

"I May Already Be a Winner"

While most people were glued to the Superbowl this weekend, I kept running to the front window peering up and down the street, to make sure that if the magazine sweepstakes van about to award a ten million dollar prize was looking for my house, they wouldn't drive past it, and award my winnings to a neighbor by mistake.

I am fully aware that with a national population of about a quarter billion, my chance of actually winning the grand prize is infinitesimally low. In fact statistically, it is more likely that tomorrow on my way to work, I will be devoured by locusts.

Yet, every year, I, like millions of other Americans who also believe they are not gullible, secretly fill out the cumbersome sweepstakes entry, because an official looking envelop told me that I might already be a winner. Though I am normally rational, when the words "Chuck Goldstone," "win," and "ten million dollars" are printed on the same envelop, I lose all objectivity.

But who doesn't occasionally daydream about being fabulously rich, even though 10 million dollars doesn't buy what it once did and compared to Bill Gates, we would still be paupers and might want to consider picking up extra cash doing his yard work.

Nonetheless, every year, I secretly empty the envelop containing the 40 pages of ads, coupons and stickers onto my dining room table, carefully pasting the correct stamps onto the proper card, and knowing if I make one mistake, they will not only deny me my fortune, but will require me to forfeit the deed to my house and move in with relatives.

The complex entry rules, I will later surmise, were composed by the same person who wrote the steps to assemble my patio barbecue, and incidentally the odds of assembling it correctly aren't much better. The entry process this year will take just slightly longer than it did to do my taxes.

Since they are more likely to let me win if I buy their product, I select 2 magazines, not necessarily ones that interest me, but instead those whose stamps are easy to get to. This year I subscribe to The Ice Capades Magazine and Reptile Grooming. Sometime in July, I will ask myself what I could have been thinking..

And the answer will be: not only the chance to win money, but also win a car. I find the sticker that tells them whether I would prefer the trendy 4 wheel drive vehicle or the high maintenance British sports car. I hear if you win the sports car, they will also give you the 4 wheel drive vehicle so you have something to drive when your car is in the shop.

Finally, to qualify, I will be forced to sign a number of affidavits, which they're permitted to do because it's their 10 million dollars. They could probably insist I have to march in next year's Macy Thanksgiving parade dressed like a ferret, and even the Supreme Court would probably tell me that I have no choice if I want the money.

So, I sign a card that says if I win, I will let them reenact my notification on film, and consent to answering the door in a tattered robe, sobbing uncontrollably when they hand me the check, which by the way will not be a normal check, but instead one the size of large oil painting. I will pose with it and try not to let on that my bank, being very strict, does not cash any check over 5 feet long.

This year, like the past 19, I did not win the money I rich deserve. Sometime in May, long after the disappointment of not being fabulously wealthy finally wears off, monthly reminders in the form of magazines I have no intention of reading will choke my mailbox, leaving just enough room for next years sweepstakes envelop, which will tell me that last year was an unfortunate mistake, and this year I'll win for sure.

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