

# The Hotel Lobbyist

Bara Swain



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THE HOTEL LOBBYIST

by Bara Swain

CAST

GOLDALEE SCHNEIDER: A former political activist and recently widowed, 70s. Goldalee is warm, energetic, independent, and quirky. She is casually dressed, sporting flamboyant jewelry.

MAXINE SCHNEIDER: Goldalee's daughter, 48. Maxine is conservative, pragmatic, and conventional. She is conservatively dressed in slacks and a blouse.

Place

Lobby, Holiday Inn Express Hotel, NYC

Time

Early afternoon, 2010

Setting: *The lobby of a Holiday Inn Express Hotel in New York City.*

*At rise: Goldalee is sitting peacefully in the hotel lobby, reading a magazine. She is handcuffed to her own chair. Her daughter, Maxine, appears impatient. She fidgets, opening and closing her coat, and tapping her well-polished flats. The two women are discovered onstage as the lights go up. Silence. Suddenly, Maxine turns to her mother.*

MAXINE: Mother, give me the key.

GOLDALEE: No.

MAXINE: Why do you want to make a fool of yourself?

GOLDALEE: Am I embarrassing you, Maxine?

MAXINE: That's not the point. I didn't drive twenty miles in traffic to argue with you.

GOLDALEE: Your father loved to drive. We saved for two years for a 1969 4-door Chrysler. I wanted wall-to-wall carpeting, but your father said that only Republicans covered hard-wood floors. Lester blamed everything on Nixon in those days – Hurricane Camille, the Stonewall Riots, the My Lai Massacre ... my miscarriage. “Goldalee,” he said. “It’s just one more miscarriage of justice under a corrupt and fraudulent administration.” But I knew he was heartbroken. I don’t think Lester smiled again until the New York Mets won the World Series that October!

MAXINE: Dad was never interested in baseball.

GOLDALEE: No, but he was interested in Art Shamsky. A left-handed Jew playing in the World Series -- can you imagine? Your father hated stereotypes -- almost as much as your grandmother’s stuffed cabbage. *(after a moment)* Are you hungry, Maxine? The breakfast buffet just closed, but I brought two cinnamon buns and a bowl of dried cereal to my room.

MAXINE: Give me the key, Mother.

GOLDALEE: This is funny.

MAXINE: I don’t find anything amusing about--

GOLDALEE: No, this is funny, Maxine. Do you know that I still feel disloyal when I eat Instant Oatmeal?

MAXINE: No, I’m certain that I don’t. Disloyal to whom?

GOLDALEE: Your father. The anti-war movement. The cause. Lester thought it was crossing party lines. I ate my first bowl of oatmeal in 1994, the week Nelson Mandela was elected President of South Africa.

MAXINE: That’s fascinating, Mother. I didn’t know that breakfast foods had party affiliations.

GOLDALEE: Sarcasm, my dear girl, is a polite form of humor intended to ridicule. Are you ridiculing me?

MAXINE: I’m sorry, Mother. Go on.

GOLDALEE: Now I can't remember what I was going to say.

MAXINE: You were talking about the first time you ate oatmeal. Mandela was elected President, and --

GOLDALEE: -- Right. And Tricky Dick kicked the bucket. I celebrated with a bowl of Instant Quaker Oats, topped with fresh raspberries and sweet cream. It was exhilarating! Your father had sliced bananas in a bowl of skim milk and a piece of toasted whole wheat. He insisted that the power of association was too strong for him to enjoy rolled oats.

MAXINE: Honestly, Mother. I'm trying to follow you.

GOLDALEE: Quaker! Quaker! Nixon was a Quaker! It's the same reason your father wouldn't buy a Ford Pinto when we moved to Manhattan. I wanted a compact car with power steering, but Lester was adamant. "Goldalee," he said. "I can not parallel park in a car that shares the same name as that nincompoop who pardoned Nixon."

MAXINE: *(after a moment)* Gerald Ford was in office?

GOLDALEE: *(pleased)* Exactly. The power of association.

MAXINE: Mother?

GOLDALEE: Yes.

MAXINE: Applying the same associative principle...let's talk about--the power of attorney.

GOLDALEE: I'm not incapacitated, Maxine.

MAXINE: *(rising)* Then why does a 70-year old woman take a car service all the way from Maplewood, New Jersey through the Lincoln Tunnel to midtown Manhattan ... *(losing her temper)* AND HANDCUFF HERSELF TO A CHAIR IN THE LOBBY OF A HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS?!!!!

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