

DO-IT-YOURSELF HEART SURGERY

A Sketch by Tom Attea

Man, Ray, being wheeled to operating room.

RAY

No, no, don't take me into surgery!

FEMALE NURSE

But you had a heart attack. If we don't operate, you'll die.

RAY

I know, I know! But if I wake up, I'll have to pay the medical bills. Dying seems easier.

FEMALE NURSE

But you have health insurance. We checked your card. Otherwise, we couldn't do anything for you.

RAY

Are you kidding? By the time the insurance company deducts all the things they won't pay for, my responsibility will be at least half!

FEMALE NURSE

Are you sure? You have a good policy.

RAY

That's why I said half. A bad policy and I'd be responsible for more.

MALE NURSE

"But we can't let you die.

He's wheeled into the operating room.

RAY

Please, please, have mercy. I can't afford to live! Just let me die in peace!

MALE NURSE

"It's against the rules. Now that you're here, we have to operate.

Surgeon peers down at him.

RAY

What do you figure? \$100,000?

RAY

At least.

Ray jumps up and grabs the scalpel.

SURGEON

What are you doing? I need that.

RAY

(holds scalpel toward chest)

I'm going to perform the operation myself.

SURGEON

Yourself? You can't do that. You'll bleed to death.

RAY

Better now than for years to come! How much more will it cost if I lie down and do it?

FEMALE NURSE

I don't know. We don't have any experience in self-surgery.

SURGEON

I'm the only one in this room with a license to perform a heart operation.

RAY

But I can't pay for it without wrecking my life. Either I operate or I die!

SURGEON

(to male nurse)

Call security.

MALE NURSE

Yes, Doctor Johnson.

RAY

Don't do that! I can't wait. I need to operate now.

(staggers a bit)

What if I just have angioplasty?

SURGEON

You need a quadruple bypass.

RAY

What about if I only have a double? Can I save half?

Same price.

SURGEON

And a single?

RAY

SURGEON  
“It won’t help. Your blood vessels are all clogged. To much rich living.”

RAY  
But don’t you see? That’s why I can’t stand to be poor. I’m used to living well.  
(raises scalpel again)  
Cut your fee in half or I operate right now. Once I begin, you’ll be out of the picture. Half or nothing.

SURGEON  
All right, all right. Just get back on the operating table.

RAY  
But you have to put in a claim for the full price. That way my responsibility will be even less.

SURGEON  
I can’t do that. It’s unethical.”

RAY  
Then, let the surgery begin.  
(cuts a hole in his blue robe)

ANESTHESIOLOGIST  
(to surgeon)  
I won’t tell anybody about the special rate.

RAY  
I want a deal from you, too.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST  
I never reduce my rates. Anesthesiologists are always surprisingly expensive, and we intend to stay that way.

RAY  
Can you operate without it?

SURGEON

No way. You'll move too much. We even have to stop your heart from beating.

RAY

You do?

SURGEON

Yes.

RAY

Do you have to restart it?

SURGEON

We have to try. Come on, now, saving half on my rate is a good deal.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST

And I'll tell you what. I'll take off ten percent.

SURGEON

You can't get a better deal than that.

RAY

All right, you win. Maybe now I can afford to live.

(gives scalpel back to surgeon; faints onto  
operating table)

SURGEON

Half price. It's enough to make me feel like a humanitarian.

ANESTHESIOLOGIST

A humanitarian?

(reminiscing about idealism)

Do you think I can qualify as one at 10% off?

BLACKOUT