



CHRISTOPHER BRIAN SALON 

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Paging Doctor Gray

Since this month's magazine has a doctor/health theme I thought we might want to start with something funny. A friend of mine dialed 9-1-1 and in a panicked voice said, "Help, my wife is 9 months pregnant, has gone into labor and her contractions are only one minute apart. What should I do?" The 9-1-1 operator said, "Calm down and tell me, is this her first child?" My friend shouted back, "No you idiot this is her husband!"

Now that we're all smiling, can we talk about medicine? First thing you should know is I would have made a great doctor. I'm good under pressure, don't mind the sight of blood and I look excellent in a white lab coat. The only thing that stopped me was the science part.

Back in the fall of 1981, I took an entry-level biology class at HVCC with a teacher named Mrs. Morgan. Are you shocked I remember her name? Don't be; I never forget the names of people who torture me. Well "torture" is a strong word; perhaps torment is more accurate. We had to learn the most detailed facts about anatomy, animal classifications and neuro-whatzits and if, by some miracle, you guessed the right answer on a test but your spelling was off by even a single letter she took half off the grade. I hadn't seen that kind of slashing of numbers since Macy's had a one-day sale. It was clear after just one semester that the only way I could be a doctor would be if I took up acting and joined the cast of General Hospital.

Anyone who can get through medical or nursing school is a straight-up genius in my book. I dated a nursing student in college and helped her study with flash cards. If I had to learn half of what she was required to know, I would have had a nervous breakdown. This is why I'm a TV journalist; you just show up to some crime scene, ask people what happened and repeat it 10 minutes later into a television camera. Your loopy aunt Fran could do this job.

As a practice, I try to stay away from doctors. It's nothing personal; they just like to do the two things most people hate—weigh you and jab you with sharp objects. The only thing



that could make it worse would be if they put you on a scale and Mrs. Morgan showed up to poke you with a number two pencil.

Once you turn 50 years of age, this whole "avoiding the doctor like the plague" thing has to end. A couple of years back I had to get a colonoscopy, which is quite the adventure. They give you pills or a special drink to "clear you out" before the procedure and, by golly it, works. Drāno couldn't do a better job. I mean I haven't seen anything that empty since Kanye West played the TU Center in Albany.

I shouldn't complain, though, because women have it 10 times worse when it comes to dealing with doctors. You just have to keep reminding yourself that the visits, the poking, the wearing of the paper gown with your pride hanging out the back for all the world to see are all designed to keep you alive.

When I was in the hospital room with three other men my age waiting for my colonoscopy, I was understandably nervous but I thought to myself, "There are a million things that can kill you but I won't die of embarrassment or foolish pride or stupidity." I won't be that guy who drops to the pavement one day because he was too chicken to let the doc do his or her thing and catch a problem early.

It's funny that I joke about getting a "D" in biology back in college but when you're really sick you are glad the doctors and nurses who are taking care of you had it so tough in school. If you think doctors are overpaid, trust me, they earn every cent. If you dare think the nurse is just there to pass out meds and take vitals, you don't know how much you don't know about the job.

Should you ever get sick, count your blessings that Mrs. Morgan was so tough and weeded out the worst students like yours truly. Anyone who would answer a question, "The knee bone's connected to the thigh bone and the thigh bone's connected to the hip bone" should never be a doctor.

In conclusion, God bless the men and women who take care of us. They save lives, ease suffering and have committed themselves to a career that is truly a calling, not a job. I'd love to keep chatting but I'm told someone named Kanye is holding on line two, upset that I compared his concert in Albany to my colonoscopy. Talk about being the "butt" of a joke.

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