

HUMOR IN MEDICINE

My Glove Is Quick

Evette Grins, RN

Although this column is primarily for original contributions, we will occasionally reprint material by nonphysicians who have something funny and enlightening to say about medicine.—H.B.

The clamor of the phone drilled through my skull and dragged me awake. My mouth felt like it was filled with the gauze packing I'd pulled out of the lanced abscess on my last patient's butt.

I squinted at the clock. Eleven AM. The phone was still ringing, my head was pounding and I figured I might as well get up. I picked up the receiver. A cool, businesslike voice asked if I was Tess Tosterone, if I was a private RN for hire, and if I'd be interested in picking up a few bucks on an easy case.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah," I said. I didn't really want to take on a new case right then, but I needed the money—the bills on my table were piling up faster than the dust on the dishes in my sink. I scribbled the information on the back of an old patient ed sheet and mumbled something about being over there in an hour.

I showered and put on my last clean uniform. The jar of instant coffee was as empty as my bank account, so I just chewed up some coffee beans and swished the gritty stuff down with boiling water. Nursing isn't for sissies.

I headed out, feeling almost human. But questions about the case were starting to bother me—especially when I got to the address I'd been given. It was a stone mansion that screamed of big money. I walked up the driveway and all I could think was, "WHY?" Why would someone this rich, who could afford a whole staff of flunkies-in-white, want to hire a hard-bitten loner like me? There was only one possible answer—the job would be dirty. I didn't know just how dirty, but it didn't matter. In this racket, you learn to take the cases as they come.

I rang the bell and a for-real butler showed me in

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and left me in a hallway where each marble tile must have cost more than I earned in a year. A few minutes later, six feet of trimly built, blow-dried manhood came down the curved stairway, and suddenly my body told me how long it had been since I'd had something hard inside me that wasn't a speculum. "Hi, gorgeous," I said, trying not to leer too much.

He said, "Miss Tosterone?" His voice sent little ripples of excitement up and down my spine.

"Call me Tess, sweetheart," I cooed in my huskiest tone. "And what do people call you when they want you real bad?"

"Bert Hansom."

"You sure are, honey," I murmured appreciatively. "Are you the one who phoned?"

"No, that was Ernie, my partner."

"And are you the patient?"

"Oh, no!" he laughed.

"Too bad," I said. "I could really take care of you."

"The patient is upstairs," he coughed. "Come with me, please."

"I just might, Bert," I said meaningfully. "But let's take care of business first, okay?" I followed him upstairs and finally got a look at my patient—suddenly I knew just how big the stakes were in this case. There on the bed was Donald F. Rump himself, America's premier corporate raider, supposed to be worth better than a million bucks for each of his 400-plus pounds. He lay there like a whale out of water, gasping and in pain.

Sitting by the bedside was a slightly healthier-looking version of the patient. Maybe 300 pounds, sweaty and unshaven, but breathing normally. He stood up and greeted me.

"Miss Tosterone, I presume? I'm Ernest Rump. I called you in to take care of my brother, Donald."

Something about the way Bert went over and took Ernie's hand and held it against his cheek told me that I wouldn't be dancing the silk-sheet samba with Bert after all.

"What's the diagnosis, Rump?" I snapped.

Ernie looked at me carefully before answering. "I don't suppose I need to inform you that this matter is highly confidential."

I managed to stop myself from slamming him up

against the wall. Instead, I just said, "You already know the answer to that one, Rump. You called me in because you heard I'm a pro. So I have to figure it's something big, something so big your regular staff couldn't handle it. Now suppose we quit wasting time. Just lay it out for me."

"Tell her, Ernie," Bert urged. "I think we can trust her."

"All right. As you see, my brother is in considerable pain. The doctors say he's badly—uh—impacted, and they want to operate to relieve what they have called an intestinal obstruction. But we'd prefer to take care of this little problem without hospitalization. Can you help?"

I gave the patient a quick but skillful abdominal exam. He had increased bowel sounds but no rebound tenderness. I looked back at Ernie. "How long has he been in this way?" I gritted.

"His last—uh—number two was over a week ago."

"And what have you done about it so far?"

"Well, we gave him some Ex-Lax, but . . ."

Something inside me finally snapped. I grabbed his shirtfront and shoved my nose in an inch from his face.

"Listen, Rump," I hissed. "You ever so much as look at a box of Ex-Lax again and I'll tie your arms into a knot around your neck, you hear me?"

"Ooh!" exclaimed Bert. "Could you show me that?"

Ernie struggled to get loose, then yelped, "I hear you. Please, let me go!"

I released him. He fell into a chair, then tried to regain his composure as I grilled him about his brother's diet. I wasn't surprised to hear that Donald Rump lived on rich foods—high-fat meats and refined sugar, but almost no fresh fruits and vegetables. I also wasn't surprised to hear that the doctors who had seen the patient hadn't asked any questions about his diet. Typical.

"Can you help?" Ernie asked anxiously.

"Yeah, Ernie, I can handle this." I told him how much I charge.

He looked surprised. "That's all?"

"That's all. You see, unlike your brother here, some people just want to make a fair living for their

work. But I guess you wouldn't understand that." Donald Rump groaned loudly, and I wondered if what I'd said had gotten to him.

"What are you going to do?" Bert Hansom asked me.

I opened my case and took out a bunch of Chux, a basin, fresh gloves, an enema set, and my institutional-size tube of K-Y jelly. "You don't want to know," I grunted.

"Oooooohh!" swooned Bert. "Could you show me that?"

I chased Bert and Ernie out of the room and got to work. From his moans and groans, I guessed Donald Rump wasn't enjoying it any more than I was. But I did what had to be done. That's what they pay me for. Then I helped the patient walk to the bathroom to finish the job. He took a while—he had a week's worth of it inside him. Meanwhile, I stuffed my gloves and the soiled Chux into a plastic bag.

Rump looked pale but relieved when he staggered out. I helped him back in bed. Then I washed up, but I knew it would take more than soap to make feel clean again after this job. Finally, I let Bert and Ernie back in.

Ernie rushed to his brother's side. "Are you all right, Donald?" The patient nodded. Ernie turned to me. "I don't know how to thank you, Miss Tosterone."

"You want to thank me?" I growled. "Then get him on a proper diet. That goes for you, too, Bozo. Low-fat vegetarian, lots of fiber. Maybe the two of you can still head off coronary artery disease, diabetes, cancer and a rerun of this situation. That's how you can thank me. That, and pay me."

I wrote out a report for the doctors, collected a check from Ernie and handed him a patient ed sheet on diet and nutrition. Then I got out of there. Back out onto the streets, into what passes for fresh air in the city. The rain was coming down hard, but I didn't mind. I figured it might wash away the stench of the Rump brothers by the time I got home.

The dirty dishes were still marinating in my sink, but they'd have to wait. I took a long shower and tried to clear my mind for the next case. Maybe, for once, it would be something clean and easy. But somehow I doubted it.

'HUMOR IN MEDICINE' ANECDOTE CONTEST

Do you have an amusing anecdote about one of your experiences in medicine? It can involve anything from patient care to embarrassing moments in medical school. Between now and December 1996, submit your comic morsels of up to 250 words to Anecdote Contest, c/o Howard J. Bennett, MD, Humor in Medicine Editor, 2820 McKinley Place, NW, Washington, DC 20015. Be sure to enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. Submissions may be abridged or edited in accordance with *JFP* style. Accepted anecdotes will appear in future issues of *JFP*. If your entry is among the top five, you will receive a free copy of the 2nd edition of Dr Bennett's book *The Best of Medical Humor*.