

M-Urgency Room

By Jeffrey Scharf

Contact:
Jeffrey Scharf
641 Escalona Drive
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
831-246-0035
jscharf_music@msn.com
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

A RECEPTIONIST

A BICYCLIST

PLACE: THE WAITING ROOM OF LAUREL STREET URGENT CARE

TIME: THE PRESENT

An injured bicyclist tries to obtain medical treatment,
American style.

ACT I

SCENE 1

The waiting room of Laurel Street Urgent Care. The room is furnished with the usual chairs, tables and magazines. A RECEPTIONIST sits behind a counter or desk. Items within reach include a clipboard with paper and pen; a device indicating "customer number 63" is being served; a way for patients to take a number; a telephone; and a loose-leaf binder. The RECEPTIONIST shuffles papers. A BICYCLIST wearing a yellow vest, helmet and fingerless gloves enters. His clothes are slightly torn. His shin and elbow are bloody. HE holds his left forearm gingerly in his right hand. HE approaches the desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome to Laurel Street Urgent Care. How may we provide award-winning medical assistance today?

BICYCLIST

I was riding my bike when my wheel got stuck in a rut and I crashed. I was barely able to pedal over here.

RECEPTIONIST

Laurel Street Urgent Care offers a wide variety of personalized services. But we do not repair bicycles.

BICYCLIST

My bicycle is fine. The problem is my wrist. It might be broken. Do you have an X-ray machine?

RECEPTIONIST

Laurel Street Urgent Care is fully equipped with the world's most advanced, up-to-date diagnostic systems.

BICYCLIST

Perfect.

(waits but gets no response)

May I see the doctor?

RECEPTIONIST

You'll have to take a number.

SHE points to the "Now Serving 63" indicator. The cyclist looks around the empty room.

BICYCLIST

But there's nobody here.

RECEPTIONIST

Sir, I realize you're upset about the damage to your bicycle -

BICYCLIST

I did not damage my bicycle -

RECEPTIONIST

But we cannot provide the second-to-none five-star care you deserve unless you follow our best in class procedures.

The BICYCLIST takes a number.
HE sits in the waiting area.
The RECEPTIONIST shuffles papers. HE approaches the desk. SHE shoos him away.
SHE flips the "Now serving" number to sixty-four.

RECEPTIONIST

Number sixty-four!

The BICYCLIST approaches again.

RECEPTIONIST

Do you have your Form 193427b?

BICYCLIST

My what?

RECEPTIONIST

Your Form 193427b.

(points to the clipboard)

You should have filled it out while you were waiting.

BICYCLIST

Sorry.

RECEPTIONIST

Now you'll have to go to the back of the line.

BICYCLIST

There is no line.

RECEPTIONIST

We cannot provide the second-to-none -

BICYCLIST

- care I deserve if I do not follow procedures.

(tries to pick up the clipboard)

Ow. I can't fill this out. I'm left-handed.

RECEPTIONIST

Laurel Street Urgent Care is an equal opportunity provider and does not discriminate by race, gender or manual orientation.

BICYCLIST

I mean, my left hand hurts too much to write.

RECEPTIONIST

You have two hands, don't you?

BICYCLIST

Of course.

RECEPTIONIST

Then this is your chance to learn a new skill. It's an ill-wind that blows no good. When stuck with lemons, make lemonade. Every cloud -

RECEPTIONIST/BICYCLIST

- Has a silver lining.

BICYCLIST

Okay, okay, I get it. But this is not going to be easy.

RECEPTIONIST

For improving dexterity and motor skills, no one beats Laurel Street Physical Therapy with its innovative techniques and state of the art equipment. Would you like a referral?

BICYCLIST

No. No, thanks. I can manage.

HE sits and fills out the form.
When finished, HE approaches
the desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Was your number called?

BICYCLIST

Yes. Number sixty-four.

RECEPTIONIST

Number sixty-four has already been served.
(turns the "Now serving" number
to 65)

Number sixty-five!

The BICYCLIST takes a number.

BICYCLIST

I'm number sixty-five.

RECEPTIONIST

My, my. Did you hurt yourself again? That's twice in one afternoon.

BICYCLIST

You sent me over there to fill out the form -

RECEPTIONIST

We at Laurel Street Urgent Care -

BICYCLIST

- follow the finest protocols. May I see the doctor now?

RECEPTIONIST

I'll need to see a photo ID first.

BICYCLIST

I'm sorry. I don't have a photo ID.

RECEPTIONIST

Please, sir, you can't fool me. Everyone who is not trying to commit voter fraud has a photo ID.

BICYCLIST

Okay, yes, I have a photo ID. I just don't have it with me.

RECEPTIONIST

A likely story. And, if you don't mind my saying so, not very smart. Suppose you got into an accident and needed immediate medical treatment and nobody knew who you were.

BICYCLIST

I did get into an accident and I do need immediate medical treatment.

RECEPTIONIST

See what I mean?

BICYCLIST

May I please see the doctor?

RECEPTIONIST

That depends. [beat] Do you have insurance?

BICYCLIST

Yes.

RECEPTIONIST

May I see your insurance card?

BICYCLIST

I don't have it with me.

RECEPTIONIST

That's not very smart, either. What if you were in an accident -

BICYCLIST

I was in an accident!

RECEPTIONIST

Sir, please remain calm. Do not make me call for sedation.

BICYCLIST

If that will get the doctor out here, go ahead.

RECEPTIONIST

We at Laurel Street Urgent Care take pride in our speedy, friendly service and efficient, helpful staff.

BICYCLIST

Please, Miss, Ms. Ma'am, I'm begging you. Tell me what to do and I'll do it.

RECEPTIONIST

Go home.

BICYCLIST

Go home?

RECEPTIONIST

Go home and get your ID and insurance card.

BICYCLIST

But that's dangerous. I already risked my life getting here.

RECEPTIONIST

You should have gone home first.

BICYCLIST

I stopped here because it's on my way home.

RECEPTIONIST

Laurel Street Urgent Care is conveniently located.

BICYCLIST

I thought emergency rooms had to treat everyone who walked through the door.

RECEPTIONIST

That is correct.

BICYCLIST

I walked through the door.

RECEPTIONIST

But you're one M short.

BICYCLIST

What?

RECEPTIONIST

You're one M short. This is not an M-urgency room. This is an urgency room. We are allowed to pick and choose our patients.

BICYCLIST

And how do you do that?

RECEPTIONIST

By determining whether and how much they can pay.

BICYCLIST

In any civilized country, I would be in with the doctor by now.

RECEPTIONIST

This is not -

(uses her fingers as quotation marks)

- "any" civilized country. This is the United States of America.

BICYCLIST

I don't believe this.

RECEPTIONIST

Don't worry, sir. We offer a free, no-obligation financial biopsy.

BICYCLIST

Once I bicycle home to get my wallet.

RECEPTIONIST

You don't have to bicycle home to get your wallet.

BICYCLIST

I don't?

RECEPTIONIST

No. You could phone home and have someone get it for you.

BICYCLIST

(hits his head with his palm)

Phone home. Why didn't I think of that?

RECEPTIONIST

Laurel Street Urgent Care specializes in innovative solutions to pressing medical needs.

BICYCLIST

There is nobody home, you, you - Argh.

(waves his papers)

Save my place. I'll be back.

The BICYCLIST exits. The RECEPTIONIST shuffles papers, files her nails and generally occupies herself while time passes. The lights may dim and come back up. The BICYCLIST returns flourishing his documentation.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome to Laurel Street Urgent Care. How may we - oh, it's you. That's a new record. Three injuries in one day.

BICYCLIST

Here's my photo ID, my insurance card, my Form 193427b and
(takes a number)
Number sixty-six.

HE flips the "Now serving" number to 66 and hands over the papers.

RECEPTIONIST

One moment, please.

The RECEPTIONIST leafs through a reference guide as SHE checks his documents.

RECEPTIONIST

(ad lib with clucking sounds)

Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Oh, my. Not good. Not good at all. What a shame. Etc.

(to him)

I'm sorry. I'm afraid your insurance is no good here. You're not in our network.

BICYCLIST

What does that mean?

RECEPTIONIST

It means you may have to pay out of pocket for some or all of the costs of our forward-thinking gold-plated medical treatment.

BICYCLIST

Pay how much out of pocket?

RECEPTIONIST

I don't have that information.

BICYCLIST

Well, how much does it cost to see the doctor?

RECEPTIONIST

I don't know.

BICYCLIST

That's pretty basic, isn't it?

RECEPTIONIST

I really couldn't say.

BICYCLIST

How much for an X-ray? Ballpark. Two hundred dollars? Two thousand dollars? Two million dollars?

RECEPTIONIST

Sir, we are not some McDonald's that puts menu prices on the wall and charges everybody the same amount. We are a medical office that uses one-hundred percent, only-in-America billing codes.

BICYCLIST

Somebody must know the prices.

RECEPTIONIST

Our pleasant, modern facility is open twenty-four hours a day for all your medical urgencies. If you have reached us outside normal business hours - which you have - our central office is now closed.

BICYCLIST

So if I stay here and get treated, you can charge whatever you want. I have no way of knowing beforehand and there's nothing I can do about it afterwards.

RECEPTIONIST

On the bright side, I do see that Doctors on Duty over on Ocean Street is in your network.

BICYCLIST

But Ocean Street is all the way across town.

RECEPTIONIST

You should have thought of that before you got hurt.

BICYCLIST

Surely my insurance company would rather have me treated here where I'm safe rather than make me bicycle through miles of traffic.

RECEPTIONIST

You don't have to bicycle through traffic. It says here your insurance will pay for an ambulance.

BICYCLIST

An ambulance has got to cost a lot more than paying for out-of-network treatment. Can my insurance company really be that stupid?

The RECEPTIONIST and BICYCLIST look at each other knowing the question answers itself.

BICYCLIST

Will you make the call please?

The BICYCLIST retreats to the waiting area and slumps down in a chair. The RECEPTIONIST dials her phone.

RECEPTIONIST

Hello. 9-1-1? This is Laurel Street Urgent Care requesting ambulance service.

Lights down as a siren wails in the distance. THE END.