

Locking horns

Service shortfalls are as annoying as a broken door



You come home from a long day. But the key doesn't fit in the door. It's not because your roommate has kicked you out. It's because the lock broke.

For more information, go to eugeneyiga.com.

You take a deep breath and call the insurance company. You go through a confusing menu of options, getting through the maze to an actual human being.

You explain your situation and confirm the details that they should already know: your name, your ID number, your phone number, your address, the blood type of your unborn son...

"We cover the call-out fee and first hour of labour," the consultant explains. "That means we can only assist you with opening the door. Any new parts will be for your account." Fine.

"I'm going to send you an SMS with the reference number confirming I've logged the case. Then I'll call you back advising you of the company I've appointed to assist and the estimated time of arrival. Anything else you need help with?" You tell her no and end the call.

You wait. And wait.

A neighbour walks by and asks if everything's okay. You smile a tired smile and say that a locksmith is on the way, while wishing you'd taken the time to get to know her so that she'd invite you in for takeaways.

You wait. And wait. Then you call the insurance company again, going through all the menus again. You explain that it's been half an hour and that you never received a call-back or confirmation SMS, like you've been ghosted but without a date.

"You didn't receive a call-back or confirmation SMS?" he asks, ignoring you just saying that. He types. "Ah, I see that a locksmith was authorised to assist you, but the SMS was sent to him, not to you. That's unfortunate. Don't worry, I'll rectify this and give you a call within five minutes."

You're afraid to hang up, but you do. Then you wait. And wait.

Eventually the locksmith arrives. You can tell because you hear him buzzing your apartment, as if you can open the gate from inside. You go downstairs to meet him.

"Sorry," he says. "But they didn't give me your contact number, so I had no way of getting hold of you." You frown, knowing you're now on a telemarketing spam list.

The locksmith pulls out his toolkit and puts on his headlamp, as though he's about to break into a safe. He does some prodding. A moment later, the door opens, like a scene from every bank heist film ever.

"You need a new lock," he explains. "And I need the full payment in cash."

You're too tired to argue so you let him get on with it while you make yourself something to eat. So begins the installation. You cringe at the realisation that the noise at such a late hour won't win you any neighbourhood friends. But you take comfort in the Kurt Vonnegut quote: "Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion. I myself prefer to laugh, since there is less cleaning up to do afterward."

Text | Eugene Yiga Photography | Gearstd