

Plinka! Plinka! Plinka!

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WE HAD TO GET TO GLENDORA, California, to comfort our daughter, whose husband had died, suddenly and unexpectedly, the previous Sunday morning. When we finished loading the car and turned the key, nothing happened. The battery was dead. We panicked. It was still tricky learning to drive our hybrid Toyota Prius. But we tracked down a mechanic, who told us how to jumpstart the little auxiliary battery in the trunk of the car. We made it to Cedar City about 11:00 p.m., found a Comfort Inn and had a good night's sleep, followed by a high cholesterol breakfast. On the road again, we had bypassed St. George when the car's red light went on. We had to get gas. Just over the state line into Nevada, we turned into a shabby gas station/store. The gas station consisted of two gas pumps, unattractive restrooms, a bar with three or four stools, and shelves of the kind of nibblers you eat only when you're bored and want to get somewhere more exciting. Oh, and yes, the ever-present slot machines.

Marden, Sherri, Harlow, and I couldn't help but notice the dancing lights in the machines. They took dollar bills. We knew the odds of winning were against us. We weren't enticed. We didn't have money to throw away. Near the door, however, we saw one machine that took quarters. Sherri dropped one in and pulled the handle. I immediately launched my lecture about how she might just as well throw her money out the door as put it in the machine. So far so good. I had a quarter in my pocket and to fortify my lecture, I put it into the slot. Plinka, a quarter came out. I immediately put it back in just to show Sherri that it didn't really pay. Plinka, plinka, plinka. Out came 30 quarters. The rest of the family came running, fully intending to put them back in, but I rescued enough to buy us all hamburgers.

As we left, I felt betrayed by that machine. It had made a liar out of me. We bypassed the Las Vegas strip and all the exciting hoopla, not daring to test our virtue and take a chance on becoming hooked and degenerate.

Our son-in-law, Bruce Campbell, had been a professor at Cal State Los Angeles for more than 25 years, head of the family sociology department. It was an unexpected comfort to see the elaborate floral displays at the funeral home, which was bulging with family and friends, colleagues and students. Bruce hadn't always been the most diplomatic person. He had, however, been instru-

mental in implementing a new college method for students pursuing teaching degrees. His students were varied—Indian, African-American, Asian, Hispanic, white. The flowers were as varied and profuse as his students.

Two Hispanic sisters came in carrying a huge floral arrangement. They looked somewhat bewildered, and I greeted them and invited them to sit down and tell me about Bruce. He was their favorite teacher. They talked about his new method. He had organized "cohorts," groups consisting of thirty teaching majors who moved through their program together. They were able to act as backup teams for each other, discussing classes and other issues with the group and helping one another. If they couldn't get the classes they needed, had financial trouble, or had to drop out, Bruce immediately went to bat for them. The two sisters, with tears in their eyes, told me how he had helped them.

At the funeral the next day, brief eulogies were given by the bishop and Marden. Then the service was opened to any who wanted to express themselves. At some of the sentiments and remarks, I imagined a quiet laugh or slight movement coming from the coffin.

At the cemetery, a piper came toward us dressed in a Stuart plaid, piping a Campbell on his way.

After the ceremonies most of the guests and relatives congregated at Diane's home, eating the abundant food prepared by friends and the Relief Society and reminiscing about Bruce and the many jokes and stories he liked to tell about others—some not exactly complimentary.

The next morning we were all a little awkward, not knowing how to react or what to say. Well, what do women do under such circumstances? They go shopping! We didn't buy much, mostly drooled at some of the new home improvement creations. Back at the house, the younger generation was anxious to examine our new Toyota Prius and marvel at its pluses. One or two drove it around the block and vowed to get one some day.

After many "I love you"s, we headed back home. It was early evening. The wind was blowing near Vegas and hail was dropping heavily, plinka, plinka, plinka, reminding us of the slots. We saw a beam of light that went straight up as if to reach the moon. As we got closer to the source, we could see it was coming out of the point of a huge pyramid. Beams of beautiful blue and gold light were dancing up and down the structure. We were fascinated. It was nearing midnight; a fierce wind began blowing; hail pounded the car, plinka, plinka, plinka. We wanted to get far away from the strip and shut out the temples of sin. We ducked into the last motel in North Las Vegas and were lulled to sleep.

The next morning we ate another high cholesterol breakfast and headed north to the promised land of Utah, out of the sound of the slots. As we neared the same little border store, we noticed that the gas tank was getting low. This time I decided I would not put even one quarter in. We gathered our trove of unhealthy snacks and headed for the door. Dad was in a hurry and went out the door first, followed quickly by the other two. I paused for a minute, feeling the hot coin in my hand. Something pulled my hand to the slot, and I hurriedly put

in a quarter, pulled the handle, then headed for the door. As I was opening it, I heard plinka, plinka, plinka and a little boy say, "Maw, look at all that money!" Momentarily I wrestled with my conscience. Should I go back and claim it?

I decided not to, since it was the Sabbath. I hurried and caught up with the others, saying absolutely nothing about my weak moment. I didn't want them to know that I, their strong, upright, God-loving, church-going mother had succumbed to gambling. No, especially not on the Sabbath and entering the pure state of Utah, home of my church-loving ancestors. All the rest of the day, a little weird thought kept nagging me. Did I actually hit the jackpot? I felt very virtuous in not knowing.