

# The Gambler

## A Modern-Day Prodigal Son

Alan Steinle

A wealthy Kansas farmer had  
two sons, and he was very glad  
to hear his elder offspring say  
that he would never move away.  
He wanted to continue there  
and be his father's farming heir.

But when the younger son had grown  
into a man, he took a loan  
from his old man and drove away.  
He told his dad that he would pay  
once he had built a business in  
a west-coast start-up town, but when  
he left, he went directly to  
Las Vegas, where he found and threw  
some balls onto a roulette wheel.  
He won the game, and bought a meal,  
then went to try a slot machine.  
He won at once, and he was keen  
to keep on winning every game,  
but soon a watchful worker came  
to show the winner to the door.  
They couldn't let him win much more.

He took his winnings and the loan—  
his fortune had already grown  
into a nice and hefty sum.  
He felt a strange delirium  
and went back to his hotel room,  
for he intended to resume  
his gambling in a different zone,  
where all his winnings were unknown.  
But word had spread around the town,  
and his good luck turned upside down.

But he stayed in Las Vegas and  
spent all his dough in wonderland.  
He wasted all his father's loan  
on careless living till he'd grown  
into a shell of what he was,  
and life and liquor lost their buzz.

The hotel kicked him in the street,  
and all he'd had that day to eat  
was breakfast that he'd gotten free.

He felt just like a refugee  
upon the street, but couldn't bear  
to ask for help from people there.

He thought about his father's farm,  
where he had never raised an arm  
to help his father in the fields,  
but he had gained from all the yields.  
He thought, "Perhaps my dad would let  
me be his farmhand servant, yet  
I don't think he would care to see  
how I have lived so foolishly."

But hungry, weak, and all alone,  
he used a stranger's new cellphone  
to call the number of his dad.  
His father wasn't grieved or mad  
but told him to come home at once  
and didn't treat him like a dunce.

When he got home, he didn't shun  
but hugged him like a long-lost son.  
He didn't say, "What did you do  
with all my money? Shame on you!"  
Instead, they had a festive meal,  
which made the son, returning, feel  
a love that he had never known,  
and now he didn't feel alone.

But when the elder son had seen  
his father's actions, he was green  
with envy and withdrew outside,  
for he was mad—could not abide  
the thought that he had never had  
a party thrown by his own dad.

But then the father came outside  
and took his elder son aside.  
He said, "I had to celebrate,  
for my lost son is home. The weight  
of worry finally has left,  
and I don't feel like I'm bereft.  
So cheer up, son. Don't feel unwell,  
for all I have is yours as well.