

ANSWERING GOD'S NUDGE

No goodbye was needed, just a long hug

BY LYNDA CHELDELIN FELL, International Grief Institute
lynda@internationalgriefinstitute.com

The nudge came three hours in to the 5-hour flight. Sigh.

I was tired. And sore.

Just a few hours earlier on the way to the airport, we were involved in a 3-car accident. Hit from behind by a car at 45 mph, thankfully my friend's truck was larger than the car. Three vehicles, two tow trucks, no obvious injuries. And, thanks to Uber, I still made my plane on time.

Thank you, God.

With security behind me, Starbucks in hand, and two cookies in my purse, I boarded the plane bound for home.

My seat was nestled between a young man traveling to Alaska and a small elderly woman reading a book. I swallowed the last of the Starbucks, rested my head against the seat and closed my eyes. The cookies could wait.

Some time had passed when turbulence woke me. Not wanting to ruin a good night's sleep in my own bed, I pulled out my iPad and began watching a movie.

Thirty minutes into my movie, I felt the nudge. Sigh.

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THE nudge. A nudge from God.

I paused the movie, laid down my iPad, and pulled out my earbuds. God pointed to the elderly lady to my right.

She had been reading earlier but the book was now in her lap. I opened the conversation by asking whether she was from Atlanta or Seattle.

"Seattle," she said.

Her kind face was framed by short silver hair, wire-framed glasses and soft pink lipstick that accentuated bright blue eyes. She was wearing a beautiful blue sweater. Blue. My deceased daughter's favorite color.

The nudge was still there. I obeyed and continued.

"What were you doing in Atlanta?" I asked.

She started to speak and then burst into shoulder- heaving sobs.

I wrapped my arms around her as best I could and just held her, resting my cheek on the crown of her small head.

I recognized those sobs. They were the sobs of a newly bereaved mother.

The sobs of a mother who lost a 47-year-old son to suicide just 4 months before. The sobs of a mother who had just traveled to his house to tend to details no parent should have to tend to.

The rest of the flight was spent in conversation with my new 86-year-old friend, a conversation punctuated by occasional sobs, lots of tissue, and a few smiles. Having walked this path myself when our 15-year-old daughter died, I reassured her that one day it wouldn't feel so raw.

We parted at the luggage carousel. No goodbye was needed, just a long hug before heading in opposite directions, she to a taxi and me to a northbound shuttle.

I'm still tired. Still sore. And still on the shuttle. But when my head finally meets my pillow tonight, I will fall asleep with a heart full of gratitude, gratitude for God's nudges.

Thank you, God.

