

Yelp me Momma

My mom and I were having lunch when she left me mid-conversation. She had that far-away look in her eyes, the one usually reserved when spotting seventy percent off on the clearance rack. “Mom, I was saying. . . .”

“What does that mean?” she asked, pointing at a sign on the restaurant counter. I turned around, knowing I had been dismissed. I read it to her out loud, a habit brought on by having a three- year -old. “If you are not satisfied with our service, please see the manager before you Yelp.”

“I can read, dear. What is Yelp?”

“People can write reviews on Yelp. Using their smartphones. It’s a way to evaluate restaurants, businesses, most public places.”

“I don’t see the point.”

I reached for my phone on the table and gave her a quick run through. “See, if you have a great experience, you can let others know. Imagine all the publicity a business gets by having real-time reviews. I’ve found our little lunch place and I’m giving it four stars because the waitress has not only been attentive, she gave you enough sugar packets to put your diabetes in overdrive.”

“I asked her to do it.”

“Yes and she did. Thus the four stars.”

“And if she hadn’t?” I could see the cogs turning in Mom’s mind.

“Then they may get a bad review.”

“Hmmm.”

I immediately regretted my reply. Yelp could turn out to be yet another complaint vehicle for senior citizens. Didn't they have enough in their arsenal?

Two weeks later, I went to pick up Mom from her bridge game. She usually waits for me out front. Same bench under the elm tree. Like clockwork. I gave her fifteen minutes and when she didn't come out, I went to find her. The cards were apparently an afterthought, as I saw Mom with six other ladies around her, smartphones in hand. What are they...? Mom said, “Rate it and hit send.” Then I knew. A crash course in Yelp. Who knew a harmless sign in a restaurant would unleash the newest form of entertainment for the bridge gals?

“Dear, what are you doing here? I always meet you out front.” Mom said with the same tone of innocence as my young daughter.

“It's time to go.” I tried giving the others an apologetic smile, but their heads were bent, their fingers fumbling over their phones. “I'm double parked.”

The set-back at the Senior Center meant we would be late for her doctor appointment. After signing in and taking a seat, Mom said, “You know, I found that restaurant that your father and I went to on our thirtieth anniversary.”

“Found it? The one in New York?”

“Yes. I looked it up and gave it a review. I Yelped it,” she said, a look of pride washing over her face.

“Mom, that was ten years ago.” I started to feel a little queasy.

“I know, but I never did like the booth where we sat. It was very noisy. Very distracting. They should just remove it altogether.”

“You Yelped that?” I didn’t realize I had raised my voice until a couple of people looked at me.

“That’s not all. Our waiter, Carlo, was rude. He gave the other table more attention than your father and I. And he forgot to refill my water glass.”

“Carlo? You can’t remember to take out your trash every week, yet you remember a Carlo from a decade ago?”

“Carlo is the name of your second cousin’s husband’s brother. And it was a very warm evening, so of course I would remember the lack of water.”

I silently counted to three, another little jewel of patience honed from my daughter, before saying, “This is not what Yelp was intended for. I mean, you can’t go back decades.”

“Suit yourself, but I’ll do it my way.” Her new found smugness was a little disarming.

“Mom, there’s a statute of limitations on complaining.”

“State of nations?”

“Stat-ute of lim-i-ta-tions,” I answered. Add hearing aid check-up to the list of appointments in her future. “It means that there’s a logical time frame, like within the last year. You have to be current. I thought I made that clear.”

“No, you didn’t. “ She was quiet a minute before saying, “Then I probably shouldn’t have Yelped Madison Square Gardens.”

“You haven’t lived in New York for thirty-five years!”

“All the same, my experience wasn’t a good one.”

“That’s because you disliked your date.”

We were saved any further conversation when the nurse escorted us to a room and the rheumatologist walked in. He asked Mom to describe her symptoms.

“The joints in my hands hurt. A lot. Especially in the morning.”

“Maybe it’s your Yelping muscles?” I offered.

The doctor gave me a blank look. My Mom gave me the one that told me to back off.

After a brief exam, the doctor decided to change her arthritis medication. I thought all was well until we reached the check-out desk. Mom went to use the ladies room, leaving me to turn in the final paperwork.

The nurse handed me a brown bag filled with samples of Mom’s new medication. Her direct eye contact never wavered as she said, “Please make sure your Mom gets these. She mentioned something about Yelping and we want her to be happy.”

Once inside the house, my young daughter came rushing down the stairs to greet us. I had no sooner walked into the kitchen to start dinner when I heard her sweet voice.

“Grandma, would you please read me a story? I’ve had a bad day.”

“You went to pre-school. How bad could that be?” Mom said.

“They ran out of snacks and lost my favorite toy.”

“That’s too bad, honey.” Mom said.

“And,

the wheels on the scooters are really wobbly. I crashed and got this boo-boo on my knee.”

“Before we read, would you be a dear and hand Gramma her cell phone?”