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911

This play is based on a transcript from an actual 911 call. The dialogue has been extended and the source material has been adapted for dramatic purposes.

Characters:

911 Operator #425 Female

Caller #1 Male – 70's – Could be female – Polite. Nice.

Officer Male – From Caller's apartment.

Setting:

Emergency line dispatch stations at Police headquarters in a local police station. For the audience's convenience, set apart from the dispatch scene, a telephone on a stool or other table-like prop. A typical day.

Lights up on the two 911 dispatchers who sit at their computer screens. Each operator wears a headpiece.

Lights up on the Caller on the telephone during call. Lights down when not in use.

Begin:

Operator # 425 911

Caller *(In matter of fact tone of voice.)* I'm dyin'.

Operator Well, how do you know you're dying?

Caller I've had a strange premonition about death.

Operator Have you taken any medication today?

Caller No.

Operator And do you have any weapons on you?

Caller No, of course not.

Operator Have you had anything to drink tonight?

Caller Oh, no, no, no. Never would I ever drink.

Operator Okay, well I'm going to send the police right out, but...

Caller Well, how nice of you, finally! Get their asses out here please!

Operator Sir?

Caller Yah?

Operator I'm going to send the police right out to you, but I need to know if you need an ambulance also.

Caller I don't know.

Operator You don't know?

Caller Well why don't you try...listen...the police are coming? When will they be here?

Operator In a few minutes, but sir...

Caller Listen; when they get here, you may speak with them.

Operator I may speak with whom?

Caller The police.

Operator I don't need to speak with the police, sir, you do.

Caller Okay, I can speak to them when they come?

Operator Yes, but I need to know, sir, you say you are dying...

Caller Yes, I'm dying.

Operator I need to know if you need an ambulance and if so, they are going to want to know...

Caller I, I don't know...I may have just passed away...

Operator Okay, sir?

Caller Yah?

Operator Okay, when I call the Fire Department, did you want them to send an ambulance?

Caller You called the Fire Department?

Operator Yah, they're ones who send the ambulance out, they're going to need to know why.

Caller Why am I dying?

Operator Yes.

Caller I don't know. May I tell you where I'm located?

Operator Yes. That would be nice.

Caller 128296 Elkroad drive.

Operator Okay, are you there alone?

Caller Of course, except for my three grandchildren.

Operator You have three grandchildren?

Caller My three, my three cats.

Operator Okay, you are the only human inside that room, is that correct?

Caller Ee-yah.

Operator Okay.

Caller The cats are very dear to me. They're more important to me than my grandchildren.

Operator Okay, where are your grandchildren at?

Caller I don't know.

Operator Uh, okay. Why did you mention them, then?

Caller Oh, because uh, the cats are sorta substitutes for them. For the grandchildren.

Operator Ah, okay, okay. Is that where you live, sir? Or do you live somewhere else?

Caller Mam! I live at 128296 Elkroad drive.

Operator You do?

Caller Yah!

Operator Where do your grandchildren live?

Caller They live here with me.

Operator They live there with you in the apartment?

Caller Of course. They are in the bathroom.

Operator So they are there?

Caller They are here.

Operator Okay, uh, you told me earlier that they weren't there, only the cats were there.

Caller No. The cats are my grandchildren!

Operator Oookay. So you don't have any actual human grandchildren then?

Caller Oh, no, no.

Operator Okay. Okay. Are you married?

Caller Noooo.

Operator No? Okay. What's going on though?

Caller I don't know. I don't know. I'm dying.

Operator Okay, but you don't know why you're dying?

Caller No. No, I don't, don't know why I'm dying.

Operator Okayyyy.

(Police knock on caller's door.)

Caller Hark! Would you excuse me please?

Operator Sure.

Caller May I call you back?

Operator Why don't you just leave the phone line open?

Caller Oh, of course. I'm leaving the phone line open.
(Yelling in the distance) Just a moment! Who is it?
(Back on the phone) The police are here!

Operator Yah! That's who you called, sir!

Caller What?

Operator That's who you called, remember?

Caller Uh, the police are here.

Operator Right!

Caller They may not cross the threshold.

Operator They may not cross your...

Caller They may not cross the threshold.

Operator Well, sir, you called! You said you were dying.

Caller Yes...

Operator And you needed help!

Caller Yes!

Operator That's why I sent the police!

Caller Oh, look....what? (*Speaking to the police*) Close the door as you leave! (*Back on the phone*) Hello.

Operator Yah? Sir!

Caller Uh, huh.

Operator Okay, what is it you'd like us to help you with, you called 911...

Caller Yes...

Operator Okay? You said you were dying...

Caller Yes...

Operator Okay, and so I sent you the police. Is there something else I can help you with?

Caller Well, um, da, ya, send the police back.

Operator Why?

Caller Send the paramedics.

Operator Okay. So you don't want the police then?

Caller Oh, I do, I do, I do, I do...

Operator Well, why don't cha go step outside and talk to 'em then.

Caller Oh, I will, oh boy, I'd be pleased!

Operator Okay good! Goodnight then.

Both dispatchers look at each other. One with slight amusement and the other with sad understanding. Line rings again a few minutes later.

Operator #425 911. What's your emergency?

Caller Hello.

Operator What's your emergency?

Caller I'm dyin'. Do you have a small suitcase?

Operator Sir, didn't we just speak?

Caller Well, I don't know. Perhaps we did.

Operator Sir. We just spoke. Are the police still there?

Caller The police were here, yes.

Operator Okay, Sir? But are they still there?

Caller I don't know. They can't cross the threshold.

Operator You did say that, sir. Are the police still at your residence?

Caller You said I could talk to them. They said they are not the paramedics.

Operator That's right, sir. You called the police, remember? I thought you were going to speak with them.

Caller You want me to speak to them?

Operator Yes. Would you please let them in so that you can speak with them?

Caller I don't know. Should I let them in?

Operator Well, if you want to speak with them, it might be a good idea to let them cross your threshold, don't you think?

Caller Well, Yes! That might work. Will they send the paramedics?

Operator If you need the paramedics, sir, I can send them out but first you can talk to the officers at your door. They need to know what situation you are in.

Caller I'm dyin'.

Operator Why are you dying?

Caller Well, I don't know. Will the police know?

Operator They might. Will you speak to them?

Caller I'll go speak to them. Can I call you back?

Operator Why don't you just leave the line open again.

Caller Okay. I think I'll do that. *(Caller sets the phone down. Speaking to the police.)* You want to talk to me? *(Beat)* What did I do? *(Beat)* No. I'm dyin'. *(Beat)* I don't know why I'm dying. *(Double Beat)* You do? *(Double Beat)* My grandchildren. *(Beat)* No. They are in the bathroom. *(Beat)* My grandchildren do not live with me. *(Sound of door closing)*

Caller Hello?

Operator Yes? Are the police there now?

Caller Yes. They are here. They seem like very nice gentlemen. Do you think they would like some refreshments?

Operator I don't know about that, Sir. Did you speak to them?

Caller Why, yes. Yes, I did.

Operator May I speak with an officer just so I know that you are all right?

Caller *(To an officer)* The young lady would like to speak with you on the phone.

Officer *(To the Operator)* Hello! We have a gentleman here who says he is dying but he doesn't know why.

Operator That's what he told me. Do you have the situation secure there?

Officer Oh, yes! We are getting along nicely now. Send the paramedics out. There's no rush though. He's already brought us sandwiches and tea.

Operator *(Snickering)*

Officer Herbal tea and bologna. *(Whispers into phone)* I think he just needs a little company for a while.

Operator Okay. The paramedics are on their way. Do you need anything else?

Officer No. I think everything is under control here.

Operator Do you need animal control?

Officer Why would we need animal control?

Operator He said he has cats in the bathroom.

Officer *(To the caller) Sir, do you have animals here?*

Caller Animals? Only my grandchildren. They are in the bathroom.

Officer Your grandchildren are in the bathroom?

Caller Why, yes. They are in the bathroom.

Officer Could you ask them to come out so that we can meet them?

Caller You want me to let them out?

Officer Why, yes. That would be nice, don't you think?

Caller Well, I suppose I could let them out. *(Caller leaves the room)*

Officer *(To the operator on the other line)* He says his grandchildren are in the bathroom. Maybe you should call CPS.

Operator His grandchildren are his cats. Do you want Animal Control?

Officer *(Snickering) Maybe* that's a good idea. Wait a sec. Uh... *(To caller) Sir?*

Caller They are bashful. They don't talk much anymore.

Officer Sir? These cats are dead.

Caller What? No. They are bashful. I put them in the bathroom because they needed a bath but I couldn't turn the water on. Could you turn the water on for me?

Officer No. I can't sir. These cats are dead. It's too late to bathe them. *(Whispers to operator)* He has three dead cats in here. Badly decomposed. Send Animal Control and the paramedics.

Operator Paramedics have already been called. Do you need anything else?

Officer Next of kin?

Operator He says there are none.

Officer *(To caller) Sir?* Do you have any family members that we might call for you?

Caller Why no. Just my grandchildren.

Officer You mean your cats?

Caller No. My grandchildren.

Officer Where are your grandchildren, Sir?

Caller *(Looking at dead cats on floor in front of officer's feet)* This is Charley, and Eddie, and Eliza. And your name, Sir?

Officer Bob.

Caller Huh?

Officer Bob.

Caller You mean like Sponge Bob?

Officer *(laughing)* You know Sponge Bob?

Caller Well, of course. My grandchildren watch that show all the time on T.V. Would you like to watch it with me? The kids seem tired.

Officer *(Puts arm around caller)* Sure, I'll watch T.V. with you. *(To operator)* I'm going to clear the line now. ETA on the paramedics?

Operator Ten minutes.

Officer Thank you, Dispatch. *(Ends Call)*.