

The good news is we found my missing cell phone. I'd finally given up, had it deactivated, yet I knew it had to be somewhere in this house. I try to keep it with me as my daughter has Cingular. This way she doesn't use up her valuable minutes. As for me, I have so many rollover minutes it doesn't matter. But the phone disappeared just like the drapes I'm looking for. They were last year's Christmas present from my elder daughter. At the time, I hung only one pair as I didn't have another rod. So now (a year later) that I finally have the rod and it's on the wall, can I find the damn drapes? Of course not. But I digress. Okay--I gave you the good news.

I knew it wasn't going to be a good day when I flushed the john and felt the water hit my bottom. I jumped up, grabbed the plunger but it was already too late. It spilled over onto the w-w carpet. There I was with my pants around my knees, holding the plunger and trying to figure my next move. Certainly I couldn't add anything to the toilet, could I? And I couldn't run out of the bathroom to the other one because I might run into Carl. (I'm sure you can use your imagination here) When I finally figured out my next move I managed to use the plunger and get the water to go down, I e-mailed my daughter to ask my plumber grandson if he'd come since it cost me \$320 for the last plumber's visit while Nick was away fishing in Alaska. His advice? Call Roto Rooter. I was disappointed, but I looked them up. I told the rep my tale of woe. She told me I'd get a written estimate (didn't) before they did the work and that I'd get a senior discount.

"Why? Do I sound old?"

"No, but you mentioned your plumber grandson so I assumed you were a senior."

"Oh." Anyway, she told me he'd come the next day (Friday) between 11-12 and he'd call first. Then she asked for an auxiliary # in case my primary was busy. (Not likely. Who calls besides the collectors looking for Kilroy or a doctor's office confirming an appointment? Everybody else e-mails.) Friday comes, 11:00 a.m. came and went, 12, 1, 2:00 I called again.

"Oh, we did call you several times and left messages."

"You left messages? On my phone? It never rang. I never left this house. There's a phone in almost every room including the garage. (Slight exaggeration, but there is one in the garage.) It never rang."

"Let's see--they called 555-9133"

Right--they're idiots. They called the cell phone, NOT the primary phone. Carl was out and he took his cell phone with him, mine was missing, remember? Does Carl turn the damn thing on? 'Course not; he only carries it to check the time. Even when it's on he doesn't hear it. I told her I was expecting twenty people on Saturday. She assured me the plumber would arrive in an hour.

Two hours later a nice young Haitian arrived. He told me it would cost \$127 to screw (pardon the expression) the toilet and stood there looking at me, holding the Roto Rooter.

Do I have a choice? I nod my head. He rotoed the john, but it still didn't solve the problem. He said I needed a new toilet--after all, "It's from 1989. And it's cracked."

"Are you sure? I think you scratched it with the Roto Rooter."

"No, ma'am, it's cracked." He rubbed his gloved fingers across the feather line to show me.

I moaned -"Its just before Christmas, such a bad time." *Right and I'm having my entire writers group here tomorrow.*

"Yes, ma'am." *Deadpan—shades of Dagnet.*

"Can't you take it off and see what's wrong?"

"That will be \$210." *Highway robbery.*

"You should get a new one. You can get one for \$60."

Right, for \$60 it would probably be crap. Fitting, I suppose.

"I'm supposed to get a senior discount."

"Yes, ma'am, that is the discount price."

"It is? How much would it be if I were 40 years old?"

"I don't make the price, ma'am, the company does."

"I know that. So how much would it be?" He seemed flustered and couldn't come up with a figure. Really inspires trust, doesn't it? *So, okay, I'll go and get a new toilet. I asked him if he was going to leave and come back later.*

"No, I'll wait for you."

"Then you might as well come with me. Heck, we'll all go." He lugged the toilet out on my front lawn and set it alongside the Nativity scene. Well, they didn't have working plumbing back then either.

"Should I put red bows on it do you suppose?" He ignored me. No sense of humor. Carl squatted and watched as Rootie Tootie slipped his rubber-gloved hand into the hole at the base of the toilet. Looked like he was doing a pap smear.

"Do you have a secret yearning to be a gynecologist?" He ignored me—again; no sense of humor. I went in to get my purse, my keys and my glasses and make a pit stop in Carl's bathroom. Couldn't use mine as there was nothing but a hole in the floor. When I came out Rootie was waiting for me. He had a peculiar smile on his face.

"Want to see what was stuck in the toilet?"

"What?"

He extends his gloved hand. I don't believe what I'm seeing. Not a dead rodent, or a cat's toy—are you ready for this? *A dead cell phone*. Yep—it's my cell phone with the little rose decal on the back to distinguish it from Carl's. I can't believe my eyes.

"It's no good now."

Well, duh~ "I know that."

"So, do you want me to put the toilet back?"

"Absolutely I do."

"It's cracked."

I felt like saying, "So are you but nobody throws you out."

"I'll wait to get a new one." So, \$215. later, plus the \$10.00 tip I gave him, AND an author-signed book. Why not? They're reading it in Jamaica, can Haiti be so different? For some reason this seemed to make him happy; he smiled for the first time. Maybe he thought he'd found a pot of gold. After that he dropped the "ma'am," and called me "Babe" at least three times; rather presumptuous I thought considering he's about 1/3 my age. The oddest thing about this whole charade is that Carl kept saying for days, "It's probably in the toilet." Kind of a joke, you know, or is he psychic? I even asked him if he conspired with Rootie Tootie to put one over on me.. I'm still puzzled because I'm one of those nit-picking types who insists on keeping the lid down. I'm not deaf and it must have made quite a splash. Guess I'll go to my grave wondering about this.

So my problem now is, do I thank St. Anthony or not. His bill was pretty steep, but he did come through.