

## Hi Yo, Silver!

Guys, you can skip this one unless, of course you have an insatiable curiosity as to what really happens behind the scenes. I'm talking the woman thing...a visit to the gynecologist. No man I know has ever particularly cared about this subject, so it is you ladies to whom this column is dedicated.

For years I have been a member of the Silver Stirrups Club that allows women to ask the question as they embark on their annual gyn visit: is this experience absolutely necessary? When I first saw a pair of these metal gizmos I was reminded of the time I mounted a horse, except with the horse I had reins to hold on to while in the case of the GYN exam, all I could do was white-knuckle the sides of the examination table. To make matters worse, it isn't politically correct to offer the doctor sugar cubes or oats to get him to halt. What makes this event so unique, so memorable if you will, is that all parties involved pretend that something else is going on than what actually is. It's a little like a Disney World adventure where everything seems a bit surreal yet not altogether a fantasy either.

A few months ago I received a note in the mail resembling a wedding invitation. It was neatly engraved in block letters on a cream-colored card which read: "our records show that it has been a year since your last gynecological visit. Please call the office at your earliest convenience to schedule an appointment." The phone number was printed in the lower left corner. I quickly ran to RSVP. It all seemed so elegant, so festive that I always wonder if it's necessary to bring along a gift, or at the very least, a bouquet of flowers.

I arrived at the office a month later dressed to kill. Women always dress for their gynecologists even though as soon as we arrive we're out of our clothes so fast we don't know what hit us. Some gals even have their hair done for the occasion or buy new shoes. There's no length to how far a woman will go to look good. What follows next is the routine procedure involving a travel itinerary of various rooms.

**THE WAITING ROOM.** This is where we sisters unite, pretending not to have a care in the world about what is about to happen next. A feeling of camaraderie is in the air. Some keep to themselves, poring through magazines, all on the subject of Women's Health and Child Rearing. Others exchange idol banter ranging from the weather report, vacation spots and fine dining

experiences. Everyone is in a state of denial and never discuss the reasons we are here. I have never entered a waiting room without feeling a sense of dread.

THE DRESSING ROOM. This is where we remove our clothes in exchange for a paper robe or a white sheet, and I'm not talking the designer high-couture collection. This is wrapped around the completely naked body, sarong style and worn en route to the next room: THE POWDER ROOM where no one ever powders their nose, but where a urine specimen is left and magically whisked away by invisible elves. No words are exchanged, just bodily fluids left in plastic cups.

THE EXAMINATION ROOM. This is where the drama happens: center stage with two main characters and a supporting role: the nurse, the doctor and the patient.

Nurse: "Hello...(eyeing the chart) Ms. Marks-White. You're looking well."

Me: "Thanks. White sheets become me."

Nurse: "Why don't we hop on the scale?" followed by "why don't we hop up on the table?"

After a series of hops, I am positioned accordingly while the nurse hums chirpily away. I ask her for a cup of water so I can pop a couple of Valium brought along for this occasion. She tells me to take a few deep cleansing breaths as though I am expected to give birth. It is that precise moment the doctor enters, smiling widely (why not? He's not on the table) while enthusiastically slapping on a rubber glove. He greets me with the same enthusiasm as Regis Philbin on "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?" Under normal circumstances, he might even be a nice guy. Today, however it's business as usual. And here's where it gets particularly funky. Neither I nor the nurse or the doctor address the subject at hand: the exam. Instead, we lapse into intensive rounds of small talk designed to make everyone feel relaxed when, in reality you can cut the tension with a scalpel.

Doctor: (sitting on a little stool and shining a 900-watt Halogen spot light under the sheet), "so, how's the family: the kids? The grandchildren? The dog? The cat?"

Me: "Really well, especially the cat."

Nurse: "I have two cats: "Fluffy" and "Smokey."

Doctor: (fidgeting around with a lot of paraphernalia) "I'm a dog man myself."

Nurse: "I have a goldfish. Very orange with a white stripe down its back."

Me: (counting the holes in the ceiling tile) “Did you know there are three hundred fifty-nine holes in one ceiling tile?”

Nurse: “Gee, I never knew that. Did you, doctor?”

Doctor: (probing every crevice of my lower hemisphere) “Can’t say I did, but that’s an interesting piece of information. You must be a real trivia buff.”

Me: “Yes, I’ve always enjoyed counting holes in ceilings. It’s become a hobby.”

Nurse: (handing the doctor a Q-Tip the size of a shish-kabob skewer) “Do you think it will rain?”

Me: “Eventually it will, but not today. Today is warm and sunny with a smattering of clouds and non possibility of precipitation.”

Doctor: (raising his head from under the sheet, tosses his gloves with perfect aim into the waste basket). “Yeah! Slam dunk,” He shouts. He then spends the remainder of the time surveying the other half of my upper landscape. He steps back and smiles approvingly. “You can get dressed and I’ll meet you in my office” or, what I refer to as the WE-CAN-ACT-LIKE-REAL-PEOPLE ROOM.

It is in this room, I wait ten minutes until the doctor saunters in, holding my chart and announcing in medical terminology: “I’m pleased with my findings.” I have now regressed to age five. I feel like a model patient who has been awarded the prize for good behavior. I thank the doctor for a most valuable experience. I am told to proceed down the hall to the: PAY-ON-YOUR-WAY-OUT ROOM.

Here is where my money and I part company. I am told to have a nice day and call the office in a week for the results of my Pap smear, blood work, final exam, SATs, M-CATS, and driver’s test. I head to the nearest bar a few blocks away and down a glass of wine. I have survived yet another visit to the gynecologist. I have passed with flying colors and hope to be invited back next year. “Hi Yo, Silver!”