

Press One

Jack English

Sam was just dozing off to sleep when he heard a noise downstairs. Someone was in the house. He called 911.

A mechanical sounding voice answered the phone and said, “Please listen to our entire menu as are options have changed. If you are calling in Swahili, Zulu, Afrikaans, Arabic, Hausa, or Yorba, please press 1. If you are calling in Japanese, Hindi, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indonesian, Mayla, or Korean please press 2. If you are calling in Spanish, Portuguese, or Paraguayan Guarani, please press 3. If you are calling in German, French, Italian, Russian, Dutch, Greek, Czeck, or English, please press 4. If you need to hear this menu in your native language, please press 5. If you need to hear this message again, please press 6. Good bye.” Then the voice hung up on him.

Sam called back. When the voice said, “If you are calling in German, French, Italian, Russian, Dutch, Greek, Czech, or English please press 4,” he pressed 4. Then the voice said, “If you are calling in German, please press 1. If you are calling in French, please press 2. If you are calling in Italian, please press 3. If you are calling in Russian, please press 4. If you are calling in Dutch, please press 5. If you are calling Greek, please press 6. If you are calling in Czeck, please press 7. If you are calling in English, please press 8.”

Sam heard someone in the kitchen opening and closing cabinets and drawers. He pressed 8 and struggled to remember the combination to his gun safe.

“Please confirm your location by entering your five-digit zip code.”

Sam keyed it in.

The voice on the other end of the phone said, “If you are calling about trash collection, please press 1. If you are calling about hazardous waste collection, please press 2. If you are calling with a question about recycling, please press 3. If you are calling about dog or cat licenses, please press 4. If you are calling about the types of animals permitted within city limits, please press 5. If you have a

complaint about trash, or abandoned cars, please press 6. If you are calling to report a pothole, missing street sign or malfunctioning traffic light, please press 7. If you are calling about your municipal tax bill, please press 8. If this is a police or public safety matter, please press 9.

Sam heard someone coming up the stairs. He pressed 9. But he pressed 9 into his gun safe's combination lock when he should have pressed 7. He pressed 9 on the phone and reentered his gun safe's combination.

The mechanical voice said, "Your Police Department is here to protect and to serve you, the public. We provide equal protection under the law to everyone regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, or sexual orientation. If your preferred pronouns, are he or him, please press 1. If your preferred pronouns, are she or her, please press 2. If your preferred pronouns are something else, please press 3.

Sam pressed 1 on his phone, then opened his gun safe and pulled out his gun.

The mechanical voice continued, "The best way to contact the police is to send an email via our website: www.city.police.org/emergency. You may send a text message to 800-911-0911 or contact us via our Facebook page facebook.com/yourcitypolice/. Our address is 1602 East Main Street. Free Parking is available in the rear. If you would like to speak to an officer, please listen to our entire menu as our options have changed. If you know your party's five-digit extension, please press 1 and enter it now. If you are calling for a parade permit, please press 2. If you are calling about records for motor vehicle accidents or to report a motor vehicle accident, please press 3. If you are calling about a gun permit, please press 4. If you are calling to complain about, noise, to report littering, or to report a building code violation, please press 5. If you are calling about Municipal Court dates, please press 6. If you are calling to report a crime, please press 7.

Sam pressed 7 and checked his gun to make sure its magazine was full and there was a round in the chamber. Then he turned off the lights and crouched next to his bed.

The mechanical voice said, "If this is an emergency, please hang up and call 911."

At that very instant, the door knob to his bedroom began to turn. Sam raised his gun to firing position.

The door opened, and before he could make out the silhouette of the person standing there, he squeezed off a round.

"What the hell are you doing?" his wife screamed, "You nearly killed me with that thing!"

“Sorry,” Sam said and flicked on the light. “I thought you were an intruder. You were not supposed to be home for another day.”

“Mother said she is feeling much better, and frankly she was driving me crazy, so I decided to come home a day early. Didn’t you get my message? I left it on voice mail.”

“No, I didn’t get it,” Sam took the magazine out of his gun and returned it to the safe.

“It is right on the machine,” Sam’s wife shook her finger in his face. “You press 2 to get messages from me; I press 3 to get messages from you; and we press 1 to get messages from everyone else.”

Downstairs, there was a terrible racket. Someone was pounding on the door. “Open up! This is the police!”

Sam skittered downstairs and opened the door. He was only dressed in his pajamas.

“I am Sergeant Schultz, and this is Officer Collins,” he pointed his thumb over his shoulder toward another officer. “We got a report of gunshots at this location. May we come in?”

“Sure, well... it was me. I accidentally fired my gun. How did you get here so quickly?”

“Somebody phoned it in. Do you mind if we look around? I have to make sure there are no... that everyone is OK.”

“Whatever,” Sam stood back out of the way.

The police quickly looked in every room and the basement, then they returned to the entrance hall where Sam was standing in his pajamas.

“You know,” Sergeant Schultz said, “it is illegal to discharge a firearm within city limits. You could get up to 90 days in jail and or a fine of \$5,000.”

“Sorry,” Sam said. “Am I under arrest?”

“No. But I am going to have to write you a ticket. Come to court. Explain the situation to the judge, and he may let you off.”

“When will my case be heard?” Sam asked.

“Court dates are computer assigned.” Sergeant Schwartz handed Sam a card with a phone number on it. The computer will ask for this ticket number,” The sergeant pointed to a preprinted number on the ticket. “Key it into your phone and it will give you the date and time of your court appearance.”

“Thank you, Sergeant,” Sam said and closed the door as soon as Schultz and the other officer left.

His wife called down from upstairs. “Is everything all right dear?”

“Yeah, I guess so. I got a ticket for discharging a firearm within city limits.”

“What happens now?” she asked.

“I have to appear in court.”

“When?”

“Sergeant Schultz gave me a phone number to call,” Sam said.

“Well, find out when it is and let me know,” his wife said.

Sam called the number. A mechanical voice on the other end of the line said, “Please listen to our entire menu as our options have changed. If you are calling in Swahili, Zulu, Afrikaans, Arabic, Hausa, or Yorba, please press 1. If you are calling in Japanese, Hindi, Vietnamese, Chinese, Indonesian, Mayla, or Korean please press 2. If you are calling in Spanish, Portuguese, or Paraguayan Guarani, please press 3. If you are calling in German, French, Italian, Russian, Dutch, Greek, Czeck, or English, please press 4. If you need to hear this menu in your native language, please press 5. If you need to hear this message again, please press 6. Good bye.” Then the voice hung up on him.

THE END

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