

Glory at the Motel 6

by Gita M. Smith

In the deep South, religion tends to be more active than contemplative, more assured of its rightness than modest. Rory and Betty Sloan, for example, entered the first of 40 rooms in the new Motel 6 to place Holy Bibles in 40 night tables. As members of the Little Rock Evangelical Church of God, they had been called to spread the Word, with the blessing of the motel manager, furthering God's work on Earth (and adding stars to the crowns the Sloans would wear in Heaven).

They moved along the shady breezeway onto which all the rooms opened, smelling the fresh paint and carpet glue, taking their time on that warm and glory-filled August day.

The walnut-stained night table in Room 211 had been sitting undisturbed in a dark warehouse for two years, and a brown recluse spider had set up housekeeping in its drawer. She did not like the blue-veined hand that slipped into her domain with a large square object, and she did what hermit spiders always do.

Had it been you or me whom the spider bit, we might have gone to the emergency room or perhaps to an Urgi-Care Center to have the bite looked at. But Betty Sloan believed that the Lord would protect her, in a general way because He was merciful and also in a specific way because she had been doing Good Works when the hurt occurred.

She said nothing and soldiered on at Rory's side, a frail osteoporotic woman with a weak heart, until her hand -- afire with poison -- fluttered once, and Sister Betty Sloan went Home.

