

13 Billion to One: Winning the \$50 Million Lottery Has Its Price

Randy Rush

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13 Billion to One is an absorbing memoir about a windfall that leads to considerations of what really matters.

Randy Rush's engaging memoir *13 Billion to One* is about a win so big that the resultant money seemed inexhaustible.

The book begins at a 2015 launch party for a product that Rush has invested \$4.6 million in. At the party, Rush learns that his investment had been embezzled by his business partner, Jeremy. The memoir then rewinds to tell the story from the beginning, when, as a hardworking bachelor nearing fifty, Rush trudged through the cold to buy cat food one day—and bought a lottery ticket that made him an instant millionaire, fifty times over.

Rush recounts his roller-coaster ride in a frank, straightforward tone. The media descent is covered using unguarded personal details, and Rush presents events as they appeared to him at the time. Viewing his win as a combination of gift, opportunity, and responsibility, he looked for ways to put the money to use.

The book conveys the joy of spending, but also its amphetamine-like effects. Rush's heart beats in overdrive; insomnia replaces sleep. When Jeremy suggests investing in his start-up, Rush sees it as a worthwhile venture and a way to help the son of a friend. The glut of money blunts his usual caution and deliberation.

Most of the book's descriptions are sparse, both when it comes to settings and to other people: one woman is tagged only as a "struggling single mom," while a Scottsdale hotel is not further established. However, Jeremy's business office is captured with details that justify Rush's impression that it's a legitimate business, while notes on the natural beauty of Rush's cabin retreat are more fulsome. Self-descriptions and introspection are also light within the narration, though Rush's concern for his pets, and appreciation for his home and friends, is apparent.

The opening scene sustains interest through the first half of the memoir. Knowing that Jeremy will manipulate several million dollars away from Rush results in suspense, alerting the audience to points that expose Jeremy's manipulative ways. The launch party blow-up is a natural pause in the middle of the book, where the mood shifts; Rush describes his chaotic childhood, resulting in additional dimension.

In the second half of the book, unearthed facts result in a broad picture of a large, well-organized crime syndicate. Jeremy's broad reach into other people's pockets is detailed through a pile up of jaw-dropping swindles and cons. Rush realizes his life has been narrowed and distorted by wealth, cedes his anger to courts and lawyers, and looks for more enriching and rewarding ways to channel his time and money.

13 Billion to One is an absorbing memoir about a windfall that leads to considerations of what really matters in life.

SUSAN WAGGONER (March 26, 2020)

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