMWs and Volvos so why should they complain? After all, they did indeed find me the opportunity, but wasn't I the one who had to go through the interview and wasn't I the one who did all the work. They should have no complaints.

I dialed Tom Daniel at work and he answered in his usual happy voice.

"What if someone who resembled Kathy Pendleton passed herself off as Collins' lover a few days ago? Don't overlook the wonders of makeup."

"That is an interesting thought. Even if it could be proven, it probably won't save Collins' campaign."

"I know," I said.

"Now that you mention it, that explains a lot. All the puzzling questions that we brought up now have answers. Your observation about the so-called Pendleton interview with the background noise indicates that whoever this was may have been a near clone of the real Kathy Pendleton but her voice was not in anyway close to that of the business executive whom she was trying to impersonate. How did you figure this out, anyway?"

"Two events inspired me: your comment about seeing me downtown yesterday and a movie I watched last night called 'Multiplicity.' Maybe you've seen it."

"I sure have. It's a movie about cloning. Oh, I see where you're coming from. That woman was a look-a-like and the fingerprints on the glass were a setup! She didn't have to say anything to implicate Collins just as long as it appeared that Collins had her murdered. Killing someone was a lot more serious matter than adultery with that person. What a setup!"

“Even just the possibility that Collins had her eliminated could very well give the presidency to Brown. And that is what we have now.”

“It looks like the senator is finished, unfortunately. So who is this mystery woman, anyway?”

“You got me. Chances are we’ll never find that out. If we do find out, it will be thirty years from now when both Brown and Collins are long gone from the political scene and it won’t make any difference. Where did Brown find this woman?”

“He probably had his henchmen dig deep into Collins background to come up with any dirt they could on the senator. They came across his relationship with Pendleton, but that seemed to be on the up and up. They were completely at a loss for what to do. Then one day some member of the Brown entourage happened to catch a glance of this good-looking woman who had a strong resemblance to Kathy Pendleton. It didn’t take long before they figured why not use this woman to somehow destroy Senator Collins. Before long this devious plot as we now see it was developed.”

“Very ingenuous, indeed.”

“Did you find a new contract yet?”

“No, but I am actively searching. SLZ Group is looking for me too, or so they say. I’m also in contact with two other firms to see what they have.” I would have to cut this conversation short, as the water I had earlier was catching up with me.

“You’ll find something, I’m sure. You always have before.”

“I hope it doesn’t take too long.”

I was relieved when Tom said, “Well I’ve got a meeting in two minutes so I have got to go. Talk to you later.”



“Adios.”

I made the necessary trip and returned to my desk to find a report program change on my desk. It didn't take long. The rest of the day passed fast enough but I had a very restless feeling within. The thought of the murder scenario didn't set well with me. If Brown gets elected and that seemed forthcoming, what would he do while president? I wasn't looking forward to four years with him in the White House.

## A RE-UNION

A few weeks later, the gloom set in. Election night came and the race was as close as two newlyweds on their honeymoon night. Brown carried California just barely and Collins had control of New York and Massachusetts. The rest of the country seemed to be a toss-up and it brought to mind the 1960 election when John Kennedy beat Richard Nixon. Rumors then were that the Democrat's success might have been due to some wheeling and dealing by those who expected some favors from Kennedy. Would that same thing happen here?

I went to bed before the final results were confirmed but it appeared that Brown would be the next president. He was in the lead and I somehow felt that he would make sure that this election would be his or at least his cronies would do so on his behalf. I didn't like the looks of things.

I awoke and the radio was announcing that Brown had defeated Collins for the presidency by a few electoral votes. I felt quite nauseous and it didn't help that at the same time my contract at the bank had ended. I had a few interviews and was submitted to quite a few companies, but no one offered me a contract. Luckily my checking account had some funds so I was prepared for the layoff. With a little free time I figured I would call some people whom I hadn't seen in some time. The first was my sister Elaine in New Hampshire. I also planned to call my friend Ed in Maine as well as Father Ted Evans, a Jesuit who taught me computer science back in college a few years ago. Since it was only seven a.m., I figured that I would wait a bit before calling anyone. They were probably all up and out of bed anyway but I made it a habit not to call anyone before nine a.m.

I shaved and showered and then had a small breakfast while catching up on the election details. There was a rumor of some voting improprieties on the part of the Brown campaign. After realizing what happened over the last few weeks, I figured that it was probably more than just hearsay. But I had no way of proving it.

Before too long I decided to try to reach my sister. She answered the phone after three rings so I said, "Hi Lainie. It's your long lost brother."

"Well, it's good to hear your voice. I haven't heard from you in weeks. Mom said your contract at the bank ended. How are you coping?"

"I'm OK. I've had a few interviews but no offers so far. I should be fine with no work for a few weeks. I imagine I should get something soon. How are Mike, Steve and Kim?"

"They're all fine. The children ask about you all the time. So, when are you coming to visit?"

"I have a fair amount of free time so maybe in the next week or so. Unfortunately I'm at the mercy of the consulting firms, as I have to be available for interviews at a moment's notice. That means that it would probably be closer to the end of the week. I do have an interview set up for next Wednesday, so the earliest I could leave would be later that day. Ideally, I could interview, be offered the contract and have to start in a week or two. That would give me plenty of time to visit. Unfortunately it probably won't happen that way. But it sure would be nice."

"We'd love to have you, even for a few days and we don't need advance notice."

"Well let me see how this interview goes and as soon as I know I'll give you a call. You'll hear from me no later than next Thursday."

"That will be fine. Talk to you soon."

“So long. Give my regards to Mike and the kids.”

“Bye.”

I decided to try to reach Ed in Maine although I figured he probably wouldn't be home but at work. I was surprised when he answered the phone.

“Go ahead, it's your dime.”

“Good morning. It's John Kuzinski. I didn't expect to find you at home. You're working, aren't you?”

“I sure am. I work at home a few days each week. It's great! Are you working?”

“Actually, I'm between contracts so I have some free time. How would like a visitor for a few days?”

“That would be great. When are you coming?”

“That's the tricky part. I can't be too far away from the house in case of any upcoming interviews. I'd love to leave today but I don't have that luxury. I have an interview next Wednesday so you wouldn't see me any sooner than a week.”

“Next week would be great. What did you think of the election?”

“I wasn't too thrilled with Brown getting into the oval office.”

“Me neither. I think Brown had the election rigged.”

“You're probably right and that's not all.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“I can't go into that now but you'll get all the details when I see you. I guess you'll just have to wait awhile.”

“That, I will do. Anyway, you're welcome anytime so just let us know.”

“I'll give you a call no later than Thursday. Send my regards to Rebecca and the children. I can't wait to see you folks again.”

“And we're looking forward to seeing you too. 'Til next week.”

“Au revoir.”

I took a short break and then called Father Ted. He offered me a tour of the computer science facilities since I hadn't been on campus for some time. The last time I was there was for a Thanksgiving Mass and breakfast, although I'm not sure when that was.

I didn't realize how long I had been away from the campus when he showed me around the grounds two days later. I was impressed and also felt inadequate regarding computer stuff. I had spent years studying computer software and then actually working in that area for a longer stretch but it still seemed like there was so much more to learn. Computers give you that feeling at times.

“Feel free to use our facilities at any time you like. There's a few things that I can show you that might interest you.”

He forced me to get hands on experience so I logged on and went to a few sites. He guided me along when I needed help and we spent about an hour so that I was quite comfortable with the system. I did get to learn some neat tricks from him. Then he mentioned PROCOMM PLUS.

“What exactly is that?” I asked.

“It's some software that lets you dial into other computer systems from the comfort of your own home, using your PC and modem. You also need to know all the variables involved at the other end to make the proper transition. Let me show you how it works.”

Father Ted then proceeded to show me how to use it and I was impressed.

“That's really easy and it can be very useful software.”

“I thought you'd like it. You can get a contract in New York City or Los Angeles and not have to worry about driving to work. I'm sure most consultants would prefer

telecommuting rather than spending time in the car, especially if the trip is an hour or more. Before I forget, you can use this logon or one of a handful of other logons that we all use from time to time. We're not supposed to let anyone outside know about this but I'm sure we can trust you. I'll write these down for you, along with anything else you may need. Here's a short list of the requirements for the PROCOMM PLUS settings. There's no need for you to memorize a great deal of stuff but just remember to keep this confidential."

"You can count on me to do that. Thanks for all this very useful knowledge. I'm really glad I made this trip to see you. Can I pay you back by taking you out to dinner?"

"Some other time perhaps. I have some papers to grade. That's the trouble with giving tests...you have to grade them."

"Well thanks again for the tour."

"It was my pleasure. I hope you find a contract soon. I'll say a prayer for you."

## A LOTTO PROPOSAL

Tom rang me the following Wednesday and asked, "How would you like a PC with all the works for under \$500? It's not brand new but close to it, probably no more than six months old."

"That's a real steal, but is it hot? I'd love one for that price. I could throw away my old 286 and really get ready for the twenty first century. I think my PC has cancer."

"Sounds like it may need a lobotomy. You're probably better off ditching the old clunker and getting a new one. You know how exorbitant health care costs are!"

"You're probably right. But speaking of costs, why is this PC that you have for me so cheap?"

"One of our clients went into bankruptcy and we have to dispose of all his assets. We'll give you a Pentium processor with a built-in modem and even throw in a color monitor. You'll be able to surf the Internet."

"I'd be a fool to pass up an offer like that."

"It's done then. I'll talk to you about it later over a brew."

I really wasn't a hacker, so I didn't plan to get so much software as to have no other life. I would use the new system at my leisure and donate my dinosaur to charity, if someone would have it. I would keep my inkjet printer and keyboard and use them with the new PC.

I turned on CNN and President-elect Brown was proposing a national lottery.

"We can eliminate many of our taxes with a national lottery. After paying off the winners and subtracting administrative costs, the remainder of the money collected can be split up proportionately by the states. This means that we support any programs that the state in question wants. We

have studied the effects from many of the state lotteries and it's about time we applied this formula to a national game. Everyone wins, as individuals who never dreamed of being rich are turned into millionaires overnight, taxes are cut and we create many new jobs. At the same time programs that may have been floundering because of a lack of funds can be restored to what they once were.”

What Brown said was partially true but nothing was mentioned of the problems encountered by some of the states in their gambling ventures. Specifically, Atlantic City was supposed to be resurrected with casino gambling but the years have proven that the people living in the city that were poor before are still poor. In 1978, the first casino opened and a decade later the town had over 18,000 slot machines and no movie theatres and no car washes. The city lost twenty per cent of its population and seventy-five per cent of those people still there were classified as poor. So much for a revival!

Then consider California. Money from the lottery was earmarked for education and some of it made it, but unfortunately not enough. Some people in the state feel that California was better off before the lottery. Many people think that a lottery solves all those financial difficulties for the school district. Because of this scenario with the lottery, other sources for funding are cut or greatly reduced. Consequently, if profits from the state games are sub par, who will have to bear the brunt of the shortfall? The students.

Even if the lottery is hugely successful, what happens when administrative costs go overboard? What happens if the money that is supposed to be used for education never quite gets there? Once again education gets to suffer. And it's even worse if the lottery doesn't perform as expected. But Brown didn't bring up these points.



He left the press conference and his campaign director then got into some of the workings of the proposed new national LOTTO.

“A national lottery has not been proposed since the 1950’s but this time we plan to implement it. It will be a 6/49 lottery, that is, you have to select six different numbers from 1 to 49. You must get all six numbers to win the LOTTO pot, which will be one half of what was collected in the previous week’s lottery. You can pick the numbers yourself or use the random number selector that is available when you buy your tickets. A ticket will cost one dollar and give you two chances to win. This means that you will select two sets of six numbers each. That is required for each entry along with your social security number, which you must verify with the person selling you the ticket.”

One of the press corps then asked, “If the pot is half of the previous week's take, what will be the prize for the initial game and when do you expect the first LOTTO to occur?”

“The first game will pay ten million dollars to the winner and the pot will be adjusted accordingly for game two depending on how much is taken in for game one. The winner has a choice of either a lump sum payoff or monthly payments for twenty years based on yearly inflation figures. We are striving to have the first game played on the first Wednesday after April 15th of next year. Lottery tickets will be on sale at all supermarkets, gas stations, drug stores and convenient stores and perhaps a few other places as well. That’s all the details we have at present but we will make anything else known as soon as we have the information. Thank you.”

He hadn’t been finished ten minutes when the phone rang. It was George from the SLZ Group.

“The health care people want you after all. They’d like you to begin on Monday if that’s no problem.”

“That sounds fine with me. I thought they found someone else they liked better.”

“Apparently she didn’t like doing the work they assigned her so she quit. You’re their second choice but it’s better than nothing. You’ll be able to pay your mortgage again.”

“But isn’t a consultant’s job to do what the client wants? Oh, never mind.”

“Can you stop at the office Friday morning so we can formalize the contract?”

“You bet. I’ll be there. What time?”

“Ten should be fine. It shouldn’t take longer than a half-hour or so. See you then. Congratulations!”

“Bye.”

There went my trip to New England. I’d have to call my sister and Ed and give them the bad and the good news. I had a new contract and my vacation would soon be over even before it started.

And we would soon have a national lottery. That was exactly what the country needed...more people throwing away money on a dream that would never come true.

We already had BINGO and the state lotteries. Now there might be an even bigger LOTTO. Along with this proposal, there went hand in hand the request for huge tax decreases as well as massive cuts to be made in endowments for the arts. This I felt as I kept getting calls for donations for PBS. Of course I would give what I could since I felt that some of the best television is of a non-commercial nature. If you wanted news and good jazz, the place to get it was from NPR on the FM dial. Unfortunately, a great deal of funding was to be cut out, even though this support was needed and justified. All these cuts were a result of the election. Things

may have been bad, but it appeared that they were going to get even worse.

## THE “NEW” COMPUTER

A few months later I was really settled in to my new contract when the phone rang. It was Tom Daniel.

“How’s your new gig going?”

“Things are good. What are you up to?”

“I’ve got that PC that I promised you. I can bring it over whenever you have some free time. It shouldn’t take longer than a half hour to get you up and running.”

“What about tonight? I’ll even feed you if you like. I made a huge pot of spaghetti and meatballs and sausage.”

“That will save me the trouble of cooking. What time?”

“I should be home by five so anytime after that will be fine. We can get the PC set up first and then eat if it’s OK with you.”

“That’s good for me. See you then.”

“See you when you get there.”

My day passed by so quickly that I was surprised to see it was 4:30. I logged off and departed the scene. An accident on the Thruway in the opposite lane slowed down the traffic ahead of me for the voyeurs but still I was home at a few minutes before five. I quickly undressed and got into some more comfortable clothes. I then proceeded to get dinner going. All I had to do was warm the sauce, cook some vermicelli and a vegetable and make a green salad.

By the time I got everything going, Tom arrived with the new PC (new to me anyway) and we spent about an hour getting it set up.

“If you want any special software, let me know...I can get a pretty good discount from my friend Joe at work.”

I replied, "I will keep that in mind although I don't want to become so obsessed with the PC that I have to call PC anonymous!"

"I know exactly what you mean."

"Would you care for a brew?"

"I thought you'd never ask."

"I had to make sure the computer was up and running before I plied you with alcohol...just a precaution. We can eat in about twenty minutes or so."

We sat down in the living room and I brought out two Labatt Blue.

"What ever happened to the political career of Jim Collins?" I asked.

"He's on the mend. Collins won't make a political impact for a few years."

"Excuse me. I've got to see to the food."

Everything was ready so I brought out the spaghetti, meatballs, sausage, salad and cooked broccoli. I also had some Italian bread and a decanter of burgundy wine.

We sat down and I asked Tom, "Care for a small glass of the house red?"

"No thanks, the beer will be enough for me."

The only sound was that from the sax of Warren Hill.

"Everything is excellent, chef."

"I'm glad you like it. Thanks for getting me the PC and getting me set up. Remind me to give you a check before you go."

"If I forget, pay me the next time. It's no big deal."

"Speaking of cash, have you played the national LOTTO at all?"

"Not me. What about you?"

"Me neither. The odds are way against you. If I want to gamble I'll head over to Casino Niagara. You can play blackjack and you can even win a good deal of the time. You

won't win as much but your odds are so much better at coming out with anything."

"Apparently the new LOTTO is raking in the dough big-time. There seems to be quite a few winners. I guess that's what keeps it going."

The CD ended so I headed to the stereo for another.

"I read recently that the father of the composer Johannes Brahms lost a good deal of the family savings by playing the lottery.

"I heard a bizarre story about a guy named Enrique Mendez who decided to play a trick on his lottery obsessed wife. He somehow managed to rig a lotto ticket so that it appeared she was a winner, big-time. She was so thrilled that she clutched her chest, fell over and died."

"Wow, that is some story. I have heard of a few incidences similar to that. As far as the lottery goes, the bad outweighs the good."

"I heard that the lower and middle class workers were wasting their wages on lottery tickets. They were throwing away their money on the slim chance of winning."

"Who said that?"

"Surprisingly, those comments came from individuals in the first half of the nineteenth century in this country. I guess some things never change."

"Apparently not."

We finished dinner and then adjourned to the living room. The dishes would have to wait. An hour later Tom decided to call it a night.

"Are you going to the benefactors' dinner for the college?" Tom inquired.

"I was thinking about it. Do you plan to attend?"

"That sounds like a fine idea. I'll meet you there."

"I hear they have an outstanding chef there so I'm sure we won't be disappointed. It will be an excellent

opportunity to sample the fine cuisine and meet some people that we haven't seen in some time.

“It's a go, then.”

## DINNER AND A REUNION

It was a fine night for being at the country club. The appetizers were exquisite and I imagined that dinner would be even better. Tom was really impressed with the Moroccan chicken delights and I thought highly of the crab croquettes, which made fine use of a dry white wine. The draught beer we were enjoying complemented the appetizers.

Some of the current students came over to have polite conversation. A former student to whom I had taught computer math a few years ago showed up and addressed me as Mr. Kuzinski.

“You can call me John now. By the way, this is Tom Daniel. Tom, meet Dave Fisher, one of my prize students, though I never told him at the time.”

“It's my pleasure, Dave. I hope John didn't corrupt your morals during his tenure.”

“Quite the contrary. He actually inspired me to get into the data processing world. Maybe I shouldn't thank him for that...not with some of the seemingly endless days I put in from time to time.”

“Where are you working?” I inquired.

“I have what many people call an oxymoron, a government job in the nation's capital.”

“Not only did I teach him about computer programming, but I also saw to it that he improved his sense of humor,” I added.

“God only knows that without one you can't survive in the information processing profession. What are you doing now, Mr. Kuzinski?”

“I'm consulting at one of the health care facilities in downtown Buffalo...a far cry from teaching high school math so long ago. We're moving one of the systems to California



and trying to ensure a smooth transition. This Los Angeles health care firm bought out our prescription drug system and within a year they are supposed to be on their own. I'm not sure it can be accomplished that quickly.”

“What are you working on, Dave?” Tom asked.

“I’m doing a good deal of maintenance right now. That's why my hours are so long. I have been trying to make sure all the existing systems keep running. Every so often I write some new programs but mostly my job is looking after all the old garbage programs, and I do mean garbage. They’re almost impossible to maintain. I certainly am learning a lot though, Mr. Kuzinski.”

I added, “I know exactly what you are talking about... spaghetti logic. I worked with a guy in Boston some time ago. He referred to the programs as 'trash'. He really was right on the money. Some programs are rushed to get done in such a slipshod manner and they hang on for a long time, but it's a miracle they work. Other programs are designed, coded and tested and then within a year they are nowhere to be seen. Either the project got canned or the system was replaced. Then others get patched and bandaged up and they hang on forever, but try to figure out what they are doing...forget it!”

“We had better get a seat for dinner or else we'll miss out on the main course,” Tom interrupted.

“Want to join us, Dave?” I asked.

“I would love to,” he responded.

We met some other nice people at the table. Frank Wilson was a financial planner and his wife Terry taught English at the community college nearby. As the evening progressed, I casually heard mention of the new LOTTO game from Frank so I asked him, “When did lotteries originate?”

“They have been played for centuries. The emperor Nero, who ruled in the Roman Empire from 54 to 68 A.D., invited his dinner party guests to draw for prizes such as slaves or a villa in the country. Even before him, Caesar Augustus instituted a lottery in order to help repair the city, which had been damaged by civil war. A century or so after Nero, the emperor Heliogabalus offered ‘prizes’ in his lottery of dead animals and insects.”

“What great prizes!”

“During the Middle Ages, lotteries were featured at festivals and fairs. “

“What about in this country?” I asked.

“As you might guess, they came over from Europe with the colonists. In 1612, officials of Jamestown, Virginia decided to institute a lottery. At first some of the other colonies were opposed to gambling, but by the middle of the eighteenth century, every colony was using the lottery to help finance education, keep charities going and aid in municipal improvements. Lotteries were used to establish or support Columbia University, Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth and Williams College.”

“It sounds like you did your thesis on LOTTO. Where did you get all this knowledge?”

“Some time ago I saw a program on the tube about lotteries. I stayed tuned in and soon got some books on it. After that, I was hooked, on the idea not on the gambling part.”

I was about to ask for another slice of bread but instead asked, “Did these lotteries ever stop?”

“They continued during wartime. For example during the French and Indian War they were used as a substitute for tax increases.”

“Doesn’t that sound familiar? Maybe Brown got his ideas from Caesar Augustus or Nero,” Tom chimed in.

“Lotteries came to an end in the United States for the most part at the time of the Civil War. They were illegal at that time. Nonetheless the state of Louisiana got it going anyway in 1869. With this enterprise came illegal payoffs and bribes, the latter going to judges and U.S. senators. In 1892, the state of Louisiana banned lotteries and it would be three quarters of a century before there was another one.”

“So when did the lottery resume?”

“The great state of New Hampshire instituted their lottery in 1963. It was a twice a year event. Can you imagine buying tickets and then having to wait half a year to see if you’ve won? Within time other states got their own lotteries going and you didn’t have to wait forever to find out the results. You could say everything returned to the way it had been.”

“You could say we’ve come full cycle. So what about this national LOTTO? Is there usually a winner for every contest?”

“Are you kidding? It seems like there's too many winners each time. The first LOTTO had five winners and it seems like that was the smallest number of people who have split the pot so far. And what’s more amazing is the fact that if you pick five of the six numbers, you get absolutely nothing.”

“You know a lot about this LOTTO. Is there something else that we don't know that we probably should?” I inquired.

“Oh, sure. Did you know why they only publish the winners' last name and social security number?”

“Why is that?”

“You won’t believe this, but don’t forget that the government is running this operation. It’s done to retain some privacy for the winners.”

“I would guess to keep it simple, too,” Dave offered.

Frank continued, “Besides, the IRS has all it needs with the name and social security number.”

The LOTTO discussion proved to be almost as good as the dinner. The main course was salmon en brochette and it was outstanding. The finishing touch to the meal was an amazing amaretto chocolate mousse cake.

“I thought the cook outdid himself with the salmon, but the dessert was a delight too,” my close friend added.

“I must have some kind of sickness since I seem to always crave chocolate.”

“Dave, if you’ve got it, you’re not the only one,” Frank chimed in.

I figured we had more than enough to drink. I offered, “I didn’t bring any cigars so I can’t offer any.”

It was getting late so we had to admit the party was over and called it a night. As Dave was leaving, he offered me his business card and I gave him mine.

“If you’re in Washington, give me a call. I know a few good places to eat in the city and Baltimore is close by too.”

“I will do that. It was a pleasure seeing you after all these years.”

“Drive carefully going home. Nice meeting you, Dave.”

“Thanks. It was good to meet you too.”

We departed knowing the morning would be here only too fast. That night I had a dream about the state lottery being fixed. I guess all that talk from the dinner table stuck in my subconscious. I don’t think the fine food and drink had anything to do with it.

## MORE LOTTO THOUGHTS

Sometimes dreams have a strange effect on you. I awoke the next day and I thought again about the previous presidential race and all that had transpired. Maybe it had to do with the fact that President Brown was the originator of the LOTTO idea and I really didn't trust too many politicians, let alone him. Don't tell me that this LOTTO was fixed. I tried to put those thoughts out of my mind, since I had to be at work within the hour for a meeting. I showered and had a bowl of cereal and headed out the door for downtown. I got to work and had fifteen minutes to spare before the meeting when I found out the meeting had been postponed for half an hour anyway. I was working on testing the program I changed the day before when the phone rang. It was my mom.

“Hi, stranger.”

“Hi, mom. How are you and dad doing?”

“Oh we're fine. And how are you? Is work all right?”

“I'm doing well and work is work, the same as usual.”

“Dad had to go see the doctor this afternoon. It's just a follow-up to last week. You haven't been here in some time. Are you available tomorrow night for dinner? I'm making your favorite, city chicken,” she said.

“Dinner sounds like a wonderful idea. I don't have anything for tomorrow so I can be there after work, say five or so.”

“That would be fine, son. See you then.”

“Take care.”

The rest of the day was quite uneventful. Just before leaving for home the phone rang and I was talking to Tom.

“Do you know what I forgot to do? I forgot to give you the check for the PC when you were at my house.”

“Yeah, and I forgot to remind you. Pardon me.”

“I brought the check with me to the country club but once again I forgot. If you’re going to be home tonight I’ll drop it off then.”

“Oh sure, stop in. I’d fix you some grub but my refrigerator is malnourished.”

“Don’t worry about dinner for me. I still have a few leftovers that I want to polish off. How about some time after seven?”

“That would be good. See you then.”

“Take it easy!”

I hung up the phone and finished logging off the system and moved out of the office into my car. The commute was routine but I was starved. My supper was some meatloaf that would soon be a science project if I didn’t manage to do it justice soon. I also had some leftover vegetables, some semi-stale rye bread and I fixed a small salad. I spent a few uneventful minutes watching the evening news and then I drove to Tom’s home.

I parked my Honda Civic and he ushered me in.

“Why can’t someone play every lottery combination, either in a pool or by himself, and be guaranteed of winning the pot?”

“First of all, where will all the money come from? You’re going to need a hell of a lot of dough. Even if you pool your resources with 1000 people, each of you will need a good amount of cash.”

“So if the odds are fourteen million to one and your pool has 1000 people, each person still has to throw in seven thousand clams. But you could win, if my math is correct, ten thousand dollars. Assuming the grand prize is ten

million, seven thousand down to win a guaranteed \$10,000 seems like a good bet, don't you think?"

A jet flew by and I waited until it passed before I added, "Well, you may be assured of winning, but it may not be for as much as you thought. You'd most likely have a split. If four other people hit it, your individual winnings would now be \$2,500. Your winnings are now less than what you put in. There was a California lottery with a payoff of 118 million a while ago, but you would have had to spend twenty three million to win. That particular contest had ten winners. If you had pooled your resources with 999 others, it would have cost each of you \$23,000 and your lump sum payment would have turned out to be not quite \$11,000 before taxes. That is a horrible investment. It could happen that there are fewer winners, but you may still lose money or just break even. Even if you win more than your investment, there is still another even more overwhelming problem."

"What's that?"

"How in the world will you ever get the time to fill out over a million lottery tickets? Don't forget that you have to get all the combinations written down first."

"Couldn't you do that with a computer? You're a programmer and you could easily write that one. Speaking of computers and chips, don't you want any snacks? I have pretzels and cashews."

"No thanks. The computer program isn't difficult but you had better be sure that your program doesn't miss one single combination, lest it be the winner. You could even do it so that each page of printout was easy to read and check off by the 1000 people in the pool. But the problem is the filling out of the tickets. Assume each person had 14,000 combinations to do and it took one minute to do four of those combinations. It would take almost two and a half days

without a break and that's really hustling. You probably want to take more time so you don't mess up."

"And you probably won't be allowed to do that many tickets at any one location because of the limits set forth."

"Even if you could, it would take at least nine hours for the machine to process those 14,000 entries."

"I can see your point. The guarantee of winning can't even be made."

"A while ago some person spent \$80,000 on tickets for a Florida lottery. I'm not sure if he did it by himself or was involved with others but he was not one of the winners of that pot."

"That's a lot of money to spend and have nothing to show for it. He could have invested the cash in junk bonds and lost it if he wanted to."

"My sentiments exactly."

"We'd better forget about buying all the combinations. What about certain people who play numbers that appear to occur more frequently than others. Are those good numbers to bet?"

"Perhaps, but then why not bet the numbers that rarely occur since they're due? The truth of the matter is that the numbers that get picked this week have no relationship whatever to those that will be chosen next week. Each number is just as likely to get picked as any other number. That's what chance is all about. This means you can study the winning combinations from all previous contests and it won't do you one iota of good. It just doesn't matter."

"What about playing the same set of numbers from week to week? You would think that every combination would be bound to show up some day, isn't that true?"

"Consider the 6/49 LOTTO which has approximately fourteen million combinations. If the lottery were played every week and, assuming that eventually every combination



came up, one different one per week, it would take seven million weeks to be assured of a winner. That's 135,000 years, too long a time and too much money to spend. Of course you could conceivably win big in the first year. It all depends on chance."

"I think you convinced me that LOTTO is not that good an investment. Everything is against you and then when you win, who knows what could happen? We've heard about those disasters that beset some of the winners. It's probably not really worth it."

"One thing you have to take into account is human nature. If someone is good with money, when they win at LOTTO they will probably not change too much and they will survive. On the other hand someone who has struggled all up until the time they win the big one will probably waste all the dough and be right back to where he or she was. Naturally there will be some exceptions. But think about this. Let's say you won a million dollars and opted for payments over twenty years. Each year you would get about \$37,000 after taxes. That's nice to have but it's not so much as to overwhelm you."

"But if you won that amount and spent the money like there's no tomorrow, tomorrow you'd be a nobody."

"Correct, once again."

"I should have known you'd have this all figured out. You taught probability, didn't you?"

"I sure did. And you probably thought that knowledge would never have any use!"

I handed Tom the long overdue check.

"Thanks, John. I meant to tell you this sooner; your former student Dave is quite a guy. He seems really on the ball. He did mention that some woman that he works with has been complaining about some program that seems to take forever to run."

“Oh yeah, what program is that?” I inquired.  
“It's that national LOTTO program!”

## DAD AND LOTTO OBSERVATIONS

I had another dream that night about the LOTTO. All the winners from the previous few months were together in this large hall. It turned out that not a one of them had a single vowel in their last name and only five could speak English. The door opened and Vanna White appeared with the question, "Who wants to buy a vowel?" It was then that I awoke.

I showered and headed off to work. The day went by fast as we had all kinds of communication problems, so everyone was complaining and fit to be tied, whatever that means. I was happy to see the end of the day and left the office for my parents' house.

My dad greeted me with a book in his hand. It was a book on, what else, lotteries. "Everything You Wanted to Know about Lotteries but Were Afraid to Ask" by Shirley N. Chance.

"Did you know that you're more likely to get struck by lightning than win the lottery?" he asked.

"I'm not surprised. Your chance of winning in the 6/49 game is about one in fourteen million. With fewer than forty-nine numbers your odds increase and with more it's worse. What other gems of wisdom are in that book?" I asked.

"Here's a little known fact. The more money available, the more people take a chance. You've heard someone say that with seventeen million dollars for the taking, they had to play. Well, if you do win you'll probably have to split the pot and probably won't get as much as if you were a single winner of say eight million dollars. Of course, you have almost no chance of winning regardless of how big the jackpot is."

“What does the book say about probabilities with respect to multiple winners?”

My father replied, “It mentions that multiple winners are indeed possible because of the multitudes taking part in the game. I’ve noticed that the national LOTTO seems to be having more multiple winners than what the statistics indicate. Of course, with chance anything can happen and it usually does. The disturbing thing is that the multiple winners are occurring more often than they should be and it keeps on happening. Just last week there were eight winners.”

“Of course that probably motivates more people to get involved. No one will complain about winning.”

“How did they come up with your chances of winning with one entry as approximately one in about fourteen million?”

“That’s probability combinations. The one represents that favorable single outcome of having all six numbers exactly. The other number represents the different combinations of six numbers chosen out of forty-nine, in this case fourteen million. Actually the number is 13,983,816. Probability is nothing more than the ratio of the favorable outcomes to the total number of possible outcomes.”

“The one is simple enough, but what about the 13,983,816? How did you come up with that?”

“Let me try to simplify it. Think of it this way. From forty-nine numbers you have 49 choices for the first number and then 48 choices for the second since you’ve eliminated one number. Naturally for the third number you have 47 choices as I think you will agree.”

“I’m with you so far. Go on.”

“Then you have 46 choices for the fourth number, 45 choices for the fifth one and lastly 44 for your last or sixth

number. Now you have to multiply these six numbers and the result you get will be slightly over ten trillion.”

“How do you get ten trillion when I thought you said originally fourteen million?”

“Well you have to do some further calculation since our ten trillion choices would have some duplication. For example if we picked the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, I think you will agree that this combination is the same as 1, 3, 6, 2, 4, and 5.

In fact we have to divide this ten trillion number by the number of combinations of six numbers. That specific number of combinations is 6 times 5 times 4 times 3 times 2 times 1 since you have 6 choices for the first number, 5 choices for the second number, 4 choices for the third number...”

“3 choices for the fourth number, 2 choices for the fifth number and 1 choice for the sixth number. I think I get it, son.”

“This product of the six numbers is 720 and our ten trillion number is actually 10,068,347,520. When we divide the larger number by the smaller number, our result is 13,983,816.”

“And that is where they get your chances of winning are about one in fourteen million.”

“To simplify it, consider picking two numbers from 1, 2 and 3. Once again we have 3 choices for the first number and 2 for the second. But 3 times 2 is 6. The specific 6 groups of numbers are 1 and 2, 1 and 3, 2 and 1, 2 and 3, 3 and 1, and 3 and 2 but there’s really only 1 and 2, 1 and 3, and 2 and 3 if we eliminate the duplications. Thus there are three different combinations and we get this three by dividing 6 by 2 where 2 is the number of combinations of 2 numbers, 2 for the first choice and 1 for the second.”

“I think it’s time to end the probability lesson. Dinner’s ready,” came the call from the head cook and master of the kitchen. I had hardly said hello to my mom but the air was overwhelmed with delightful fragrances.

After giving thanks for all our blessings, we sat down to indulge. It was as good as ever as I expected. Dessert was blueberry pie with ice cream, a fitting touch to the meal.

“How long is your contract?” my mom asked.

“I anticipate another six months, at least. I may even get a chance at some overtime.”

“How is Tom doing these days? Did he ever get that promotion?” my dad inquired.

“He’s doing fine and he did get a nice raise along with the promotion. Why don’t you come over for dinner on Sunday? I’ll see if Tom wants to join us since you haven’t seen each other for some time.”

“We can’t make it on Sunday. We’re going to a hundredth birthday party.”

“For George Burns?” I asked.

“We didn’t get an invitation for his party. The one we are going to is for the parent of a friend of your father’s. We can make it the following Sunday if you’d like to have us.”

“I think something’s going on that day. We’ll have to make it another time. I’ll talk to Tom and see what day is good for him.”

We finished dinner and sat talking for a little while.

“So you found that book on lotteries quite interesting, I assume.”

“Yes, it has a good deal of fascinating tidbits, such as commonly played numbers.”

“What are the most common combinations played?”

“Well you have different games since one may use forty nine numbers and another fifty four and so on, but the statistics I read indicate that the most common set is 1, 2, 3,

4, 5 and 6. Next in line are 7, 14, 21, 28, 35 and 42 and the third most popular combination is 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30.”

“When you think about it, each combination is just as likely to occur as the next, so any could come up.”

“So you could pick the numbers yourself or let the computer do it and your chances are the same for winning. But let’s say you happen to take 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. For the \$106 million jackpot in Florida some time ago over 52,000 people played this combination. It didn’t win, but if it had come up, you would have been rewarded with about \$2000 before taxes.”

“Wow! I can’t imagine picking six numbers exactly right out of forty and only winning that much. So that means you have to pick a set of numbers that is not too popular even though a very familiar combination could win. That is unusual.”

“It’s all chance.”

“Could I borrow that book for a short while? I’d like to look through it.”

“Just make sure I get it back someday. One thing I have found with books and videos is that if you let someone else have them for a while, you have a good chance of not seeing them again. The people who return the item are few in number.

“I will get it back to you the next time I see you and you have my word. I guess I better get going. I’ll talk to you soon.”

“So long, son.”

I headed home and watched some of the National Geographic Special on New Zealand and read some of the newspaper. After that I went to bed and once again had a dream about LOTTO.

## A WEST COAST TRIP

A few weeks later the LOTTO dreams only occurred once a week, but that was after a beginning week of almost every night occurrences. I intentionally forced myself away from the lottery so maybe that had something to do with it. The project I was working on was proceeding quite well and my boss decided that I was the person who should head out west to work with the people there for a few days. Most of the required systems were now running out of California but there were some difficulties so I was the one requested to make things smoother.

I was just printing out some reports when Tom's words about that LOTTO program overcame me. That really was odd. Then and there I decided to call Dave Fisher in the nation's capital. Unfortunately he was in San Francisco at a conference but I was fortunate to get the name of the hotel at which he was staying.

"He's staying at the Best Western Hotel on Sutter Street. He'll be there for the rest of the week and all next week too," his project leader, Margaret, replied.

"Thanks. I'll be in the area myself, so I'll get in touch with him there." I was supposed to fly out on the weekend to the city by the bay so why not contact him there. He'd be surprised by my call but more surprised by what I had to ask him about that dreaded computer program. I was to stay about a week or so in the area to lend as much assistance as they needed to the people involved with the prescription drug program. I was glad that I didn't have to go to Los Angeles where the head honchos were, not to mention the earthquakes, floods and raging forest fires.

I still had some packing to do for my long journey westward. To say I wasn't thrilled with flying was an



understatement but I didn't have a choice. It came with the territory. I think I'd rather see the dentist than have to fly anywhere, especially someplace as far away as the West Coast. Since my flight was very early in the morning I figured that I would catch up on my sleep while in the air. Just in case I had trouble sleeping on the plane, I did bring along a few books, one of which was the book on lotteries that I borrowed from my father. I had gotten through about half the book and my going and coming flights should probably give me enough time to finish the book.

Some of the stuff I discovered was that, in early colonial days, King James had warned the Jamestown people in 1612 not to defraud participants in the lottery. I guess corruption and cheating in the games was prevalent a half millennium ago.

Not that long ago, officials of the Pennsylvania lottery were found to have injected latex into a good many of the balls used in the drawing. The substance made the balls heavier so that those without it would rise to the top and constitute the winning combination. As you might have guessed, these were the numbers on which the officials had bet. Fortunately this plot was discovered before the guilty parties completed their scheme and they had to spend a few years in prison. Then there is documentation of cash skimming in Tennessee and the resulting suicides of two state officials involved. This does not even take into consideration undetected plots and schemes that may never surface.

Another interesting tidbit has to do with a "Lottery tickets for guns" swap program. This took place a few years ago in Scituate, Rhode Island as well as in the state of Iowa in Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, Waterloo and Iowa City. The last I heard, Lotto World magazine is still encouraging the concept. Of course if you get involved in this exchange and

lose at the lottery, you won't be able to shoot anybody. I guess that's probably a good idea.

I spent the rest of the afternoon doing some more testing and getting last minute instructions from my boss Catherine. She gave me my tickets and wished me luck on the trip.

"You should be fine with the people there. I met them all and they seem to be very accommodating. You met some of them when they were in town."

"Joe, Lucy and Terry all seemed friendly and helpful."

"Keep track of all your expenses and you'll be reimbursed. Well, enjoy California and I'll see you when you get back."

"Thanks. I'll see you in a week or so."

I got home and was barely in the door when the phone rang. It was Tom.

"That was excellent timing. Just seconds ago I walked in the door and haven't even changed my clothes. You must have special powers."

"I guess you could say I have E.S.P."

"You didn't forget about driving me to the airport Sunday morning did you?"

"Not by a long shot. In fact, I was just calling to check what time you need to be there."

"The flight leaves at 8:45, so I would like to be there about an hour before that. I know it's early but at least you can go home after your trip while mine won't even have started."

"You have my sympathy. I'm glad you're making the trip and not me. Did you start packing yet?"

"Just barely. I'll probably finish up tomorrow. I really hate packing so I usually wait until as late as possible."

“Have you talked to Dave Fisher lately?”

“I tried to reach him today but it turns out he is at a conference in San Francisco.”

“It’s too bad you couldn’t have been in the bay area this week. You could have met him there. Your timing is just a bit off.”

“Actually he’s going to be there through next week as well, so I will try to rendezvous with him then. That will save me the trip of going to D.C. to see him. If you’re not doing anything later, why not stop in?”

“Thanks, but I’ve got a million things to do. I will pick you up 7:30 on Sunday morning.”

“That should give me plenty of time. I am not too thrilled about a five-hour flight. Oh well, that’s the way it goes!”

“I’ll see you then.”

“So long.”

## CONTACTING DAVE FISHER

Early on Sunday morning, Tom picked me up and drove me to the Buffalo airport. I had no trouble getting up, although it seemed that Tom would have rather been asleep.

“Rough night, Tom?”

“I guess I shouldn’t have stayed up to watch that movie.”

“What did you see?”

“Oh, an old flick called ‘The Boys from Brazil.’”

“I’ve seen that one. It’s about Josef Mengele and his attempts at cloning Hitler. It brings back to mind the incident with Kathy Pendleton.”

“I thought about that too when I was watching it last night. Or this morning, to be technically correct.”

“Well you can rest up when you get home.”

“You’re coming back on Saturday night, right?” Tom asked.”

“That’s my plan, but you never know. They may want me to stay there longer. The flight is scheduled to arrive at eight, but I’ll call you on Friday and let you know for sure.”

“That’s fine.”

Before long I was on my way. We took off and in less than a half hour we stopped at O’Hare airport in Chicago. I didn’t have to change planes but there was a delay of forty-five minutes to pick up more passengers. That didn’t give me much time to do anything but wait. I took out the LOTTO book and resumed my information gathering. For not being a gambler, I found the book fascinating indeed. Despite the overwhelming odds, I was at the point of convincing myself that spending a dollar each week on a lottery ticket may not be that bad an idea. If you could get

some kind of payoff for having say four numbers out of six, then it could be somewhat worthwhile. The goal was to have fun, make a few bucks or not lose too much and not get addicted to gambling. The goal was not to get greedy. Why not get a ticket from the computer for the first week and then stay with those same numbers from week to week?

The book did talk about bad luck to the winners of the lottery but it also mentioned some heartwarming stories of the victors who took their success in stride and even shared their wealth with their families. I guess that would keep you from having problems.

There was also documentation of people who won the lottery and somehow passed their luck onto others. It sounds strange but that's LOTTO. You have to admit that some people are lucky and others aren't.

Before long we were back in the air. The in-flight movie was 'Babe', the pig movie that I had already seen. There were no clones in this movie although maybe the sheep weren't all originals. There was no way for me to know. Though I enjoyed the movie when I first saw it, I figured that maybe I'd either do some reading or catch some zzzz's. I was just about finished with dad's book so I found another. After a half hour or so I felt like maybe a nap was in order. I put the book aside, put the seat back, closed my eyes and before I knew it we were landing at San Francisco International Airport. I did manage to sleep for a couple hours during the flight, but I couldn't remember any of my dreams. Of course that didn't mean that I didn't have any dreams about LOTTO.

I picked up my rental car, a Ford Taurus, and then went to the hotel to check in. I unpacked and then headed out for something to eat. When I returned I checked the television schedule but couldn't find much worthwhile. I did some reading and before long it was late, at least by my

clock. I reset my watch and realized that this day was too long so I figured I'd call it a night.

The alarm rang and it was another day. I had a blueberry bagel along with some rich coffee and it seemed to jump start me. I drove to the facility where I was to meet Frank Ignatio, the project leader for the drug prescription program in California. I had talked to him via telephone on numerous occasions so by now I had created an image of him based on his voice. Needless to say my visualization was quite off the mark but nevertheless he seemed pleasant enough and I spent the rest of the day with him and others involved in the conversion. I got to see Joe and Terry again but Lucy had a personal day so I would see her the next day. It was a long day as jet lag was catching up with me. I got to my hotel at a few minutes after six, just in time to catch the news. There wasn't much new going on so I decided to try to reach Dave Fisher at his hotel but he wasn't in. I left a message for him to call me after eight. I should be back from dinner by that time as the effects of the long flight from Buffalo still lingered.

When I returned from dinner it was not quite eight and a half hour later the phone rang. It was Dave.

"Your name isn't by any chance Ted and you aren't the Unabomber, are you?" Dave inquired.

"No. His name sounds the same but it's spelled differently."

"What brings you to this part of the country, Mr. Kuzinski?"

"I'm here on business for a few days. Call me John...I'm not your teacher anymore so you don't have to address me as Mr."

"How about if I call you bomber?"

“I guess that's all right...as long as it's not Mr. Kuzinski. Do you want to get together tomorrow evening for dinner? I'll pick you up at your hotel.”

“That sounds fine with me. I can be available at six tomorrow out in front. What kind of car are you driving?”

“I have a dark blue Ford Taurus. I'll see you then.”

“Have a good night, bomber.”

I settled down to rest and before long I was sound asleep. Those long flights do that to most people.

## MORE LOTTO DISCUSSION

The next day I awoke refreshed. I wouldn't say that I had conquered the jet lag completely but I was on my way. I got into the office and Frank introduced me to Lucy Hilton.

"John, this is Lucy. Lucy, meet John from Buffalo."

"I already know her from her visit to Western New York last month. You must have forgotten that you sent her there to escape the rains."

"My mistake. This project is getting the better of me. But speaking of the weather, you missed an earthquake last week. It was small but unforgettable nonetheless. Maybe we'll have one for you this week."

"Oh, don't go out of your way for me. I'll pass on the tremors!"

"Don't you have all that snow most of the year?"

"The city itself escapes the brunt of the storms, usually. The area that gets it is south of the city, but only for three or four months."

Lucy added, "That must be where the ski areas are!"

"Precisely. Of course, snow in Western New York does not match up to the yearly amount in Syracuse. There's even more of the white stuff in the area north of that city."

"I'm originally from south Florida, so I know all about the hurricane season," said Lucy as she sipped her coffee out of a Miami mug.

Frank sighed, "I guess we'd rather have some snow than earthquakes, fires and floods. It would stop the drought."

I mentioned, "I love coming to California because of all that is here: the mighty Pacific, the mountains in Yosemite, the giant Sequoias, Hollywood, the glorious sunshine and wonderful weather."



The rest of the morning was spent going over concerns about the drug program. The questions were coming so fast and furious that when I looked up at the clock, it was already 12:30. We stopped for an hour for lunch and then proceeded to where we had been. The afternoon sped by as well and before long I headed back to my hotel.

I changed into jeans and a sweatshirt and turned on the news. Because of our late lunch, which was delicious, I could go for some time without food.

Half an hour later, I picked up Dave at the Best Western Hotel and I said, "Greetings, stranger!"

He grasped my hand firmly, "How are you doing, John?"

I had finally gotten him to not refer to me as Mr. Kuzinski. Oh, if only more people had more respect for others! But then, Dave was an outstanding young man.

"I'm fine. I'm slowly getting over my flight fatigue. What are you doing in this part of the country?"

"I'm here for a course on programming efficiency. It's quite interesting. I really thought that it would be boring but it isn't. With all the programs that we have to maintain, this is an attempt to streamline systems to make them run faster. I have been here over a week and the time has just flown by. Last week I was in class for database management. All in all, this is so much better than working."

"Tell me if you feel the same way in twenty years. As you get older and take more classes, you'll probably get sick of them. You may be right that it's better than being at the office, though. Are you hungry?"

"We had a late lunch so I could manage without food for a while, unless you're famished."

"No, we can eat later. Well, why don't we head out to Muir Woods? Have you ever been there?"

"No, but I hear the redwoods are really impressive."

“Indeed they are.”

We procured two bottles of water for our hike and got onto the highway. Fortunately I knew how to bypass rush hour traffic. The sky was glowing with hues of orange and red and I knew this would be a great evening to view the sunset. We got there in a short time and headed out to one of the trails.

“This place is incredible! I’m glad you suggested it.”

There were hardly any people around so I said, “Tom mentioned that you were talking about some co-worker who was complaining about the length of time that the LOTTO program took to run.”

We kept moving along the trail, always away from others.

“That program seems to take forever to finish. It must have been written by some consultant who got paid by the length of time the program takes to run. Oh, I’m sorry. I forgot you’re a consultant.”

“Don’t worry about that. I’ve seen many consultants in my day, some commendable and others not worthy of hiring. And yet management somehow signed a contract with these incompetents.”

“You don’t think that the program is fixed, do you?”

“Well, how long would it take to generate a few random numbers, match against all the entries and do calculations to figure out how much money will be paid? I don’t think that should take more than a few minutes, certainly under an hour.”

“The way I would do the processing is I would sort the entry of six numbers from smallest to largest to create a twelve-digit number. This number would have two digits for each of the six numbers from the forty nine.”

I postulated, “So if someone picked 13, 7, 34, 3, 41 and 18, this twelve digit number would be 030713183441

and you would sort the computer's randomly generated six numbers in this same way. Then see if the twelve-digit number for the contestant matches the twelve-digit winning number."

"Sure. Then repeat this process for each entry until the whole file is processed. If there happens to be a match, the social security number attached to this twelve-digit number would then be used to get the name, address and whatever else was needed from another data file and this is recorded as a winner. At the same time, the number of entries is accumulated so that the pot is determined for the following LOTTO. Naturally some data record from the previous lottery has to be read to determine this payoff and each winner's share."

We stopped to catch our breaths. My companion sipped some of his water.

"Well done, Dave. Perhaps a sort of the file of entries before processing could speed up the process somewhat. It sounds complicated but it's half a dozen tasks that involve not much activity except for the matching of entries to the winning combination. That will take the longest but even that should be processed quite rapidly with today's powerful computers."

"I agree, but then why is that program in my beloved D.C. running so long?"

"I don't know. Can you get me access to the program so that I can take a look at it?"

"I'll see what I can do. You have access to the system, don't you?"

"Sure, but just send me all the information I need in the mail. I'll go from there. Now what do you think about dinner? Are you in the mood for some Mexican fare? I know a good place called Chevy's that I think you will like. It's a little out of the way but well worth the trip."

We headed towards the car and Dave seemed to be ready for dinner, “I could go for a nice fajita or some black beans. What are we waiting for?”

We got into the car and were on our way.

## RESEARCHING THE PROGRAM

I was fortunate to make my flight back to Buffalo on Saturday. Frank was satisfied with the week I had spent and figured that I didn't need to stay any longer in the golden state.

Tom picked me up at the airport and we headed for home.

“So you saw Dave Fisher. What did he say about the monster LOTTO program?”

“We had a small discussion about what we thought the program should do and how long it should take in general terms. We did all this in the quiet darkness of Muir Woods.”

“So you were there in the midnight hour. I didn't think you could get into the area after sunset.”

“You can't, as far as I know, but we were there in early evening well before the sun was gone. It was still light but don't forget that Muir Woods seems to always be dark because of the monstrous redwoods.”

“What else came up about lotteries?”

“Not too much more except that Dave will be sending me some information so I can sneak a peek at the LOTTO program. I really am curious.”

“Just make sure curiosity doesn't kill the cat!”

A few days later, I was back into my normal routine in Buffalo and somewhat recovered from my western trip. I got back home from work and found the correspondence that I was looking for in the mail. It was David's note about the LOTTO program. He sent all the information I needed to take a peek at the slow monster. I didn't finish reading to the end of the page, as I wanted to dive right in. I decided to get something to eat and then head over to the college.

While getting some grub, I recalled that Dave mentioned an alternate design for the lottery program. The collection of data at the remote terminals would be the same and a record for each six number combination would still be there. It would once again have the twelve-digit number created from the six numbers and sorted from lowest to highest. Along with this number would be the entrant's social security number. This was the same as before. In our previous discussion, every one of the records in this file was processed since we had a sequential file. This type of file is good for processing because it can be processed very fast, even if the file is huge. Unfortunately, if you want to get to a specific record in this file, you have to read the whole file. That's just the way sequential files work.

There is another kind of file that you can use called a keyed file, one with information on the people who enter the lottery. We can get all the information on the person we need, provided we have the social security number, which is the key to the file. In this case we would only read a single record, not every one in the file, which saves time. Since there is only one record for each social security number, the keys are unique. But keyed files can have duplicate keys.

This was the type of file that Dave proposed. After all, you could have two or more contestants who submitted the same six number combination and this sorted combination would be the key to our file. Now our LOTTO program would be a little different.

We would still have to generate the six numbers and create our twelve-digit "winner." We would also have to determine the payoff, probably from another small file. At the same time we would have to keep track of the number of entries from this LOTTO because that number would be necessary for the next week's contest. This could be done easily if each location sending data transmitted the number

of tickets bought. But now we would only read a few records from our indexed file. We would take our twelve-digit “winner” and use it as the key in our reads. We could find zero, one or more records.

We are still not through because we still have to get information on the winners and determine how much each one would receive. These reads would again be keyed reads and the remaining calculations shouldn't take too much time.

Dave's proposal was an excellent one. I put down his letter and had some leftover soup, bread, salad and a small glass of orange juice. My next step was to get down to work. I headed out to the college. I figured I would sneak into the system in the nation's capitol as indirectly as I could.

The computer room at the school was almost empty so I was in luck. I logged on and then got to use PROCOMM PLUS for the first time. I found the phone number to use to get into the system in Washington and made sure that I had the right settings.

I dialed the number and got into the system that I wanted, but all I got on my screen was garbage. I rechecked the settings both on my system as well as on the other end and was relieved to find that one of the settings was wrong. I changed it and what a difference that made!

It didn't take too long before I found the LOTTO program. Instead of looking at it, I created a test file and copied the LOTTO program over to it. Then I sent the test file to a new location and logged off and went off to get a soda. Then I signed back on. I was really disappointed but not too surprised, as I couldn't make heads or tails of what I saw in front of me, and this had nothing to do with any settings. The program was in BASIC but I was looking at object code instead of source code. Object code is what the computer executes and it looks like a bunch of swearing. It comes from the source code, which is what programmers

write. On occasion I have seen source code that appears to be object code. That is, because of some programmer's creation, you didn't have the slightest idea what the program was supposed to be doing.

But anyway, the source code is compiled, or run through another program that does some checking but mostly conversion. The result of the compile is object code. Anyone looking at object code will have no idea of what the program is doing but the computer understands it. I logged off and decided to drive home. When I got home, I called Tom and agreed to stop over later. I also mentioned that I had some news.

When I got over to his place he asked, "So you said you had some news for me. What exactly is it?"

"I got a glance into the LOTTO program and I can't figure out what it's doing."

"I thought you were a hot-shot programmer! Or is it written in a language you don't know?"

The phone rang but Tom let it and eventually the answering machine picked up.

"It's written in BASIC on a PRIME system using the PICK operating system, but what I was looking at is object code."

"I object! What are you talking about? What's object code?"

"Simply put, I write a program or source code and then compile it and the result of that compilation is completely unreadable to human beings and it's called object code."

"What do you mean by compile? Say, do you want something to drink?"

"I'm fine for now. A compile is just software that converts your program so that the computer can understand



it. The computer doesn't speak the same language that we do, even if it is COBOL or BASIC."

"Apparently not. So what are you going to do now?"

"Fortunately, programs written on PICK systems are compiled but they can also be de-compiled or converted back from object code to source code."

"Do you have the resources to de-compile the program?"

"Not yet, but that's where you come in. You said that Joe could get just about any kind of software that I want. Do you think he could get me this de-compiler?"

"I can ask him. I'll bet that if he can't get it, he has the resources to find it somewhere."

"That's good news. I'll pay whatever he asks, too."

"I'll have to write down exactly what you need. I'm not into computers like you are."

"Tell Joe I need a BASIC de-compiler for a PICK operating system. That should be sufficient to get what I need."

"And speaking of needs, can I get you a beer?"

"Why don't you have one and I'll have a ginger ale, if you have it."

Tom decided that he would bypass the beer so he brought out two glasses of Vernor's. We finished them and then I headed home. It seemed like the day had started a month ago. I figured that I would have no trouble getting to sleep. I also guessed that I would probably have another one of those dreams. I was right on both counts.

## MORE SETBACKS

A week later I was at the office when the phone rang.

“Systems, John Kuzinski.”

“Joe found the BASIC de-compiler, but it’s not cheap. It will cost you a case of beer.”

“I thought you said it’s not cheap. A case of beer for the software is quite a deal.”

“I didn’t tell you this. Joe wants a case of Foster’s Lager. That’s the catch.”

“It’s still a good deal as far as I am concerned, as long I don’t have to buy him a boomerang.”

“Do you want to talk to Joe? He’s right by my side.”

“Sure, put him on.”

“Hello, John. How are you on this fine day?”

“Very well, now that I found out you got the de-compiler. You’re not Australian?”

“No, I just happen to like Foster’s.”

“I’ll get you the brew as soon as I can. You should have it by the weekend.”

“There’s no rush. It took me long enough to get you what you needed. Besides, I know where you live. Well, I’ve got to go. Do you want to talk with the accountant?”

“Just tell him I’ll catch up with him later. Thanks again. Bye.”

Tom dropped off the software and I was thrilled. I had a copy of the LOTTO object code from the remote site so I figured I would work on it from the PC at my house. I started by reading the instructions on the de-compiler and got a good handle on what I had to do. Armed with the necessary knowledge, I proceeded. The end result was a lot better to read but quite a bit of the code was still undecipherable. I was stymied but I wasn’t about to give up.

After some consideration I realized that maybe there was an upgraded version of the de-compiler. I went back to the instruction manual and delved deeper. There's an old adage: if at first you don't succeed, read the instructions. I had read them, just not completely. The manual said that this de-compiler was version 1.3. Now all I had to do was figure out what the version of the program was.

I was stuck but I figured that somewhere in the object code there must be an indication as to what version of the software I needed. I got back into the code and did some searching. After a while I almost called it a night but then I found it. The program appeared to be version 1.6, which could be the reason for all my difficulties. I needed version 1.6 of the de-compiler. At least that was what I hoped. I logged off my system and headed towards the phone. I dialed Tom's number and fortunately he was home.

“So you are home?”

“Stop over if you'd like.”

“I'll be there shortly.”

I wasted no time getting to Tom's place.

“Did that de-compiler work?”

“It helped somewhat but it looks as though I need a different version to get the object code back to completely readable source. It's my fault. I should have realized I needed a specific version of the de-compiler.”

“Let me see if Joe can find it for you. What version do you need?”

“It looks as though it should be version 1.6.”

“Well, if he found the de-compiler that you have, he'll probably be able to find version 1.6. You never know until you ask.”

“So do you think that this will mean another case of lager? And when can I meet Joe? He sounds like an interesting guy for an Australian.”

“He’s not from down under. He just likes Australian women.”

“I thought it was only the Foster's.”

“That too. But it’s funny you should ask about meeting him because I just talked to him and he's having a party this Saturday night and told me to ask you to come.”

“It's been a while since I’ve been to a party. I think that’s a wonderful idea. Would he want me to bring anything besides the Foster's? Like a bottle of wine or some food concoction of mine?”

“I’m sure Joe wouldn’t mind those Chinese wings, the ones you made a few months ago. They were out of sight.”

“I'd be happy to make them. They're easy and everyone likes them.”

“I'm not even going to tell Joe that you're bringing an appetizer. We'll surprise him.”

“Great! Well, I have got to get going. Thanks. I will be seeing you.”

“Later, John.”

I drove home and headed to the land of zzzz’s. I was somewhat disappointed that the de-compiler didn't do exactly what I had hoped it would do but still I was not discouraged. I was looking forward to the party.

## THE PARTY

Saturday evening came around faster than I thought and it was too soon to have news about version 1.6 of the de-compiler. The wings were just about done when the doorbell rang. I figured it was Tom, and sure enough it was.

“I could smell those wings before I made the turn onto your street...they smell great!”

“All I have to do is get them out of the oven and wrap them. It's easier to cook them here than at Joe's. They will stay hot for quite a while if I wrap them in foil and newspaper.”

“Are you kidding? They won't be around long enough to get cool.”

“I guess you're right.”

I did what I had to do with the wings and we were on our way. It was a magnificent spring night for the party with temperatures in the high 60's.

“You'll like Joe. He's an interesting and very likable guy.”

We got to Joe's house, which was just outside the city in the town of Amherst, and we had trouble finding a place to park. And it was early. This had the makings of an outstanding shindig.

“John, this is Joe Terry. Joe, meet John Kuzinski”

“So you're the mad bomber. I thought your name was Ted!”

“Fortunately it isn't and he's not related, I don't think. You're not from Australia, are you?”

“Not really although there have been a few nights where I've been 'down under', if you know what I mean. So, what did you bring?”

“I made some Oriental chicken wings. I also have a case of Fosters in the car in exchange for the software.”

“The wings smell great! Bring them to the table over there. You didn’t have to get the lager. I still have to locate the de-compiler version 1.6 for you.”

“So do you think you’ll be able to get it?”

“I looked for it but so far I haven’t had any luck.”

My spirits sagged. “So you don’t think that version is around anywhere?”

“Well I do have one more possibility, but don’t get your hopes too high. These wings are out of this world. You can come to any of my parties.”

“Thanks.” I was glad he liked them but sad that he couldn’t find the version I needed. Fortunately I forgot about that real fast, as a tall woman wearing a dark green dress that almost matched her eyes approached.

“Are you the one who made those wings? They are fabulous. Oh, excuse me, I’m Annie Dalton.”

“Hi. I’m John Kuzinski.”

“Are they a lot of work, and what’s in them?”

“They aren’t that difficult to make. The secret is the blend of garlic, fresh ginger and soy sauce. Marinating overnight helps to finish the process.”

“There’s some lovely spice that I am trying to identify. What is it?”

“Cinnamon! I’m glad you like them.”

“So you must be a chef from some area restaurant.”

“Actually I don’t make a living cooking. If I did, I probably would never enjoy eating as much as I do. My main means of support is as a software consultant. And what about you?”

“I’m an investigative journalist with United Press.”

“I thought your name sounded familiar. I've read many of your articles and I must say I admire your work. Didn't you do the feature on the Unabomber?”

“Yes, I did write a few things about the former math professor. You're not related to him, are you?”

“He spells his name somewhat differently than mine. Nevertheless, I taught mathematics a few years ago before I got into information services. I hope my destiny doesn't parallel his.”

“I certainly hope you'll never reach those depths. He was an interesting individual but strange to say the least.”

“Can I get you a drink? I was on my way to the bar.”

“I'll join you. I may have a glass of pop or juice. It depends on what Joe has.”

We headed over to the bar and I was delighted to see that our host had a half keg of Molson Ale. Annie only wanted a glass of tonic with a twist of lime so I obliged her and then poured myself a small draught.

“You're three quarters of the way to having a 'sugar bud,’” I said.

“What in the world is a 'sugar bud'?”

“Some Rhine wine added to your tonic and lime. I believe the drink originated at Anacone's on Bailey Avenue. It's a poor man's gin and tonic.”

“It sounds like it might be quite pleasant. I usually don't drink except for an occasional beer or a glass of wine with dinner. When I was younger, I had an experience with tequila that probably made me the way I am now. And that had nothing to do with the worm at the bottom of the bottle!”

“I think I know what you mean. Everyone probably goes through a night like you experienced. Some never drink again, others have a decent respect for alcohol and then others aren't effected in the least by this overindulgence.”

We spent some time conversing about more pleasant topics like cooking and Seinfeld and she made the night fly by. As the party progressed, I met a few more people and it turned out to be a fine evening. The food was excellent, as were the people and the music. Before I left I swapped business cards with Annie Dalton. I also delivered the case of Australian beer and thanked Joe for a wonderful time. We got onto the highway and Tom said, “You seemed to be having a good time with Ms. Dalton.”

“Every aspect of the party was enjoyable and she seemed very nice, considering she works for the media.”

“You’re kidding about that media line, right?”

“Of course. Annie is a very interesting woman.”

“Did you know that she was a close friend of Kathy Pendleton?”

“Oh, really!”



## A SOLUTION TO THE SETBACKS

A few days later I heard from Tom. "Joe found version 1.6, John. That should make you happy."

"That's good."

"You don't sound all that thrilled and excited."

"I will be excited once I see if it does the job and not before. I have been in this predicament before so I don't want to get my hopes up too high. I think you know what I mean, don't you?"

"Yeah, I've been there myself. Have you called Annie?"

"I was going to do that later."

"Well, I'll let you go so you can call her. Are you going to be home later?"

"Sure. Stop in."

"I should have the de-compiler for you. Talk to you later."

"So long, Tom."

I called, but I got her answering machine. I left a short message. Tom dropped off the software before I got home and I immediately got on to the system to see if what Joe found was what I needed. Indeed it was!

I didn't really get into the LOTTO program that much as I had to run a few errands. When I returned, there was a message on my answering machine from Annie. I figured I would call her back after I looked at LOTTO for a while, so I got down to work. I discovered that the input to the program was a file of LOTTO entries. These consisted of a nine-digit number and six more numbers. The nine-digit number was the social security number of the entrant and the six numbers that followed were the numbers selected that could make the player rich. First the program read through the entire file of

entries for a count to be used for next week's game. Then it read the same file again and created a table with entries for each possible number and then added 1 to each one for every one of those six numbers. It did this for every record or set of six numbers. I didn't really know why this was being done. Maybe it was for some kind of statistics.

When this process was done for all the entrants, it took the table with the counters and selected the six numbers whose counters were the smallest and this turned out to be the winning combination. Now I could see that this exercise had nothing to do with compiling statistics.

So it almost selected the six winning numbers at random, but the winning combination turned out to be the six numbers that the fewest people had selected. How devious! And yet if that procedure was being followed, why were there so many winners? I found that the next thing the program did was to go back and find the winners' social security numbers from the input file. The next part of the program was confusing but it appeared that another file was being read. My guess was that it was determining the amount of the payoff as well as the names of the winners and some other needed information. At this point I was a getting a little tired and somewhat confused. I would have to do some more investigation into the program.

It was as good a time for a break as any so I decided to try to reach Annie. I dialed her number but once again she wasn't home so I left another message.

It wasn't a minute later when the doorbell rang. It was Tom.

“Well, does it do the trick?”

“It sure did and what I found is very interesting. However, I am a little baffled.”

“What do you mean, John?”

I told him all that I had discovered until that point and he was as stymied as I was.

“How about a cold one?”

“That sounds like a great idea. So the old LOTTO program is rigged after all. That would also explain the long running time, wouldn't it?”

“It sure would. It's doing a great deal more processing than it has any right to do. It's also reading the entry file twice, which requires more time. Despite that, I still can't understand why there would be so many multiple winners if the program was doing all that it seems to be doing.”

“Is it possible that it doesn't always go through that specific logic? For example, on some days it generates the six winning numbers legitimately and on other days it does its hocus pocus. Thus we could see no winners or multiple winners, the latter being what we have witnessed to date almost exclusively.”

“That's a possibility. Let the program run in a normal way for a while and after the people get all obsessed with the game, have the program get devious.”

“Thus, the people keep playing and the money keeps rolling in and the program alternates the way in which it runs. That sounds like a possible explanation.”

“I will have to look at the program in greater detail tomorrow. It's too late to do anything more tonight. I'm zonked.”

“So the program is difficult to follow, I presume.”

“Yes, it's not very well structured to say the least, difficult to read and impossible to maintain. I'm sick of those types of programs. This is just another example.”

“Did you talk to Annie?”

“I left her a message and she left me one and then I left her another. I love technology. What did we do before answering machines, faxes and pagers?”

“We lived our lives.”

Tom continued, “Getting back to LOTTO, I thought today’s computers were so fast that they could do all kinds of processing in no time at all. If so, why does this program takes so darn long to run?”

“Well, to begin with, the program has to make multiple passes at the input feeding it. If it sorted the entries first and then generated the six random numbers and then read the sorted file, the time to run the program would be much shorter. You are only reading the entries once and you wouldn't have to read the entire file. As you pointed out, the computers out there now can do unheard of processing in no time at all. What takes so long is I-O.”

“Isn’t that part of that song, ‘Old MacDonald Had a Farm’?”

“Very clever, Tom. I-O refers to any input or output operation. Input involves reading a file and output means writing out a record for a file. If you read a file and then update the file, then you have a combination of input and output. Any of these operations is time consuming and bound to slow down a program. Of course just about every program has I-O. This is what really consumes time and this appears to be what is making the LOTTO program drag.”

“Well I think I understand what you are saying. Don’t forget I’m an accountant and not a computer nerd...no offense intended. I better be on my way. I will talk to you tomorrow.”

“Ciao”.

Despite the fact that I was really into the program, somehow I figured it was time to get some sleep. Tomorrow was another day.

## POSSIBLE LOTTO SCHEMES

I did get some sleep but nowhere near enough. Work was horrible, as all I could think about was LOTTO. Then the phone rang. I figured it was Tom, but I was wrong and pleasantly surprised.

“So I finally got in touch with the gourmet!”

“Well, hi. It's nice to talk to you rather than your answering machine.”

“I hate answering machines, but they're a necessity.”

“I feel the same way.”

“I'm sorry for not getting back to you sooner but I've been swamped. I love my job but sometimes I wonder if all the seemingly endless days are worth it. Maybe I should have become a nun!”

“I know a few religious and their days don't appear to be any shorter than yours. There probably is no perfect job.”

“Right now, I'm overwhelmed by all that's going on, but I'm sure that I'll get over it. It's been this way before.”

“I'm sure you'll survive. Would you like to get together for dinner sometime?”

“If you cook, I'm there! Gee, I thought you'd never ask.”

“It took me a while to get up the courage. But seriously, I'd be delighted to cook for you. Do you have any preferences?”

“No. I'll try almost anything except liver and snake.”

“Does what I cook have to have had parents?”

“That's a line from Seinfeld, isn't it?”

“Yeah, I wish I had written it. How about carbonnade a la flamande?”

“I have no idea what that is and I usually don’t eat anything I can’t spell but in this case I may be willing to make an exception. But what is it?”

“It’s Belgian and it’s beef with onions and beer.”

“Sounds great. Count me in.”

“How about this Saturday night?”

“Saturday would be good for me. Let me bring dessert. I’ll show you another of my skills.”

“That’s fine with me. Come over any time after four. Do you know how to get to my home?”

“I am familiar with your street so I’ll be able to find it. Don’t forget I’m an investigative journalist.”

“I hadn’t forgotten. The house is light blue and the number is on the mailbox to help you out.”

“I’ll see you on Saturday.”

“Until then.”

I went back to work and the day still dragged on but eventually I was on my way home. I had some leftover spaghetti for dinner and then got right back into the LOTTO program. The program was definitely a challenge so I had to spend more hours than I wanted to working on it.

After two hours I wasn’t any more informed than when I had started. I got off the system and starting to reconsider what Tom and I had discussed regarding fraud. There were various possibilities for officials to make off with the cash. To begin with, they could understate the money put in and skim cash that way. Another possibility was to overstate administrative costs and get dough in that manner. As long as no one checked all the expenses, they could get away it. A third possibility would be to have LOTTO but no winners, something akin to what I had uncovered.

It didn’t quite make sense. If the program ran along different paths as we figured it would, eventually there had to be a legitimate winner. Of course the people running the

LOTTO could get a substantial amount of interest on the money they held in the coffers when there were weeks without a winner.

But the conflicting thought was that since there had been quite a few winners so far, this theory seemed far-fetched. Unless the program ran normally for a while and then the scam came into play. But this in itself might cause questioning on the part of the public. This scenario didn't seem acceptable.

So then what else could it be? Maybe I made a wrong assumption. Perhaps the plan might be to start as before and then have no winners for a while and finally multiple winners splitting the pot. One winner turns out to be some official who snuck in the winning combination of numbers somehow. All the others involved in the split are winners, but the pot gets diluted. The following week everything goes back to the way it was and no one has a clue that anything transpired.

That is a possibility except I didn't see anywhere in the code where a "rigged" number won the LOTTO. Of course maybe I have yet to stumble onto this code in the program. Getting back to the program, I did check and see that three files were being accessed and that did seem reasonable. The first would be the file of numbers and social security numbers. The second would be the information file with names, addresses and so on and the last would probably be the file having information to determine how much to pay out. The three files seemed to be what was needed.

I decided to take a break. I was just overwhelmed so I sat down to read the paper. The LOTTO winners' names and social security numbers were on the front page and there were seven people splitting the pot: Smith, Howard, Lesinski, Townsend, Hanson, Cellini and Parello. The first few names were fairly common and did nothing for me, but

the last two names seemed familiar. Somehow I had heard that combination of Cellini and Parelo before. I just couldn't quite remember where.



## DINNER AND MORE REVELATIONS

On Saturday afternoon I had no new information on the program as I decided to take a few days off from it. I figured the best approach was to get away from the program for a while. Returning later might produce dividends.

Shortly after 4:30, Annie arrived. She brought a surprise dessert, which I promptly put into the refrigerator.

“Something smells good.”

“That's my cologne...it's a blend of oregano and turmeric. Can I get you a glass of wine or juice?”

“I think I'll wait until dinner. On second thought, maybe a glass of wine would be fine.”

“You're a poet! I have burgundy and white Grenache.”

“White Grenache! Isn't that an oxymoron?”

“Come to think of it, yes. But it's a very nice wine anyway.”

“You convinced me. The white Grenache it is. The burgundy should go good with the main course.”

I fetched the drinks and brought out some hors d'oeuvres.

“I made a few stuffed mushrooms...I hope you're a fan of fungus.”

“Until recently, I didn't care for mushrooms. I guess our tastes change as we get older.”

She moved to the tray of mushrooms and took one. She was wearing jeans and a T-shirt that said, “Friends don't let friends go into politics.” The look on her face told me she was pleased.

“These are good. I guess you passed the test and I don't have to worry about the main entree.”

“Thanks. I think the secret to being a good cook is following easy recipes that taste great.”

“That sounds simple, but I don't think it's that easy. That almost sounds like a light beer commercial.”

I was going to ask about Kathy Pendleton but thought better of it. The best time would be after dinner. It was no sense bringing up that subject until much later. But I was going to ask another question related to LOTTO.

“Do the names Cellini and Parello ring a bell?”  
“Aren't those the two lawyers who have a billboard on the I-190 leaving downtown?”

“Is that it? That's why those names are so familiar. Wait a minute. Aren't their names Cellino and Barnes?”

“Now that you mention it, that is right. Why do you ask?”

“Oh, nothing. It's not that important. I think dinner is about ready.”

Dinner went well as Annie thought highly of all my culinary efforts of the day and I in turn raved over her lemon mousse. We sat drinking hazelnut coffee and I said, “I understand you knew Kathy Pendleton.”

“She was a dear friend who was murdered by President Brown's thugs. Her death resulted in his elevation to the highest office in the land.”

“I thought that myself, but couldn't prove it.”

“In a few weeks I will have enough evidence to force his resignation from the presidency. I am close to proving that his LOTTO project is fixed and a great deal of the money being taken in is winding up in his pocket. There is also plenty of evidence to prove that he bought votes to win the election and took advantage of illegal campaign contributions. All in all, he is as crooked as they come.”

I didn't need an opening but now I felt like my efforts with the LOTTO program were well worth it.

“A former student of mine has access to the LOTTO program and I have been investigating it over the last few days.”

“What did you find?”

I proceeded to give her all the information I had up until that time and she was almost as impressed as when dinner arrived.

“The information I have uncovered is about the same as yours but I got my data from different sources and in a different manner. However, this is like a confirmation of each others work.”

“I still have some work to do, though,” I added.”

“You and me, both. That’s why you haven’t seen anything in the press about this. But once I finish, Brown will be a thing of the past. I hope you have been careful. You saw what they did to Kathy!”

“I did and I think I know what happened to her. You know more about her, don't you? More coffee?”

“Perhaps a bit. Sadly, I do know about Kathy. You see, the night she was murdered I got a call from her. She asked if I had seen her on television. I told her no and then she said that the woman on the tube was an imposter. She then told me to hang on as someone was at her door. The next thing I heard was a ping, then another ping, probably bullets fired from a gun with a silencer on it. A few seconds later I heard a dial tone.”

“Wow. I hope they’re not after you.”

“Well, they probably are but I have got to do my job so I can’t be concerned about it.”

“Do you always use your real name when you produce articles or do you use another?”

“Most of the time I use Ann Dalton but on rare occasions I use the name Tonia Neland.”

“Don’t tell me you know Patricia Hearst!”

“Tonia Neland is an anagram of my name. Actually, very few people know of the Dalton / Neland connection. I probably shouldn't have told you about it.”

“Don't worry. I have no problem keeping secrets. Can I get you anything else?”

“No thanks. I have to get going. You have really been helpful and I love your cooking. It won't be as good but I'd like to cook for you too.”

“That would be nice. By that time I should have a lot more to tell you about that LOTTO program.”

“Thanks again. Please be careful!”

“You be careful, too. Good night.”

As she drove off I knew that I probably wouldn't get much sleep and if I did I would probably have another one of those dreams. Sometimes I hate it when I'm right!

## THE WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM

Sunday morning came too quickly. I got out of bed and was glad that I only had a few glasses of wine. Hangovers weren't worth it. Years ago I had a few of those mornings to remind me never to do that again. I went to morning Mass and was thankful that Father Christopher's sermon was merciful.

After breakfast I got a call from my mom reminding me to bring over the book on LOTTO if I was through. I'm glad she called, as I had almost forgotten...about dinner, not the book. I said that I would bring the book and should be over in early afternoon. I spent some time perusing the Sunday news and decided to do absolutely nothing for the rest of the morning. I put Handel's Water Music and the soundtrack of the motion picture "Amadeus" into my CD carousel and relaxed. The former was one of the very first CD's I bought and still a delight, as was Mozart.

I would get back to LOTTO tomorrow when I would be rested and ready. Many thoughts raced through my mind but I tried to calm myself and put everything in order. It wasn't very easy.

I drove to my parents' house and it wasn't too long before my dad got into another incident dealing with the lottery.

"I saw on the news last week that there was a shooting in your neck of the woods, probably less than five miles from your house. No one was killed but apparently some guy chased his wife out of his or her home and fired at her. He missed and was later arrested."

“It turns out they had recently been winners in the lottery. I guess all that money can cause serious problems,” my mom added.

Not to be outdone I chimed in, “I heard of a guy who won the lottery and after a few months died of a heart attack. Word was that all those winnings brought a lot of stress and that’s probably what killed him. His life was fine until all that money arrived. What a shame!

“Oh, I left your lottery book in the den.”

“Care for a beer?”

“No thanks, dad. Maybe later.”

“So what did you think of the book?”

“It was really fascinating. I was very surprised though, because I knew of the unbelievable odds at winning. After glancing through the book, the prospect of winning seemed even bleaker. And yet somehow I’m almost convinced to take a chance on the lottery, maybe play a dollar a week with the same numbers and plan not on winning the big one but just playing with the idea of winning something and not losing my shirt. Fifty-two dollars a year isn’t a great deal of money.”

“Your mom and I play from time to time but not on a regular basis. The trouble is people think they can survive by winning the lottery. If you win a lot of money and don’t control your spending, you’ll be right back where you started from in a hurry.”

“What I don’t like is the attitude that winning the lottery is an alternative to hard work. People want quick fixes. They’re lazy. They don’t want to do anything. Well it just doesn’t work that way. If you want something, you have to work for it. That’s the principle on which this country was founded.”

“Tell that to a professional athlete. So much for solving the problems of the world.”

“Dinner’s ready,” came the words from the head gourmet.

“It’s time for chow!”

Dinner was delicious as anticipated. Later, 60 Minutes was sensational as always so my dad changed the channel. PBS had a special on about the Quiz show scandals in the early days of television. I had seen the movie on my trip, and PBS managed to bring everything into focus.

“I didn't think TV executives at that time were so corrupt.”

“Some things never change, John.”

“The amazing thing is that so many shows were rigged. It seems like all of them were.”

“They were out there to make money and it didn't make a difference how they did it.”

“That really is sad.”

“Money is what makes the world go round. And all along you thought it was love.”

We sat around for a while longer and then I decided to head home. “Thanks for dinner. It was as good as ever.”

“You're welcome, John. I'll talk to you.”

“Take it easy. Don't work too hard!”

When I got home, I dressed down and decided to watch the Mark Russell Comedy Special on PBS that I had taped a few nights ago. How did we ever live before VCR's?

I rewound the tape and got a glass of ginger ale and pressed the play button. What I saw was the tail end of a show on about the underworld. I must have set the wrong start time when I set the VCR a few days earlier. As I started to watch, it turned out to be very informative and captivating. I figured I had plenty of time so I decided to continue watching this unanticipated taping.

They were talking about two guys who had been in the Mafia but in different crime families. The one was deeply

involved in racketeering while the other made his daily bread by dealing in gambling and prostitution. Though they were in factions that hated each other, these two individuals knew each other quite well. They both played on the same high school baseball and football teams.

One day each was asked to perform a hit on the other. Each was very reluctant to take down his friend so consequently they both questioned what they had been doing up until this time in the Mafia. As a result each gave up his life in the underworld and testified against the mob, resulting in quite a few arrests and imprisonments on both sides. Eventually they were both put into the witness protection program. Their names were Cellini and Parelo.



## SORTING IT ALL OUT

Then it all made sense. I had what I was looking for. All I had to do was get into the LOTTO program and I would have knowledge of what was going on. Now I was excited and running on adrenaline. The phone rang and I almost fell out of my chair.

“Hello,” I said, although it didn't sound like me.

“John, it's Tom. You sound different.”

“I am and do I have news for you!”

“Well, it will have to wait until I see you. I was called away on a brief business trip and I need a ride when I get to the airport. I wonder if you could pick me up at the airport in a few hours. My plane is due in at 11:23 tonight.”

“I'll be there for you. Don't forget I owe you for driving me to the airport last time.”

“I didn't even have to remind you. Well, I've got to go now. I'll be on United flight 202. See you in a while.”

I had over an hour before I had to leave the house so I dove right into the LOTTO program. My suspicions were confirmed and I also discovered some more logic in the program that would help account for the long running time.

The phone rang but by the time I got to it, the ringing had stopped. Probably a wrong number. It was time for the airport trip anyway, so I was happy to get out the door. Once I got on the expressway I felt I was being followed but then the car got off on the Walden Avenue exit. I could feel paranoia setting in and that I didn't need. I was at the terminal for only five minutes when Tom's flight arrived. He came off the plane rather quickly and he spotted me at the same time I saw him.

“You look pale, my good man. Have you seen a ghost?”

“I wish that was all I had seen. I'll give you all the dirty details once we're in the car. I hope you don't mind the wait.”

“Gosh, this must really be something big!”

Tom's luggage was waiting when he went to retrieve it so we got to my car without delay. I put his bags in the trunk and we were on our way. I paid for the parking and exited the lot onto Genesee Street.

“So what in God's name is going on? I've never seen you like this before.”

“To start with, Annie came over for dinner last night. Everything was fine until I asked her about Kathy.”

“Pendleton, I presume?”

“Yes. She mentioned that just before Kathy was murdered, the two spoke on the telephone and Kathy stated that the woman on television claiming to be her was an imposter. Just then the doorbell rang and Kathy excused herself to answer the door and Annie heard what probably were muffled gun shots and shortly after that a dial tone.”

“So our theory about the look-a-like was correct.”

“Unfortunately, yes. Annie also mentioned that she was just about ready to come out with enough information to tear down the Brown presidency, relating to the murder, the LOTTO deal as well as a few other improprieties of the Brown entourage.”

“Oh, so she knew about LOTTO too.”

“Well, she had information but not from the same sources as I had. I then proceeded to relate what I knew about the national lottery and she was really excited. In fact this news seemed to thrill her about as much as the dinner I cooked for her.”

“So you really impressed her! What did you cook?”

“Oh some stuffed mushrooms for an appetizer and carbonnade a la flamande along with a few other things.”

“Great. What else happened?”

“I mentioned that my work wasn't quite done but that I should have more damaging proof once I got back into the program. Not long after that, she had to leave. She did offer to cook for me and I accepted.”

“That still doesn't explain your behavior. We knew all of these details already.”

“True, but a few days ago I happened to read the names of the LOTTO winners in the news and there were seven winners. The first five names were fairly routine, common names like Smith and Hanson. However, the last two names were Cellini and Parello.”

“Those sound common too. No, wait a minute. I just heard an ad on the radio for two lawyers. I think it was Cellino and Parello.”

“Well, you're half right. It's Cellino and Barnes that you are probably thinking of. But anyway, last night I was set to watch the Mark Russell comedy special, which I had taped. Somehow I wound up with a show on tape about the Mafia. It was fascinating and they got into different events over the last thirty years. I got caught up in the program and they talked about two gangsters who eventually were put into the witness protection program. Their names were...”

“Cellini and Parello. Wow, that is a bombshell. So who were these two?”

“Frank ‘that red stuff on your shirt isn't sauce’ Cellini was a member of the Galliano family and he was asked to take down Gino Parello of the Milano family. At the same time Gino ‘the only hits aren't in baseball’ Parello was ordered to do in Cellini. But it turned out that the two knew each other.”

“How so?”

“They had played on the same sports teams in high school in South Orange, New Jersey. Not only that, they were still good friends.”

We were cruising the I-90 when Tom said, “So neither of them wanted to carry out the hits.”

“Good guess. To take that one step further, they decided to turn over a new leaf, if you know what I mean. They turned themselves in to the Feds and their testimony netted quite a catch. Cellini and Parello put quite a few of the main players in the underworld behind bars.”

“And naturally they wound up in the witness protection program. Oh God, now I realize what this is all about.”

“Pretty slick, isn’t it?”

“It sure is. I assume you got back into the source code for more details.”

“Just before I met you at the airport I discovered more reasons why the program was chugging along. It first read a data file and did some updating of records. It added new records and then started reading the same file from the beginning, deleting some of the records. The program then read the file of entries for a count and then got the winning six numbers by the minimalist method.”

“You mean by reading all the entries and recording the occurrence of each number and then taking as winning numbers the six numbers that the least amount of people chose.”

“Precisely. Then the program read though the input file of entries to determine the winners. After that it got the winners' names from reading another data file, obviously a name and address file. Then it got a random number from 3 to 10 and went to the very first file to get that number of additional winners of the lottery.”

“And what you're telling me is that this file is nothing more than individuals who were put into the witness protection program...people who lost their original identity forever. They were winners who could never collect one cent of the winnings.”

“This file may even have people who had died. At present I have no way of verifying that. Dave Fisher can probably help me answer that.”

“So this strategy dilutes the winnings of the pot. Sure there's a winner, apparently multiple winners when in fact there may be only one or two, if any. So if the jackpot is forty million dollars and eight people are supposed to split it, they each get a mere five million. But in reality only five million dollars is paid out and thirty five million pocketed.”

“And yet it looks like there are many winners so more people keep playing and this results in an even larger jackpot. This in turn results in still more dough in the coffers of whoever is running the show.”

“What was happening in the beginning of the program with this protection file?”

“New people are being added to the witness protection system every day so they are added to the file. The deletions were records of the so-called winners from the previous week's LOTTO. You don't want the same bogus winner day after day.”

“How ingenuous! Why didn't we think of that?”

“Because we're not demented!”

I pulled up to Tom's house and he asked, “Stop in for a while.”

“Maybe for a bit.”

“Does Annie know all the late-breaking details?”

“No. I haven't talked to her all day. I'll get a hold of her in the morning. She'll be surprised.”

Tom had a beer and I had a cranberry juice. We talked some on his trip and I figured it was time to go.

“Thanks, John. Good luck trying to get some sleep.”

“Good night.”

I would need more than luck to fall asleep.

## A MURDER IN D.C.

I headed home and before long thought I was being followed. On Jamison Road, a Buick was right on my tail. I sped up a bit but so did the driver behind me and when I slowed down, so did my pursuer.

Whoever it was liked to tailgate and there was no traffic on the road so he could have passed if he so desired. There was no use trying to outrun this car as it had plenty of horsepower, which I didn't. Perhaps I should keep driving until I got to the police station; that might deter him. Then I had an idea. I turned onto Creek Road and I was relieved to see the Buick fly by me. I guess they were just out for a joyride. I made a U-turn and kept heading home.

A few minutes later I got to my driveway. I imagined the Buick waiting for me in the driveway but there was no car there. But then I noticed that my garage door was open. Now I started to get concerned. Maybe I had left it open when I left. Or I may have thought I pressed the button on the remote to close the door but somehow didn't really wind up with the door closed.

Nonetheless, I was very cautious as I entered the house. I was quite relieved to see that everything seemed to be all right and indeed I must have simply forgotten to close the garage door. Inside the house normalcy reigned but inside me that was not the case.

I knew that it would be difficult to relax and catch some zzzz's. I wished that I had had a good physical workout so I would have no trouble falling asleep. I thought about a beer or a glass of wine but then decided that either would only keep me awake longer.

I readied myself for bed and lay down but I realized that this could be a long sleepless night. The phone rang, but when I went to answer it, the party on the other end was

silent and then I heard a click. I went back to bed and then the phone rang again but when I went to answer it, the ringing ceased. I then turned off the phone so I couldn't hear any rings. I also wrote "ring, ring" on a small piece of paper to remind me to turn the ringer back on. I put it on top of the answering machine. That effort of turning off the phone seemed to help.

But then I heard a crash. It might have been in the basement or living room. Perhaps something had just fallen in the garage, like a shovel or broom. Cautiously I went to the kitchen to get a glass of milk. Before gulping it down, I checked the basement, garage and outside. There was no answer for the sound I heard. I finished the milk, hopped into bed and tried to relax and get some rest.

I didn't have dreams that night about LOTTO or anything else. In order to dream you have to sleep. The alarm went off so I removed myself from the bed even though I wanted to stay there. I felt like calling in sick to work but I reasoned if I didn't work, I wouldn't get paid. I hoped a long hot shower would revive me but I was still tired and groggy. Even a shot of caffeine seemed to have no great effect on me.

I drove my car out of the garage and headed for the expressway. I wasn't on the highway more than five minutes when I saw a car speeding down the road at close to eighty miles per hour. I figured I wasn't going to get in his way so I stayed in the right lane hoping he wouldn't hit me. Unfortunately he had other plans. He didn't hit me but after he passed me he cut right in front of me and slowed down to fifty-five.

I had two choices: either pull out and pass him or slow down further. Since there were plenty of cars in the left lane I would have to wait if I wanted to pass him. When it was finally clear, I signaled and tried to pull out and pass. I



got into the passing lane but he beat me to it. The car was an old brown Chevy Impala and I couldn't help notice the license plate on the car: S4 708.

Now in the passing lane right ahead of me, he was starting to slow down. Soon cars were passing me on the right and I was stuck. Eventually I got into the right lane when the traffic subsided but so did he. I didn't want to stop the car but I couldn't get away from him. He wouldn't let me. I didn't know what to do. I was trapped and scared. Within a few minutes I was somewhat relieved when he pulled into the express lane and took off. Before he did this, he waved as if he knew who I was and would be back to see me again. I hoped that I would never run into him.

By the time I got to work, I had calmed down somewhat. My boss asked me if I had a few minutes to spare." Sure, George. Anytime."

I went into his office and he said, "Have a seat. It looks as though you could use some time off."

I sat down and said, "Thanks."

He took a sip of coffee and replied, "You had mentioned taking a vacation. Anytime in the next few weeks won't be a problem since everything is running smoothly now."

"Well, thanks. I will consider it and let you know."

"Oh, thank you for all your extra efforts. You're the reason things are running so smoothly around here."

"That's what you pay me for!"

"Well, let me know."

"I will."

It was nice to know that someone appreciated my efforts.

I left his office and tried to reach Annie but I got a pizza parlor. The last thing I wanted was a pizza but that wasn't the reason I almost hung up. I apologized for dialing

a wrong number and the person answering was very forgiving. I would have to be more careful dialing. I dialed Annie's number again and this time got a busy signal. I'd have to try later. I had some programming to do that I wanted to get out of the way but first I had to make a trip to the men's room. When I returned I got back into my work and it helped me get my mind off recent events.

Thoughts about Cellini and Parello crept into my mind once again. That reminded me that perhaps I should try to reach Dave Fisher to dig up more information on the witness protection file. I used my calling card to call the nation's capital since I didn't want to have my employer pay the long distance charges. I don't think they would have been too thrilled if I called on their dime. Unfortunately the number was busy. I'd have to try him later as well.

The lunch hour came and I ate a sandwich and some fruit but I could barely taste what I was eating. I spent more time testing the program I had written earlier. For the first time in a few weeks I was caught up with the work on my desk even though I felt anything but normal. I dialed Annie's number at work and the phone rang but no one answered. I was having a tough time reaching anyone. I decided to try Dave again.

I didn't get Dave but one of his co-workers, Alison Hendricks, answered the phone.

"May I please speak to Dave?"

"Do you mean Dave Fisher?"

"Yes, he's the man."

The rest of what Alison said was completely incomprehensible as she was overcome by grief. All I heard was sobbing. Another person came on the line.

"I'm awfully sorry but Dave was found murdered in his apartment a few days ago. I'm Sherry Jones. I worked with David. The police say it looked like a robbery."

My heart sank to my stomach. All of a sudden I felt like the temperature in my cubicle had risen ten degrees. "I'm sorry! I'm John, his former teacher. Are you all right?"

"Yeah, we're all taking it quite hard here. We can't figure why anyone would want to do that to him. He never hurt anyone. He had no enemies. Are you OK?"

"Yes. Thanks. I've got to go."

"Take care of yourself."

"You too."

## THE CONSPIRACY AND FEAR

To say I was scared was a gross understatement. If they got rid of Dave, who would be next? I tried to reach Annie but the line was busy again. It was almost quitting time so I sluggishly finished some testing and called Tom.

“Tom Daniel at your service.”

“Thank God I got through to someone. Are you going to be home tonight?”

“Sure, stop over anytime.”

“It might be late.”

“Anytime you come over will be fine. I usually watch the late news and some of Letterman, so that’s not a problem. Are you all right?”

It was starting to sound like an echo, but I assured him that I was surviving.

“I’ll see you later.”

I finished up and headed for home. When I got there I tried Annie again but her line at work was still busy. I really didn’t have much of an appetite but I ate some of the leftover beef, onions and beer anyway. The dish tasted so much better when I first had it with Annie. That was only a few days ago but it seemed like it was months. I was much calmer then, too. It’s really amazing what a difference a few days can make in someone’s life.

I washed the dishes and while I was finishing up the lights went out. Perhaps someone ran into a power line or maybe it was just another power outage. This was the first one in some time but they were not uncommon. I guess I would have to do something about it or else sit here in the dark. By the time I found some candles and matches, the power was restored. It was bad enough that events were the

way they were but now little incidents like power outages and garage doors left open were starting to spook me.

I sat down to rest for a second and after a few minutes decided to finish the dishes. When I was done I figured I better do some serious documenting of my investigation. I got started and every half hour or so tried Annie. After all I got by trying her work number was a ring and no answer, I tried reaching her at home. The result was the same...no answer. She must have forgotten to turn on her answering machine.

I was making good progress when it hit me. Other than Tom, Annie and I, no one knew the whole story of the Brown conspiracy. If anyone got me before I got all this on paper, what good was all the time I spent on this fiasco? A sense of urgency had developed. I had to hurry but I couldn't be sloppy. I proceeded and after an hour tried Annie's number once more. This time I got her machine, which meant she had gotten home, and turned it on and went out. I left a brief message and got back to the business at hand.

When I finished, it was almost 10 o'clock, so I took all the papers and drove over to Tom's.

Tom greeted me at the door. "You look worse than last night. Now what?"

"Dave Fisher was robbed and murdered a few days ago."

"Oh, no! When did you find out?"

"Just this afternoon. It's possible the robbery was added only as a distraction."

"Do you think that his death is tied to the LOTTO?"

"I don't know. It's possible that he was just mugged and killed by some thief who knows nothing about LOTTO. On the other hand, it could have been agents who work for President Brown. If that is the case, they probably know about what I'm doing."

“What can we do?”

“I’m not so sure. Here’s what you can do for me. I documented all I found and it’s in this envelope. Can you make two copies of all this at work tomorrow and see to it that Annie gets one? Her office is close to yours downtown, isn’t it?”

“I can walk over there on my break tomorrow morning. That should be easy.”

“Copy it yourself. Don’t let anyone do it for you. At this point I’m not sure whom to trust.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll get the stuff Xeroxed and over to her office as fast as I can. How many pages are there?”

“About ten.”

“No sweat. Are you going to go into hiding?”

“Not just yet, but I’m taking no chances.”

“Did you reach Annie?”

“I tried calling her today. I hope she’s all right.”

“Don’t worry about her. She’s been through so much similar stuff as an investigative reporter that this is chickenfeed to her.”

“I hope you’re right. Well I better shove off. Maybe I’ll finally get some sleep tonight. Heaven knows I need it. So long.”

“Be careful, pal.”

“I will.”

When I got home there was a message from Annie but her phone was busy when I tried to return the call. I tried a few more times. I figured I would have to wait until the morning to talk to her.

## THE BREAK-IN

The night was loaded with interruptions. The darkness brought all kinds of sounds, most of which were created by the wind. The weatherman had predicted high winds and he was right on the money. I tried to fall asleep but just as I was about to doze off, the phone rang. But it only rang once and then it stopped. I learned from the previous night, so I turned off the phone and let the answering machine do all the work. That solved the problem of the ringing but not that of the wind.

The alarm went off and I felt like I had slept much better than the night before. Of course, that's not saying much. I arose for another day. I hoped that this day would be better than yesterday. I felt that there had to be a turning point sooner or later. Each day brought with it more difficulty and I thought maybe I had reached bottom and things would turn around. Only time would tell.

At the office I continued with my testing and it seemed like things were going well on all the systems, old and new. The atmosphere seemed to be almost void of pressure and it showed in the people. It's funny but while the situation in the office improved, I seemed to falling into the depths.

I decided to try to reach Annie at home but all I got was her machine and I didn't leave a message. I decided to try her phone at work and got a busy signal. I was thankful that I had worked on all that documentation the night before. With any luck she would have the package by the end of the day.

By lunch I still couldn't reach her. I decided to get away from the office so I headed out for a brisk stroll. The temperature was pleasant enough, not too hot and not too

cool. It was overcast and had been all day and probably would remain so for the remainder of the day. When I returned I felt refreshed. I had a 1:30 meeting and it only lasted forty-five minutes. As soon as it ended I dialed Annie's number.

"Hello." It was Annie at long last.

"You're harder to reach than the end of the rainbow."

"I'm sorry. Things have really been crazy these last few days."

"Can we get together tonight? I have some late breaking news."

"I'd love to but I can't make it tonight. How about tomorrow?"

"Sure. Where and when?"

"How about my place at eight? That will give me enough time to get all my errands run."

"Eight it is."

"Can you find my place?"

"I think I have a pretty good idea. See you then."

I hung up the phone and went back to a problem that came up. It was no big thing and, by the end of the day, I had it all figured out. All through the afternoon I kept thinking that I forgot to do something. I just couldn't figure out what it was. It was time to head for home so I got in the Honda and hopped onto the downtown expressway. I felt somewhat better that I had finally talked to Annie and then it came to me: I was so relieved to be speaking to her, I forgot to tell her about the package that Tom was to deliver.

I turned into my driveway and noticed that the garage door was closed. This time I really had closed it before I left. I did notice that the garage light seemed to be glowing. I probably wouldn't have noticed it except it seemed so dark and gloomy outside even though it was a while before the sun was due to set. Don't tell me I left the garage light on. I



was almost positive that I had doused it before I jumped into the car. I didn't like the thoughts that started coming into my mind.

I drove the car into the garage and headed towards the door leading into the kitchen. I turned the key in the lock and proceeded cautiously. Upon opening the door, I noticed that the hall light was on. I could leave one light on but I couldn't accept the fact that I had left two lights on. Soon I noticed that these weren't the only lights now on in the house. The light in the bathroom and one of the lights in my bedroom were both on as well. I didn't accidentally leave all those lights glowing. Someone had been in my house. I only hoped that they weren't still there.

I was shaken and shaking, but after a deliberate search, it was clear that whoever had been there was long gone. I was relieved but just barely. My house had been broken into and I felt like I had been violated. I was shivering even though my house was warm but I proceeded into the living and dining room area.

The sliding glass doors onto the deck were open about a foot and I figured the thieves used this to exit. I discovered an open window, which was probably how they got in. Outside the window were some fresh footprints that I'm sure weren't mine since they were a good two sizes smaller than my shoe. I concluded that this window was indeed their entry.

The VCR was gone, as was my CD player and dual cassette deck. My old amplifier was still there as was my 1975 SONY Trinitron. It was a good working TV but probably too old for anyone to steal. The same applied to the amplifier. No windows were broken but I eventually found that they broke the lock on the front door adjacent to the garage door. That door led into the garage, which then required you to go through another door to actually enter the

house. Since this second door was dead bolted, the thieves were dead-ended at this point so they used the window to get in.

I proceeded cautiously to the study and found my PC missing as well. Fortunately, none of my investigation relating to Brown and the LOTTO caper was on the computer. I had copied it to a floppy disk and the disk I had put in my safe. The storage device was still there. This was a small relief, but not much. I wondered if this robbery was an isolated event or was somebody really after me. I sat down to catch my breath. I realized that I was in the market for another PC!

## MORE RESTLESSNESS

I called the town police but they referred me to the state police. I dialed that number and passed initial details to them. They said they would send over a detective within the hour.

Detective Frank Johnson's appearance indicated that he had once played college football. I mentioned all that had been stolen and he checked for fingerprints. When he got to my stereo he saw the proliferation of prints on the glass door, but I cautioned him that the majority of fingerprints there were probably mine. He seemed to feel that the thieves were probably just out to pick up video and audio equipment to sell for drug money. I didn't mention a word about my LOTTO endeavors.

"Will any of the merchandise ever be recovered?"

"By now the stuff has probably been sold. Who knows where it is!"

I didn't add that except for the PC, all the video and audio items were just about ready to be replaced.

"Was any money stolen or jewelry or other valuables?"

"I don't keep money in the house and really don't have any jewelry except for my college ring. It was untouched."

"College rings aren't worth that much to robbers. The same applies to checkbooks. They don't want to be bothered with that stuff."

"I guess that's all I can tell you."

"Here's my card. If you think of anything else, give me a call."

"I will do that."

He left my house and I fixed some dinner. I had a small salad and some leftover chicken stew, which I heated. A dinner roll and a bottle of Labatt Ale complemented the stew.

I had just finished eating when the phone rang. By the end of the second ring it stopped, just like the previous night. I was tempted to turn on the machine but I didn't. I turned on the news and ten minutes later the phone rang again. This time it was Tom.

"I had unexpected visitors yesterday."

"Anyone I know?"

"That's hard to say. Whoever it was left and took quite a few of my possessions without even asking me."

"You weren't there, then?"

"Thank God, no. They came in through the window in the living room as far as I could tell."

"What did they get?"

"My PC and audio and video equipment."

"So you're finally going to have to get a new TV and amplifier!"

"No. They left both. I guess they weren't that dumb. Although the CD player and cassette deck were pretty much over the hill as well."

"Do you think they were after the PC and what you were doing?"

"If so, that PC won't tell them a thing. I left nothing critical on the hard drive.

"Well that's a relief, though I'm sure you're probably quite upset. Just hang in there. I have got to get going."

"See you."

I didn't know what to make of all that had transpired. I just knew that I was tired. As I lay in bed, the noises returned. The wind was still howling but not like the night before. I forced myself to relax. Eventually I would get over

the break-in but that would take time. For now I was restless and it seemed like I wasn't going to be able to get much sleep.

As I lay there I heard it. It was a loud sound and getting louder by the minute, the sound of bass coming from a car radio. I had experienced it on numerous occasions as cars turned onto my street. On those occasions the car may have been out of sight but the deep sound lingered, even past the railroad tracks near my house. Eventually it was gone, just like the vehicle.

But now it was different. The noise increased as I began to think that it would soon be in my house. Then I heard the sound of the train and realized the car was halted at the railroad crossing. It seemed like forever but finally the train was gone and so was the annoying bass sound.

I turned over on my side and tried to clear my mind. Then I heard a gentle tapping on my bedroom window. At first I thought it might be a bird, but they usually don't come around this late. Maybe it was some other animal like a bat, but then the sound grew louder. I slowly moved out of my bed and eased my way into the hallway. Then I heard the footsteps. I thought maybe it was just a dripping faucet so I cautiously checked the bathroom and kitchen sinks. There was no water coming out of either faucet. I then proceeded down the stairs and determined that the sink next to the washing machine was not the cause. Then the sound of the footsteps intensified and the tapping on the window increased as well.

I grabbed my sleeping bag as I slowly moved to the cellar trapdoor. I opened it and the full moon enabled me to not have to worry about any obstacles in the dark. But as good as that was, it was also bad since I could very easily be spotted. I'd have to take my chances. I climbed the stairs and exited the house and gently lowered the door, not making a

sound. It was eerily quiet. I crawled along the ground until I got to the security of the woods.

From my position I could see more light than usual at the front of the house. It was almost as though there were high intensity spotlights on the building. I rolled down my sleeping bag and waited. After what seemed like half an hour I saw lights being turned on in the house, one after the other. Every light seemed to be on. There was no way I would be going back into my home anytime soon.

After a while the lights were turned off, one by one until most of them were doused. Then I heard auto engines being turned over and it appeared that the visitors were driving away. But then I saw flames coming out of my house and soon the entire dwelling was engulfed. I felt overwhelmed but thankful that I was not inside. I closed my eyes, devastated.

## STILL ANOTHER MURDER

The alarm went off and I knew that I had far too little sleep. I then realized that much of what had appeared to have happened previously was a dream. For one thing my house doesn't have a cellar exit. Second of all, there's no electrical outlet in the woods to plug in my alarm clock. I rose from the bed and got ready for another day at work.

Once I got out on the highway I felt a little better. Obviously my home would not feel all that welcoming for a while. I had to find comfort somewhere else. I was quite relieved to know that my house was not one giant barbeque. That was certainly consoling, but the burglary was troublesome.

Work was no different than usual. I got a call from California and was asked for some assistance with the drug program. I answered as much as I could and promised to phone back with the remaining answers within the hour. I researched the problems and within a half hour was back on the line with the folks on the West Coast.

Recent events were still on my mind but somehow I managed to proceed. I talked to George and mentioned my burglary and he was quite sympathetic. We agreed that you have to make your house as burglar-proof as possible but no matter what you do, if someone wants to get into your abode, they will get in.

"You should put up a small hand-made sign on your door which says, 'I'll be right back...went to the gun store!'"

I added, "I saw a similar sign in a small convenience store when I lived downstate. It said, 'These premises guarded by a 357 magnum three days a week. You guess which days.'"

“That should deter them. Nevertheless, locks are only used to keep your friends away.”

The rest of the day dragged on. Finally it was quitting time so I headed home. I wasn't exactly thrilled about arriving home but I knew that I would have to face reality. The feeling was eerie as I entered the house but my uneasiness was unnecessary. Everything was all right for now. The looters had not returned. I hoped that I wouldn't have to go through this every day from now on.

I got out of my consultant's clothes and put on my jeans and a T-shirt. I wasn't that hungry so I figured that I would wait before I ate anything. I picked up the paper and saw the small headline at the bottom of the page: “Journalist Killed in Auto Accident”.

As I read on, my heart sank. Annie was dead. She had been killed in a crash on the Kensington Expressway. The cause of the crash was still under investigation. Inside the car was found a quart bottle of tequila that was just about empty. The accompanying picture of what was left of the car turned my stomach. I knew right away that this was no accident and that the alcohol was planted. Annie had been done away with because of her investigation.

I dialed Tom but couldn't get through. All I got was his answering machine and I didn't leave any message. Then I dialed Father Ted at the college.

“John, you don't sound too good.”

“I'm not. I can't talk about it on the phone.”

“Why don't you come over to my office? I'll be here for another hour or so.”

“Thanks. I'll see you shortly.”

“God be with you!”

I hung up and got a few things together. I didn't want to stay at the house that night, or the night after for that matter. I made sure I had my timer set and secured every



window and locked up. I got on the Aurora expressway and headed to the college. I thought I was being followed again. I was relieved when he exited on Seneca Street. I couldn't wait to see Father Ted.

I parked in one of the faculty lots and headed to the administrative tower. Father Ted was in and finishing up his work for the day.

“You look like you lost your best friend.”

“Did you hear about the accident that resulted in Annie Dalton's death?”

“Yes. I heard about it on the radio. What a tragedy!”

I proceeded to relate all that had transpired, except for the fact that I used the log-on that he gave me a short time ago.

“I guess the first thing we have to do is get some dinner. Did you eat already?”

“Not yet. My stomach couldn't handle it when I read the news.”

“Well we can go over to the residence and get something. You can rest assured that you're safe here. You don't have to go home. I know I wouldn't if I were in your shoes.”

“Thanks. I'm not sure what I should do.”

“We'll figure that out later. Does anyone know you're here?”

“You're the only one. I made one phone call to Tom Daniel after I read about the accident. I didn't leave a message though.”

We got to the residence hall and saw a few Jesuits partaking in dessert. It was almost 7:30, so most of them were finished with the last meal of the day. We were probably the last ones. Fortunately there was still food left so we had some beef stew, rice pilaf, tossed salad and French-

style green beans. I ate more than I had in some time. I guess I made the right decision by coming to see Father Ted.

“Are you going to leave the area?”

“I have friends in Maine who I haven't seen in some time. Maybe it would be a good time to get away.”

“If you need a car, you're welcome to mine. I rarely drive it so I won't miss it. I can also give you a collar and a black shirt so you can disguise yourself as a priest while traveling.”

“What about my car in the lot?”

“I'll move it into the garage in a little while. If you were followed, whoever tailed you probably left by now. We'll wait another hour or so just to be safe.”

“I think it's best to travel when it's dark. My sister lives in New Hampshire so I could stop in there to rest before completing my journey to Maine.”

“Do you want me to call anyone for you?”

“You could call Tom and he'll make some phone calls to my parents and some other friends of mine.”

“That I can do. What about work?”

“Luckily my boss said I could take a vacation anytime now as everything is running smoothly. I'll call in a little while and leave him a message. I can also call my sister.”

Father Ted finished his coffee and said, “So the LOTTO is fixed! I'm not that surprised. I also figured that Collins had nothing to do with Kathy Pendleton's death. Brown was and still is a crook. He makes Nixon look like a saint!”

“What a sad state of affairs that is.”

“It's amazing how greedy some people can get. They have all kinds of money but still want more. Unfortunately this has been going on for centuries.”

We left the dining hall and passed a few Jesuits on their way to retire for the night.

“You can stay here as long as you want.”

“I think I will head out tomorrow morning at around three or so.”

“Here's my car key. It's the dark blue Chevy Cavalier in the faculty lot. Do you need an alarm clock or anything else?”

“I have a small travel alarm.”

Father Ted got me some bedding and towels and showed me to my room.

I called my sister and warned her of my arrival but I gave her no details of the recent events. Then I called my boss and left a message on his voice-mail. I set the alarm for 2:45 and it wasn't long before I was asleep.

## LEAVING THE SCENE

I only got about four hours sleep that night but it was unquestionably my best sleep in days. I washed up but didn't shave and decided to give up shaving indefinitely. I got everything together and left Father Ted a note of thanks, saying I would call to let him know of my whereabouts. I headed out the door towards the blue Cavalier. The city was asleep so I got in and headed to the Kensington expressway.

There were very few cars at that hour and before long I passed the place where Annie had died. There were still remnants of the crash but I kept on going. Before long I got on the New York State Thruway and figured I would keep traveling until I needed gas. Since the tank was almost full, I guessed that I could probably get close to Massachusetts without refilling.

The Thruway was boring but it was the quickest way to get to the Turnpike in Massachusetts and my sister's house. There were a handful of cars on the I-90, but mostly it was tractor-trailers. They did the greater part of their driving at night. I turned on the radio and found Buffalo's public radio station, WBFO. It was playing some vintage Coltrane and I figured I would only hear this jazz for another half hour before it was out of range. By that time I could probably pick up WJZR, a Rochester jazz station.

As I drove, I pondered my next step. It was good to be away from Western New York. I wondered if Annie had gotten my documents and how much she had accomplished before her untimely death. There was no doubt in my mind that she was murdered. Perhaps they tampered with her car's brakes resulting in her not being able to stop.

The darkness of night was leaving when I reached the Syracuse area. I switched to the National Public Radio

station that broadcast from the university and it was relaying the news from the day before. It was the typical news about the President battling the Congress and various other little bits that were already old news. Then came the death of Annie Dalton, which was a result of alcohol. At least that was what was reported. She had won many awards for her valiant work as a reporter. She was what every good journalist should be. I remembered Jessica Savitch. She was another outstanding journalist who had lost her life in an automobile accident.

I had enough of the news so I switched the dial. I came across a few country western stations and some adult contemporary but I kept searching for something else. Eventually I found a classic rock station, so I left it there.

Before long, the fuel gauge was approaching empty and I was getting off the Thruway onto Interstate 90. I would get gas as well as a little breakfast before I got onto the Massachusetts Turnpike. I filled up the tank and paid with cash though I wanted to use my credit card. I didn't want to leave any kind of trail so that I could be found. If they wanted me, they probably knew where I was anyway. I ordered a cup of coffee and two blueberry bagels, paid for it and hopped back into the car.

I entered the turnpike and picked up my ticket for the toll road. It was almost 8:30 and the sun was nowhere to be seen. There was more traffic now but nothing like rush hour. I kept my speed at the limit, as I wanted to avoid being pulled over for any reason.

At the rate at which I was traveling, I figured to be at my sister Elaine's house in Londonderry well before noon. They were close to both the mountains and the city of Boston, which was perfect for them as she loved the outdoors and he craved the city and its excitement. They both loved the restaurants of New England.

It wasn't long before I exited the turnpike and got onto I-495, the outer beltway around Boston. The traffic was heavier now and this was the area where there never seemed to be a let-up. Soon I entered Interstate 93 and I was in New Hampshire. Before long I would be at Elaine's.

I drove into the driveway and she greeted me with a hug.

"I didn't know you got a new car."

"It's not mine. It's from the Jesuits at the college. It's a long story."

"Well, I'm not going anywhere so give me all the dirty details."

"Before I start, call mom and tell her I'm here. Tell her I'm on vacation. I'd call but I'm not quite up to it just yet. I might reveal too much to upset her."

"All right. Do you want to even say hi to her?"

"No. Tell her I'll call her in a few days from my next destination."

She called and returned in a few minutes. I started into the LOTTO conspiracy and got through all the lurid details as well as all the recent happenings.

"This is better than a soap opera!" Elaine exclaimed, putting down her coffee mug. Her blue eyes shone with excitement.

"Don't they say that truth is stranger than fiction?"

"You can stay here as long as you want. Mike will be glad to see you too. He talks about you a lot. So do and the kids."

"I'll probably head out to Maine in two days. I have to call my friend Ed Martin to let him know I'm coming."

"He's the consultant you worked with a few years ago, right?"

I nodded. "He has fifty acres and his house has more rooms than Buckingham Palace."

“Do you want to call him now while I get a little lunch together?”

“I'll try, although he's probably at work.”

I retrieved his number from my papers and called. He wasn't in but his oldest daughter was. She gave me his number at work so I dialed that one.

“Hello.”

“Hi Ed, it's John Kuzinski.”

“You must have the wrong number. There's no Kuzinski here.”

“If you hang up now, you'll have to go back to your boring work!”

“I guess you got me, John. I didn't expect to hear from you this soon. How is everything?”

“Let me put it this way. The last few days have been so bad that I would almost rather be at work. Anyway, can you stand a visitor? I'm at my sister's in Londonderry right now.”

“Sure. Come on over. You're welcome to stay as long as you like. Are you on vacation or are you running from the police?”

“I'll give you all the details when I get there.”

“When can we expect you?”

“Sometime Saturday afternoon.”

“That will be great. See you then.”

“See you in a couple days.”

I then dialed Father Ted's office and I was fortunate to get him just as he was leaving for lunch.

“Father Ted Evans.”

“Father Ted, it's John. I'm at my sister's house in Londonderry. Thanks again for last night. I can't tell you how much better I felt at the Jesuits' home.”

“You're quite welcome. I called Tom and told him that you were on your way to Maine. He sends his regards. He said he would call your mom and dad this afternoon.”

“I should be in Maine sometime on Saturday.”

“We'll take care. We're all praying for you.”

“Thanks. I'll be talking to you.”

By the time I finished, Elaine came out with lunch. She had some homemade meatball soup and chicken salad sandwiches.

“I owe you for all this and the phone calls I just made.”

“Nonsense. We'll do all we can to help you. I realize what you're going through. It's a tough time but you'll get through it.”

The soup was delicious as was the sandwich.

“So what can you do about this LOTTO plot?”

“I'm not so sure. I really haven't given it much thought. I've been too busy trying to calm myself down and get back my sanity, which I think is slowly returning. Staying alive has also been a major goal!”

“You're up against some pretty powerful people. Do you think the president knows all of what's going on or do you think he just has given carte blanche to his people to do whatever it takes without his approval?”

“That's the question of the hour. It's possible he just approves their actions and really doesn't get that involved. And yet, the whole LOTTO idea was his.”



## SEEING STEVE AND KIM

“Hi, Uncle John,” Kim said as she hugged me.

“How are you, Kim. How was school today?”

“OK. Did you have a nice trip?”

“It was good. I thought you had to wear a school uniform, or did you change schools?”

“They did away with the dress code.”

“Where's your brother?” I asked

“He's got soccer practice and won't be home until later. I'll be back out here after I change.”

“She will be busy for a while with her friends on the phone but you will at least see her at dinner,” Elaine responded. “

She really has grown since I last saw her.”

“Wait until you see Steve. He's taller than I am.”

Just then my sister's better half arrived, dressed in a spiffy dark blue suit.

“Hi, stranger. Good to see you. You have to visit more often.”

“You're right. How's work treating you?”

“You know what it's like working for the government. There are so many people with federal jobs who don't do anything and they still complain about working too hard. Heaven knows that doesn't apply to me.”

“So you're quite busy, Mike?”

“To say the least. So what brings you to New England? I heard you're on your way to Maine.”

“In a few days, yes.”

“I hope you can stay awhile. We haven't seen you in some time. Last weekend Steve asked when you were going to visit.”

I then gave him highlights of what had happened over the past weeks and he was somewhat taken aback. Not that he was a fan of the president. He was just overwhelmed with everything.

“Wow! I don't know what to say. I'm shocked but probably not that surprised. I never was comfortable with that cowboy as president. I guess the good news is he won't be around much longer.”

“I just hope the same thing can't be said for me.”

“You just have to be careful. Do you think your burglary is tied in to LOTTO?”

“Gosh, I don't know. I hope not but I have no way of knowing.”

“I can't imagine having someone break into our house. It must be weird.”

“It's going to take some time before I get over it. I hope you never have to experience it.”

“Mike, do you want to start the grill? I've got some chicken teriyaki marinating.”

“Sure, honey.”

“I haven't had that in a long time.”

“She has this great marinade recipe and it's simple.”

“She just lets it stew overnight, right?”

“How did you know?”

“I do some cooking of my own.”

“Yeah, I do a little too, but I'm not as good a cook as she is.”

“With time you'll get better. It took me years before I got to where I am today.”

“I guess you're right. Time and experience can be excellent teachers.”

After an hour, my nephew arrived from soccer practice, just in time for supper. He was close to six feet tall and still growing. His blond locks were overflowing.

“If you get any taller, you'll hit your head on the door!”

“Are you going to come to my soccer game? It's tomorrow afternoon.”

“I'd like to. What position do you play?”

“I'm the goalie. Coach made me goalie because I cover up more of the net than anyone else.”

“Are you the biggest soccer player on the team?”

“I'm the tallest and no one comes close to my weight.”

“How are your reflexes?”

“Not bad. I've only allowed 3 goals in 5 games.”

“That is pretty good.”

“Supper's ready,” Elaine shouted.

We proceeded to dinner of chicken teriyaki, rice salad, broccoli with mustard seeds and orange escarole salad. The wine was a very fine Riesling.

“So do you play any of the lotteries, John?”

“Not really. The odds are stacked against you. I knew this even before I got involved with the national LOTTO. I learned even more about lotteries from dad and one of his books. I even borrowed it for a few weeks.”

“What did the book have to say?”

“It went into the history of lotteries and talked about odds. I found the book quite fascinating and enlightening. It also mentioned buying thousands of tickets and what that does to your odds.”

Mike added, “I think you could devote an entire study to payoff as opposed to investment. If you got 1000 people to go in on LOTTO, you would increase your chances while at the same time reduce the amount that you could win.”

I replied, “Winning less is better than not winning!”

“So what about your odds when the whole thing is fixed? Elaine inquired.

“Assuming the 6/49 lottery, without hanky panky the odds are about fourteen million to one. This assumes you buy a single ticket. With a fixed game, the odds now shrink to about fourteen million to less than one.”

“Are you saying the odds are now almost zero, Uncle John?” said Steve.

“Bingo.”

“So Uncle John, it sounds as though you will never play any lottery,” Kim said.

“Actually, that was my feeling before I started delving into that LOTTO book. After going through it I came up with a slightly different point of view. Perhaps one could play the lottery with some restrictions. You could spend a dollar a week and no more.”

“That’s \$52 and not a great deal of money. What are the other restrictions?” Mike asked.

“Don’t expect to win the big jackpot. You could wind up with smaller payoffs for having four of the six numbers. Think of it as entertainment. Then avoid dreams of winning a million dollars and at the first sign of addiction, cease playing the game.”

“That does sound practical. Unfortunately too many people don’t follow this dictum. That’s where they go wrong,” my sister offered.

“What about studying past number combinations or numbers that rarely come up, John?”

“That’s an easy one, Elaine. For example, consider two people: Steve and Kim. Steve has a computer program to track number patterns and occurrences. He then takes all this information and uses it to buy his ticket of two sets of six numbers. Kim meanwhile just goes to the store and buys a

ticket. The computer terminal there randomly generates her two picks. Now who has the better chance of winning?"

"That's not fair, Uncle John. I want to use the computer too," Kim added.

"Well you can but it won't help. You see, neither has an advantage over the other. You and your brother both have the same likelihood of winning."

"So what you're saying is that either combination is just as likely to win as any other combination and past games have no effect whatsoever on the lottery at hand," my brother-in-law offered.

Not to be outdone, Elaine added, "So picking 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 is just as likely to win as say picking 2, 19, 41, 23, 17 and 36."

"That's the exact state of affairs."

"I'm impressed, but that seems to be the case," Mike chimed in. Finally the conversation got removed from LOTTO and focused on the kids. I was relieved. I figured that someday Steve and Kim would get a good education on President Brown and his LOTTO headache. I only hoped that I would be around to tell them.

## RECOVERING SANITY

The kids headed up to bed and we sat around talking for another hour or so. Before long the older people were tired so we decided tomorrow was another day. Elaine got all the necessary blankets and towels and I thanked her and said good night to her and Mike.

Without question, I had the best sleep in over a week. I awoke feeling exhilarated. Elaine fixed some ham and eggs, toast, hash browns and fresh coffee before she headed out the door. Mike stayed around after the kids left for about an hour.

“I’m glad you came. It gives me an excuse for taking some time off. The work will still be around tomorrow. Sometimes I think we get too carried away with work and the rest of our lives suffer.”

“I can’t argue that, Mike. Thanks for having me. It’s only unfortunate that what beset me over the last few days is what brought me on this visit. I too will have to look at my priorities.”

“So apparently you’re feeling the loss of your star student Dave and Annie Dalton.”

“Yes. To lose one friend is bad enough. Losing both at the same time is an extra burden. I was just getting to know Ms. Dalton. “ I took a sip of my coffee.

“Somehow I can’t help but thinking that if I hadn’t had David send me the information on the LOTTO program, there’s a good chance that he would be alive today.”

“Don’t blame yourself for that. You weren’t the one who killed him. Besides, we can’t conclusively demonstrate that his murder was related to the lottery scam.”

“I still feel responsible for his death.”

“This has really been a difficult time for you, John. The real blame lies with others. Your work on all this is way

beyond the call of duty. Not many would have done what you as well as Annie did in this regard. Her death was most likely related to LOTTO. Her reporting was always a threat to the Brown campaign.”

“She spoke the truth and the truth is what destroys many a politician’s career.”

“Apparently the truth was going to do just that to the president so he had her eliminated.”

“That realization doesn’t make it any easier for me to accept the fact that they’re both gone from this world.”

“You will survive. Anything we can do to help you in your time of distress, let us know. If just being here away from the scene of the mishaps helps you, so be it. Sometimes comfort can be achieved without a word being said.”

“Thanks, Mike. So what do you have growing near the deck? Are those zinnias?”

“You know your flowers. Those are a variety called Persian Carpet.”

“Appropriately named, if I may say so. Is this your doing, Mike?”

“No, that’s your sister’s bag. I’m too busy at work.”

“Speaking of which, how is everything at the office?”

“Right now things are smooth as can be. We did have a rash of retirements but seem to have gotten over that hump. It did take a few weeks though.”

“If I give you a social security number, can you get me information on that person?”

“Oh, you’d be surprised how much information I can get you with just a social security number. It’s actually scary. What do you need?”

“I just have some social security numbers and I need to know where these people are living.”

“That would be no trouble. Just give me the numbers and I'll get you their names, current addresses as well as previous addresses.”

“Anything you can do would be greatly appreciated.”

I went to the car and got out two copies of the Buffalo News that posted LOTTO winners. I copied down the fourteen numbers and gave them to Mike.

“I'll have that information when I return. Are you going to need anything before Elaine or I get home?”

“No, she gave me the rundown so I'm all set. Do you want me to make dinner tonight?”

“No. She's making shrimp and pasta. It doesn't take long at all. Give me a call at work if you need anything. Here's the number. Bye.”

“See you later.”

When he left I had the whole house to myself. I picked up the Boston Globe and started to read it. There wasn't anything too different from the previous day...the usual disasters, murders and political junk. I turned on the TV and switched to CNN headline news. They mirrored what the Globe had to say. This was the first time in a few days that I had a chance to watch television. Mine was stolen so my last night home I did not get a chance to turn the TV on.

No, it wasn't stolen. That was one piece of equipment that they didn't take. Then why did I think it was removed? Maybe it was just wishful thinking. I guess the last few days were really getting to me. Here I felt a bit better. Losing my friends was very hard to accept. With regard to everything else I still didn't know what to do.

I looked at the TV Guide to see if there were any good movies on and found that there was a movie starring Walter Matthau called ‘Hopscotch.’ It was to be on in about ten minutes so I turned to the station on which it was to be



shown. I spent the next few hours thoroughly enjoying the flick.

It was about a former government agent who stayed one step ahead of the incompetents who were chasing him. I identified with him, although I really wasn't being chased. Also, my pursuers weren't bumbling idiots like those in the movie although I wouldn't mind if they were. The end of the movie was a great deception. That was what I had to do. I had to turn the tables on the Brown group.

## PLANNING THE TRIP TO MAINE

The movie ended and before long I was napping. I rarely take naps, but this one I really needed. I awoke when I heard a car in the driveway. Mike had arrived, less formally attired than the previous day.

“After what you have been through, I'm surprised that you didn't fall asleep last night after dinner. I've got those names and addresses for you.”

“I can't thank you enough. Why so casual today?”

“Yesterday I had a meeting with the head honchos so I had to be presentable. Usually I dress more like this. So how was your day on the home front?”

“I watched a good movie this morning called 'Hopscotch'. Maybe you've seen it.”

“Oh yes. I've seen it a few times. Walter Matthau is a joy. I don't think I've missed too many of his pictures. Elaine also is a big fan of his and she liked the movie too. Is she home yet?”

“No. You're the first so far.” I barely finished the sentence when the door opened and there was Elaine with my niece.

“We did some shopping, daddy. Wait until you see my new swimsuit.”

“She needed a new one, dear. The old one is too small.”

“So how was your day, John?” my sister inquired.

“Quite relaxing. I was just telling Mike about the movie 'Hopscotch.’”

“Wasn't that a good movie?” “It was just the thing I needed along with my short nap.”

“Do you want to go see your nephew play soccer?”

“I forgot all about it. I better go; I promised him that I would come.”

“Honey, are you and Kim coming too?”

“If Kim wants to, fine. I'll stay here as I have some things to do.”

“I'll stay with you, mom.”

Mike and I headed out to school and the game had only just begun. Steve was a monster in goal compared to the opponents' goalie. He only saved a dozen shots or so as the most of the game was away from his end. He did let one shot in. It was almost impossible to stop as the visitors put on quite a rush. It was their only serious threat of the afternoon and my nephew had most of the game to get some rest. He actually seemed bored but came away with a 4-1 win.

“You gave up that goal that you shouldn't have, Steve.”

“Oh dad, that was a tough one to defend. It seemed like they had guys come off the bench for that rush.”

“Your dad is kidding you. You did quite well today.”

“Bottom line is you won. You can't ask for anything more than that. They were never even in the game.”

When we got to my sister's house, dinner was almost ready. We had a tossed salad with crusty French bread and shrimp in tomato sauce with garlic and basil over angel hair pasta. Mike opened up a bottle of Merlot to help us digest the food and it was a perfect addition to a great meal.

“You outdid yourself, sweetheart.”

“Nothing to it.”

“Kudos to the chef. Did you ever think of opening up your own restaurant?”

“Mike wouldn't let me. Besides, it's too much effort. The days are too long and the nights aren't much better. I enjoy cooking just the way things are.”

“Make sure you take her out for dinner one of these nights, Mike.”

“We're heading into Boston tomorrow night. But you're leaving in the morning, aren't you?” my sister wondered.

“Yes, I plan on leaving no later than ten as that should give me enough time to make it to Ed and Rebecca's house by afternoon.”

“That's too bad. We'll take you into the city the next time. Are you going to stop in on your return trip?”

“I'm not sure how long I'll stay in Maine. Who knows?”

“May I be excused, mom?”

“Don't you want dessert, Kim?”

“Not now. Maybe later.”

“What about you, Steve?”

“Can I have some pie and then be excused?”

“You must be hungry from stopping all those shots.”

“Not as hungry as when I used to be running up and down the field. Today was really relaxing out there. Why don't you folks have your pie and I'll have whatever is left?”

“Never mind. Here's your pie. The grownups will have theirs with coffee,” my brother-in-law insisted.

Steve finished his dessert and then left the table. We had ours with amaretto decaf coffee. It was a fitting climax to the meal.

“They grow up so fast, don't they?”

“I'm not surprised, the way Steve eats. We don't ever have to worry about leftovers. Kim does quite well herself.”

“Let me get rid of these dishes and then we can sit out here.”

We all pitched in and before long the table was cleared and the dishes were in the dishwasher.

“More coffee, John?”

“No thanks, I'm fine. That was very good though. And you said it was decaf. It didn't taste like it.”

“We like it too. I wish you could stay another day”

“I'd love to but I told Ed that I would be there tomorrow afternoon. I figure that I have a four hour jaunt to get to his house.”

“Where exactly does he live?”

“In Freedom. It's about an hour from Augusta.”

“So you're driving to Freedom, are you?”

“That sounds mysterious. I never made the connection until now.”

“Give us a call when you get there. There's no rush, dear brother.”

“I really don't know how to thank you for the last two days. I think I may have recovered my sanity here.”

“We're glad that we could be of assistance in your time of need.”

We sat around talking for a while longer and then I excused myself and washed up and retired for the night. It didn't take long before I was asleep.

## DRIVING TO FREEDOM

I had a great night's sleep and awoke at a few minutes after seven. I hadn't shaved in days and was slowly on my way to look like one of the members of ZZ Top. On the other hand, my friend Ed looked like the lead singer of the Grateful Dead. I brushed my teeth and showered and decided to write a short letter to Tom.

Dear Tom,

By now you're probably wondering where I am and what shape I'm in. The last few days away have done me a world of good. I'm currently at my sister's house and, within a few hours, I should be at the home of Ed and Becky, my friends in Freedom. You were undoubtedly wondering who was writing you from the state of Maine.

Did you ever get the documents to Annie? Even if you did, I can't see how it could have done any good. Do my mom and dad know everything yet? If not, give them as much as you can without causing them to worry themselves to death. I only hope that the news of all my adventures didn't cause any heart attacks or gallstones.

I'll probably be in Maine for a while, thinking of what to do next. Actually it's quite refreshing to not have to worry about going to work in the morning. That's the good news. The bad news is I'm still concerned about my safety. I'll make it a point to spend some time at the ocean, as I know a few good places. I camped at Camden Hills State Park on my last visit to Maine and it's only thirty minutes from my friends' place. It will also give me a chance to do

some serious contemplation, not to mention allowing my friends some time for themselves.

I was going to ask you to check up on my house for me but if you do so, exercise extreme caution. Who knows, maybe they're watching it and awaiting my return. You just can't be too cautious.

And speaking of being watched, I don't think I told you of my adventures on the Aurora Expressway. I'll never be comfortable with Chevy Impalas, especially old brown ones. But I'll get into that at another time. It's really a long story.

I hope all is well with you and everyone else back home. Stay well!

Your friend,  
John

I sealed the letter and put a stamp on it, using the return address of the Martins'. I packed all my belongings and headed to the breakfast table.

"Did you sleep well, John?"

"Yes, indeed. I can't remember when I slept as well as I did last night. I owe you."

"Oh, don't worry about it. You would have done the same for any of us!"

"I didn't even have any bad dreams for a change. Perhaps I've seen the worse and better days are on the way!"

"Did you have some really horrifying dreams?"

"I don't think I told you about the nightmare I had after my house was broken into."

I related all the terrifying details, concluding, "It was bizarre to say the least. "

"Probably brought on by all that's happened, "Mike mentioned.

“The good news is they’re only dreams but the bad news is that they can’t be avoided, John.”

We dug into breakfast. Elaine had prepared blueberry waffles and sausages and I don't think any eating establishment could have done a better job. Of course, she is my sister and I'm slightly prejudiced.

“You have a mighty fine restaurant here, ma'am.”

“Don't forget to tip your hostess generously!”

“Before I go, remind me to give you Ed and Rebecca's address and phone number in Maine. I imagine you'll have to forward some mail to me there. Just put it in a separate envelope with your return address.”

“Like I said, anything Elaine and I can do to help we'll do.”

“Thanks.”

We finished breakfast and before long it was time to leave, so I was back on the road again. It wasn't long before I entered Interstate 95 in the Live Free or Die State. It was a magnificent day filled with brilliant sunshine and I felt a lot better than a few days ago. I was driving to Freedom!



## ANOTHER RENDEZVOUS

Before crossing the state line into Maine, I stopped at the liquor store in New Hampshire. Whoever came up with the idea of having a place to buy alcohol so close to the highway must have been a genius. Either that or he got a cut of the cash collected for drunk driving offenses. This may be the LIVE FREE OR DIE State, but what were these people thinking?

I thought about getting Ed and Rebecca some live lobsters once I crossed over into crustacean heaven, but I decided to pick up a few bottles of wine instead, a Riesling, Chianti and a white zinfandel. Knowing the cooking skills of my friends, I figured they would be welcome additions.

In a few short hours I was almost at my destination. Before getting there I stopped at a post office not too far away from Ed and Becky's home. I would mail the letter to Tom from there. I got back into the car and checked the last set of directions to my friend's house. I thought I remembered the directions but it wouldn't hurt to double check. It had been some time since I had been there so I had to refresh myself with the way.

In a short while I was turning into Ed's driveway.

"Hi stranger. It's been a few years."

"It's good to see you, friend. You're looking as good as ever."

"You forgot to shave this morning, didn't you?"

"That's what I forgot. I knew there was something that slipped my mind."

"You're not hiding from the Feds, are you?"

"No, it's worse than that. But you may want to have a seat before I give you all the dirty details."

We went inside and I saw Rebecca and some of their offspring. From her appearance, you would never believe

that she was the mother of eight children. In her forties, she was slender and fit. I'm sure the large garden and being in charge of the house had something to do with this.

Becky inquired, "Do you remember Sarah, Ben and Tricia?"

They had all grown since last I had seen them. Ben was the youngest at thirteen, while the two girls were fourteen-year-old twins. All three resembled their mom and you could see that Ben had Ed's eyes.

I hugged Becky and then each of the kids followed. Before long they were on their way to chores and homework. Ed, Becky and I sat down and I proceeded with all the details of the last few weeks.

Ed said, "That's incredible. Our Dave might be interested in your story. He's into computers and statistics."

"Where are Elizabeth, David, Theresa, Amy and James?" I needed to know.

"You have some memory. I'm impressed. I don't think Ed knows the names of all his kids."

"Amy and James are in college," I guessed.

"Yes, James is a senior at Michigan and Amy is in her junior year at Boston College. Our younger ones are still home. Elizabeth is fifteen and still at school and both Theresa and David have after school jobs. Dave is eighteen and Theresa is seventeen. You'll see them later."

"You and Ed have done a fine job with the children."

"Thanks. From what you have told me, you did a great job too on the LOTTO thing. It's so hard to fathom. Somehow I never did really trust the president, even before he was elected. So do you think he came up with this LOTTO scam on his own or was it contrived by his henchmen?" Ed replied.

“I don't know but it was originally his idea so he probably came up with the scheme and from the way it looks he'll get away with it.”

“From the latest run of events it looks like you're right. So what can be done about this mess?” Becky wondered.

“I'm not sure right now but let me do some brainstorming. Of course that will have to wait until Monday. Can I get you something to drink?”

I answered, “Sure, a glass of water would be fine. Wow, I hardly recognized the children. They really have grown over these last few years.”

“Wait until you see Theresa and David. They sprouted like weeds and are doing a good job of putting me in the poorhouse as far as my supermarket ventures are concerned. Their clothes buying sprees aren't giving me any relief either. Thank goodness Ed has his work to provide for all of us and we have so many hand-me-downs, which the kids don't mind. It's also nice to see the older ones going out and getting jobs. That does two things: it makes them realize what it takes to run a household and it gives them an idea what responsibility is all about.”

“It probably will force them to enroll in college rather than get a job after graduating from high school,” I replied.

“Amy and James are proof of that,” Becky added.

“He may have come at a good time, sweetheart.”

“How's that, Ed?”

“Do you feel like doing some work for me? I have as much as I can handle and there's more if I want it. You can even do the work from here as I do most of my work in my office at home. I go in to the office a few days a week and I see no end in sight to work on the horizon. But I'm really

getting ahead of myself. How long were you planning to stay?"

"I really don't have any specific plans but I sure as heck don't want to be a burden to any of you here."

"John, I'm sure my wife will bear this out. Stay as long as you'd like. I doubt that you'll be a headache to any of us. I know the kids like it when you're here. Besides, if you work for me, I'm positive that you'll get sick of me before I get tired of you."

"I have to agree with Ed, you are welcome to stay as long as you like. We understand what you are going through. From what I can see, your computer skills could really be an asset to us with what my husband has been going through these last few months."

"We'll even negotiate a good billing rate so your food and lodging will be free. You'll just have to promise to make bread for us every so often."

"This sounds like a deal that I would be hard pressed to turn down."

"You can get out of our way by heading to the ocean any time you feel like. It's really close. The mountains are a little longer trip but well worth it. You're also welcome to take any of the children with you; I'm sure you won't have to twist any arms. You'll also be as safe here as any place I can imagine. We don't let any revolutionaries in our state. But anyway, don't decide now. You have plenty of time to do that."

"So how are Amy and James doing at college?"

"James is thinking about getting an MBA. Meanwhile Amy is considering a teaching career. You'll probably get a chance to see her if you stay for an extended period of time."

"So it sounds like they're doing well. Speaking of doing well, how is your garden doing?"

“Well, why don’t you come and take a look.”

We started outdoors but a bolt of lightning and the roar of thunder deterred us for the moment. It was only a temporary delay, though.

## WORKING OUT A DEAL

The late spring rain didn't last very long, only a few minutes. The sun followed and we headed out back. The garden was doing quite well and Ed harvested some lettuce and asparagus for supper that evening.

“Working for you sounds like a great idea. I will do my best not to be a burden to you and your family and I will help with whatever I can around the house.”

“Don't worrying about doing too many household chores. The children all have theirs. However, you are allowed and encouraged to show off your culinary skills whenever you feel moved.”

“That's fine with me. Since you're going out of your way to help me, I'll pitch in as much as I can in that regard. Now what exactly are you working on and what will I be doing?”

“You'll be working on a DEC VAX system using COBOL. Since I know that you know COBOL and DEC systems, you shouldn't have any trouble adjusting to the VAX.”

“What exactly will I be doing on the system?”

“I get all kinds of requests; some are to make simple changes such as modifying a report field or adding a date on a report. Other requests are to add some feature because of new considerations, such as a new process or calculation. I think you know exactly what I mean. The last type of request is the most challenging. We have to look at the program and figure out how to make it more efficient. That should be right up your alley.”

“I guess you're referring to that notorious lottery program. Actually I didn't do anything with it, but my version would run faster.”

“So it sounds like you should have no trouble with this stuff.”

“That’s what I’ve been doing all these years as a consultant.”

“So we have a deal. That’s great! When was the last time you saw the ocean?”

“Certainly too long a time.”

“You know that Camden Hills State Park is less than thirty miles from here.”

“I remember from my last visit. I intend to go back there and a trip to the mountains would be good for me too.”

“Baxter State Park is a longer trip, but you can certainly do it on a weekend and with your flexible work schedule there should be some good opportunities for you to get there. It’s perfect for a long weekend.”

“I think coming up here was the right thing to do. Forgive me for taking such a long time to get back here. It’s unfortunate that the tragic occurrences of the past few weeks are what got me to visit you. I don’t know how to express my gratitude.”

“John, say no more. It’s good to see you again under any circumstance. Don’t forget that we haven’t visited you either.”

I didn’t reply as Rebecca mentioned to Ed that he had to do a grocery run before supper.

“Feel like joining me for a jaunt into town?”

We headed out and about an hour later returned with the goods. Without delay, Ed got the grill going and before long he was really into it, grilling zucchini slices as well as the main course. The marinade was wonderful and the air could not have been filled with a more pleasant aroma.

Becky brought out rice pilaf, a tossed salad using the lettuce Ed harvested as well as the asparagus from the garden, steamed. By this time Elizabeth and David joined the

meal. We sat down to indulge after Ed led us in a prayer blessing. The taste of the swordfish was as good as the fragrance in the air while Ed was cooking dinner. And the pinot noir wasn't bad either.

"Leave a little room for dessert. I hope you like Mississippi Mud Pie," Rebecca interrupted the silence.

"I sure do. Did you make it?"

"I can't take credit; it's from the store."

"That won't stop us from indulging, I'm sure."

We finished dinner followed by the dessert and the children took care of the cleanup, so we retired to the den.

"Would you care for a spot of Grand Marnier?"

"That sounds like a fine way to end a delicious meal. Everything was exquisite."

"We're glad you liked it. I haven't done swordfish in quite some time so it was a treat for us too."

"I noticed all the children ate it too, except for Ben. I guess they all have good taste like their parents."

"For the most part none of the children are fussy about what they eat. That makes it easier on us when either Ed or I cook. They try everything. Of course they love junk food, like all other kids."

"From what I can see, Ed has done some work on the house."

"He remodeled one bath as well as wallpapered a couple bedrooms, all on weekends. I think he is relieved to be at work where he can take it easy."

Ed brought out three snifters of Grand Marnier and we gently imbibed.

"So you really love it out here, don't you?"

Ed said, "I don't think we'd rather be anywhere else. We lived in the Boston area for a few years but that was too hectic. It's nice to visit, but living there is another story. The children missed the city at first but it didn't take them very



long to get used to the quiet here, not to mention the ocean and the mountains. They found new friends very quickly.”

“I love it here too and can see why you like it as much as you do. Have you been up to Acadia National Park?”

“We were there last summer. It’s a great place in spite of all the tourists. It’s even better in September when the leaves are changing colors and the outsiders are gone. Have you been there recently?” Rebecca inquired.

“Not in a few years. I’ll have to get back to Mt. Cadillac Island.”

“It looks like you might have a wonderful opportunity now!”

## GETTING ED INVOLVED

Before I knew it, I had worked for Ed for a few days and it was doing us both some good. I was earning my keep and Ed was getting work done on his project. It was late afternoon when Rebecca handed me a letter.

“It looks like either the cops or the IRS found you.”

“Becky, I’m shocked. You never were like this before. I guess being with Ed all these years has warped your sense of humor.”

I tore it open and began to read it.

Dear John,

I hope you're all right and doing well. I got your sister's address from your mother. Speaking of your mother, your mom and dad got all the details of what's going on a short while ago. Fortunately Father Ted was with us to really comfort them in this very trying time. He assured them that God would look after you. They were really upset at first but they're both doing fine now. Father Ted and I are handling events well.

You are probably wondering if Annie got your documentation. I gave it to her as I had promised you but I guess all your work was for naught. I was contacted by Annie’s sister Tricia recently. I didn’t even know she had a sister.

Your house is fine. I carefully check up on it from time to time. It hasn't been torched or fire bombed yet.

By now you're probably in Maine and, if so, this letter got forwarded from your sister. Excuse me for using your sister's husband's last name on the

outside of the envelope but I didn't want to bring any unnecessary attention to your whereabouts.

I'm sure you'll get by and someday we'll be able to look back on this whole situation and not be forever infected by it. Be careful and God Bless!

Your amigo,  
Tom

I put the letter back in the envelope and Becky asked, "So how is everything back home?"

"Everyone's coping and basically there are no new developments."

"I guess no news is good news."

"I sent Tom a letter last weekend using your address as a return address so apparently our letters crossed paths. Strangely enough, he seemed to answer all the questions I asked without knowing them. That's unusual."

"Maybe you're just on the same wavelength. I wouldn't worry about it too much."

"I guess you're right. I learned a long time ago that worrying is a waste of time and not worth it."

By this time Ed joined us and I related what the letter from Tom brought.

"I've been doing some thinking about this whole LOTTO scam but it seems like we're really stuck. We can't change the program because we don't have the source code. Even if we did have the program it would be really risky to get involved making any changes. It's just too dangerous a thing to do."

"We also don't have all the investigative work that Annie Dalton did to bring down Tom Brown. That would be a big boost to our cause."

"Could we somehow get it?"

"I'm not sure where to start and even if I had some idea, it probably would be dangerous at that."

"I did think about changing the file that the program uses but we may not be able to change that either."

"You said 'may not' which implies that you're not ruling that option out. Is that correct?"

"Well, there may be some possibility, but I'll have to do some further thinking about it."

We spent a while poring over the possibilities.

"Soup's on and I really do mean soup."

"I guess we better sit down to dinner, John."

"I'm with you."

"What smells so good, dear?"

"It's the chowder that John made, or is it a bisque?"

"I believe it's a bisque, but you could call it either and I wouldn't complain. I also made some Cuban bread as well."

"This bread is really crusty and delicious and the bisque is exquisite. What's in the bread?"

"The only ingredients are flour, water, sugar and yeast. You could add some olive oil and salt if you desire, but that's about it."

"So what's the main course and did John create that too?"

"It's Spanish rice and I made it, dear."

"Oh, fantastic. Her rice is out of this world, John."

It was superb. It was ordinary Spanish rice with a flair, as Becky had added ground pork to give it a little extra. The children all loved it too.

We finished dinner and sat down in the den.

"So where did you buy the lobster for the bisque, John?"

“That wasn't lobster; it was monkfish! It has a texture so close to lobster that it can be easily mistaken for something a lot more expensive.”

“You could have fooled me.”

“It did fool you. Sometimes things aren't exactly what they appear to be.”

“Yeah, I guess you're right.”

## A LOTTO SOLUTION

Twenty-four hours later, as we had our coffee in the den, Ed said, "I've got it!"

"What dear?"

"John's bisque inspired me."

"What are you talking about?" Becky asked.

"I think I have a solution to our LOTTO scenario."

"Don't keep us in suspense, out with it," I chimed in.

"Here goes. I said and we agreed yesterday that we couldn't very well change the program or the file in the program. But suppose we somehow interrupt the running of the program and get it to use a file that we ourselves create. It would appear that the program is using the normal file but in reality it will be using ours."

I offered, "And the file that we create will have some very incriminating stuff in it."

"Exactly. You're thinking just like me."

"There are just two little problems. First, how do we interrupt the running of the program and second, how do we slip our file into the mix?"

"That is what still needs to be worked out. I have to spend a bit more time on analysis but I do have a contact in Washington who owes me a favor. I'm sure he would be more than willing to assist us in our endeavors. Come to think of it, he's no big supporter of Brown or his policies. He may be very useful and even come up with some ideas. This collaboration could give us a breakthrough. To get started, what I need from you is the de-compiled source code of the LOTTO program. By getting into the code, I can really get a good idea of what we need to do."

"No problem, Ed. I'll give you everything you need. Well, we seem to be a lot better off today than we were last

night at this time. I always wanted to inspire someone with my cooking!”

“We're getting there slowly, but we are getting there amigo.”

“Can I get anyone anything?” Becky inquired.

“How about a little cognac for the three of us, if no one objects.”

“That’s a good idea,” I added.

Ed switched on CNN and there was President Brown stating that he had nothing to hide and would make his tax returns from the last two years available to the public next week.

I was wearing my bright red T-shirt with only a single Polish word on it, so I came out with, “Nazdrowie.”

“Is that what your T-shirt spells?”

“Sure.”

“Now I know how to spell it. Bottoms up.”

“Cheers. Here's to a solution to nail people who deserved nothing less than that!” Becky said.

## THE PARK

My weekend started early as I headed over to Camden Hills State Park on Friday. I figured that I was with my friends for almost a week so perhaps my departure was good to let them have some privacy. I just convinced them that it was time I got to see the ocean again.

It was overcast as I headed out to the coast. The weather was supposed to get better as the day went on and I could see that the sun was struggling to make an appearance despite the clouds. Seventy-degree temperatures were not out of the question, and that was fine by me. I managed to borrow a small tent from Ed and a cooler with some ice and a few other necessary items like utensils and the like. I would have to get some provisions, but that would come later.

I was on the road for less than an hour when I saw the sign for the entrance to the campground. The sun was still hidden by the clouds but you could see that it would soon establish its presence.

Before long I was checked into my site. The tent went up quite easily, thanks to the technological advances of the last few years. Now anyone could set up a tent without the least bit of trouble. I decided to take a hike to the ocean.

I crossed the busy highway and made my way to the rocky shore. There was a scattering of people on the beach and some on the rocks. I hadn't seen the mighty Atlantic in a few years. I found a comfortable slab of stone and sat down to ponder all that happened. It seemed that Annie had been killed months ago rather than just the few days that was the case. I guess certain events have a way of warping the passage of time.

I reached into my backpack for the lunch that Rebecca had prepared over my objections. She had packed a



piece of leftover barbeque chicken and some nice Italian bread along with a can of soda and some fresh fruit. I certainly would be all right with friends like Becky and Ed.

The night before Ed had relayed the fact that he talked to his associate in Washington and between them all was well. Ed had found a solution to both problems that we had encountered.

The first had to do with causing the program to end in an unusual or abnormal manner. When a program does this, it is said to abend. Take the phrase 'abnormal end' and remove the six letters 'normal' and the result is 'abend.' When a computer program runs, one of three things can happen. First, it can begin and end in a normal manner with all the results being just as desired. This happens to quite a few programs and this is the way every program should run. Second, the program can end in a normal manner but some of the results wind up in error, say wrong data on a file or report. Some programs proceed in this manner without being fixed because no one notices that there is a problem.

The third and last thing that can occur when a program runs is an abend. There can be an abend for a variety of reasons, including bad data. If you feed a program data that is supposed to have a specific field be some kind of number and it isn't, the program could abend. If you run a program in an area or region that is too small, it could also abend. If you run a program and give it ten seconds to run when it actually needs twelve seconds, it will also abend. If you run a program that creates an output file and you don't allow enough space for the file or if the system doesn't have the space you need, in either case the program will abend. There are many other reasons for abends, but these are a few of them. Some of the reasons are really complicated and not worth even talking about but I think you get the idea.

Many programs that abend can just be started over after determining what the problem was and correcting it. So if it is determined that your program ran out of space for one of your output files, all you might need to do is allow for more space for this file and restart the process. Any program that abends but is involved with updating a file requires a bit more to be done. Certainly the problem needs to be corrected as in the earlier case. In addition, files that are being updated need to be put back to what they were before the program started. This process is referred to as restoring the files.

In computer lingo, the data file is restored from a backup, which was created after the last time the program was successfully run. A backup is nothing more than a copy of a file at some point in time. All these backups form a family of files or generations of the file. So let us say that the last time the program was run the backup was generation one. Today we will create generation two and the next time generation three and so on. What has to be done in case of an abend is to use the proper generation of the backup. But actually that process is really quite simple: just use the last generation and you will have the right backup.

What Ed was going to do was to take the latest generation of the backup and copy it to another file. He then would add some incriminating information to this copy of the file and somehow make this new file the latest backup. Of course this file had the witness protection people's names and social security numbers. Now when the program abends and has to go to the backup, it would use Ed's doctored file as backup and then the fireworks would begin.

I asked Ed how this abend would come about but he wouldn't tell me, imploring me to only think about how to accomplish this and if I could not figure it out he'd fill me in. Well I thought about it and I didn't have the answer, but I

had a few ideas. I guess all that counted was that he had the solution.

In a short while I would take a jaunt into town to pick up a few items. A hike up the trail to get a panoramic view of the ocean would come later. The exercise would be just as welcome to my body as would the view to my spirit. But for now I was just going to enjoy being outdoors near the pounding tide. Noisy as it was, it was very relaxing.

## A NEW LOTTO WINNER

The following Tuesday I set off to bed not realizing that when I awoke the next morning, things would be radically different. To begin with I had another dream about LOTTO. This one was different from all the rest as the final result was that the president was forced to resign his office due to a myriad of improprieties, one of which was the scam involved in LOTTO. I had other dreams too but awaking erased the memories of these other ones. Rising from the bed, a feeling came over me that I hadn't felt in many weeks.

When I had left Western New York, it was with a great deal of emotion and trepidation. My time in New England had relaxed me but there still was apprehension. On this new morning that all seemed to change. It was hard to put my finger on but now it was radically different. At breakfast Rebecca commented on the change that had come over me. She could sense it but couldn't explain it, nor could I. I wasn't complaining.

I spent the day as usual but seemed much more productive and alive. At quitting time, Ed brought in USA Today and said there was something on the front page that might be of interest to me. There at the bottom was the list of the weekly LOTTO winners. At the top of the list was none other than Tom Brown followed by his social security number. At the top of the page was a copy of President Brown's tax return from the previous year. Naturally his social security number was there and it was only too obvious that this number matched that of the first winner in the national lottery. And I didn't even think that our chief executive played LOTTO!

"President Brown is finished, plain and simple. Ed, you did it!"

“Who, me? What are you talking about?”

“Your connections came in handy. I guess I can rest easy with this revelation. I would say that it wouldn’t be long before the finger pointing begins and all of Brown's cronies are running for cover. I have one word for you Ed, THANKS.”

“A great deal of the credit goes to you and Annie Dalton. What she started, you finished. It's unfortunate that she can't share in the knowledge that she did him in.”

“I don't think I told you this. Tom Daniel got a call from Annie's sister. I didn't even know she had a sister. I guess I would have found out about her sooner or later had she not been killed.”

“How about a glass of champagne to celebrate this great occasion?”

“Great idea! “

“I guess I anticipated this turn of events and put some on ice this morning before I left for the office.”

Rebecca joined us and I showed her the front page as Ed went to fetch the glasses and the sparkling wine.

“So this is why you were the way you were this morning. Did you know then what we know now?”

“No. I didn't find out about this until Ed dropped the paper on me a short while ago.”

“Well that's great news and cause for celebration. I've got some ribs that we can do up on the grill tonight. I would say that my sauce is as good as you'll find anywhere. I've been working on perfecting it for a few years now and I think it's there!”

## A GOOSE IS COOKED

I got up the next day with the realization that maybe we partied too much. Of course, there was a good reason to celebrate...a once in a lifetime event had occurred. You would have thought that we hit the LOTTO big time. In some sense we had. I showered and spent about seven hours working with a long weekend on my mind. I was going to head out to the ocean later in the day and spend most of the weekend there. Ed and Rebecca were going to join me on Saturday with some of the children for a cookout and I was going to be the chef.

Ed approached me at about the same time in the afternoon as he had the day before. Again he dropped the paper in front of me with the admonition, "Check it out!"

There in front of me was a full-page article outlining former President Brown's shenanigans. It told of the murder of Kathy Pendleton, the complicated LOTTO scam, vote fixing on the part of the Brown campaign as well as other incidents that had transpired over the last few years. There was basically everything Annie Dalton had described to me and more. I glanced to the top of the article and noticed that the journalist who did the piece was Tonia Neland.

I said, "Did you see who wrote the article?"

"I didn't notice. Do you know the writer?"

"It's one of the names that Annie used for some of her articles. I guess her editor took all her work, put it together and figured it would be fitting to put her name on the story since she uncovered all the details."

"Appropriate, indeed. I wish I had had a chance to meet her."

"You would have liked her," I sighed.

We strolled towards the garden. The recent rain was quite evident in the change to the tomatoes and squash.

Then I said, "You'll be happy to see I figured out that horrendous program bug you gave me a few days ago."

"Great! It was starting to get to me too," my friend added.

"I'm quite caught up with all the work, so I plan to head out to the ocean shortly. I'll just pack and get moving. You'll join me on Saturday, right?"

"Sure, we'll be there. I'm looking forward to what you'll be cooking. It won't be goose, will it?"

"I can guarantee you that it won't be that. After all, isn't the goose already cooked?"

## BACK TO THE OCEAN

I awoke on Saturday morning and headed over to clean up and shower. After finishing breakfast I took a walk down to the beach. As I walked, I contemplated the events of the past few days. I was really quite happy working for Ed. I had an ideal job. I loved doing what I was doing. Who wouldn't mind staying home to work? Why didn't more corporations let their employees work at home? Just think of all the highway frustration that could be eliminated if this concept were put into effect.

I had called my boss in Western New York and he said I could return to work when I felt like it. He seemed to think that if I made it back in a week or two that it would be fine. My next consideration was for my close friend Ed. I was helping him out but he certainly did the same for me, even more so. Perhaps I could work for two bosses at once. Why not?

What if I could work fewer hours back home at the office and still assist Ed by giving him a few hours a week by working at my house. A great scenario would be to eventually end my Western New York contract and then work full time at home for Ed. Yes, that was what I would try to do.

I sat down on my favorite rock and watched the surf pounding on the rocks. The sun shone brilliantly and the sky was blue with not a single cloud in sight. In a short while I would be joined by the Martin family. I would go into my future plans with Ed and see if he approved. I felt like it would be good for all parties involved, not that I wouldn't mind staying here longer. It's just that it was time to return home.



I must have dozed off and really lost track. I looked at my watch and found it to be almost three p.m. Ed and Becky and the kids would be here shortly so I'd better head back to camp.

I crossed the busy highway and headed up the road into the campground. It was a lovely afternoon but I noticed a few black clouds in the west heading towards me. As I approached the check-in station I noticed an old brown Chevy Impala with New York license plate number S4 7CB. It scared me briefly when I thought about the incident on the highway in Buffalo not that long ago but I quickly remembered that the plate number of the car driven by that lunatic was S4 708.

I walked passed the car and the park attendant; I heard the driver ask if a John Kuzinski was registered there. I kept walking a bit faster now and I really was concerned. Perhaps I had misread the plate on the Chevy Impala when I was being harassed on the Aurora Expressway. It's easy to misread a C as an O and you easily mistake a B for an 8. What if this really was the same Chevy Impala I had encountered a while ago back home? Don't tell me they finally found me. I know my friends didn't own a Chevrolet and they certainly wouldn't have to ask if I was registered there.

I decided to bypass going back to my tent and instead head up the trail to Mt. Megunticook. Once I got on the trail I should be able to function better. I didn't have many options but I knew that going up the trail might offer the best chance for getting out of this jam.

I kept hiking and climbing and it appeared that no one was on my tail but I couldn't look back. I had to keep going. Maybe the new addition of fuzz on my chin would allow me to escape. I increased my pace and hoped that I had taken the right fork when the trail split. Then I heard the

gunshots and now I seemed to be caught. Soon I heard a bullet whiz by and then I stumbled. As I lay on the ground, I tried to crawl away but I saw the blood. I had been hit. Over the last few weeks I had found it almost impossible to sleep with the turn of events. Now I could feel as if I would not have that problem as I was drifting off. Oh why had I used that name when I checked into the campsite? John Kuzinski. John Kuzinski...

## A REAL RENDEZVOUS

“John Kuzinski. John Kuzinski.”

I opened my eyes and was surprised to see that I was at the beach. However, that was nowhere near as surprising as seeing the woman who had uttered my name. I blinked my eyes and looked again and that didn't change a thing. It was Annie Dalton.

I couldn't find any evidence of blood on my body so I quickly concluded that my brief escapade with the Impala was a dream, as if I hadn't had enough bad dreams. I soon realized that the woman nearby wasn't Annie after all but her sister, Tricia. But I could easily see that she was an identical twin as I saw no difference between her and Annie.

“I hope I didn't cause you to have a heart attack.”

I reached out to hug her. I'm not sure how I surmised this but somehow I knew that this was not Tricia after all, but Annie.

“It's you Annie, isn't it?”

“Yes, it's me. Tricia was the one who was killed in the accident and not me.”

She started to sob and I could feel her pain. I tried to console her as much as I could.

She continued, “The time you were trying to reach me, Tricia was visiting. Her visit was unexpected. She ran out the door and grabbed my purse by mistake so my ID was there with her. When I heard the news I went into shock. I went to a friend's house and I stayed in hiding. I didn't even report to work. It wasn't until I saw the front page of USA Today with Brown's tax return and his name as a LOTTO winner that I contacted my boss and decided that the time was right to act.”

“I'm really sorry about Tricia.”

“Thanks. I talked to Tom Daniel and he told me about most of your tribulations, even where you were. That's why I found you here. You must have gone through hell.”

“Compared to what you faced, it was nothing. Did you meet Ed and Rebecca?”

“Ed told me where to find you. I just told him I was a friend of yours, though I think he knows who I am.”

“So you had all the information to nail Brown but couldn't come out with a story until yesterday. I guess you had no other choice.”

“Actually, I thought about doing the article sooner and using the Tonia Neland name. When I saw the USA Today, I figured the time was right. How did you ever manage to pull this scam on those crooks?”

“Ed had a big part to do with it. I gave him all the details and he looked at the LOTTO program, did some analysis, made some phone calls to an associate in Washington and the deed was done.”

“Did he change the program to nail Brown? I didn't think that could have been done.”

“No. He somehow got the program to abend while it was running”

“So how did he manage to get the name and social security number of Tom Brown into the file if couldn't change it?”

“Each day after the program runs, that file is copied or backed up to a generation data set. All he did was copy the backup to another file, add the Brown data and sneak this incriminating file into the generation of backups. This new backup then was what was used by the system to restore the file. Ed had looked closely at the program to see how to really achieve the results that came about, namely get President Brown to be the first winner listed.”

“How did he make it abend?”

“Each program needs a certain size area in which to run. If the area is too small, the program would abend. Increase the size of the area and the program would run fine. Another way to get a program to abend would be to limit the time it gets to run. You can add a parameter to have as much time as it needs to run. Those are just a few ways to cause an abend.”

“So you’re not sure what caused the program to abend?”

“No, but I think Ed probably talked to his friend in the nation’s capital and he somehow changed the size of the files used for sorting that were necessary in the program. If he just lowered the space requirement for these work files, an abend could easily result. I guess you’ll have to ask Ed.”

“And all I thought you could do was cook!”

“Speaking of food, you have to join us for dinner tonight. I’m cooking and Ed and Rebecca and some of their children will join us. They should be here any minute, in fact.”

“I’d be delighted.”

“Believe it or not I just had a dream that I napped too long on the beach and I ran into a brown Chevy Impala at the check-in station. This was the same car that I painfully experienced on the highway back home. I wound up being pursued and eventually they shot me. I passed out and you woke me from the nightmare. I’m glad you came along.”

“Wow! Ex-president Brown really put you through hell and that brown Chevy Impala drove you to the brink as well. Suffice it to say, you probably won’t be eating hash browns any time soon nor will you purchase a brown suit. I doubt that you’ll ever be a Cleveland Browns’ fan nor will you care for any poetry by Elizabeth Barrett Browning.”

“For some time, I’ll probably have an allergic reaction to anything brown.”

“Now that you mention it, do you think Tom Brown will ever get back into politics?”

“Don't bet on it!”

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Author's note:

Recipes for most of the food mentioned in this work can be found in The “Read My Lips” Cookbook by the author. Check out the website [BOBCOOKS.COM](http://BOBCOOKS.COM) for more information.