

I Don't Want to Live in a Motel

By Michael Groetsch

“Hi, Barb. Just calling to see how things are going at home. I'll be back in town late Sunday afternoon.”

“Everything is fine, Mike, except that the little kitten the kids found yesterday is getting real weak. I'm going to the pet store in the morning to buy some kitten formula and a baby bottle. I'm going to try nursing it back to health.”

“Oh, while you're there, Barb, please do me a big favor and get a live mouse for Gene's snake. The snake hasn't eaten in about a week and is getting real hungry.”

“A live mouse? Are you crazy, Mike? I am not having anything to do with one animal eating another. Before you know it, you'll suggest feeding the cat to the dog.”

“Okay! Okay! You're right, Barb! Why not just bring Gene to the pet store with you and look the other way. Let him buy the mouse and pretend that you don't know what's going on. Pretend that he's buying yummy snacks for the dog.”

“Wait a minute, Mike, Gene says that he needs to speak with you before you go.”

“Hey, Dad. I have to talk real low. Mom doesn't know that the snake got out of its cage and is slithering around the house somewhere. Don't make a big deal about buying a mouse. I don't have anything to feed it to right now. She'll ask questions if the mouse hangs around too long and will find out that the snake is on the loose.”

“Gene, do you know how serious this is? We've lived in our house since 1979! If Mom finds out about the snake, we'll be living in a motel! Find the snake and find it now! Although I have told you never to lie, if she asks you about the snake, LIE! Lying to Mom is better than being homeless. I'll see you tomorrow and we'll figure out what to do then.”

“Hey, Dad! How was your trip?”

“Fine, Gene. Were you able to take care of our little problem?”

“Not really, Dad. But I didn’t have to lie to Mom about why I didn’t need a mouse. I found some snake- skin underneath my bed. I told her that a snake doesn’t eat when it is shedding. I just didn’t tell her that the snake is shedding while crawling around the house. That buys us a little more time. Mom bought the whole story but did seem a little suspicious. I sure don’t want to live in a motel. I have to go to work at the supermarket in a little while, Dad. I’ll try finding the snake when I get back.”

“Mike! Wake up! Wake up! I got up to give the kitten his baby bottle and realized that *your* son Gene is gone! It’s 1:00 o’clock in the morning and I can’t find Gene! He came home from work at ten last night and went to bed about eleven. His bike is gone too.”

“Okay Barb! Okay Barb! Calm Down! Don’t get so excited! That little \$\$\$%^#@&! What in the #%^&#@#\$ is going on!”

“Mike! Look here! He must have had a thousand pennies in that jar. They are gone too! What do you think he's up to? Where would he go with a thousand pennies on his bike at one in the morning?”

“I don’t know Barb, but I am about to find out. What’s his cell number? He always carries his cell phone. That little #\$\$%^%\$#@&! How dare he sneak out of the house like this! What do you think he’s doing with the pennies?”

“Hey, Dad. I was a block away when I got your call and came right home. What’s up?”

“What do you mean, Gene, what’s up! Where in the hell have you been? It’s nearly 1:30 in the morning!”

“Dad, I know it looks bad but I can explain. I just went to the supermarket to get a can of cat food for my snake.”

“How dare you, Gene! Can’t you do better than that? When I told you to lie yesterday, I meant to Mom, not to me! How dare you lie to me! Didn’t I teach you better than that?”

“No, Dad. Honest! It’s the truth!”

“Gene, why do you have that bag of pennies in your hand?”

“Oh, I didn’t have any dollar bills, so I brought all my pennies to the supermarket so I could buy the cat food. Look, here’s the cat food and here’s the receipt.”

“Son, what do you have in the jar in the other hand?”

“Great news, Dad, it’s my snake. I found my snake around midnight. It was under my bed, a few feet from where I found it’s skin. That’s why I went to buy it some cat food. Getting lost and shedding has been a real ordeal for him. I know that he must have be real hungry.”

“Gene, you took a thousand pennies and your snake to the supermarket? Barbara, come in here! Tell *your* son to go to bed! Gene, we’ll talk again in the morning.”

“Hello. Yes, this is Mrs. Groetsch. Sir, should I remind you that it is 4:00 o’clock in the morning! Who? The fire department! Do I have a son named Gene? Would you hold on for a minute please? Michael, Go see where *your* son is! I think that *you* have a problem!”

“Barb, I see him in front of the house. Tell them to hold on for a minute. Gene! Gene!
What in the hell are you doing out here? Did you call the fire department?”

“Dad, before you get mad, please let me explain. The snake wouldn’t eat the cat food, so I came out here to catch a gecko for it and smelled smoke. I think the trash container across the street is on fire.”

“What do you mean, you think? I repeat, what do you mean, you think? Do you see a fire, Gene? Do you see a fire? How dare you call the fire department without a fire! I can’t take it anymore! You’ve done it now, my boy! Are those sirens that I hear? Oh God, here comes the police and the fire department. Are those the neighbors coming out? I have never been so embarrassed in all my life! Gene, I think that I am going to hurt you! What was that? Gene! Gene! Weasel, the cat, just ran out of the door! The sirens from the fire truck and police cars are scaring him. He’s running down the street.”

“I’ve got a flashlight, Dad! Don’t worry! I’ll get Weasel! You handle the firemen and police. Come here, Weasel! Come here, Weasel!”

“Gene, stop yelling! It’s four in the morning. The neighbors are still sleeping. I am so embarrassed. Barbara! Get out here and help with *your* son! Oh, hello, lieutenant. Hello, men. Thank you so much for coming. Well, I think that my son may have overreacted. He did smell smoke though. Isn’t that smoke I smell? Could I fix you a cup of coffee?”

“Hey, Mom! Hey, Dad! I see Weasel! He’s hiding in the bushes! Weasel! Weasel!”

“Gene, I told you to shut up! The neighbors are sleeping! Oh, hi, Frank, you’re up real early this morning. Going to work? Officer, obviously the fire was a false alarm, but would you consider helping us catch our cat?”

“Weasel! Weasel! Come here, Weasel!”

“Gene, I told you to shut up! Officer, thank you so much for coming. I think that we can take it from here. I know that you must be a very busy man.”

“Hey, Dad, I have to talk real low. I have good news and bad news. The good news is that the snake finally ate. He ate the gecko that I caught right before the fire trucks and police came. The gecko’s tail is still in the cage but the gecko is gone. I guess that’s proof he ate him, huh? The bad news, though, is that I forgot to put the top back on the cage and he’s on the loose again. Tell me what lie to tell Mom this time. Maybe I’ll stick to the shedding story. It takes a while for a snake to shed you know. I sure don’t want to live in a motel. Maybe we can schedule our trip to Disney World early this year.”

“Mike! Get up! The alarm clock just went off. It’s time to go to work.”

“Barb, where’s Gene?”

“He’s upstairs sleeping.”

“Good. It won’t hurt him when I feed him to the snake!”