

Body Bus Driver

Our facility is located on the same grounds as the General Hospital. We have a separate building on the lower parking lot and are not affiliated with General other than we both are government facilities.

Every now and then it becomes necessary for us to go up to General and pick up a body in their ER. It's a fairly short walk and is no real problem for us. This usually occurs when our ambulance service is busy on other runs and it saves us a lot of time to go up the hill and get the body ourselves. We use a cart on wheels that looks somewhat like a square coffin.

It has a plastic cover that fits over it so that noone knows what cargo you are transporting. We simply call it the Body Bus.

On this evening, we were called to pick up another 'John Doe' at general who had passed away moments earlier in their ER. When I called our ambulance service to go pick up the unknown patient, they informed me that they had two other runs that they were on and that it would be at least an hour before they could get to General. One of our doctors who was working late, told me to go ahead and pick up the body myself while he stayed and watched the phones.

It was not an exciting assignment, but what the heck, it couldn't be all that bad.

So I went back and got the body bus ready to roll and headed off to General to pick up our latest customer. As I got to the back entrance to the hospital, I must admit that I was somewhat surprised at the reception from the people inside as I rolled down the halls towards the emergency room.

The thought Mosses splitting the Red Sea comes to mind as I recall rolling down the halls saying hello to the many people who had braced themselves up against the wall at the sight of me. Their eyes were bulging in horror as if they were afraid that I had come for them. As I turned down another hall, I felt the power of Mosses, as the busy halls suddenly parted and gave me free travel to my awaited customer.

I wasn't quite sure how these people knew who I was and what I was doing there, but it was obvious that everybody knew that I was from the morgue and that I was there to pick up a body. And though I maintained my usual friendly ways with the people - "Howdy", "How ya'

doin'", "Good evening" - most of the people seemed hesitant to look at me but instead looked away. The Grim Reaper must be a lonely guy, I thought.

After picking up my lost soul, I headed back, receiving the same reaction from the people only a bit more pronounced, as if they seemed to know that now there was a body underneath that cover. I made no attempt to be bright and friendly with the people. Even though he was an unknown and unwanted lost soul, I felt that my customer deserved a ride to the morgue with respect and as much courtesy as I could muster up. This was no time to be bubbly.

I got out of the hospital feeling as if I had singlehandedly ruined the appetite of many unfortunate people behind me. I suddenly realized that the casual trip up the hill to the hospital required a rather frightening return to the morgue DOWN the hill. Negotiating the body bus down the hill through pot holes and pebbles was a scene, I'm sure, that resembled something you'd see in a Buster Keaton clip.

Out of breath and in a sweat, I finally rolled our customer safely into his new home.

It was an experience that I hope will not come my way anytime soon again. But Johnny Doe is ours now and we'll make sure he gets the proper care he deserves.