You made your room registration long in advance, gave credit card info and the hotel confirmed. Then it happens! After a long, tiring flight, you arrive and the front desk clerk says there's no room for you.

The lame excuses start. All booked up solid, and many people who were supposed to check out decided to stay another night. So sorry. However, we can get you a room at a hotel nearby. Of course, the rate is a bit higher ... etc... etc.   If that's your only choice, consider going to the other hotel. Maybe you'd rather not. Don't get angry or demand to speak to the manager, because the clerk may be just following orders. State clearly that you're reporting this as a breach of contract, and you'll file a formal complaint. Ask for the clerk's name, as well as that of the hotel manager.

Then, if you're firm enough, an attitude change may happen. The clerk quickly studies the desk computer, reports with a nervous smile that a room just became available. The clerk may even toss in a free breakfast and/or upgrade to a more expensive room. At the original price quote, of course.

The same applies to air travel. A senior couple had a recent example of this happen. The booked flight left Fort Lauderdale four hours late because of mechanical trouble. When the flight arrived in Las Vegas, they had missed the connection for the second leg of the schedule to Los Angeles.

When they applied at the airline desk, along with other frustrated passengers, they were put on a wait list. The couple insisted that because they were not responsible for the delay, they should be on the first available flight.

They then asked for the airline's passenger relations phone number to make a formal complaint. Suddenly, they were assigned seats on that next flight. Was it a miracle of good luck? No, it was just that they stood their ground.

When traveling, know your passenger rights, and when they're ignored, state your case calmly and forcefully. You may be happily surprised at how quickly your polite, but firm demands will be honored.