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## SCOTT WINOKUR

# A Kafkaesque stay in an S.F. hotel

**G**REGOR SAMSA of Czechoslovakia and Lorraine Getz of Los Angeles both had revolting experiences in bed — involving bugs.

Samsa was the character in Franz Kafka's famed short story, "The Metamorphosis." He awoke one morning to discover that he'd turned into a gigantic insect.

Getz, 29, is a fashion designer who says she awoke the morning of Dec. 4 in San Francisco to find herself covered with bed bugs — many of them fat and sassy after a night of gorging on her blood.

Don't laugh. Turning into a gigantic insect is no fun. Nor is getting bitten to shreds by ravenous little critters with exoskeletons.

I've seen a photo of Getz, post-assault. She looked like something out of a medical textbook. (So did Franz Kafka, for that matter.)

All of this might be of no concern if not for the fact that Getz had her alleged encounter with *Cimex lectularius* while a guest in one of The City's better-located mid-range lodgings, the Hotel Richelieu on Van Ness Ave. and Sutter St.

And now there is a Superior Court lawsuit memorializing her account of her experience.

Getz is asking the hotel for unspecified damages for her injuries, discomfort and psychological distress, all of which occurred, she claimed, because the Richelieu

"failed to maintain its premises in a safe condition."

There has been no legal response to the charges yet, and neither the owner nor the president of the company that runs the Richelieu, Tarsadia Hotels of Costa Mesa, returned my calls. The general manager, Fred Rapp, declined to discuss the case.

In fairness, it should be noted that the Richelieu has a clean record with city agencies that go after bad hotels — health, building inspection and the city attorney's office. With Lorraine Getz, however, its reputation is besmirched.

According to Getz, she awoke around 7 a.m., itching. When she turned on the bedside lamp, she noticed about 20 bed bugs on her skin and nightgown. Nauseated, she ran to the bathroom and began plucking them off her body, she said. She remembered looking in the mirror and seeing "angry red" bites on her face, neck, hands and back.

Her attorney, Steven Haney of Los Angeles, said that when she examined the bed, "she found white bugs, red bugs and brown flat bugs crawling on the blood-stained bed sheets."

Getz told me she threw some bugs in a cup of water and ran down from her second-floor room to the front desk. The attendant offered her another room, she said, and a hotel official, Irene True, came up to investigate.

"There were probably at least 100 bugs on my bed when she came up," Getz said. "She saw them and she was just pathetically and sympathetically apologizing."

Getz said the hotel tore up her \$300-plus bill (for three nights) and offered to have her luggage

sprayed, along with the room, when the exterminator arrived.

Back in L.A., Getz said, she went to a doctor and received three oral and topical medications for the itching and swelling.

'Physically, I'm recovered. Mentally, I haven't. I wake up thinking things are crawling on me'

"It was hard for me to go out in public for at least a month. I looked like a walking disease," she said.

"Physically, I'm recovered. Mentally, I haven't. I wake up thinking things are crawling on me.

"I also have a hard time staying in hotels now, but I have to, because it's part of my job. But I inspect rooms before I stay. In fact, I left a hotel in Santa Cruz recently because I didn't like its looks."

Haney said that he has called the Richelieu about 10 times and gotten only two or three calls back, from Fred Rapp or people claiming to represent him.

"They've taken the position they're not going to do anything," Haney said. "The hotel has a cavalier attitude."

Which brings us back to Gregor Samsa and "The Metamorphosis." Scorned and reviled by his family, Gregor dies at the end. There's no place for him in the world. Lorraine Getz, on the other hand, is not about to go away.



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