

RECEPTION

It was a muggy day outside, causing one to sweat within seconds after they had stepped out into the world. The air wavered as though the whole city were possessed by a funhouse mirror's lively spirit, and the high noon sun glared off of every surface. Through this summer day, one hundred and three residents of the city had walked, biked, or driven, to arrive at the same hospital waiting room, and fill it three beyond capacity. The air conditioning was a pleasantness to all who entered the hospital's sliding doors. In the waiting room, mumbled conversations could be heard here and there in different languages, as the receptionist steadily, if not incredibly quickly, allowed patient by patient to be summoned to the desk and then pass inside to the hospital proper.

The receptionist called out to the filled up waiting room, "John Andrews."

Two John Andrewses rose up from their chairs at the same time, made eye contact, and then awkwardly both sat back down increment by increment.

"Looking for Andrews, John."

The two Johns, glancing at one another while avoiding eye contact, both raised a hand for the receptionist's attention from their respective seats.

The receptionist, seeing this and their little glances to each other, remarked, "Oh, ummmmm let me see." She clicked her computer mouse, looked at the monitor, and then called out, "John Percy Andrews?"

Both began to stand again, and then, seeing the other, sat back down again.

“Hm! Date of birth is February 1st, 1989.”

No dice.

A few in the waiting room who had had nothing better to do during their entire wait were turning to see the hubbub head on.

“Wellll, something in the medical record will have to do... Blood type A positive?”

The two Johns looked to each other, gave exaggerated faces that conveyed “no idea,” and they each shrugged a little.

The receptionist gave an annoyed scoff, and then tried, “Currently seeing a therapist for diagnosed zoophilia?”

A few of the conversations halted, as more ears were suddenly pulled in by that exciting word. The halt in conversation cascaded through the room as others realized that something might be going on, and in very short order, the room was completely silent except for the receptionist impatiently ticking her nails on the counter. Many more eyes had turned to face the receptionist, so that they could be aware of if something was causing delays.

Both Johns’ cheeks began to burn, and they got up with half a mind to cover their face as they walked up to the front, and then, each making one farewell glance to the other, they saw that once again they had not been told apart, and in dread they sat back down among the other waiting patients once again.

The receptionist sighed, and said, “Last four social security digits are 4321?”

One John Andrews pointed to himself and mouthed “Me!” to the other John. The other John Andrews pointed to himself and mouthed “ME!”

The receptionist clicked her mouse like it was a voodoo doll made against either of the Johns in her waiting room. She then began reading aloud from her monitor: “The basis for this diagnosis of zoophilia, even as our understandings of sexuality evolve and become more permissive, is, indeed, not Mr Andrews’s attraction to his male Golden Retriever alone. It is more for the social distresses it has caused for the fact his apartment neighbors can hear him masturbating the dog and his inability to cease the activity or embrace some more private

venue; it is nearly as much a diagnosis of voyeurism, though is specific to the dog. It has caused him to lightly intersect with the criminal justice system. By his own admission this attraction interferes with his life, and by his own request he wishes that something here be cured.”

One of the Johns (both of them still possibly being up next to the desk) said to the other John, in the otherwise silent and rapt waiting room, “Would you be interested in skipping your appointment and going to get lunch together?”

“Yes.”

The two Johns both finally actually got up for realsies and walked very quickly out of the waiting room.