

Note: I was working on a rather long puking story when this idea popped into my mind and bled...I mean begged to be written. Enjoy. P.S. this story is not beta read so all mistakes are mine.

To Scratch the Surface

By [LindaS](#)

The ambulance swerved around a corner causing Johnny to steady himself with his right arm.

"Yeow!" He gritted his teeth as pain shot through his forearm. "What's our ETA?"

"About ten minutes," the ambulance attendant replied.

Johnny checked on his patient again. The man was stable. Sitting back down, he gingerly removed his lightweight jacket. The pressure bandages he had applied earlier in the rescue were now soaked with blood. He carefully peeled them back to have a look at the wound.

"That looks pretty nasty," the attendant remarked as he observed the injury.

"Yeah," Johnny muttered. "Hey, can you hand me a couple more bandages." *Man, I didn't think it looked that bad, then again the light in the mineshaft wasn't all that great.* Johnny reapplied the new bandages and slipped his jacket back on. Seemed he couldn't shake off the cold he had felt since the rescue down in the shaft.

Johnny thought back to the rescue. It had been a rather hairy one. A bunch of spelunkers had been exploring an old abandon mine. They weren't aware they were standing over a boarded up section. The floorboards, old and decayed gave way. Two fell through, one to his death, a third person escaped without injury and was able to summon help.

When their engine company had arrived on the scene, it was decided that Johnny would go down the shaft due to the unstable conditions and to the fact that he was the lightest. The rescue actually went off without a hitch until they were removing the victim. The stoke bumped against the side wall causing a shower of dirt and rocks to rain down on Johnny, along with a piece of a supporting beam. The timber tore through his jacket and ripped a nice gash along his forearm.

"You're okay down there?" Roy shouted to his partner.

"M okay," he replied back. In the dim light of the shaft, the cut didn't looked that bad. He quickly bandaged it and slipped his jacket back on. It was chilly here beneath the surface.

Once topside, the tear in his jacket didn't escape Roy's scrutiny.

"Thought you said you weren't hurt."

"It's nothing but a scratch." Johnny pulled his arm away. "Don't worry, mom, I'll have it check out when we get to Rampart."

That remark threw up red flags in Roy's mind. Johnny was actually volunteering to be checked out. "Why don't you ride in with the victim and I'll bring in the squad," Roy offered. If Johnny did hurt himself, the older paramedic felt better knowing his partner wouldn't be driving.

Upon arriving at the hospital, Johnny deposited his patient with Dr. Brackett in treatment room 2. Kel, noticing that Johnny was holding his arm, told him to get it checked out. Johnny nodded as he left the room. Walking up to the nurses' station, he was surprised and pleased to see a new face there. An attractive, petite blonde was busy going over some charts. Johnny stood in front of the desk for a minute and, when she didn't acknowledge him, he cleared his throat and flashed her the patented Gage smile.

"Is Dixie around?"

"Sorry, Nurse McCall won't be in for another hour."

"You must be new here. I'm John...John Gage, paramedic with Station 51." He hesitated, giving the nurse a chance to introduce herself.

"And..." The nurse's face clearly expressed a look of impatience.

Johnny gave a swallow. "Just brought in the patient in treatment room 2. Sort of cut myself during the rescue." He took a glance at her nametag. "I was wondering, Miss ...I mean Nurse Collins, if one of the docs could have a look?" Gads, she made him feel like he was a schoolboy standing in front of the principal.

"We're extremely busy right now, Mr. Gage. You can have a seat in our waiting room." There was more starch to her than in her uniform. She turned from him and picked up another chart for review.

"But..." Johnny stammered. He shivered a bit even though he still had on his jacket. The nurse was offering no sympathy...a real ice princess. "How about I grab a cup of coffee and wait in the lounge?"

"Do what you wish, Mr. Gage, just don't expect me to come looking for you." With that the nurse left the desk.

"Man," Johnny moaned as he clutched his arm to his chest. "What I'd wish is for...is for Dixie to be here." He walked down to the waiting room. At this time of the day it was filled with snot-nosed kids and blue-haired ladies. He selected to sit at a secluded spot in the corner away from the crowd.

Roy stretched his arms against the steering wheel as he sat in standstill traffic. He had stayed behind at the scene to clean up before heading off to Rampart. An accident somewhere up ahead had snarled traffic causing reduce speed to about five miles an hour. At this rate, it would take a good hour to get to Rampart.

Roy slammed on the brake as the traffic once again came to a halt. Man, he was glad that Johnny had gone ahead. Of course, Roy would have at least liked the opportunity to examine his partner's arm before he had left. Well, it didn't seem to be bleeding that bad and by now one of the doctors at Rampart would be looking at it. The traffic started to move again.

Wow, cruising now at fifteen miles an hour!

Johnny squirmed in his seat. He believed that waiting room chairs had to be an ancient form of torture. No

one in his or her right mind would design a hard piece of plastic and actually think it would be comfortable to sit in. He thought about slipping off his jacket to have a look at his arm, but he felt too cold. He really wished he had a cup of hot coffee right now. He was cold...cold and thirsty. Maybe he should go to the lounge. He had a better chance of bumping into a doctor there than here. He stood for a moment, but the room seemed to wave before him. Dizzy, he sat back down and a feeling of nausea crept over him. He leaned his head back against the wall and closed his eyes, hoping the sensation would past.

As Roy entered Rampart, he spied Dixie walking up to the nurses' station.

"Well Roy, what's bring you in here?" She flashed him a smile as she removed her sweater.

"Brought in a victim who fell down a mineshaft." He returned Dix's smile. "You haven't seen Johnny around?"

"No, I just came on at three." Dixie paused, noticing the worried expression on Roy's face. "Don't tell me he's in trouble."

"Not sure, he injured his arm at the rescue, but said he would get it checked out."

Dixie raised an eyebrow in disbelief. "He said he would have it checked out?"

Roy nodded.

Dixie quickly scanned the charts at the station. "Well, I don't see any record of him being treated. Why don't we check with Nurse Collins? She should have been on duty when Johnny came in."

As Dixie moved to leave the station, a high-pitched scream sounded from the waiting room.

Five-year-old Sally wanted to be a doctor when she grew up. She was tired sitting next to her mom in the waiting room. She wasn't sick, her baby brother was. As she moved around the room, she gave each 'patient' her professional diagnosis. The boy with a stomachache had appendicitis; the kid with the rash had Chicken Pox and the old lady with the sore leg needed an amputation. Of course, the old lady didn't appreciate her help and told her to scoot along.

Sally surveyed the room wondering whom she could doctor next. In the corner sat a man. He kind of looked cute. His brown hair fell across his forehead like her 'boyfriend' who lived next door.

She crawled up into the chair next to the man. "Mister," she said giving his shoulder a little shake. He must be sleeping. "Mister," she spoke louder and gave his shoulder another push.

"W...What?" Johnny cracked his eyes open a bit. He tried to focus on the small figure next to him.

"I'm Doctor Sally and I'm going to dial nose you." She placed her tiny hand on the dazed man's forehead. "Hmmm...cold and wet, just like my dog," she pronounced.

And as sick as one. "What kind?" Johnny inquired.

"Huh?"

"What kind of dog?" The man asked with hope that even a conversation with this small child would keep his mind off how he was feeling.

"My daddy calls it a Fox terror because he tears everything up, but I call him Pepper," she stated proudly.

Johnny gave her a weak smile. He had a terrier when he was young.

"So, what's your problem?" Sally asked, reverting back to her doctor role.

"Cut my arm." Johnny tried to raise the limb, but it felt heavy.

"Ewww...gross! The girl remarked

Johnny followed the child's eyes to his arm. The sleeve was now covered in blood that had soaked through the bandages. *Guess I didn't stop the bleeding.* The paramedic in Johnny knew he had to get help, but his body refused to cooperate. Struggling to stand in hopes of attracting the nurse's attention, the man succeeded only in toppling out of the chair, falling to the floor in a heap. Frightened, the little girl stood on her chair and let out a loud wail.

Roy and Dixie rushed into the waiting room. By then a small crowd had gathered. There were low murmurs. "Do you think he's dead?" "Somebody should get help." They were both shock as they pushed their way through the gawkers to find Johnny lying on the floor.

"Johnny!" Roy shouted.

"R..Roy?" Johnny chattered. He tried to open his eyes, but was too tired and cold. His head was swimming.

Dixie swiftly commandeered two orderlies and a gurney. They carefully deposited Johnny on the gurney and moved him down the hallway. Dr. Brackett, having finished with his patient, came out to see the cause of the commotion.

"Bring him in here," he shouted.

Johnny was smoothly transferred to the exam table. Dixie efficiently cut off the bloody sleeve of his jacket and removed the blood-soaked bandages. Roy, starting an IV ordered by Brackett, glanced at the wound. *Junior, you and I are going to have to have a discussion as to what a scratch is.* He knew that wound was going to take more than just a couple of stitches.

Roy entered the room staring at his partner. The whole purpose of the paramedic program was to treat victims as soon as possible, to prevent them from going into shock. Well, Johnny collapsed right here at the hospital. There was no denying that Dr. Brackett was angry. He was furious when he found out how Nurse Collins had handled the situation. It wasn't good hospital policy to have people keeling over in the waiting room for lack of treatment. If Dixie hadn't stepped in, Roy thought Nurse Collins would have been fired on the spot. Of course, he wouldn't want to be in Nurse Collins' shoes. He knew she'd be getting a worse dressing down from Dix.

"So how are you feeling?" Roy took in the pale face of his partner and the bandaged right arm.

"Better." Johnny waved his arm with the IV in it around as if to emphasize the point.

Roy winced remembering the difficult time he had getting the stick. *He'll have a bruise there for sure.*

"Doc wants to keep me here for a few hours of observation before releasing me."

"Well, I already let Cap know that he'll have to get a replacement for you. With the amount of sutures Brackett put in that arm, you won't be using it for a while."

Johnny winced at the thought of the stitches. Right now, with the pain medication he was on, he wasn't feeling so bad, but he knew from past experience that his arm would hurt and the stitches would itch like crazy.

Both men were silent for a moment. Roy cleared his throat.

"Listen, the next time you're hurt, even if it is only a scratch, promise me you'll let me look at it."

Johnny stared at his friend. He knew that Roy was shaken by what happened. He flashed Roy a grin and said teasingly, "Sure Roy, after all, you're bound to give better treatment than what I received here lately."

Johnny hadn't noticed the opening of the door during his last remark. "Better than what?" Dixie frowned.

"I think it's time for me to leave," Roy stated, shooting his partner an apologetic glance for deserting him.

Dixie tapped her toe as she waited for a response. Johnny stared at her sheepishly. "Uh...better than... uh..." Johnny gave up. "Dix, you know what I mean. I just didn't want Roy to feel bad."

"Oh, I know what you mean and, John Gage, haven't we always given you A-one treatment?" Dixie walked into the room and sat the tray she was carrying next to the bed.

"Uh...well, yes," Johnny stammered. Dix smiled at him as she deftly uncovered the tray. Johnny nervously eyed the object that the nurse picked up.

"Uh...what's that?"

"Just some more of our A-one service. Now if you will just roll over a bit."

"Ah...Dix," Johnny moaned and then gritted his teeth.

"That wasn't too bad. See, I barely scratched the surface." Dixie grinned as she picked up the tray to leave.

The End