

Your Lucky Numbers Are...

There were things he could do to be a wallflower. Randall Glenn was not a person who wanted to draw any attention. He, after all, was the introverted type.

Growing up, Randall kept to himself, coming home after school, not stopping to play. He had to be home for Mother. Every day, she sat in an overstuffed arm chair of their one-room apartment, and did needlework, humming quietly. Randall liked to watch her so contented. He played in her big bag of buttons as she worked, starting a collection. His favorite had fallen off of her old, red dress. She never bothered to put it back on because the dress didn't fit anymore. The button was black with gold embellishments, and Randall kept it in his pocket.

Late at night, his father would stumble through the door, bottle in hand, alcohol stench fresh on his breath. Randall hated him. He learned to love the cramped cupboard under the sink.



It was Friday night, and forty-eight year old Randall parked his rusty Toyota in a lot diagonal Luckies' Pub.

Randall stuck to a strict daily routine. Changes made him fidgety, unable to think. Every morning, he'd wake and count his buttons. Then shower, and walk around the secluded area near his house. Randall spent most of his time outdoors, lost in thought. Afternoon was for meticulous cleansing of his buttons. At night, he'd go out to get supplies, sometimes stopping for Chinese food and parking in the lot across from Luckies to people-watch.

He sat in the car, camera hidden in rear windshield, mirrors adjusted perfectly to see all the doors to Luckies, and make sure no one escaped from under his nose. This was the seventh time this ritual occurred. He pulled out a crinkled paper bag and reached in, grabbing a fortune cookie and breaking it. He pried out the paper and flipped it over, ignoring the “fortune”.

*“Lucky Numbers: 3, 7, 11, 14, 48, 99”*

So the number was three. Randall stared intently at his mirrors. Two giggling girls left, flopping in tall heels. He sat for an hour before the front door creaked open again, and a petite brunette wearing a sinuous, red dress walked out—alone.

“*Lucky number three.*” She sauntered to a polished, blue Prius. Leaving space so as to not be suspicious, he tailed her around town and up Otis Street, parking a few doors down from number three's ranch. Quietly, Randall eased his way out of his old car with squeaky doors and made his way, in the cover of night, to fourteen Otis Street. He crouched under a window and peered in. She was in front of her sink, washing dishes and humming a disconnected tune. A television lit the room with a blue glow. She looked brittle.

He smiled, noticing an open window. Grabbing both sides of the frame, he hoisted himself into a bedroom. There was an old vanity next to a door, a few knickknacks, and a small bed in the corner with a plethora of frilly pillows. She kept tidy.

The static noise of the television became clearer as he crept down a hallway towards the glow.

Number three's singing was somewhat pretty, hitting right notes with a soft, jazzy voice. She didn't sing one song, but a compilation of many and some humming. “*Someone who'll watch over meeee. Hmmmm. How does it feeeeeeel? Hmmm hmmmmmm. So this is loooove.*”

Slowly approaching her from behind, the closer to her bare neck, the more anxious he became. The television's extreme volume covered his quiet steps and shallow breathing, but one heavy footfall and she whipped around, holding a soapy bowl. With a startled gasp, the bowl fell to the floor, spreading shards of glass.

She floundered, forgetting how to scream. Randall forcefully shoved his hand over her mouth, and grabbed the back of her head. She struggled, but he squeezed harder, causing whimpers of pain and fear.

“*That pretty face isn't going anywhere tonight.*” Randall whispered ominously into her ear. She wept, and Randall gagged and bound her tightly with rope from his pocket.

Shoving her down, she hit the floor with a sickening slam. Randall kneeled to watch her squirm. For a split-second, a wave of sympathy rushed over him, but soon it was over and he brushed the feeling aside.

The microwave blinked “11:00.” Her eyes widened as he pulled out a large, shining knife from his coat.

Randall slowly stepped towards her, sopping up fear. Lowering the blade to her throat, the point barely touched the soft indentation of her neck. Only now did he take in how beautiful she was. Her skin glowed under the television's light, and her hair, full of loose curls, framed her

delicate face. Randall spun the knife on its tip slowly, loving her agony. Warm tears streamed down flushed cheeks and into her hair, fanned around her.

*“Don't cry. This won't hurt a bit.”* Randall chuckled to himself, bringing up the knife. She closed her eyes tightly, tensing up. But he did something she didn't expect. Randall took the knife and cut off a button from her dress. Prying it free, he examined it closely, then stuffing it into his breast pocket.

*“Alright. This part hurts.”* A smile spread from ear to ear, but not the kind you see on a boy early Christmas morning, or a girl who had her first kiss. This smile was full of malice. With a deep breath, he put the knife down on her breastbone, between her ribs. *“Tell me when.”*

Her screams were concealed by the noise from the excessively loud television.



Randall was good at cleaning. He had a love/hate relationship with bleach, and his only real friends were scrubbing brushes and dusters. He believed everything had a place. Suits and ties belong on hangers the same way cereal belongs in cabinets, and blood doesn't belong on a kitchen floor.

Number three's house looked more beautiful and neat than before. He switched off the television, and locked the doors.

Her dismembered body was in a sturdy trash bag he lugged to the car, casually tossing it into the trunk. He put his Corolla into reverse and drove away. It took an hour to get to his middle-of-nowhere home. Exhausted, Randall headed to bed without even changing his blood-stained clothes.



The next morning, Randall took the small, red button from his pocket. Admiring it, he noted its roundness, the way it shined, how many holes it had. He could brag about this button. In the living room, he pulled out a glass box displaying his collection from high shelf behind the slip-covered couch. They came from various places: little baggies of extra buttons that come with clothes, the dryers at the coin-op laundry, his mother's bag of buttons, and most recently, the

clothes of the women he killed. Proudly, Randall placed his ninety-ninth button into an empty spot, leaving one slot left. After changing his clothes, he spiritedly hopped to his car, gunning the ignition.

Driving to the lake in the mountain, he parked in the street and carried the bag for a mile to throw off snoopers, covering his feet with bags to not make prints. Near the far end of the large lake, he took a rowboat into the water and dumped the bag, watching it sink before rowing to shore.

In his car, Randall admired himself. The police had investigations open for months without suspecting him. There was never evidence. Randall was more than a genius; he was a god.

He started back home. The fortune from the day before still lay on the ground. On a whim, Randall bent to pick it up. It was slippery. He held it in front of his face with one hand on the wheel.

*“Lucky Numbers: 3, 7, 11, 14, 48, 99”*

Sighing, he flipped the paper, only to find the fortune-side blank. He scoffed, but started thinking. *“What if the numbers are important? Maybe I get to write my own future.”*

While trying to decipher meanings, the little paper slipped, fluttering to the floor. Sighing, Randall turned to catch it, taking his eyes off the road. The fortune back in grasp, he looked into his windshield. In front, the road turned to avoid the mouth of a gorge he was quickly approaching.

Adrenaline rushed through him as the brakes hit the floor, and he swerved to avoid the drop-off, but too late.

The Corolla steered off the overhang, flipping down the side, landing hard. A sickening odor of gasoline filled the cab in an instant. Randall couldn't tell if he was in pain or not, but blood was pooling on the floor. All he knew was that he couldn't move his body, and a high-pitched buzz was getting annoying.

That's when Randall Glen's car caught fire, trapping him, and leaving the collection of buttons unfinished.