

# Lessons Learned in Las Vegas

by [Shai Afsai](#) (June 2021)



*She Represents*, Jeanne Mammen, 1928

## Lesson 1

When you arrive at your hotel room  
hungry and thirsty  
after a long flight from the east coast  
and from traveling to and from airports  
and are delighted to find  
after checking in  
that there is an array of snacks  
and bottled water waiting for you  
next to the big flat screen TV—  
which you turn on to a mixed martial arts fight on ESPN—  
and lie back on the couch  
and eat a packet of chocolate peanut candies,  
chocolate raisins,  
epicurean snack mix,  
pretzel nibs,  
Pringles,  
Mars Mix,  
and roasted cashews,  
and wash all that down  
with four FIJI Water bottles  
and think to yourself,  
*Wow. This is some hotel. I wonder if tomorrow  
they'll refill the complimentary snacks too  
or just the water*  
then you'll discover  
upon checking out  
that you've actually been charged over \$200 for minibar  
expenses—

and you can buy a lot more  
chocolate raisins, Pringles, and bottles of water  
in a store  
for \$200  
than you ate and drank in fifteen  
impatient, gluttonous minutes

while laying back on the couch,  
watching mixed martial arts  
on the big flat screen TV  
in your hotel room

## Lesson 2

When you're taking an evening stroll  
up and down the Vegas Strip  
alone  
in sneakers and exercise pants  
and an absolutely gorgeous young woman  
in salacious attire  
approaches you and gives you a friendly smile  
and asks how your evening is going  
and you think to yourself,

*Wow. This is some city.*

*An absolutely gorgeous young woman in salacious attire  
wouldn't be approaching me and asking how my evening is going  
if I were taking an evening stroll in sneakers and exercise  
pants*

*back home*

and then you follow up that thought with,

*Wait. I wonder if she's a prostitute*

but then before you can think that thought through fully  
the woman asks where you're staying

and you tell her

and she says she's heard that's a very nice hotel

and you say,

"It sure is.

They even have snacks and FIJI Water  
waiting for you when you check in"

and she says she'd love to see what your room looks like

and you can't possibly say no to that

and so you both head to the hotel

and up to your room

and she goes into the bathroom to freshen up

and while she's in there  
you quickly throw out  
all of the chocolate peanut candies,  
chocolate raisins,  
epicurean snack mix,  
pretzel nibs,  
Pringles,  
Mars Mix,  
and roasted cashews wrappers  
and empty water bottles  
that you left strewn about the couch  
before taking your evening stroll  
and then she comes out of the bathroom  
in nothing but a red bra and panties  
and offers you a condom  
and you have sex  
and then  
when it's over  
she says, "That will be \$600"  
and you give her \$700  
because Vegas is all about tipping  
and you should never give less than 15% –  
then, yes,  
the woman was a prostitute  
and you've paid for sex–

but a few days later  
when you check out of the hotel  
and discover that you've been charged over \$200  
for chocolate raisins, Pringles, and bottled water  
you'll conclude  
that in comparison  
\$700 was a fair deal for what the woman provided,  
and as prostitution is legal in Nevada  
the only actual crime is the hotel minibar prices

### **Lesson 3**

When you put down \$100  
at the Free Bet Blackjack table  
and a few hours later find  
you have \$4,300 in chips piled in front of you  
and your friend comes back from the restroom  
and is relieved to see your pile continued to grow  
while he was away taking a leak  
and he says to you,  
“I think now’s a good time to quit,  
while you’re this far ahead.  
You’ve already made enough  
to cover the whole vacation,  
and you don’t even know how to gamble”  
and you say  
that you can’t possibly stop now,  
not while you’re this hot,  
and your friend tries a different angle  
and says,  
“We’ve been at the tables  
for a few hours already  
and I’m hungry.  
Just now,  
coming back from the restroom,  
I met two absolutely gorgeous women  
and they asked if we were staying here  
and they said they wanted to check out our rooms.  
You should see what they’re wearing.  
Salacious!”  
and your mind is on the next bet,  
so you barely hear him,  
but your friend keeps trying  
and says,  
“Let’s go up to my room with the women.  
I still haven’t touched  
any of the snacks or water there.  
Come on”  
but you ignore his suggestion

and within an hour  
lose all of the \$4,200 you'd won  
and the \$100 you initially bet  
and the additional \$400  
you hastily withdrew  
from the ATM  
by the restroom  
near where your friend met the two women  
he has taken up to his room—

you'll appreciate that your friend  
never once later blurts out,  
“I told you so”—  
not during the rest of your stay in Vegas  
and not after the trip is over  
and you're back on the east coast—  
even though you know  
that's exactly what he's thinking

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**Shai Afsai's** articles, short stories, poems, book reviews, and photographs have been published in *Anthropology Today*, *Haaretz*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Journal of the American Revolution*, *New English Review*, *The Providence Journal*, *Reading Religion*, *Review of Rabbinic Judaism*, *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, and *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*. See more [here](#).

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