

## *What Are the Odds?*

By *Alice Furey and Sheryl Tovar*

"OUCH!" Marco Lopez yelled as he pulled his hand from the soapy water.

Roy and Johnny, who were sitting at the table studying for the paramedic re-certification exam, looked up. Marco was holding his right hand and blood was dripping from the fleshy portion near his thumb. The paramedics jumped up.

"I'll get the box." Johnny ran to the squad while Roy went to examine Marco's hand.

"What happened?" He peered at the wound, which luckily, didn't look too deep.

"I was washing some glasses; I think one of the them must have broke. I reached in and ..ouch!" he cried again as Roy palpated the area near the wound.

"Just a flesh wound." Roy grabbed a dishtowel and wrapped it around Marco's hand. Johnny came back with the Trauma box, Hank Stanley right on his heels.

"What happened?" Hank watched as Johnny rummaged through the trauma box for bandages.

"Glass broke," said Marco, hissing as Roy cleaned the wound.

"Roy, is he okay?" Stanley asked.

Roy nodded. "He's fine, Cap. Looked worse than it was."

Cap nodded. "Better write up an incident report." He walked back to his office.

Chet entered the room. "What happened?"

John laughed. "The dishes, 1, Marco, zip!"

"Thanks for the sympathy, John," Marco said, flexing his hand. "Remind me to return the favor next time you get hurt."

"Which should be at any time," Chet piped up. "You're about due for an injury, aren't you, Gage? What's it been...a whole two shifts since you're last one?"

Johnny glared at Chet. "Very funny. Very funny. I don't get hurt any more than anyone else."

Roy snorted as Chet and Marco exchanged a glance. John answered indignantly. "I don't."

Chet laughed. "Gage, you're a disaster magnet. Face facts, pal." He walked to the sink. "Hey Marco, you forgot to let the water out." Chet reached in to unplug the drain before the guys could warn him. "OUCH!" he yelled as he pulled his hand out of the water. Blood dripped from his index finger.

Johnny grinned. "Chet, you are a disaster magnet!" He peered into the sink. "Hey, at least he unplugged the

drain."

Roy sighed and re-opened the Trauma box. At times, this station felt like an elementary school.

Johnny gingerly picked the broken shards of glass out of the sink and disposed of them, while Roy bandaged Chet.

Hank wandered back into the day room as Roy packed up his gear once again. "Now what?"

"Cap, you'd better call in a code I," Johnny giggled.

"Oh cute, Gage! Real cute!" Chet retorted with disgust.

Johnny ignored him and continued to snicker as he tied up the garbage bag and headed out to the Dumpster.

A few minutes later, the station tones went off.



The squad and the engine pulled up to the address of their call. A nearly hysterical woman ran from behind the house to meet them. "Oh...hurry please! It's my son; he's really stuck!"

Captain Stanley approached the woman first. "Calm down, ma'am," he said soothingly. "Now tell us, where is your son?"

"He's stuck in a tree! If I've told him once, I've told him a thousand times not to climb that tree!"

"Better get the ladder," Hank ordered.

Chet and Marco went to retrieve the ladder while the rest of the crew followed the woman to the back yard. There, they found a small group of boys looking up a very large tree.

"It's all my fault," admitted one of the boys. "I double dared him."

"He dared you first," one of the other boys commented.

Johnny chuckled while he put his gloves on. "What's his name?" He squinted from the sun as he attempted to look up into the tree and spot the boy.

"Brian," the boy's mother answered. "Brian!" She looked up the tree. "It's gonna be okay! Help is here! There gonna get you down!"

"Wow! He's up there pretty far, Cap!" John concluded, as Chet and Marco trotted up with the ladder.

"The ladder isn't going to be tall enough, Cap," Roy surmised. "I'll have to climb up and get him. Those branches look sturdy enough."

"Be careful, Pal," Hank advised, giving Roy a pat on the shoulder. Kelly and Lopez hoisted the ladder up against the tree and Roy began his ascent.

Thankfully, the branches were strong, in spite of the height the boy had reached. Roy climbed up to him

easily. "Hi there," Roy said calmly. He stood on a branch lower than the one that held the boy and ran a practiced eye over him. He concluded that the child was frightened but uninjured. The boy clung to the tree, looking straight ahead.

"My name is Roy; I'm a fireman." He failed to get a response from the child. "We're going to get you down from here...so don't you worry." He waited again, but the boy refused to look at him. "If you let go, you can put your arms around my neck and I'll get you down from here. Promise I won't let ya fall!"

The boy glanced quickly at Roy, then stared ahead again.

"I'm gonna help you, okay?" Roy said in a reassuring voice. He shifted on the branch, making sure that he had his footing and reached around to pry the small boy off of the limb.

Suddenly the little boy turned his head, sinking his teeth into the paramedic's arm.

"OUCH!" hollered Roy, completely surprised by the attack. He pulled his arm back and looked at the teeth marks that remained. "That hurt!" The bite had broken the skin slightly and drops of blood oozed out of the teeth marks. Roy leaned back and pulled on his gloves. He looked at the boy again. "Look, your mommy sent me up here to get you. She's waiting down there for you, okay?"

The little boy stared at him. "My mommy told me to never talk to strangers."

Roy sighed. "I'm not a stranger. I'm a fireman. We help people."

"Policemen help people," the boy answered solemnly.

"You're right." Roy rubbed his hand. "But so do fireman."

The little boy regarded him for a moment. Then he shook his head and started to climb down the tree.

"Hey!" Roy yelled as he watched the boy make his way down with the skill of a chimpanzee. Roy slowly climbed down after him.

When he reached the ground, the boy had already raced away with his friends. The distraught mother looked at the firemen. "Thank you so much. I'm very sorry."

"No trouble at all," Hank Stanley answered.

Roy snorted to himself as he headed to the squad. Johnny followed him, surprised to see his partner reach for the trauma box.

"Why are you opening that?"

"Cause that little...MONKEY bit me!" Roy growled as he began to clean his wound.

John grinned. "He did. Lemme see." He tried to reach for Roy's hand, but his friend yanked it away.

"I've got it!"

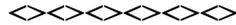
"Did he break the skin?"

"Yeah!" Roy said as he held a bandage out to Johnny. "Here, help me with this."

Johnny whistled as he examined Roy's hand. "Perfect set of teeth marks. Want to go to Rampart and get that checked?"

Roy glared at his friend as he closed up the trauma box and returned it to the squad. "NO. Let's just get out of here."

Johnny laughed as he watched Roy stalk off, then he climbed into the squad and they returned to the station.



As Roy backed into the apparatus bay, he realized that his partner had been uncharacteristically quiet for the ride back. He glanced over at Johnny, hoping that the unusual silence wasn't in preparation for a much larger soap box session. Roy could just envision the topic. *The situations kids get themselves into? Parents who don't keep a close enough eye on their kids? Kids these days have no respect?* The possibilities were endless. *Please NOT today, Partner!* Instead, Johnny sat with a smug little smirk on his face. *I'm going to hate myself for this but I have to know!* "What are you looking so smug for?"

Johnny quickly turned his head and the smirk changed to a grin. "Whatever do you mean, Roy?"

Roy raised an eyebrow, attempting to contemplate his partner's strange behavior. *Stranger than his usual "strange"*. "Never mind." He opened the door and got out of the squad.

John giggled as he climbed out the other side, obviously pleased with himself.

A few minutes later the engine backed in and its' crew ambled into the day room. Johnny was pouring himself a cup of coffee while Roy sat on the couch reading the newspaper.

"You are all in for a treat tonight!" Captain Stanley declared as he bent down to pull a large kettle from a bottom cupboard. "I'm gonna make some of my famous clam chowder!" He set the kettle on top of the stove and opened the pantry door, retrieving a bag of potatoes.

"Clam chowder again?" Johnny mumbled with a look of mild disgust.

"What was that John?" Hank asked, cheerfully ignoring his paramedic's remark.

John let out a nervous chuckle. "I said I can't wait to have your clam chowder again...Sir."

"Good, good!" Hank replied, eyeing Johnny with an overly indulgent smile. "Since you're so anxious for some, John, why don't you help me out and peel these potatoes."

Johnny groaned as he grabbed the bag of potatoes. The others grinned, amused by his predicament.

Whistling happily, Hank opened the refrigerator and pulled out an onion. He stopped suddenly as he noted the crew standing around watching. "Well...this station isn't going to clean itself, is it?" He watched as the men scurried off and then he turned to John with a smile. "It's a secret recipe!"

Hank placed the onion on the cutting board and began dicing, while John reluctantly peeled the potatoes.

"Oh great!" Hank muttered a moment later. He nudged Johnny away from the sink and turned the faucet

on, running water over his index finger.

Johnny craned his neck to survey the situation and noticed the blood pouring from a fairly large slice in Hank's injured digit. "Uh...Cap? Looks like you cut yourself." Hank shot him an irritated look. "No kidding, you twit! Well, don't just stand there!"

Johnny looked closer at the laceration. "Looks deep," he concluded. "I think you're gonna need a couple stitches. "

"Oh that's just great!" the captain grumbled.

"I'll be right back; just keep it under the water." John jogged out to the bay.



Two hours later, Roy backed the squad into the apparatus bay. Hank Stanley sat in the passenger's seat in a foul mood. His partner sat between them, once again wearing that smirk on his face. With a sigh, he turned off the engine. This was turning out to be a long shift.

The three men trudged into the day room, where Marco stood over the stove stirring what they hoped was dinner in the kettle Hank had set on the stove.

Johnny walked over to the stove and peeked at the contents of the kettle. "Smells pretty good, Marco!"

"Potato soup," informed Marco. "Stoker made it."

Johnny looked around the room. "Oh...well, where's Stoker?"

"In the locker room," replied Marco, failing to hold back a smile. "Changing his shirt?"

"Why's he changing?" John asked.

"Cause of the blood." Chet answered, glancing up from the newspaper he was reading.

"What blood?" Roy asked, concerned.

Chet turned a page. "We were tossing a basketball out back and Marco elbowed Mike in the face. Cheap shot."

Marco's face reddened. "Come on, Chet. It was an accident!"

Roy and Hank looked at each other, both mildly alarmed. Johnny just stood there grinning. "Man! I don't believe it!"

"Well, is he okay?" Hank asked.

Marco nodded. "Yeah. It stopped bleeding pretty fast. We put some ice on it."

Johnny grinned. Roy shook his head rolling his eyes. He glanced at his partner, noting that the superior smug look was plastered again on his face.

"Why the smirk?" Roy asked, annoyed. John shrugged.

Chet glanced up. "Yeah, Gage. You got that cat-who-ate-the-canary look."

John shrugged again. "Well, it's just that...I seem to be the only one survivin' the shift unscathed."

Chet snorted. "Don't get comfortable on your high-horse, oh, accident-prone-one. The shift is young."

John laughed. "Well, maybe. But I feel pretty lucky, Chester B."

Stoker wandered back into the dayroom, clutching a baggie of ice. "Why does Johnny feel lucky?"

"Cause he hasn't been injured this shift...yet!" Lopez answered.

"Marco, Marco, Marco..." Johnny shook his head. "I can't help it if I'm the careful one."

"CAREFUL?" Hank grunted.

"Et tu, Cap?" Johnny asked, mock hurt in his tone.

"Gage, I'm with Chet. If there's an accident waiting to happen, it'll happen to you."

"Not this shift!" John insisted.

"Wanna bet?" Chet snorted. Johnny glared at him.

"You're on, Kelly. I'll bet you five...no ten bucks that I won't get injured this shift."

"A sucker bet!" Chet laughed.

"Count me in!" Marco added.

"Me too!" Stoker piped up. "I'll take that action," Cap yelled.

Johnny scowled at his co-workers. "Fine! I'll bet you all." He glanced at Roy, who was wearing a frown.

"Are you in, too?"

Roy shook his head. "You shouldn't bet on this kind of stuff!"

Chet laughed. "Why not, Roy? Come on; consider the odds! It's practically a sure thing!"

Roy shook his head. "I'm serious...it's like...asking for something to happen."

"Oh, come on, Roy." Hank went to the sink for a glass of water. "It's all in fun."

"Just the same..." Roy had just started speaking when the tones interrupted him.

***Station 51, traffic accident with injuries. Intersection of Orange Street and Eastdale Road. Time out 16:25***

Roy pulled the squad over to the curb, surveying the accident scene, and the two paramedics hopped out. *This doesn't look too bad!* Cap approached them. "We've got two vehicles involved. Roy, you take the Ford. John, there's a lady in the Buick, looks like she needs help. Kelly, get an inch and a half out and hose down that Ford. It's leaking gas." Cap hurried off to supervise Chet and Marco.

Roy nodded at Johnny. "Let me know what you got." John waved and headed over to the Buick. He was about a foot away when he stopped short. Behind the wheel was a beautiful, voluptuous woman. She had strawberry blonde hair, perfectly coifed, and pouty cherry lips. She was holding a hand up to her head and Johnny could see a trace of blood seeping through her fingers. He approached the car.

"Mam, are you okay?"

She looked at him, smiling the most perfect smile. "I'm fine." She rolled her eyes. "It's just a little cut. But, my poor car! This ugly dent!" Her voice was deep and sultry, the kind perfected to have an effect on men, and it definitely affected Johnny. He smiled, stuttering self-consciously.

"Well, don't you worry about that. Let's just make sure you're okay." He picked up her well-manicured hand and began to take a pulse, aware of the heady scent of perfume wafting from her person. She looked at him with large, doe eyes.

"I feel so silly!"

"Believe me, mam, there's nothing for you to feel silly about." Johnny flashed her his patented boyishly charming grin. "These things happen all the time. The important thing is that you're okay." He unwrapped the blood pressure cuff, sliding it onto her arm.

She smiled, licking her lips. "Thank you! You sure know how to make a girl feel better!" Johnny smiled again, a slow blush creeping up his face. He examined the cut on her forehead, and checked her pupil response.

She stared into his eyes and smiled. "What's your name, cutie?"

"Johnny. What's yours?"

"Desiree."

John smiled. "Well, Desiree. Looks like you're gonna be all right. I'm gonna dress this head wound. Then, we'll contact the hospital, and probably take you in and let them check you over."

"Oh no," Desiree shook her head vehemently. "I can't go to a hospital. I'm late for work!"

Johnny finished cleaning the wound and regarded the woman carefully. "Desiree, you really should have someone check you out. You don't want to take chances with a head injury."

The tall woman shook her head again. "Really, I'm fine." She took Johnny's hand in hers. "It's just a little cut! I don't even have a headache."

"I'm sure your boss will understand if you're late."

Desiree laughed. "You don't know Sal! I'm a singer. I perform at the new revue at the Bijou Theater. The show must go on, darling."

John's eyes widened. "Wow. A singer, huh?"

She smiled flirtatiously. "You should come see me. I'll get you comp tickets."

The young paramedic grinned. "I'd like that...if you promise to let me repay you with a drink afterwards."

Desiree smiled demurely. "I'D like that!"

Johnny smiled and nodded, then he returned to business. "But, you still should see a doctor."

Desiree nodded. "Okay, I'll go see my own doctor later. But, I'm not going to the hospital."

"Okay," Johnny agreed. "Then I need you to sign a form, saying you refused treatment."

"Fine, sweetie!"

Johnny reached for the forms. "Ow!" He grabbed his finger and glanced down. A small amount of blood was welling from a paper cut.

"Oh, let me see!" Desiree took his hand. "You poor thing! I hate paper cuts! They sting so much."

Johnny nodded, about to respond when he heard Chet calling his name.

"Gage! Oh Gage." Johnny waved Kelly off, but the Irishman was insistent. "GAGE!"

Johnny smiled at Desiree. "Excuse me a minute." Still clutching the MICU form in his hand, the now annoyed paramedic jogged over to where Kelly stood with Lopez.

"What, Chet?"

"Ah, Gage," Kelly began, "see that lady..." He gestured the voluptuous woman

"Yeah," Johnny said, turning to toss a smile at Desiree.

"...well," Chet continued. "She ain't no lady!"

"What are you talking about, Kelly?" Johnny asked, exasperated. He shook his stinging finger, noting that droplets of blood were still oozing from the small cut.

"I mean she's a HE."

Johnny looked at Chet and laughed. "Yeah, right, Kelly. Boy, you must think I'm a real dope."

"That being beside the point," Chet said drolly. "I'm telling you, Gage. My sister had tickets for a musical revue at some theater last week. We saw a show there and she was in it."

"So what? She's a singer."

Kelly shook his head. "Gage, it was one of those...you know ...female impersonator shows. Where guys dress like chicks...and SHE was in it...I mean HE."

Johnny stared at Chet, then glanced back to the beautiful woman, who smiled at him. He smiled nervously, then looked at Chet. "Is this a joke?"

Chet shook his head solemnly. "No joke, man."

Uncertain, John glanced back at Desiree. She had one shapely leg out of the car and she had hiked her skirt up high on her thigh as she adjusted her stocking. He looked back at Kelly. "No way. I don't believe you, Chet."

Chet shrugged. "Suit yourself. Learn the hard way."

Hank jogged over to them. "Is this a conference I wasn't invited to? Don't you men have a job to do? What's going on?"

John sighed. "Nothing, Cap. The Phantom here is just up to his pranks!"

"Kelly..." Cap began.

"I'm not, Cap. Honest!" Chet shook his head. "I was just tryin to save Gage some embarrassment."

Hank glanced from Kelly back to Gage.

"Right, Cap. He's just trying to convince me that that gorgeous woman over there is really a ma..."

John broke off his sentence as he turned back to Desiree. She had removed her wig and was combing it out. A cigar dangled from his lips and a small stocking cap covered his short brown hair. John's mouth hung open in shock, as the man placed the wig back on his head and tossed away the cigar. Chet and Marco began to laugh. Cap grinned.

"John? Don't you have a job to do, pal?"

Mouth hanging open, Gage didn't respond. Just then, Roy jogged up. "Cap, the Ford's driver is fine. The ambulance is going to transport him into Rampart, but he doesn't require a follow-up." Hank nodded. Roy turned to Johnny. "How's your victim?"

"Huh?" Johnny stared at Roy, uncomprehending.

"Your victim!" Roy repeated.

"Oh." Johnny looked at Roy. "Okay. Laceration on hi..her forehead. Refused treatment Look, I got this ..uh...cut.....um, it's bleeding, so I'm gonna get a Band-Aid. Can you get this form filled out?" Johnny thrust the form into Roy's hand and jogged quickly over to the squad.

Puzzled, Roy stared after his partner, then turned to glance at Cap, Marco and Chet. All three were laughing. Kelly was almost doubled over. Roy opened his mouth, then shut it. *I don't want to know!* He approached Johnny's victim.

The woman smiled as he approached. "Where's the other gentleman?"

"Oh, he, uh, got tied up." Roy held out the MICU form. "Could you sign this, please? It says you refused

treatment."

Smiling, the pretty woman signed the form and handed it back.

"Thank you." Roy began to walk away as she started her dented car. He glanced down at the form, noting the scrawled signature.

**"Ralph Jones?"** Roy turned back to glance at the woman, but the car pulled away. He hesitated. *I really don't wanna know*, he thought to himself, and he turned and headed back to the squad.

### ***At the Station***

A subdued Johnny sat hunched over his dinner, still mortified over the earlier run.

"By the way, Gage!" Kelly called. "You owe us some money!"

John looked up. "I owe you money? I don't think so!"

"Yes, you do," Kelly grinned. "You bet ...what...four of us, right? That you wouldn't get injured this shift?"

"Yeah?" Johnny said. "And I didn't." He dropped his fork onto his plate and sat up. "So, how do I owe you money?"

Kelly laughed, pointing to the Band-Aid on John's finger. "I don't know...that's some mean paper cut you got there."

Hank grinned. "That's right, John! I didn't even think about that."

"Oh, come on!" Johnny protested. "A paper cut doesn't count."

"It's an injury!" Chet argued. "You bled...you pay. It counts, so don't weasel out on us!"

"A bet's a bet, Gage!" Marco grinned.

"Yeah, John." Mike laughed. "Pay up!"

Johnny glanced around the table at his co-workers, all of whom were smiling or laughing. His mouth dropped. He sputtered, staring at Roy.

"Oh, you're laughing too?"

Roy shrugged. "It's funny." *I'm just glad that your worst injury this shift is to your pride*, Roy thought.

Johnny sighed in defeat. "Fine! I'll pay you the money," he growled.

"Cheer up, Gage! I'll set you up with my cousin, Paula...", Kelly chortled, "or...her twin brother, Paul...if that's more your type."

"Oh, very funny, Chet!" Johnny snapped. "Very funny."

The others burst out laughing. Johnny pushed his plate aside. "You're all a bunch of comedians." He stood up, stalking out of the room.

Roy made a mental note to remind his partner within the hour that if Chet HADN'T seen that musical revue, then most likely, he and Marco would have been tripping over each other to get next to "Desiree"!

Just then, the tones went off.

*Station 51...House collapsed, 4245 Beachwood Way, time out, 18:50. KMG-365.*

*Saved by the bell!* John thought, relieved. He trotted to the squad, eagerly climbing into the passenger seat.

Roy grinned at his partner. "Looks like you've been saved by the bell!"

John nodded. He sat silently as his partner pulled into the early evening traffic. After a few minutes, he shifted in his seat.

"Roy?"

"Yeah."

"He really LOOKED like a chick."

"Yeah!"

John sighed. "Man, what are the odds?"

THE END

