

FYI: iPhones don't float



It was just a quick exchange. I was at a restaurant on the border of Nevada and California dropping off my kids with my parents, who live in the Silver State. They were taking them and my brother's son for a week to do whatever grandparents do with their grandkids when their parents aren't around.

I just needed to use the restroom "real fast" before we had lunch and ditched the kids. I checked my email on my iPhone quickly as I made my way through the lobby and then shoved it in my back pocket. My daughter and sister-in-law followed me and we split ways at the stall doors – that's when it happened. I will never, ever forget that dreadful sound.

"Kurrr-Plop."

I turned my head and looked down to see my iPhone in the bowl, slowly sliding down deeper and deeper. It reminded me of that last scene with Jack in "Titanic" when he lets go and sinks into the abyss of the Atlantic Ocean, at least to me it was just as traumatic. At that moment, instinct kicked in and I fearlessly reached in and rescued it.

My scream startled my daughter and we met at the sinks, where

I was already frantically pounding out the water from what now seemed like massive openings in my phone – cups of water poured all over the counter. My daughter quickly ripped off the cover and grabbed some towels. Then my sister-in-law came out of her stall and asked what had happened. When she heard the news she rightly struck an “eww” face and instructed me not to turn it on.

“I read that somewhere, don’t turn it on and put it in a bag of rice to soak up the water.”

Stunned and visibly shaking, I headed to our table to have lunch. My mom talked to me about bedtimes, helmets and something about a restaurant in Reno with a parrot that flies over diners dropping dollar bills to the kids, but I couldn’t think of anything but my iPhone. I had just bought it a week before; I’d had the original iPhone for over three years and decided to take the leap when it stopped taking a full charge.

Could it be saved? Why am I so upset? The parrot does what?

The six-hour ride home was brutal: no phone, no Twitter, no email. At about Newhall, my iPhone started turning on and off on its own in a haunting poltergeist way. It was weird; screens I had never seen would pop up and then the phone would go black again. When I got home I put it in a bag of uncooked white rice as instructed by my sister-in-law and the results of the Google search for “Dropped iPhone in toilet.” The rice glowed blue and red as my possessed phone turned on and off as it nestled deep in a Ziploc bag.

That night I dreamed a tidal wave hit me in my office.

The next day I took my phone out of the rice and to the Apple Store. I played it cool with the Genius assigned to help me and as I handed it to him I said, “I dropped it in water.” He looked exactly like a younger, shorter version of Russell Crowe, which was reassuring for some reason. He took it in his certifiably-Genius hands and without looking up at me asked,

“Did you drop it in the toilet?” Busted, I fessed up, “Yeah, but I wiped it down with a handy wipe. I haven’t turned it on and it’s been living in rice since last night.” He smiled as he looked up to me, “It happens all the time.” Forcing a smile back I asked casually, “Can it be saved?”

Like I was good either way. Just wondering.

Little Russell assured me there’s always hope and took it into the back room to laugh at me with the other Geniuses, or as he put it, “run some tests on your phone.” When he came out through the white unmarked door after about five minutes he was shaking his head as he walked toward me. Like a doctor he delivered the news, “We did everything we could; we couldn’t save it.”

My heart sank. In a manic monologue I told him how long I had my first phone, the very first iPhone! I took it out of my purse and showed it to him, he seemed very impressed for an Apple employee. I finished up with how long I waited to get a new one, and now all the patience and restraint was for nothing. I really laid it on, but I meant it, I was truly and disproportionately upset, afraid I was going to burst into tears right there next to the external hard drives.

“Well,” Little Russell started, “since you had your first iPhone for so long, and you seem a little upset, we do have phones for these sorts of situations.” Ah, being a Genius and all, he realized he had a possible crier on his hands and Apple doesn’t do crying. Think about it, with its massive crush of people, its prices and the technical catastrophes being schlepped in and discussed daily, have you ever seen anyone crying at an Apple store? No.

Little Russell beelined it over to the bar and came back holding a small, black, unmarked CIA-type case. Not a white and grey, cheerful iPhone box, but a covert, lean and shiny box with an iPhone laying unceremoniously inside. He never

once verbally said, "I'm giving you a new iPhone." Never said the words "free" or "replacement," he just brought it over, took it out of its CIA case, had me sign a form and handed it to me.

I stood there a long time holding my new phone and waited for him to say something – he didn't. He just looked at me. Then I said, "Would it be weird if I hugged you? I mean, would you get in trouble or anything?" He shrugged and put his tattooed arms out. Isn't that a nice picture? I was hugging a Genius with my new iPhone in hand in the middle of the Apple Store. I was happy. Really happy. Like wedding-day happy. Like when you were in eighth grade and the bell rang on the last day of school and you ran outside and threw your notebook up on the roof and ran wildly with your friends through the schoolyard kind of happy. It's really kind of sad how happy I was over an iPhone. Little Russell understood.