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Editorial

A Day in the Morgue

We begin by introducing Dr. Why, a pathologist and the head medical examiner in a large hospital. Because of a heavy work load, he restricts his practice to postmortems.

Contrary to what one might think, Dr. Why isn't a dour person. The fact that all of his patients are dead has not alienated him from the living. In fact, he is as congenial as people come. If there is such a thing as bringing a bit of sunshine to a morgue, Dr. Why does it.

Medical students love Dr. Why. It isn't unusual for him to work surrounded by students. He has the interesting habit of talking non-stop as he works, describing what is taking place. These soliloquies (yes, even if everyone leaves the room, he keeps on talking) make even the most routine procedure come to life.

Now we shall spend a day with him in the morgue. Decidedly, Dr. Why is not an ordinary doctor nor is his morgue an ordinary morgue. On one wall there is a large plaque, with the following inscription:

Truth is fallen in the street.

—Isaiah 59:14

So there you have it! Dr. Why doesn't dissect cadavers of flesh and bone. He doesn't handle human organs. When the police find truth fallen in the streets, they pick up the body and deliver it to his morgue. Dr. Why's job is to find out what happened to truth.

It's 7:00 a.m., and Dr. Why comes breezing through the door into the morgue. Never early, never late. After a quick exchange of greetings with his assistants, he heads for the dressing room and dons his work clothes. In the meantime his helpers place the first victim on the table.

"An interesting case..." he observes. (Those are always his opening words, because all cases to him are interesting.) "Interesting, indeed. Do you see what I see? (He never waits for an answer.) This has been a violent death. See those wounds? They are deep. In a moment we will see which organs were damaged..."