

HEART PROBLEM

Drama by

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Original Script

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Dec 18, 2024

1. INT. INDOOR TENNIS COURT - EVENING

Two ASIAN men just finished a match in a SIDE COURT. RICHARD LIN, (60), a slim man sitting in a plastic chair against the wall, is wiping his face and head with a towel. Facing the wall next to him, JERRY LI, (62), is pulling out a water bottle from his tennis bag on his chair.

RICHARD
A tough match!

Jerry raises his head and glugs some water from his bottle.

JERRY
You played pretty well today!
Can you play our next USTA game in
two week's time? JAMES won't be
able to play.

RICHARD
What happened to him?

JERRY
He has some heart problem.

Richard stands up and puts his towel inside his bag, then picks up his winter jacket with one hand and carries his bag with other hand.

RICHARD
That's bad. Count me in, I should
be able to play.
How long will he be out?

Jerry carries his bag and follows Richard, and the two men walk off the court towards a corridor leading to the main door.

JERRY
He said he will have a surgery, and
may be out for at least a few
months.
(then)
That's why I always tell my
patients to have an annual health-
check, so the earlier we find any
issues, the better chance to avoid
those complicated procedures,
particularly for people at our
ages.

RICHARD

I do it every year before our company's annual health-care enrollment. I will have my annual physical next week.

2. INT. CLINIC ROOM - MORNING

Richard sits on a clinic bed, relaxed. Across from him, sits DR.JONES, (52), cherubic yet stately, holds a piece of report in his hands.

DR.JONES

Looks like there is something in your EKG report...

RICHARD

(frowns)
What is EKG?

DR.JONES

EKG stands for electrocardiogram. It's a medical test that records the electrical activity of the heart. It can detect various heart issues like heart attacks, irregular heart beat etc. You never did EKG before?

RICHARD

No! My previous doctor never did this on me. What problem with my heart?

DR.JONES

It's hard to say.
Do you have a chest pain?

RICHARD

No! I play tennis regularly...

DR.JONES

Do you regularly feel short of breath?

RICHARD

No! I don't smoke, don't drink alcohol, and I eat healthy food. Plus, I don't have any of the symptoms you mentioned...

Dr.Jones puts the paper on the side, and stares at Richard

DR.JONES

Heart problem is a very serious issue, many heart attacks have no symptoms, we call it Silent Heart Attack. I suspect you may have one. I am sending you to the ER, and have already called the ambulance.

RICHARD

(in disbelief)

An ambulance?!

Dr.Jones stands up and walks to the door as a "LOUD AMBULANCE SIREN" approaches rapidly.

RICHARD

Can you finish the physical check, and then I can go to the ER, please?

DR.JONES

Don't worry about your physical, we can reschedule it for you.

Richard gets off the bed, looks scared and worried. He grabs his coat and walks out of the room.

3. INT. ER ROOM - AFTERNOON

Richard wears patient gown laying back against the pillow in a bed. He is covered with a blanket from waist down. His right upper arm is wrapped with a blood pressure cuff, a needle is taped at the inner elbow, a pulse clip is taped on his middle finger.

DR.TAYLOR opens the slide curtain, and walks in.

DR.TAYLOR

Your EKG does show some abnormality, but the lab report on your blood sample shows everything is normal.

He flips the paper in his hand

DR.TAYLOR (CONT'D)

The X-ray on your chest also shows nothing abnormal.

RICHARD

So, what is the problem with my heart, then?

DR.TAYLOR

We don't know yet. I suggest that we keep you here overnight, and put you on a treadmill for a stress test tomorrow morning...

RICHARD

Overnight here?! I haven't eat anything the whole day today. I want to go home now, and I will see a cardiologist to find out.

DR.TAYLOR

OK, I'll have your paper processed and get you released then.

4. INT. RICHARD'S RESIDENCE - AFTERNOON

Well decorated inside, Richard sits on a chair at the table in the nook area, staring at the laptop screen.

He types "cardiologist near me" in Google search, and goes through a list of links and stops at "DR. SALAMA". He clicks the link, an Arab-looking doctor's photo pops up. He reads through the introduction carefully till the phone number appears.

He grabs his cell phone from the table and dials the number.

LADY (V.O.)

Heart Cardiology Institute

RICHARD

Hi, Good Afternoon. I'd like to have an appointment with Dr.Salama, please?

LADY (V.O.)

What is this about?

RICHARD

I went to my doctor's office this morning for a physical, but he said my EKG shows some abnormality and sent me to the ER right away. The ER Doctor, however, couldn't find what the issue is, so I want to see a cardiologist...

LADY (V.O.)

Let's see...
Dr. Salama's schedule is fully

booked until February...

RICHARD
(in disbelief)
February?! That's about 3-month
away!
I need to see him ASAP!

LADY (V.O.)
Well... I'll let our Office Manager
know, and she will probably give
you a call in a few days to let you
know.

RICHARD
Okay, thank you.

5. INT. RICHARD'S RESIDENCE - EVENING

Richard sits in the library and searching info about heart problem on his laptop. Suddenly his cell phone rings, he picks it up, and saw Jerry's name appears on the screen.

JERRY (V.O.)
Hi, Richard, we have the line-up
now for next week's match, you and
me will play the 2nd double.

RICHARD
That's good! We can practice a bit
this weekend.

JERRY (V.O.)
Sure thing. Let's set a time on
Friday then.
Oh, by the way, how is your
physical?

RICHARD
Just the normal stuff, you know. My
new doctor did an EKG which I never
did before, and said there is
something abnormal, then sent me to
the ER, can you believe it?

JERRY (V.O.)
What? You were sent to the ER?

RICHARD
Yes, by ambulance!

JERRY (V.O.)

What symptoms did you have at the time?

RICHARD

Nothing! And the Doctor at the ER couldn't find anything either.

JERRY (V.O.)

That's strange. But heart problem is a serious one, you need to take it seriously. I'd suggest that you avoid any intense exercises until you figure out what the problem is.

RICHARD

I already called a cardiologist and will see him later anyway. Don't worry, I've been playing tennis every week as you know, I'll be fine.

JERRY (V.O.)

Let's wait for his diagnosis then. I'll find another partner till your cardiologist says you can play.

RICHARD

(sigh)
O.K.....

Richard hangs up the call, looks disappointed.

He walks over to the window, looks through outside, deep in thought...

6. EXT. STRIP MALL - AFTERNOON

Someone comes out of a glass door which has a big fascia sign "Family Dentistry" hanging high above the door.

7. INT. FAMILY DENTISTRY - AFTERNOON

Richard sits in a chair waiting. Across from him is the dentistry's Front Desk, several ladies are busy working behind the desk.

A hygienist, MARY, (58), comes straight to Richard.

MARY

Hi, Richard, good to see you again.

RICHARD

Good to see you, too.

Richard gets up, and follows Mary, walking inside to the treatment room.

MARY

Any changes in your health?

RICHARD

No, just as usual.

8. INT. DENTISTRY TREATMENT ROOM - LATER

Mary pulls out a floss and is to finish the last step in cleaning Richard's teeth, but Richard's phone rings in his pocket. Lying on a dental bed, Richard quickly pulls out his phone.

RICHARD

Hello...

WOMAN#1 (V.O.)

Hi, this is Dr.Salama's Office Manager, I'd like to ask you a few questions before I can put you down for an appointment, was you sent to the ER by your doctor?

RICHARD

Yes, he said I might have a silent heart attack...

WOMAN#1 (V.O.)

What did the ER Doctor say?

RICHARD

He couldn't figure it out, but wanted to keep me there overnight, and do a stress test next day. I declined.

WOMAN#1 (V.O.)

I see...
In that case... Can you come on Monday, December 9 at 1:15 pm?

RICHARD

Yes! I can do that.

WOMAN#1 (V.O.)

Good, see you then.

Richard looks relieved and rushes to put his phone back in his pocket.

MARY

You SHOULD have told me you have a heart problem when I asked you...

RICHARD

I don't think I have a problem, and I'm trying to find it out. I cannot say so before the cardiologist confirms that.

Mary looks unconvinced, and rushes to floss-clean Richard's teeth quickly, then gets up and press the button to notify the dentist.

Moments later, the dentist, (60), a half-bold man walks in.

MARY

He didn't tell me he has a heart problem...

Dentist didn't say anything. He comes over and uses a scaler to check Richard's teeth.

DENTIST

There is some wear on your teeth, but other than that, everything looks good.

He then pats Richard on the shoulder

DENTIST (CONT'D)

I'll see you next time.

9. INT. CLINIC ROOM - AFTERNOON

Richard sits on the clinic bed, looking nervous, exhausted and anxious. He occasionally wipes his forehead.

Suddenly he heard a knock on the door, and a thin, short man, Dr. Salama, (58), walks in.

RICHARD

Dr. Salama, is it very serious? I feel anxious and exhausted after I was first told that my EKG looks abnormal...

DR. SALAMA

(laugh)

Tell me the story.

Richard starts from his appointment with Dr. Jones for his physical. When he said he was sent to the ER, Dr. Salama shakes his head lightly with wry smile in disbelief.

Richard continues with his ER experience, even his dental office encounter.

RICHARD

Am I going to have a heart attack?

DR. SALAMA

(laugh)

You are fine...

RICHARD

But both EKG at my doctor's and at the ER show some abnormality, there got to be something wrong with my heart...

DR. SALAMA

An abnormal EKG doesn't necessarily mean you have a heart problem, it could be anything, that's why I have you tested with the STRESS ECO-CARDIOGRAM.

RICHARD

What did you find?

DR. SALAMA

Since your heart rate, heart beat, blood pressure are all normal, blood test also shows no problems, and you do not take any medications, the only thing we found is that your heart does look a bit different and I believe it's the normal variance that caused the abnormal EKG. So you don't need any treatment.

RICHARD

(relieved)

Do you mean I don't have a heart problem?

DR. SALAMA

(smile)

I believe so.

RICHARD

(sigh)

Thank you, thank you, Doctor! You saved my life!

DR. SALAMA

You can go with your normal life, but if you experience any chest pain, or shortness of breath, please call my office right away. If any of the symptoms are severe, please call 911 immediately.

RICHARD

I will, Doctor.
I wish my Primary-care doctor could be more cautious in sending me to the ER...

DR. SALAMA

You and me have lived in other countries before, and we know every country has something good and something not-so-good. In this country, doctors are scared of being sued by those lawyers, so they tend to over-treat patients...

RICHARD

Oh--- now I know, why people are so scared when they heard I may have a heart problem!

10. INT. RICHARD'S RESIDENCE - MORNING

Richard sits at the dinning table in his nook and eats a bowl of cereal. Between bites, he sorts through the mail. He puts other mails aside, but leaves two bills.

He quickly opens one, looks at it, and picks up his phone from the table.

WOMAN#2 (V.O.)

Hello, PrimeCare, how can I help you?

RICHARD

Good Morning, my name is Richard Lin, and I'm calling about my bill. I visited your office for an annual physical on Nov. 8. The physical is preventive care and should be no

charge for me.

WOMAN#2 (V.O.)

Let me take a look...
Your physical was done on Nov. 28,
and it's no charge for you. But the
Nov.8's visit of \$175 was a Health
Check, it's not the physical...

RICHARD

No, no, no! The Nov.8 appointment
was for the annual physical, but
Dr. Jones sent me to the ER...

WOMAN#2 (V.O.)

That's correct, you didn't finish
the physical that day but on Nov.
28...

RICHARD

Yes, but both were for the
physical, and you should charge
both to that.

WOMAN#2 (V.O.)

We can only charge one Physical per
year, and also EKG is not part of
the annual Physical...

RICHARD

I didn't ask for the EKG...

WOMAN#2

But you DO have a heart problem...

RICHARD

No! I don't have a Heart Problem,
it's the Heart of the Health System
that has a problem! Please combine
the two visits into one for annual
Physical!

Richard hangs up the call without waiting for the woman's
response.

Exasperated, he tosses the bill aside. He pauses for a few
seconds, and picks up the other letter.

He opens it up, a statement with a total of \$3409 charge for
ER EXAM appears in front of him.....

FADE OUT