

Brussel Sprout Surprise

By Ariane Rivendell

A/N: Male readers should read only with Great. Great. Caution...

Another small adventure in the Window in Time Series.

A Window In Time II:

Brussel Sprout Surprise Sounds Great, After All

Engineer Mike Stoker peeked into the captain's office in time to see Captain Stanley put the phone back in the cradle.

"Hey, Cap, who's got lunch duties today?" Mike Stoker leaned against the doorframe.

"Didn't I mention it at roll call?"

"Nope."

"And no one bothered to tell me until now?"

"I don't think anybody realized it until now, Cap."

Captain Stanley grunted as he cleared away the paperwork from his desk in search of the roster sheet for the day. "Here it is. Looks like it's me. I guess that's why I didn't mention it."

"What're we having?"

Stanley threw his tall engineer a suspicious look. "Brussel Sprout Surprise. Why, Mike? You weren't thinking of stopping at the market on the way back from a run, now, were ya?"

"Wouldn't dream of it, Cap. Especially not with Brussel Sprout Surprise on the menu."

"Atta boy."

"Station 51. Man trapped. Carbon Canyon Campgrounds. 71000 East Carbon Canyon Road. 7-1-0-0-0 East Carbon Canyon. Park officials will meet you at entrance. Time out: 0952."

Park officials met them at the entrance and directed them to a numbered camping spot farther in the campgrounds with further information that a young woman would be waiting to direct them to the victim.

Long brown hair and large hazel eyes met the vehicles of Station 51 as they came up the road, leaves flying from their tires. The overcast skies made the forested area fairly dark, but they saw her standing by the roadside. She waved the Squad down and as the rescue paramedics pulled over they noted that she was wrapped in a towel.

"It's my boyfriend," she began to explain as the firemen clambered out of the vehicles. Johnny and Roy grabbed their equipment from the Squad compartment. "He's caught in some our camping gear."

"Whose turn is it? Mine?" Johnny asked his partner.

"Ee-yep," DeSoto answered.

Johnny took the lead and followed the girlfriend. The paramedics could see a young man, blonde wavy hair, sitting on a tree stump with something in his lap.

The girlfriend pointed to him, "That's him. That's Roy."

DeSoto's expression fell and he nearly stopped in his tracks, sending voodoo curses at the devilish grin his younger partner sent back his way as Johnny walked ahead of him. As Johnny and Roy neared the scene, they realized the young man was stark naked. Except for a camp stove he appeared to be wearing...

Hesitating, the two paramedics walked up and stood next to the glassy-eyed young man as the entire Engine crew started to come up behind them.

Johnny cleared his throat. "Hi. I'm Johnny and this is—" he pointed to his glaring partner then turned back to the young man. "Hi. I'm Johnny. What, uh, what seems to be the problem?"

"He's got his you-know-what stuck in there and now it's bleeding and he can't get it out," the girlfriend proclaimed with an absent wave of her hand.

Cap immediately spun on his heel, placed his hands on Stoker's already defensively upraised arms, spun the engineer around and half-shoved, half-hand carried him back to the Engine. Marco and Chet frantically stepped over each other in an effort to remove themselves from the immediate vicinity of the victim.

Both paramedics swallowed hard and looked at each other.

"It's...your turn, remember—?"

"Yeah, I know, I know," Johnny softly complained then turned his attention back to his patient. "Are you, uh, in any pain, sir?" he asked, rubbing the side of his nose.

"Yeah. A *lot*."

"We tried soap, we tried grease, but he's just way too big," Brown Eyes explained.

Johnny and Roy stole a half-glance at each other while Lopez and Kelly felt the need, right then, to clear their throats and shoo all the invisible bugs from the air around them.

Johnny's curiosity got the better of him, despite the mental, anguished squirming of his fellow firemen, and he turned to the girlfriend, "How did this happen?"

But it was the boyfriend who answered, his speech somewhat slurred. "We came out here to spend the weekend together, y'know? We got drunk, smoked some weed and then we—"

"Okay, we get the picture," Johnny insisted with his hands held up.

"You guys can get me outta here, can't ya?" the boyfriend pleaded.

"We're gonna do what we can," Roy tried to assure the red-faced young man and got on his HT. "Engine 51, HT 51, can someone bring us a blanket?"

"10-4, Roy," Cap acknowledged.

Johnny kept his eyes pointedly on his partner, noting Roy had said 'what we can' rather than his usual 'everything we can'. "Uh...do you...uh, wanna...?"

"No. Why don't you, uh, go ahead...?"

Johnny grimaced. "Okay, uh, sir, are you still...uh, that is to say, um, are you currently, uh..."

"Yeah, I am," the young man said, catching where Johnny was going.

Gage cleared his throat, "Okay, uh, so you can't... you can't *relax*?"

"No way, man. I even smoked some weed before you got here, but it didn't work. I guess I'm just too much of a stud. Huh, baby?" he reached for her.

"You know it, Roy," she answered, grabbing her boyfriend's hand.

One pair of firefighter eyes rolled while three others found the senior paramedic, who stared back at them with death threats in his eyes. "I'll get his vitals," DeSoto crisply stated and got to work doing so, keeping his eyes – very steadily – on his watch, turned, as he had, toward the forest, while he got the respirations.

Johnny squirmed, both physically and mentally, to try to ascertain the precise condition of the victim in relation to the camping equipment he was wearing. Fortunately, with the sun behind the clouds, and the camp stove so close to the victim's body, Johnny was unable to see anything at all. He mentally rifled through all the equipment the Squad and the Engine both carried, but he could think of nothing to use that would free the young camper. At least nothing that would cause further injury...

Cap returned to the scene, solo, handed off the blanket to Roy and saw both of his linemen clutching each other like they'd seen a ghost. *Oh for crying out loud...* "Lopez, go help Stoker."

Captain Stanley's voice barely fell to the leaves before Marco was hightailing it back to the Engine.

Chet stared after his compatriot, "Why does *he* get to go?"

"Would you like to supervise the rescue more closely?"

"Uh, no, Cap, I think it's best if I stay *right* here, you know, for moral support," Chet stated firmly, pointing to the ground as if planting himself in it.

"You do that." Cap stepped over to the rescue-in-progress, "How's it coming?"

His paramedics slowly looked up at him with long-suffering expressions.

"I can't believe I just said that..." Cap whispered and ducked away, moving over to Kelly.

"Uh, Cap, I don't, uh, I don't think we have anything that can get him out. I think we're gonna have to take him to the hospital, as is," Johnny reported.

Not on my Engine, you're not. "Well, we've got an ambulance coming. Chet, go wait for the ambulance and direct them here, okay, pal?"

"Aye aye, *Cap!*" Chet Kelly never walked so fast in his life.

"Okay...uh, well, um...I'll call Rampart." Johnny tripped over himself getting to the biophone, dropped the antenna and seemed suddenly to have a difficult time screwing it on. "Uh, Rampart, this is Rescue 51."

Back at the hospital, Dr. Brackett answered the call, "This is Rampart, go ahead 51."

"Uh, Rampart, we have a male, about 22 years of age. He's conscious and in considerable pain. Standby for vitals."

Brackett frowned while the question marks exploded around him. *What the hell kind of report was that?* "51, can you describe the situation the patient is in?" *You know, like how you normally do, first...*

Brackett heard Johnny clear his throat and then return on the line, *"Uh, Rampart, the victim is, um...currently caught in a small camp stove."*

Brackett sighed heavily and his voice took on a tense edge. "Well how is he caught, 51?"

Back at the campground Johnny turned a desperate eye toward his partner, but Roy was extraordinarily busy searching noisily through the trauma box. Gage scowled and shifted position. "Uh, Rampart, he's, uh...well, that is, um, he's, uh..."

Brackett punched the response button very hard with the side of his hand, "C'mon, 51, spit it out! Tell me what's going on over there." The tone of the Head of the Emergency Department was a siren call, bringing Dixie and Drs. Early and Morton to the ER base station watering hole to listen in.

"Uh, well, Rampart, uh, his uh, very vital organ," Johnny punctuated the last three words very firmly, "is caught in a hole in a camp stove and is currently too...rigid to have it retracted at the scene."

Three doctors and a Head Nurse stood dumbstruck at the call base station at Rampart General Hospital.

"Rampart? Do you copy?"

Brackett snapped his mind back, "We're still here, 51. 51, how long has the patient been in his current predicament?" He scowled as Drs. Morton and Early turned pale and squirmed away from the counter.

Johnny covered the receiver with his hand and turned to his patient, "How long have you been like this? Stuck with the stove, I mean," he quickly amended.

"About an hour, I guess."

"About an hour, Rampart. He's also somewhat drunk and has been smoking marijuana. He claims to be bleeding but in his current condition, it's impossible to get visual confirmation. His BP is 150 over 90, pulse is 70, respirations are 16."

"Alright, uh, 51, go ahead and give the patient 5 milligrams of MS and bring him on in."

"10-4, Rampart."

Marco came running over, "Cap, Stoker's down."

"Ai yai..." Cap muttered. He turned a deflated expression to his paramedics, "Does maybe one of you want to go over and uh..." he thumbed loosely back toward the vehicles.

"I'll get it." Roy began to gather the trauma box together.

"No, I can do it," Johnny offered. Imploringly.

"You're already half-way there with this patient. I'll tend to Stoker."

Johnny grabbed his partner and begged under his breath through clenched teeth, "Please, Roy."

A mischievous glint lit Roy's eyes, "Sorry. I'm not giving up my turn."

Johnny reluctantly turned back to his patient and smiled at the young man. "Hi. We'll, uh, we'll get you outta here real quick, okay?"

Chet returned, leading the ambulance attendants and the gurney.

"Uh, hey, Roy!" Johnny called to his very retreating partner, who seemed not to hear him. "Okay, uh, sir, uh, we're gonna take you to the hospital, now, okay? Can you, uh, can you stand up?"

"Yeah, I think so."

The patient laid his hands on the stump and the stove in various combinations and turned this way and that in an effort to figure a way to stand up with his newfound fashion statement but every attempt was met with a grimace of pain.

"Uh, look, okay, uh, why don't you keep your hands on the, uh, on the stove, there, and we'll take care of the rest, okay?"

Cap and Kelly threw Gage a dark look, which John pointedly ignored.

"Okay, Hal, uh, why don't you take his left arm, I'll get his right. Ma'am, if you could help, uh, Roy, was it? Right, uh, if you could help him with the stove, keep it steady so it doesn't hurt him. Okay, here we go."

After a minor yelp and much groaning and grunting, the victim got to his feet and they guided him to the gurney. It was a bumpy ride across the forest floor, punctuated by more groaning, grunting and yelping and they reached the road where Marco and Roy were waiting for them.

As Johnny waited for the attendants, Cap, Marco and Chet to load the victim onto the ambulance, he turned to his partner, "How's Mike?"

"Fine. It'll be a few minutes before he feels okay enough to drive, I think, but he's okay."

"Alright. Guess I'll...meet you at the hospital."

"Johnny, you want me to—"

"No, no. Might as well only one of us...nevermind."

"Okay." Roy stared after his partner as he climbed into the Squad.

"What was that all about? I've never seen such a hangdog expression on Gage, before," Cap asked, a hand on the open Squad door.

"Oh, Johnny and I are taking turns taking the lead on runs. Guess whose turn it was?"

"Oh. You guys having a problem I should know about?"

"No. Just trying a new routine."

"Guess that's not gonna last much longer, is it?" Cap chuckled and closed the Squad door.

~!~

Roy stood up as Johnny quickly moved through the ER corridor toward him with a horrified expression, "So, how is he?"

Without stopping, Johnny grabbed Roy's arm in a vise grip and nearly dragged him from the waiting room. "Did you get the supplies?"

"Yeah, I got the supplies."

"Good. Get me out of here."

"Hey, hey, what's wrong? Whaddya doin'?" Roy untangled himself from Johnny's grasp when they got outside. "Did they get it off?"

The younger paramedic violently shuddered, hopped into the Squad, put his arm on the dashboard and laid his head down.

"Johnny what's wrong?"

"I don't want to talk about it," came his muffled response.

Roy settled back against the seat and medically considered the case. "They got a urologist, didn't they?"

"I said I didn't want to talk about it."

"Inserted a needle -"

"Roy!"

"—drained the blood—"

In a flash, Johnny grabbed the mic, "LA, Squad 51 available." He threw Roy the evil eye, slammed the mic back into the casing and put his head back down on the dashboard. "Drive, Roy! Just drive, alright?"

~!~

The Squad backed into the apparatus bay with Johnny still hunched over himself. The paramedics slid out of the vehicle and made their way into the kitchen.

The Engine crew, sans Cap, were sitting at the table. It was set with plates, macaroni salad, chips, condiments and milk.

"Where's Cap?" Johnny asked as he and Roy entered in.

"Out back on the grill making lunch," Mike answered, munching on some potato chips.

"You feeling okay?" Johnny asked, grabbing some chips for himself.

"Don't even go there, Gage. Just don't do it," Stoker warned him with a dark look.

"Yeah. Let's keep the conversation to the weather," Marco suggested.

"Or sports," Chet added from the couch, reading the paper.

"No. No sports. Sports have injuries. All *kinds* of injuries. We're sticking to weather or movies," Marco adamantly announced.

"Good point," Chet agreed.

"So what's he making?" Roy asked, grabbing a seat and trying to steer the conversation over to neutral territory.

"Hot dogs!" Cap announced from the kitchen door with a full plate of dogs and buns.

"Oh god!" came the groans from the men and they trudged miserably out of the kitchen, with pained expressions and clutching their stomachs.

"Christ's sake, Cap, whaddya go and do *that* for?" Gage admonished as he followed his shiftmates.

Roy stood up and stepped over to his captain who was laying the plate of dogs onto the table, "You're cruel, you know that?"

"What? It's not my fault this was already on the menu."

"You're a cruel, evil man, Cap. A cruel, evil man," Roy reiterated and he sauntered out of the kitchen with his hands in his pockets.

"I've seen worse, you know!" he yelled after his crew then turned to the table and looked deflated. After several moments of staring at the empty table, he shuddered then traipsed out of the dayroom after his crew. "Mike! Fire her up! We're going shopping..."

fin

* Based on an actual incident. The real incident, understandably, left a fainted maintenance worker, a nauseous fireman and an incredibly tense male RN in its wake. Apologies to the poor gentleman for borrowing his real-life predicament. I *really did* try to ignore it as a story idea but The Boys just couldn't leave it alone... (!)