

His Heart's In the Right Place

by Gerry Schramm

Andy Lee's friends commented on his well-meaning but always terrible advice by noting that his heart was in the right place. Andy, always hurt by that backhanded compliment, felt each stab anew when he learned an interesting medical fact about his body: that his heart was not in the right place. And for that matter neither were his liver, kidneys, spleen, intestines, stomach, or colon—none of his internal organs were where they should have been.

"What does that mean, Doc?" Andy asked his physician, Doc Jakara. That was his first name: Doc. His well-read patients and colleagues called him Doctor Doctor, amused by the similarity to the character in *Catch-22* named Major Major. Andy, however, wasn't well read.

"It means that your internal organs are not where they are in other people," Doc said. "Some, like your spleen, are not exactly misplaced, just oddly placed. Your heart, however, is misplaced. In fact, your heart is where your left kidney should be."

"And where's my left kidney?"

"You only have one. The right."

Andy was puzzled. "Why, then, does everyone say my heart is in the right place?"

"I think that's just an expression," Doc said. "It should not be taken literally."

Andy wasn't so sure. "Is there an operation that can relocate my heart, put it where it should be so that I could counsel those around me instead of irritating them?"

"Listen," Doc said, "it's not your heart. Even though all of your internal organs are not where the textbooks—and my years of experience—tell me they should be, the placement of them does not

affect your ability, or inability as the case may be, to give useful advice. The problem is in your head."

"But," Andy said, "I've always been told that I have a good head on my shoulders."

"You see, that's not true either," Doc said. "Your heart isn't in the right place and you don't have a good head on your shoulders. These X-rays show that your head is terrible." Doc Jakarta held the films against the glowing wall panels for Andy to examine. "Frankly, I'm amazed that you're even alive."

Andy could see what Doc meant. The X-ray showed his head to be a Jack-o-lantern: triangles for eye sockets, cruel-smile jaw, soup for brains.

"Oh," Andy sighed. "Is nothing I've been told about me true?" "That depends on what else you've been told," Doc said. "Especially about your genitals."

