

# ***Not Quite Right News by Mark Lee Golden***

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## **Snakes Behind and Snakes Ahead**

In 2006 the snake-fest movie *Snakes on a Plane* was released. The \$33,000,000 horror movie budget had medium success. The cost to make the frightening film earned a worldwide box office gross of \$62,000,000. This bad B movie produced by New Line Cinema continues making money as a cult film on DVD and streaming. However, the outrageous plot versus day-to-day life kept thousands of air passengers on the ground. Many used trains and rental cars. Those who did board aircraft typically carried grizzly bear strength pepper spray. Meanwhile, airport concession stands sold pricey, fang-proof Kevlar stockings, (protecting the primary bite-zone) available in camouflage and black. These became a favorite for travelers. Airport scammers sold vials of anti-venom in volumes. Many in-flight passengers never went to the restroom no matter what their bladder demanded. Most kept their feet raised on the edge of the seat with arms wrapped around their legs. This protective measure caused severe cramps. Physical therapists and licensed massage therapists noticed a ten-percent increase shortly after the popularity of the farce movie.

Individual and class action lawsuits, and investigations into air safety by the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) flooded the legal channels. "Reduction of, or complete loss of, peace-of-mind" were the main charges by plaintiffs. Sadly, no amount of money could take away fear of the 2,900 species of snakes located from Scandinavia to Australia. Psychologists and counselors saw the money slithering in as a result of the increased paranoia. Clients complained of seeing snakes under every bush and around every corner. They imagined snakes patiently waiting in home medicine cabinets, toilets, and microwave ovens, dishwashers, coiled under bed pillows and in vehicle glove compartments. One month after the movie opened, prescriptions for anti-depressants and firearm purchases shot up over ten percent.

At airport entrances protesters were all too common. They carried signs reading "Lapdogs on laps go. NO reptiles in cargo!" This became a rallying cry of the bewildered and delusional.

For over a year, pilots, flight attendants were required to watch special webinars produced by the FAA titled, "You Can Fly Free of Fear." This computerized video included more than one flight attendant with a friendly snake in hand, or sliding around her neck and shoulders during the typical safety speech using directional hand motions: exits fore and aft, emergency water landing, oxygen masks, etc. Most computerized virtual passengers showed no interest or alarm at seeing the silent serpentine companion. One passenger unbuckles her belt and races to pet the cold-blooded, docile mascot. All is well.

Coincidentally in 2006, within days of *Snakes on a Plane* another snake filled movie came out. This straight-to-video release, action-thriller, called *Snakes on a Train* was released by Asylum Movie Productions. Critics said the motion picture "lacked venom." The \$1,000,000 budget could

be the reason. Again, psychologists and counselors saw more money due to paranoia. The movie's climax is a super-giant snake that consumes an entire Amtrak train. Not many movies have a snake gobble a train. A significant number of airplane travelers had switched to train travel but now the rails lay cursed as well.

Amtrak developed a pamphlet entitled "Snakes, Your Best Friend" and placed these in every seat pocket. Stewards handed out plush pink and blue, goofy-faced snake dolls to children, unless the parents objected. These were tenderly called Serpent Sally or Serpent Steve. A gender-free, rainbow colored doll was also available, called Wiggles.

Due to the venomous reaction and lasting effects on millions of movie watchers, and a potential round of fresh lawsuits, Asylum Movie Productions has chosen a different path, one with less slithering. In a recent interview, a spokeswoman expressed pride concerning their new endeavor.

"Our latest production will be trimmed down. Man's love/hate relationship with reptiles is filmed in a remote village in China. The script requires a cast of only two actors, one American female tourist who speaks no Chinese, one Chinese man who speaks no English, a handful of snakes and one rickshaw. Yes. A hand-drawn rickshaw—which is a small, light vehicle with two wheels, pulled by one man on foot. A rickshaw will help keep production costs way down. The one used for the movie has an added compact luggage holder on the rear. That's where the snakes come into play. Or, out to play might be more accurate."

Suppressing a giggle, the spokesperson shouted "SPOILER ALERT!" and then continued, "The passenger's bag is mistakenly switched with a satchel owned by a visiting serpentologist. Of course the soft leather satchel is filled with fussy specimens of all sizes and shapes. Let the writhing begin! The overheated, bored snakes chew through several leather latches on the bag. The chemicals in the leather dye turn the snakes into a biting frenzy. They chew holes through the satchel, hoping for more chemicals." The speaker waved her arms in jest. "Suspense ensues! They escape and find their way to the quiet, contemplative female passenger...to do what snakes do.

"The driver hears the woman's screams. She is no snake charmer. Frightened, he speeds up his pace, failing to understand the English "Stop! Help! Stop!" The shocked rickshaw driver thinks if he runs faster the threatening snakes won't catch him. But, being a little dull, he doesn't get the simple math involved. It's the old story of the trotting donkey trying to nab the carrot on the driver's stick. But here we have snakes, and no carrot, no donkey, only a man. But this quickened pace cannot separate the driver from the unwanted fang-baring passengers sliding forward. The snapping mouths finally reach their handy prey."

Asylum Productions also said that due to the potential lawsuit issues, they'll be keeping *Snakes on a Rickshaw* on a tight budget of \$10,000 and keep the movie short. The spokeswoman said, "For this story, 15 minutes is all it should take. The rickshaw driver was willing to do his job for his normal wages—since he's never seen a movie or knows what television is. The real cost is

flying the small crew to China and back and a few rice bowls here and there. We've still got leftover snakes from the last movie, so that will help too."

So movie watchers, get ready for this latest, scariest, weirdest, goriest, dumbest, most ridiculous snake film in sometime. Oh! Best avoid going to China for a few years.

Asylum's spokeswoman did announce, "A new series of family-friendly movies with less gore and violence, the working titles are *Gnomes on a Plane* and *Gnomes on a Train*." She added with a knowing smile, "Gnomes are very big right now."

Another story from REAL LIFE (that I made up!) This parody news story is for amusement. Any similarity to real people, places or things is fictitious and not to be taken as fact.