

The Rewards of Sacrifice

Years ago my mom had a date with this fellow who pulled up in a shiny new Jaguar. Poor sucker thought it'd be nice to invite us kids to go with them to the Red Lobster. *BIG* mistake. However, my six year old little brother Heath and I dived in that miniature back seat before mom could even try to talk him out of it. Yee-doggy. You talk about the Clampetts coming to town? I hadn't felt so highfalutin since we'd talked momma into squealing rubber in our yellow Vega out back of the Tasty Freeze!

Poor mom. She couldn't stop biting her nails and looking back. I knew she was just waiting for us to live down to her expectations. Seeing her so jittery made me feel plumb awful, so I whomped Heath in the back of the head; figuring he was mostly to blame. The little booger looked up from under his cotton-white mop top and gritted what baby teeth he had left. "Whatcha do that for?" He demanded. He proceeded to stab me with an ink pen, and after a short scuffle, I was forced to tell momma on him. With that, he spit on me and went back to writing his name on that fancy cow smelling seat. Mom gave us her best scowl. It was her way of reminding us of her last three dates, which we'd run off before they even made it to the front stoop.

I don't know... Heath and I had never been too keen on that new kid-friendly, 'Mr. Sensitive' act so popular with the 'players' back in the 70's. Yeah, this cat had good taste in cars, but we weren't easily fooled. Something about him reminded us of a politician. This Red Lobster thing was probably just a ploy to get our vote. One thing was for sure, he hadn't done his homework. Yes, mom was prettier than a young Ellie May, but everyone knew the word on the street was she had a pair of kids wilder than two lop eared monkeys raised in a hollow stump. At any rate, Heath kept up his doodling, and I was glad. I figured if I could keep him busy we might keep from running off this fellow until we'd at least had a chance to chew a heap of that fancy ocean food he'd be springing for. I winked at momma to let her know I had it all under control.

Once in the restaurant we behaved pretty well, at least for the first four or five minutes. After that, the sugar rush kicked in from all the candy I'd stolen from the bowl up front. Then we commenced bouncing around like two rookies in the Pro Rodeo bull riding finals. Heath was closest, so momma whacked him one good. The little booger merely scrunched his nose up and slid underneath the table and off towards the restroom before I could trip him or anything.

"I gotta go pee-pee," he called out loudly across the restaurant. Some people snickered. It was totally embarrassing. So I yelled back, "Don't eat the toilet mints you little munchkin!" Momma whomped me with her menu, then quickly turned to force a plastic smile at that politician of hers.

A few minutes later the place was abuzz with Heath's return. He was zipping from table to table; his fly wide open, doing his best "Hulk" imitation. He'd stare longingly at everyone's food and then call out, "Munchkin Man!" He was like some sort of three foot tall super hero lounge lizard working the room.

Needless to say, that was our last ride in a Jaguar. Poor ole' momma never even got past the first stop on the campaign trail. I reckon I should shoulder some of the blame, but it isn't like I didn't try to keep Heath busy.

But anyway- Obviously there are seasons in our lives we're called to make sacrifices. Momma did, raising two kids as a single parent. She could've pawned us off on somebody else while she pursued her own happiness, but she didn't. She put herself aside and stood up to her responsibilities like a parent should. I believe that's commendable before God. Thanks mom!

Many times I have to remind myself that if reaching my dreams has to come at the expense of my family or friends, then I probably have my sights set on the wrong mark. What if God's ultimate plan for our lives is we be willing to lay down our dreams to help someone else reach theirs? (*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* **John 15:13** KJV) Instead of getting bitter over the sacrifices we've made, and fretting over what might've been, maybe we should try giving thanks for being given the opportunity to be more like our Savior. Jesus laid down everything for us.

Who knows? With the right campaign strategy one day we might all have one of those highfalutin Jaguars chariots waiting on us up in heaven! I can almost see momma squealing rubber out back of those pearly gates now.

-Guy Sheffield 8/21/07