

Dr. Doom

by Jack Swenson

I passed out one night while I was standing at the sink brushing my teeth. I got to my feet and told my wife what happened. "How do you feel?" she asked. "Lousy," I said. She called 9-1-1. The firemen came and then the emergency guys. They took me to the hospital.

The ER doc couldn't find anything wrong. "This happened before?" she asked. I told her to explain; her pronoun reference was faulty. She asked me if I frequently took a nap on the floor before bed. "Only when I'm drinking," I said.

She sent me home. That night I slept like a baby. In the morning my wife went to work. She's a nurse; her specialty is cardiology.

I was finishing my breakfast when the phone rang. It was my wife. Her boss wanted to see me, she said.

My wife's boss, Dr. Allen (I call him Woody behind his back), checked me out, and he couldn't find anything wrong. He asked me about my parents. When he found out that my father died of heart attack, he told the nurse to schedule a treadmill. He left rubbing his hands together.

I flunked the treadmill. Next stop: cath lab. A doc stood there holding a knife and saw behind his back just in case they had to crack my chest. Woody ran a wire up one of my arteries.

My arteries were fine. "Yes, but he smokes," Woody said. One of the nurses fainted. Another made the sign of the cross.

That wasn't the end of it. Woody was determined to find something wrong with me. He did, too. He did some more tests and found some funny looking cells in my blood. He referred me to an oncologist.

By then I was a nervous wreck. The cancer doc wanted to do another test. What she did was auger a hole in my butt while I leaned over the exam table and watched television. When the results came back, I was relieved to find out that I didn't have leukemia as the cancer doc had feared. I had a form of anemia. No big deal.

I did a hop, skip, and a jump as I left the clinic that day. On my way out, I held the door for an old couple who were just the arriving. The old woman was taking baby steps. The old man was wearing gardening gloves.

