Spirituality
Soul Seeing



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The day I filled out the paperwork for my father to be placed on Medicaid, all I felt was anger. After 12 years in a memory care unit, my fiscally responsible father

finally ran out of money. Anger launched a cynicism that drilled a hole in my soul as I completed the final paperwork. It was time for me to go home, half a nation away, leaving my dad in the hands of kind and caring people whom he saw through only one trusting lens. He thought everyone was me.

Pulling my car into Wendy's parking lot, I felt my tire scrape the curb, reminding me to relax and calm down. I drove up to the window, where a young woman with distinctive features of Down syndrome waited to take my order. A pair of thick black rim glasses perched on her nose.

"What do you want?" she asked, friendly. An ice cream machine roared behind her, churning up cold treats. I shouted my order, wanting to make sure she heard me. Writing it down slowly, carefully, she read it back to me. Bobbing my head up and down like my dog does pointing to his food dish, I wished the process would hurry. Instead, she read it over to me once more. And another time just to be sure.

"That'll be nine dollars and 29 cents please. One moment." She slid the window shut.

As I sat in my air-conditioned car, I recalled a patient I'd once met at a clinic I worked in as a community mental health nurse. A lifelong Medicaid recipient, all Bill ever wanted was a paying job, a real job to make him feel like everyone else. Bill had a birth injury that left him mentally challenged yet willing and able to do small jobs. Finding an employer willing to hire people with disabilities was the hardest part. I never thought he could work an eight-hour shift, but he proved me wrong. He cleaned floors at the mall for 15 years, retiring with a small pension, plenty of friends and life experiences.

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Through the Wendy's drive-through window, I could see two workers arguing, both with Down syndrome features. On the opposite side of the room a man stood in front of a hot grill, twirling a spatula between his fingers, flattening patties, one empty sleeve pinned onto the back of his brown shirt. He ignored everyone.

When a young woman in a hairnet entered the room, the hot kitchen scene shifted. Doing what a commanding general in a battle must do, she rallied her crew against their own anxieties. Her slow and deliberate manner brought peace and calm. She glanced at me through the closed window, and we recognized one another.

I was a commanding general, too. For the past 12 years, I directed and controlled the care my father had received. But now, in shock, I realized my tenure was over. There were payment rules to follow and boundaries on possible care he could have. I had to let go of my father, allowing his care to pass into the hands of God and a new standard of nursing care.

Cynicism had been fueling my frustration, but it hadn't planted itself firmly enough for me not to recognize a beatitude when I met one. Here at a Wendy's, love was patience. Here, love was kindness in the form of a carefully wrapped fish sandwich. Love leads us, at times drags us, not to hopelessness and despair or to the edges of anger through helplessness.

When my attendant opened the window, handing over my chocolate shake and the rest of my order, she carefully said to me, "Thank you for your business."

All I could think was, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."

"I'll be back," I tell her, seeing a smile spread over her lovely face, feeling how wet with tears mine had become.

I understood I had come to the right place.