

Sister Lorie's Tale from the Dark Side

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Tuesday, November 03, 2020

<https://curmudgeon-alley.com/sister-lories-tale-from-the-dark-side/>

Did you ever wake up and wonder what side of the planet it is? Well, I woke up and wondered what part of the universe I had been magically transported to. I'm a planner. I planned a trip to Oklahoma City. We have been going to this retreat for a few years now. We found a hotel close by the facility. Granted this



hotel is not much, but it is clean and cheap

I made the reservation on one of those on line places. You know the kind where you can see lots of lower rates for hotels... I won't mention the name here. I found the hotel, made the reservation and like a flash they charged my card.

That same day, the hubby calls to tell me that 'mail count' is that same time frame. For those of you who are not familiar with USPS, mail count translates to going in early, working late and no time off except for your own funeral. Oh well, we can't go, so I call the online company. No help there, but they did suggest that I call the hotel. Eureka! They said no problem to change the reservation to the fall. We generally attend the fall retreat as well, good deal.

Months pass. It's now October and the much needed and awaited trip is upon us. I call the hotel to confirm the dates and make sure they are aware that we are bringing the dog. No problem on both. There is a per day fee for the dog.

The day of doom, otherwise known as check in. Nice trip. Roll up to the hotel with time to spare. We planned to drop the pooch and luggage and go to set up David's musical equipment for the retreat. By this time the small fuzzy one is beginning to cross her legs. We decide to divide and conquer. David takes doggie duty. I proceed to the lobby. I have noticed that the hotel has gone down a bit and is more than shabby.

First clue. There are two clerks in the space that could nicely accommodate a midget. The younger clerk is male, new on the job and has an accent that indicates he is from a place on the other side of the globe. It appears that the senior clerk should have switched to decaf about two pots ago. I give the usual ID and she finds my reservation. Houston, we have a problem. The payment from the online company is not being cooperative. Frustration + caffeine = not good. She's giving the new clerk tasks only to elbow him out of the way and do it herself. Add more characters to the scene. Two men come into the tiny lobby. One of them is engaged in a cell phone conversation. Clearly, he is speaking loud enough the phone could be a prop. Now to complete the scene, David and greatly relieved dog have come to see what the problem seems to be. Senior clerk is now going from a low mutter to an all out grouching. The dog, picking up on

the tension is starting to shake. We have now have 6 people and one shaking dog in the space that could easily hold 1.5 people in comfort. I'm checking for one of those little signs that states the max capacity deemed by the fire marshal. Party time in the lobby.

The clerk grouching is turning into a buzz. I suggest that the problem may be with the reservation change. The dismissive wave tells me that my thoughts have fallen on deaf ears. I continue to wait. She gives up. We are now going over the extra room charges and finally get the keys. Off we go!

The plan continues. Drop the dog and luggage, on to the retreat. One might think that would be an end to this little tale of woe.

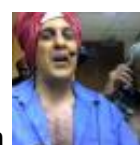
After the Friday evening session of the retreat, we are back at the hotel. It's been a long day. David takes the dog on her constitutional. I begin to change and perform the usual night time routine.

Face dripping wet, I reach for the towel next to the sink. Yikes! What did my hand just touch. It felt like 60 grit sand paper. I open my eyes to find that this is the towel. Where did they buy these things? Home Depot? I very gingerly pat dry, not wanting the pumice stone effect. David has just returned with a happy little dog. She gets a treat when she does her business at the hotel. But wait, didn't I just hear the toilet flush? Why yes indeed it was. We discover that the room comes with an unadvertised feature. Running water in the toilet. Resulting in random flushes. While not as dependable as 'ol Faithful, the flush is about every half hour. Good grief!



Second clue. Now the room phone is ringing. It's Ms. Caffeine from the front desk. From the speed at which she is speaking, we had time for at least one more pot. She is talking faster than Robin Williams on crack. I try to slow her down to the speed of light, but no go. I'm now at the beginning of a 5 minute rant to let me know that the online company can't find my reservation. Funny, she accessed it on her screen at check in. She goes on to imply that I might be pulling a fast one. She demands that I call the company this very minute to 'take care of this' or she will bill my Visa card for the whole amount. I remind her that it's 10pm on a Friday night and this issue should be between them and her. We have now kicked the speed up a notch. Who knew she had another gear! She informs me that I am being ugly and hangs up. Nice. By this time, David is looking at me. The dog is looking at me.

I call the online company. I get the first clerk. She gave her name as Sally. Seriously, do they think we don't know where they are? I explain the problem as best I can given the language barrier. She quickly realizes that the time frame is from a previous system and tells me she cannot help. I tell her that the data is out there and find a supervisor. Sally tells me 'I'm very much happy to be putting you on hold'. Translation: drag up a chair boys, it's going to be a bumpy night.



Clerk II. After a tiny wait, no more than 5 minutes. I explain the problem again to the new best friend from India. He was able to access the records for the original date. 'This is very long ago, why are

you checking in now?' More explaining about change of dates by the hotel. 'Oh my, oh my. I cannot be fixing this.' Just what I wanted to hear. He did put me on hold again to send me into billing problems purgatory.

From the length of the hold time, I can only conclude that billing problems purgatory is a long way off. Finally a human! Explanation of problem part three. He tells me he can't talk to me??? I explain that this call was forwarded by the online company. After a bit of groveling on my part, he agrees to call the hotel. I settle down for the night.

I feel something odd. I check out the blanket. Wow, I didn't know we had WWII relics. I'm starting to



look fondly at the dog's bed. She has a much

better deal. She gives me the look that tells

me she is not about to share her little Chihuahua slice of heaven.

Saturday, light doth dawn, life is good. Doggie walk, breakfast, off to workshop. At noon break, I call the hotel just to make sure all is well. I get the desk clerk that is starting his third week. He is unaware of the problem and cannot check to see if the room has been paid. Wonder how he checks folks out? I give up.

Dinner break. Clue three. We zoom back to the hotel to do the doggie walk. As we are opening the door the phone is ringing. Do they have cameras in here? It's newest front desk clerk from check in. I barely get hello out of my mouth and he starts the dissertation. I will only hit the highlights here. We are awful, not paying for the room, causing Ms. Caffeine to make several calls, call online company now. I ask him to let me know when it's my turn to speak. There must be something in the water in this town that causes people to speak loudly and rapidly. Woohoo, it's my turn. I ask about the previous night's promised phone call. This launches another loud protected speech on how all the online employees are liars and you must yell and scream at them to get them to do anything. I'm thinking he's the man for the job!

I'm now getting looks from the two-legged and four-legged fellow travelers. The one with the lesser number of legs is pointing towards his watch and making a hungry-feed-me face. Knowing that I'm back in phone-call-hell, I ask him to call our friends and cancel dinner.

Back to the online company. I brazenly call the I-can't-talk-to-the-guest number! Ha! I get someone from my home country. We are now on a roll and my hopes of peaceful resolution soar. I explain the problem again with the addition of the hotel harassment calls. She is sympathetic. Be still my heart. She tells me that I can expect a long hold time as she will try to help. 1.5 hours later, the best that can be done is for the online company to refund my money at some future date. I have the joy of paying even more for the stay. Have I mentioned that the tub drains at the rate of cold molasses?

I have officially thrown in the towel. I know when the universe has converged and rallied against me. I am starving. We have now missed the evening session of the workshop. I go to pay the bill at the front desk.



I wait for my turn. Note that both clerks, Ms. Caffeine and Mr. India are awaiting me. Will the joy never end? I explain that I came to pay the bill. Ms. Caffeine informs me that she has already billed my Visa. Oh, really! I ask what the amount of the total unauthorized charge is. She makes a production of announcing each charge and then adding it on a 1950 adding machine. Mr. India has decided to launch into his favorite rant about the online company. I am tired, frustrated, hungry and within a hair of homicide. I tell Mr. India to shut up. Possibly in a loud tone. Ok, I yelled! Ms. Caffeine gives me the final total. Only \$30 more than I had booked the weekend for. I am now out over 250 between the promised refund and the hotel charges. I'm thinking I could have stayed at the Ritz for that little bundle. I believe I used an expletive delete at this point. Ms. Caffeine ordered me from the lobby. Thinking an exit would be easier than an explaining the dead bodies to the police, I left.

Again, one would think the tale of woe is at an end.

We go to dinner. Return and settle for the night.



3:45am. I didn't know there was an am to 3:45. I awake to a strange banging noise. With at least 90% of my brain cells still in la-la land, I ask David if he hears that noise. I get up and peek out the window, can't see a thing but parking lot. So, I open the door and poke my head out. What to my astounded eyes does appear, but what looks to be a homeless woman beating on the door with both hands. Out of my mouth pops, 'What the hell do you think you're doing?' She informs me that her baby is in there and she can't get the door open. I can say with a great amount of certainty that this woman was decades past child bearing age. I shut the door and bolt it. I scramble around to find my glasses. Find the hotel phone. Dial the front desk of infamy. Mr. India is on the job. I tell him that there is a person beating on the door about 3 rooms down. Mr. India's reply, 'I told her to stop that'. Nice. At this point I had no temper left to lose, it was all gone. I suggested that he had 5 minutes to make her stop or I was going to call 911. I failed to use my inside voice. The din was stopped in a few minutes.

The few hours left in the weekend went fine.