



The author, in uniform (right), outside the MGM Grand Hotel & Casino.

“I Was a Las Vegas Concierge...”

Well, for a week, anyway: Bruno Maddox goes behind the scenes at the MGM Grand Hotel & Casino, learning the secrets, working the shifts, making dreams come true. Photographed by Jeff Minton

In the lobby of the MGM Grand in Las Vegas sits a huge golden lion upon a dais of red flowers. The lion is the corporate mascot of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the movie studio whose most iconic film, *The Wizard of Oz*, told the story of a young Kansas girl trying to find an all-powerful wizard in a fantastical land of color and magic. The girl's quest ends when her dog, Toto, tugs open a curtain, revealing the Great Wizard to be a smallish, elderly man frantically pulling levers and cranking handles and amplifying his voice by means of a speaking tube. Generations of moviegoers have come away with the impression there never really was a wizard in the first place, that it was “just” a little man behind a curtain all along.

But that isn't how “Gary Ring” sees it, in the quiet of the Post-Lunch Lull, standing behind the mighty Desk and staring across at the great gold lion.

“Gary Ring,” you see, he knows that magic is real, and that wizards walk among us. The dreams that you dare to dream, “Gary Ring” knows, they really can come true. He has seen it happen. He has even made it happen. Because “Gary Ring,” you see...

“Gary Ring,” he is the concierge.

“Gary Ring” wasn't always the concierge. He wasn't even always “Gary Ring.” Early on the first morning, deep underground, the woman in Uniforms gave him his blue suit, and his corrugated cornflower-blue necktie, and his white, white shirt, and all of it fit so well, as if the clothes had been waiting there for him, forever, that he was almost surprised not to find a brass name tag, too, like the other concierges wore, preprinted with what he would soon come to think of as his “old name.” But no. There was nothing, no name tag at all, until mid-morning he thought to mention it to Jeanne Mills, who was not just the *chef concierge* at the Grand, but the sitting U.S. president of Les Clefs d'Or, the international, prestigious society of elite concierges. Jeanne's name was pronounced with two syllables, like *genie*, and like a genie she disappeared, and returned not long after with a name tag for him, and just like that he was “Gary Ring.”

He was “Gary Ring,” just like that, but he was not yet the concierge. For there was too much, still, that he did not know. He had not yet learned the trick of upside-down map reading—for when a concierge is giving directions to a guest from behind the mighty Desk, the map, to the concierge, is always upside-down. Nor had “Gary Ring” yet mastered the art of arranging flower petals in the shape of a heart upon a bed. His first attempt came out lopsided, almost closer to the shape of an actual, anatomical

128 JUNE 2012 TRAVEL+LEISURE

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New York

(917) 407-4292

Nicki Silverman: nicki@dsreps.com

Los Angeles

(626) 441-2224

Deborah Schwartz: deb@dsreps.com

Crystal Roberts: crystal@dsreps.com