



# THE 8TH VERDICT



T E S S E R E A N S T O R Y S E R I E S



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# THE 8TH VERDICT

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# INTRODUCTION

It starts with me dressed up as an eighty-year-old man. Well, maybe not eighty, but I'm in disguise. Next, I'm asked by a man — hiding in the shadows — which one of the seven people I'm here to kill. The thought moves me, forces me to question the purpose of my visit during this beautiful summer night gala.

The dream haunts me, stirs something I didn't realize was even present. Is it jealousy? Frustration? Overwhelm? It doesn't matter what I choose to believe; it seems the choice has already been made for me.

As the days turn into weeks, each night before I drift off to sleep, the man visits me, forcing me to answer his question. One night it's the *Celebrity*. I imagine her hanging off the arm of a well-groomed partner in a tuxedo, laughing, giggling beneath the breath of some sadistic plan. My imagination runs wild as I slip poison into her drink, cane in hand, shuffling by unnoticed.

The next night it's the *Millionaire*. I imagine a warehouse tucked under the shadows of some faraway place. Inside, are young children slaving away under conditions unfit for even a beast. For certain, this man must die. I imagine tapping him on the shoulder with a tiny needle protruding from my left ring finger. It too, contains an untraceable poison. One — that within several hours from now — will cause him to lose consciousness, then perish from his own inability to swallow.

Each night as I drift off to sleep, I am visited, once again, by the man in the shadows. I then proceed to watch the seven people from my hiding place next to the large marble fountain of Poseidon. And, each night, I choose someone new, until I have killed them all more times than I feel comfortable sharing.

Until one night, *something changes*.

The following short story is the result of my final choice; *the eighth verdict*. After months of killing people I've never met, and countless bouts of uncertainty from those patterns of thought, a single choice freed me forever. Now looking back, it was obvious. But when you are in the thick of searching for answers to questions that shouldn't be asked, I can see how all of us could easily fall into the same trap I did.

With that said, enjoy the story. I hope it sheds light upon the same choices you will need to make in the future.



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# THE 8TH VERDICT

I don't even know where to start with this crazy, twisted story. Maybe I should start with our insatiable need for more. You know, the way we dive into things blindly, then beg for positive outcomes that can better our lives, only to receive a dull sense of fulfillment when the music stops and all the seats are taken. Maybe, *I'll just start at the beginning.*

The date is Tuesday, July 15th. My wife and I decide to do something out of the ordinary. We've come up with the idea of copying a friend who keeps winning everything from t-shirts, to movie passes, to lifetime gym memberships. His technique is simple;

*Join every damn sweepstake under the sun.*

My wife likes the idea — enough anyway, to create an exclusive email account for the *shitstorm* of spam we're about to receive from our little venture. She's smart about these kinds of things; always cognizant of the onslaught of skullduggery hiding around every digital corner.

Our next move is to do what anyone with a strong backbone and a wifi password would do.

*We dive in head-first.*

In just over a week, our inbox is fuller than a fat-cheeked chipmunk chomping through a treasure chest filled with cheetos.

Was it a good idea? Yes.

Did we win things? Yes.

Did we win things of great value? The truth behind *that* answer, lies within the details of how I've come to be dressed like an eighty-year-old man, looking to assassinate one of seven people from a list provided by someone who won't reveal his true name.

Do I have your attention? If not, please read that last sentence once again then check yourself for a pulse.

For starters, I'm not that old. However, in this moment, I appear to be frail, ambiguous; and that's the point. *It's a costume.* This is to obscure myself from the rest of the crowd.

As for the location, it's far from ideal, but I need to make it work. It's a lavish outdoor gala, surrounded by pillars like those found in a Greek coliseum. Except we're not in Greece, we're at a hidden oasis nestled on the outskirts of the Sahara Desert.

The good news is that it's night. *Thank God.* But the high-reaching pillars are glowing heavily from the spotlights resting at their base. This makes it almost impossible to hide as I do my recon work.



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Towards the left of the bench in which I'm perched, is a large marble fountain of Poseidon (*trident and all*) dancing with ripples of light from the shallow pool beneath his feet. There is a couple standing at the fountain base, each, with a drink in their hand. They are staring at the loose change tossed in by those hoping for fortune and fame.

How did I find myself in this position you ask? As already mentioned, my wife and I joined every sweepstakes and raffle we could find. This includes the lottery, both public *and* private. Turns out we didn't know as much about the *private* kind as we thought we did.

You see, there are two types of lotteries. The first kind — where you pay two dollars for a ticket at the drugstore, then wish you didn't as not a single ... damn ... number ... matches the drawing. Then, there's the kind that are far lesser known. *We won one of the lesser knowns.*

About two months into our little *kill everything in sight* game, we landed upon a lottery that offered a sizable *crypto* prize. The amount, for the sake of the story, doesn't really matter. Just know that it was big. As in, *life-changing* big.

If you don't know what cryptocurrency is, it's a type of currency that is *bank less*. Kind of like a free barter system in which anyone can trade, or sell, anything they wish to exchange for digital currency. There are no fees, no banks, no bureaucracy, and no bullshit.

We entered because we like the idea of crypto. And, because crypto can sometimes go up (or down) in value like a stock. This means it could be worth a lot more if we play our cards right.

For the record, we entered the drawing as many times as we could, thinking it would give us an edge. Which it did. What we *didn't* expect, however, was how we were to come into the actual prize itself, *after* we won.

It started with an email informing us we won. But — *there's always a but* — there was a stipulation. The stipulation was hiding in the fine print, which neither my wife nor I read, probably because we were too busy daydreaming how we'd spend the money.

Attached to the email was a PDF document explaining the stipulation. Come to find out, neither of us were excited about the terms.

*Congratulations! You've won!* It started so innocently. Then went downhill from there.

*In order to gain your prize, you must complete a single task. Kill someone! That's right, all you have to do is take a life! Eazy Peazy!*

Uh, what?

*Your next step is to choose a person from the attached document, which includes a list of seven individuals. Once you choose your victim, we'll do the rest. After the deed is done, you collect your prize. Yay for you!*

*Signed,*  
*The Handler*



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I could almost see the guy with a megaphone dressed in carnival pants, a long-tailed overcoat, and a baton twirling wildly in his free hand. I'll never forget the look on my wife's face either, as I read the email out loud.

"This is a joke, right?" she asked.

*I wished it was.*

We decided to go back to the original entrance certificate and read the fine print. I know, a little too late, but maybe it would save a life. Turns out, it did. *Ours.*

You see, it wasn't meant to be literal. Silly me. Instead, once we were to choose someone from that document, they wouldn't actually be killed. So no, not murdered, just *offed*, as in, removed from the list, or something like that. Quite a difference from winning the money then running for the rest of our lives because we *actually* killed someone.

However, and this is the big however, if we are to choose the *wrong* person, then we will be put out of the game completely. No money, no crypto, and no fulfilled dreams distracting us from reading any future fine print.

It is simply a game; just much more complicated than we expected. All in all the rules are the same. They chose one of us—me—to go to the party in disguise: so I can choose someone from the list, give the reason why I chose them, then share my final verdict with the *Handler*. You know, *the carnival guy*.

This brings us to the present. I'm sitting on the bench with the *Handler* sitting beside me whispering covertly into my ear.

"So, who's it going to be?" he asks with a cheeky grin, hiding in the murky shadows of a dirty martini.

"I don't know, I'm still trying to decide." I reply, tapping my leg nervously.

"Well you better hurry up buddy. The night ain't getting any younger."

He's right, it's been dark for almost two hours. The thought creates a bead of sweat that's building under my itchy wig; I imagine ripping the furry thing off and violently scratching my head like a monkey with bad dandruff. The thought brings me back to the task at hand. I need to choose, and I need to do it soon. If I don't, then there's no prize and no reason to be dressed in this ridiculous outfit.

As I look over the guests, I peer back towards the *Handler* and tell him I am going to do some recon. I need to get closer, analyze, and choose which of the seven will leave the greatest mark upon the world if they're gone. Oh, sorry, that's a part I left out.

While reading through the terms, it also states that we must choose the person who will leave the greatest impact in the wake of their demise. *Which makes my job even harder.*

The reason is simple; each person on the list already has some level of influence. It would be foolish to choose one whose death would be meaningless. Again, that's the biggest



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challenge before me. Each of the seven marks has already accomplished something extraordinary with their lives.

For example:

1. The *Celebrity*, in her beautiful red dress. She has moved millions with her films throughout her acting career. She's also earned great abundance and shared it through her charities, as well as many personal, and professional connections
2. The *Politician*, who has made the world a better place with her laws. Some have proven not only beneficial for the people in which she serves, but also for her family who adores her for who she has worked so hard to become.
3. The *Millionaire*, for his creation of thousands of jobs and large charitable contributions, which have both helped to support, and groom, the overall ecosystem of society.
4. The *Sports Star*, for his admiration and inspiration to thousands of young followers, as he's overcome great odds, both social and personal.
5. The *Inventor*, for her immense impact via the companies she's built, which have bettered the world from fuel efficient transportation, to the biodegradable plastics that we use in our everyday lives.
6. The *Clergyman*, for his guidance and support to the followers of faith worldwide. And, for his gift of clarity to those challenged by hard times, overwhelm, and loss.
7. The *Artist*, for creating inspirational works that have helped thousands of people to see with different eyes, breathe new life into their own creative visions, and produce opportunities where none seemed possible.

As I scroll through the names, the task becomes more complicated as I imagine removing each person from the list.

The *Politician* seems to be an easy target; but their loss may be short lived as someone could replace their position within days. Yes, they've accomplished many things, but so few of us follow the details of every new law. Would it really matter if they were gone? Or, would it backfire and *improve* the world if I chose them?

I then look at the *Clergyman*. My first thought is; *no one kills clergy*. But the impact would be immense. No need to mention the spiritual ramifications placed upon my own twisted soul for even thinking about it. If killing wasn't bad enough, to kill a leader of worldly faith, well, I'd rather be that fat chipmunk choking on a cheetos.

I place my focus upon the *Sports Star*. There are so many children moved by his accomplishments; they would surely miss him. Not to mention, many hopes and dreams would be crushed in the process. I'll have to put a check by his name. *Sorry kids.*

Next, the *Celebrity*. There's no doubt that when someone famous passes, it moves many around the world. However, there are well over seven billion people on this planet, so their loss may be an illusion in numbers, since they live in the US. I know this because you can follow



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the most well-known celebrities in the United States, see the large numbers of their followers on Instagram, then realize they haven't scratched the surface (in total numbers) of followers with lesser known celebrities in countries like China or India. Now, if this was an *Indian* celebrity, that may be different. There would be a *lot* more people missing this person if they were to vanish. No offense to our US celebrities, it's just simple math.

The *Millionaire*, at first, seems like someone to forget about. But what if they're in the background of something much larger than the size of their bank accounts? Before I scratch them off the list, I need to know what they've accomplished. I know better than to brush off a rich person; like we so often do with the writers behind popular movies. Without them, there would be very little to take for granted.

This brings me to the *Artist*. Artists are in a class all by themselves. Some can have a large following, yes, but forget about those numbers for a moment. An artist's work can go on for generations after they're gone, leaving a massive impact in their wake. Just think of Van Gogh for example, the man died broke. He created over two hundred paintings, and only sold a single one while he was alive. So yes, the Artist's death may not seem like a great loss at first, but what if their work becomes famous after they're gone? This could produce immeasurable impact upon their passing. They'll be considered for sure.

Finally, the *Inventor*. The deeper we get into the technological age, the more impact these people have upon the world. Did you know that rubber is the most important commodity on the planet? You thought it was oil didn't you? Well, it's not. Without *rubber* the world comes to a crashing halt. So, what if this person had invented something like that? With her gone, *we'd be gone*. She gets a check without question.

The strain on my shoulders has now reached a breaking point. I have absolutely no idea who to choose. Worse, if I choose wrong, the game is over, and we go home empty handed.

As the minutes tick by, I continue to examine all seven. I eavesdrop on their conversations, listening for cues to their level of importance, and watch how others react to their presence. I do my best to sum up — guess really — their impact upon the world. The more I listen, watch, and analyze, the harder the challenge becomes.

I can feel my patience running thin as I fight to imagine what it would be like to be each person on the list.

Continuing my way through the gala, something else stands out. The people here are all beautiful. Everyone is dressed to the nines: Gold, diamonds, rubies, elegant dresses, expensive suits, you name it. And their smiles; everyone is happy. And no, I'm not talking the fake kind of happy you see when we lie about how our day is going when it was actually shit. I mean *genuinely happy*. The kind of happy only a high level of personal fulfillment can bring.

The longer I mingle, the more the game feels rigged. *Everyone* seems to be important. Everyone has, or will have, some impact upon the world; especially if they're gone. I can't help myself; the cost is too high to lose any of them.



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*“Wait, what did I just say?”*

At first the thought feels ignorant, even stupid. But the more I think about it, the more it disrupts something inside me.

Making my way back to the *Handler*, I start to tear off my costume. The first of those who notice me look shocked. I can see their faces, jaws dropping, as I tear off my itchy wig and throw it into Poseidon’s pool. Regardless of how many people I’ve set off, no one looks more surprised than the *Handler*.

Now standing before him, I take a deep breath and offer my choice.

“I’ve chosen someone.” I say, yanking off my tie and throwing it too.

“Oh yeah? So, what’s the verdict?” he asks.

“The Millionaire.”

The *Handler* shakes his head.

“Nice try...”

*I interrupt.*

“And the Artist, the Clergyman, hell, all of them.”

The *Handler* looks uncertain.

“So, you’re choosing *all of them* to die? That breaks the terms. I’m sorry buddy, you’ve lost the game. There will be no prize.”

*But I’m not finished.*

“No,” I say, with a clenched jaw. “I’m choosing them all to *live*.”

The *Handler* looks confused.

“If you choose no one to die, then you still lose. Is this your final choice?” he asks, getting to his feet.

“No. You said the rules were to choose someone from the document. Is that correct?”

“Yes, those are the terms.”

“And that means whoever’s name is on the document, not just on the list?”

The *Handler* now looks nervous.

“Yes, you are correct.”

“Then my final choice, is *you*.”



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I can hear oohs and ahhs coming from the crowd. The *Handler* takes a deep breath.  
“Continue.” he says.

“By choosing you, the *Handler*, each of the seven will be allowed to continue making an impact on the world. Which is far greater than anyone of one of them dead. So, if I choose *you* to die, then they get to live, hence, the greatest impact. Like you said, I only need to choose a person *on* the document, whose death will produce the greatest overall impact. You signed it, so your name was on it.”

“Yes, I’m on the document. But what brought you to this conclusion?”

I sit down on the bench and take a deep breath.

“It’s simple. At some point in my life I have wanted to be *all* of these people. As I got older, life simply got in the way of those dreams. And the more I watched these people tonight, the more I realized I had been killing them off, one by one, since childhood. So, by removing *you* from the equation, I’m giving them all a second chance. In an odd way of looking at it, I’m giving *myself* a second chance.”

The *Handler* takes a step closer, removing himself from the shadows. Now, I can clearly see his face, proving my suspicions about who he really is. *He’s me.*

He then removes his hands from his pockets and begins to clap. The audience, now hovering all around, follows his lead.

“Well then.” he says, “You’ve won.”

I can barely feel the air returning to my lungs. I wasn’t sure at first, but it felt right. As with all things in life, the game seemed rigged until I saw the profound truth behind it.

The more we allow ourselves to fall into the trap of self-doubt, the greater our chances are of remaining separate from the truth. And that truth, is that we take on many different roles throughout life; all of which, allow us to make a much greater impact upon the world.





# IN COMPLETION

As mentioned in the introduction, this story originated from a dream. On countless occasions I found myself the old man, sitting on a bench, being asked by a faceless man (*The Handler*), which person at the party was to die. For months, this dream continued to haunt me since I had no idea what message it was trying to convey.

As I played along, I made my way through the crowd, over, and over. I watched, envied, even felt the cold hand of jealousy place itself upon my shoulder telling me I wasn't doing enough with my life compared to everyone else.

Until one day, *I could take no more.*

That's when the *Handler* asked me who was to die one too many times. My response was simple; *if it was him who was removed from the list, the nightmare would end.*

What's the *Handler's* real name you ask? It should be obvious by now.

It's *Doubt*.

*Doubt* is the eighth verdict. It is a kind of poison that seeps into our being without notice. It takes its time, weaving itself silently through our lives. Until one day, it has taken us over so completely, that we no longer have the sense to know it is even there.

For me, the dream represents the possibility of removing all doubt by awakening to the truth. Sure, it came after I had been pushed for months, but nonetheless, *it still came.*

Since the day I chose the *Handler* to die, I have not been asked to kill off any of the seven again. Instead, I have *become* them through my work. Not necessarily those specific seven, but I've allowed the universe to work through me as a conduit, giving me the opportunity to become anyone I choose.

Now, I can write my stories freely, create my models openly, share my thoughts without the constant worry of judgement, write my music without limitation, and live my life without wondering what *could* have been.

This is one of the greatest gifts of becoming aware of the walls we build around ourselves. To be free to create, dream, and meld worlds within words, then benefit from the near immeasurable rewards. And, it's been a huge reward to see projects come to life, move others, and create abundance for all involved; whether monetarily, spiritually, or through gratitude.

*This is a priceless gift.*

So next time someone asks you which dreams you are to assassinate, *kill the messenger.* For it is more often than not, simply the voice in our heads, *disguised as doubt.*

Humbly yours,  
Adam King

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