



Back at home I went over to the fridge and grabbed a Coke. I poured it over ice in a frosty mug we kept in the freezer. Up stairs I pulled off my polo and changed into t-shirt and shorts. I figured Margie wouldn't be back for another hour or so from work.

Margie had landed a pretty good job all things considered, not that it paid all that well, but not much did in White Purchase. She was working in accounting for a loan office in town that was located throughout the state of Georgia and some other places. She traveled some but was able to do most of the work from the home office. I would like to know someday how such a place came about in White Purchase.

I don't particularly like sitting back down in front of the computer to work especially right after work but I had some personal interest in the interviews that day that I just had to satisfy with Google. The first thing I checked out was exactly what had gone on in the last Georgia lottery winning before this mega-prize was handed out.

I typed in Georgia lottery and went right to their site and down in the left corner I saw *past results*. Atop the list was William Morris who had netted the largest ever jackpot at 85 million. The pot was larger but he'd opted for cash, I read.

The largest ever jackpot awarded had been close to 400 million. Yesterday's reported pot was 623 million, third to a Florida winning of 655 and a California winning of 715 million.

Yesterday's winnings had been split between 20 people, 12 of which incredibly lived in Georgia. Apparently the mega-

millions lottery tickets were sold across several states. To have 2 of the 12 in White Purchase was incredible.

What I found almost as intriguing was that a cash prize was given as an incentive to the lottery ticket sellers. If a jackpot was awarded, \$25,000 was given to the seller. I could only imagine how Sandy Anderson felt about almost getting the full \$25,000.

White Purchase now had two multi-millionaires, one shooting from the bottom of the economic food chain to the top and another stepping outside of past shady dealings (apparently) into the big time.

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I sat in my car tucking my hands under my arms trying to warm up. It was frightfully cold for this time of year, I thought to myself. Our old Honda took forever to warm up and would have driven on to work without worrying about it just to get it over with if it weren't for the windshield being so frosted.

It would never snow in White Purchase but all the humidity meant plenty of frost on the ground in the morning. Nothing to write up north about but enough to get your coat on.

Clocking in I noticed that Max our editor had two of our news writers at his desk and already had taken off his tie. I preferred to ease into the morning. I liked to make myself a cup of coffee and sit down at my desk and read the front page of the Atlanta paper (research and personal development, I justified). I could tell as I tiptoed to my desk that today wouldn't be quite so sweet.

"Stan, get in here," Max called.

I turned and entered his office and stood back behind the others and he continued to rant. I picked up from his

bantering that it had something to do with the lottery winners I spoke with yesterday.

He looked up at me. "Stan, you finished with our lottery winners?" he asked.

"Yeah, they're done," I said hoping I was in the clear.

"You got the pictures to Juan in the back?" he asked. I nodded.

"Well, get down to Community Bank see what's going on," Max said.

He could tell I was a little lost so he added, "Apparently, there's talk that Chason is going to close his account today when they thought he was going to be making his big deposit."

"Oh," I said. *Fun*, I thought.

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Driving the few short blocks down to Community Bank of White Purchase I thought about what I would do when I got there. I doubted that I could get away with snapping a picture over the bankers shoulder of Chason grinning in the other seat signing a withdrawal slip. Or that I could get a close-up of the bank owners tear running down his cheek.

When I pulled up into the parking lot I saw my picture. Outside the bank a considerable crowd for White Purchase had beaten me to the scene and were being detained outside. They complained plenty but the sign on the door said the bank was closed. People were peeking through the doors trying to catch a glimpse of Mr. Hemmings. Others were standing off to the side acting bothered and important. Some were holding their coffees and laughing, nothing better to do.

I eased up behind the mob with my camera in my hand down by my side. When I got close enough I zoomed in on the closed

sign and adjusted the focus. I took about 5 shots from that angle before everyone started turning my way.

I pulled out my notebook and pen and figured I'd just start talking to everyone and getting names. It would be awfully close to gossip but not knowing what Max wanted nor what was going on, I guessed it might be the best thing offering itself at the time.

"Stan from the Post," I said.

"Can anyone tell me what's going on?" I asked hoping the man in the suit to the right of the door would speak up first.

Faking some dignity, he said, "I'm here to speak with the bank about an account, and they won't open the doors."

"Can you give me your name, sir?" I asked innocently.

"Ford Palmer," he said. "I give legal services here in town."

"Ma'am do you know why the doors are closed," I turned and said to an elderly lady on his left.

"Well, I brought my rolls of change like I do every few weeks," she said gripping her purse, "and when I got her the lady told me to wait a few minutes in the lobby. Then when a few others came in and everyone started talking and pointing, they asked everyone to step outside," she said. "I'm cold."

"And your name?" I asked.

"June. June Willis," she said.

I looked at another lady about 40 something figuring she would say straight out what was going on.

"What was everyone pointing at, ma'am?" I asked.

Twice a week we put the Post on people's doorsteps and mailboxes. The news about Chason Hemmings and Sally Pearson and their millions would be front page come Saturday, the second publication of the week. I'd chosen my mugs of the winners and one of the shots at the bank turned out perfect. It showed quite a gathering for White Purchase and the face the bank manager's making is straight-faced and troubled.

"Stan," Max said over the intercom. No *get in here*, nothing. It was just understood that I was to be in his office before he hung up the phone.

I scooted around my chair, bumping my knees on my desk, squeezing out of the tight space. His office was just on the other side of a cement cinder block wall, but in another hall.

I stuck my head in his door and said, "Yeah, Max."

"We aren't running the story on Chason," he said bluntly.

I kind of lowered my eyebrows, stunned I guess. "What?"

"We're not running it Saturday."

"Why not? Is something not ready? Is the story..."

"No, it's not that," he interrupted.

"It's just not the right timing."

"Help me here," I said. "I'm not following you."

"Look, it wouldn't be in the best interest of Mr. Hemmings nor this paper to run that story tomorrow," Max said.

I just sort of looked at Max hoping he would give more details.

"There's a chance that it could cause a lot of ruckus here in White Purchase if too much attention is called to Chason right now," he said.

I wanted to say, *how's he going to hide millions of dollars in White Purchase*. But I didn't. I just kept my same confused look on my face.

"What about the bank deal? Does that go too?" I asked.

"Yeah, that too?" he said.

"Does Ms. Pearson have anything to do with this?" I asked.

"No, she'll still run," he said. "It will be good to run her front page. Great picture. Those little old ladies... they're quite a crew, aren't they?"

"Yeah," I said. "That they are."

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"I just don't understand what's going on," I said to Margie lying my head back on the arm of the couch and resting my socked feet on the other arm.

"What in the world does that mean... it wouldn't be good for *Chason*."

"As if half the town doesn't know about it already. I mean practically everyone in this town had a relative down at the bank the other day," I said.

"Well, maybe he didn't win after all," Margie said.

"What was he doing at the bank then?" I said.

"Hey," Margie said. "Don't raise your voice at me. I'm not Max. I don't work at the Post."

“Is there any benefit to you for selling a winning ticket? You know, beyond just the money it costs to buy it? Do you win to?” I said smiling?

“There’s a small kick-back you know. Ain’t no million though.”

“If I ever sold me one of them jackpots, they give you 25 grand,” he continued. “But there can’t be but one winner, you see.”

“Too bad,” I said.

“I’m o.k.” he said. “I guess I’m lucky to have sold what I sold, you know.”

“Can I take your picture with a few tickets in your hand,” I asked.

“My picture?” he said kind of shy wiping his shirt with his hands.

“You look great,” I said walking back and holding my camera up to see if I needed the flash or not.

I picked up the camera to turn on the flash and realized I was out of film.

“Where do you keep you film, Mr. Anderson?” I asked.

“Only if you only show my good side,” he said giving me a slight profile.