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A winning 'red' carpet moment

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Maybe you're like me: You've never won anything in your life.

Never won a contest or a sweepstakes. Never hit on a lottery ticket. Never even won a lousy door prize.

When the old guys manning the Knights of Columbus table wave you over to buy raffle tickets for a new Pontiac G6, sure, you fork over a few bucks.

But you know you'll never see that baby parked in your driveway, even if you bought enough tickets to wallpaper a room.

If this sounds like you, Mr. or Ms. Perpetual Loser, I give you hope.

And this hope is the saga of Ronnie Teich.

Teich, 54, an accounting technician from Ellicott City, just returned from a whirlwind \$4,000 weekend in Hollywood after winning OK! magazine's Red Carpet Sweepstakes.

She walked the red carpet at the world premiere of the new MGM animated movie Igor and chatted with Steve Buscemi, John Cusack and Arsenio Hall, a few of the stars who did voices for the film.

And she'd never won much of anything, either.

"I'm an online contest junkie," she told me. "But I'd only won little things: T-shirts, DVDs, pens."

You won a PEN!? I thought. I never even won that.

But Teich's luck changed last September when she entered the Red Carpet Sweepstakes put on by OK!, a celebrity mag.

A few months later, she arrived at her office in Rockville to find a voice-mail message from one of the magazine's flacks saying she'd won the sweepstakes' grand prize: a glamorous trip for two to Tinseltown for the premiere of a movie to be named later.

True to the mindset of the perpetual loser, Teich immediately thought someone was yanking her chain.

And she had a pretty good idea who the chain-yanker was.

"I have an ex-husband and he's nuts," she said. "When people say they see Elvis at the Dairy Queen, believe it. Because I married Hitler."

When another voice-mail message arrived on April 1 - yes, that would be April Fool's Day - saying the trip had been changed to Las Vegas for the world premiere of Deal, starring Burt Reynolds, Teich thought: OK, Hitler's

REALLY getting creative now.

But it wasn't the nutty ex-husband playing tricks. Because a few months later, a letter arrived with an OK! letterhead that essentially said: "Forget the Vegas trip. You're headed to Hollywood for the Igor opening!"

Only then did Teich truly allow herself to get all worked up.

"I'm a big TV and movie buff," she said. And now she was off to her dream destination.

So a little over a week ago, she and her boyfriend, Bill Holter, a retired federal employee from Hazleton, Pa., finally flew to L.A.

At the airport, they were met by a limo driver holding a sign with Teich's name - just like in the movies - and whisked to the swanky Roosevelt Hotel, a landmark built in 1924.

Already, this was way better than winning a stupid T-shirt.

That afternoon, she met with a personal shopper at Macy's, who helped her pick out an outfit for the big event. And the next morning, a makeup person arrived at her hotel room to get her all dolled up for the 10 a.m. premiere - they do things early on the West Coast - at Grauman's Chinese Theatre, right across Hollywood Boulevard from the hotel.

Finally it was time for Ronnie Teich, the big movie fan, to do something she'd only fantasized about: walk the red carpet at a gen-u-ine Hollywood opening.

Except it turned out to be a purple carpet.

This was because Igor, the tale of a hunchbacked lab assistant who dreams of becoming a scientist and winning the Evil Science Fair, has some sort of purple motif running through it.

Whatever. The walk was an incredible experience.

"It was a wall of photographers screaming 'Look over here!'" Teich recalled, with one flashbulb after another going off in migraine-inducing fashion.

I caught a glimpse of Teich's and Holter's walk on YouTube. At one point, they pass behind the big, fat head of James Lipton, the host of Bravo's Inside the Actors Studio, as he's being interviewed. And they both look smashing.

The screening of Igor was a hoot, too. As you might guess, attending a world premiere is different from taking in a movie at your local Cineplex. With cast and crew members and their families in attendance, the crowd claps for everything - you can be the third assistant wardrobe guy and get a huge ovation during the opening credits.

And when it was all over, and she had chatted up John Cusack, Steve Buscemi and Arsenio Hall and gotten their autographs and attended a post-screening party at her hotel, Teich remembered wanting to pinch herself and wondering: "Are we really here?"

They were. It wasn't a dream. It was a great story. Hell, it's an inspiration to luckless souls everywhere.

It's enough to make me want to run out and look for the old guys selling raffle tickets at the Knights of Columbus table.

A brand new Pontiac G6. ... I'd probably want the hard-top convertible.