

IT'S AN EMERGENCY, DON'T HURRY!

A Sketch by Tom Attea

Sign on wall: "Emergency Room."
Sleepy nurse at desk. JIM, a distraught
young businessman, ENTERS, carrying an
attache' case.

JIM

Nurse! I need help!
(SHE pays no attention to him)
Nurse! This is an emergency!

NURSE

I'll be with you in a minute!

JIM

Thank you.
(waits)

(MAN is wheeled across room on table,
followed by his DOCTOR)

DOCTOR

Relax. It's only a heart attack.

PATIENT

But a coronary bypass! I'm not sure I want to be awake for the operation.

DOCTOR

I have to ask you some questions as we go along. You could have up to five blood vessels in
your heart that need replacement.

PATIENT

So?

DOCTOR

Your insurance only covers two. I'll need your permission to do the others. Then I have to know
if you want me to sew you back up.

PATIENT

What!?

DOCTOR

Your insurance only covers the incision.

(HE is wheeled off. JIM reacts; turns to NURSE)

JIM

Nurse! I can't wait all day. I have appointments to keep!

NURSE

Maybe you should come back later.

JIM

I would, if I could. But that's my problem. I can't remember what my appointments are.

NURSE

Why not?

JIM

I lost my memory!

NURSE

Oh.

(hands him sheet of paper)

First, you have to fill this out.

JIM

(looks it over)

Wow, I'm really in trouble.

NURSE

What's the problem?

JIM

You want to know my name, my address, my phone number! How can I tell you things like that when I lost my memory?

NURSE

I'm sorry, sir. Everyone has to fill one of these out. If you can't do it yourself, you'll have to have a family member or friend do it.

JIM

But, nurse, if I could remember who my family and friends are, I'd still have my memory.

NURSE

I'm sorry, sir. Rules are rules.

(Young WIFE comes rushing in, dragging HUSBAND behind her. HE is bent in pain. SHE holds a small paper bag)

WIFE

(to JIM)
Excuse me, this is an emergency.

JIM

Certainly.

WIFE

Nurse, I have to see a doctor right away.

NURSE

I'll be with you in a minute.

WIFE

But I don't have a minute! I have to see a doctor right away.

JIM

(interjects)
Everybody does.

(to SELF)
Oh, I used to have such a great memory! I mean, I could never recite the Iliad or anything like that. But, as least, I could remember my name!

WIFE

You don't understand, nurse. My husband needs a doctor immediately. There's not a second to waste!

NURSE

What's wrong with your husband?

WIFE

We had an argument. And I love him. You have to believe I love him. And I'm sorry. But --

NURSE

-- I'm waiting.

HUSBAND

(points to bag)
She cut off my navel.

NURSE

Your navel?
(to WIFE)
Why that part?

HUSBAND

She said, "I wish you were never born." Then she --
(painful expression)
-- whacked it off.

WIFE

Oh, sweetheart, I'm sorry.
(to NURSE)
But how can I be married to a man who doesn't have a navel?

MAN

(to WIFE)
Thanks, darling.
(to NURSE)
Can somebody sew it back on before it's too late?

NURSE

Fill out this paper and have a seat.

WIFE

We don't have time for that!

MAN

My navel is dying, dying with every passing moment!

NURSE

A doctor will be with you shortly.

WIFE

(leads HUSBAND away)
Come on, darling. I'll fill it out. Here, hold this.
(hands him bag; THEY EXIT)

JIM

I've got to remember something, even if it's just a general principle to get me through this. Like "... life according to reason." Aristotle! That's it. But why can't I remember more? Life would be so much better! Maybe I'm a classical scholar. No, no -- I have too many appointments for that. Maybe I'm a philosophy major who went into business. Hey, I could be onto something

there.

(to NURSE)

I have to see a doctor, now!

NURSE

Can I have your form?

JIM

(hands it to her)

Here!

NURSE

It's blank.

JIM

That's the point! It's blank, I'm blank! Get it! I lost my memory.

NURSE

Don't you have a wallet?

JIM

Why?

NURSE

You probably have some I. D. in it.

JIM

Why didn't I think of that?

(takes out wallet; begins to look through it)

(DOCTOR ENTERS)

DOCTOR

(to NURSE)

Who's next?

(JIM is about to say something when the WIFE comes rushing in, dragging her pained HUSBAND behind her, as SHE holds out her form)

WIFE

We are! We are, doctor!

HUSBAND

She cut off my navel.

DOCTOR

That's serious.
(to NURSE)
But who's next?

NURSE

(points to JIM)
This gentlemen, but he's still filling out his form.

DOCTOR

That's all right.
(to JIM)
You can finish it while we're talking.

JIM

No, no -- I can wait. I only lost my memory. On the other hand, he --

HUSBAND

-- lost my navel.

DOCTOR

All right.
(to HUSBAND and WIFE)
Come with me.
(HE takes form as THEY follow him; as they EXIT)
Now, tell me, how did you lose your navel?

HUSBAND

She cut it off.

WOMAN

I said I'm sorry, didn't I?

JIM

(filling out form by referring to cards in wallet)
My name, my address -- that helps. But what about my appointments? And my wife's birthday?
I can't go home without knowing that!

(Another DOCTOR ENTERS)

DOCTOR

(to NURSE)

Next?

NURSE

Take him.

DOCTOR

(to JIM)

What seems to be the problem?

JIM

I lost my memory.

DOCTOR

How did you do that?

JIM

(takes out electronic organizer)

I kept everything in this electronic organizer -- my whole life. I depended on it for everything, till I couldn't remember anything without it. Nothing. Then one day --

DOCTOR

-- What happened?

JIM

The battery died.

DOCTOR

Didn't it have a backup battery?

JIM

Yes, but that died, too.

DOCTOR

Say, that's very serious. I better take notes.

(removes electronic organizer from his own pocket;
prepares to make first entry, as THEY cross the stage
toward the EXIT)

Now, tell me, how long ago did it happen?

BLACKOUT