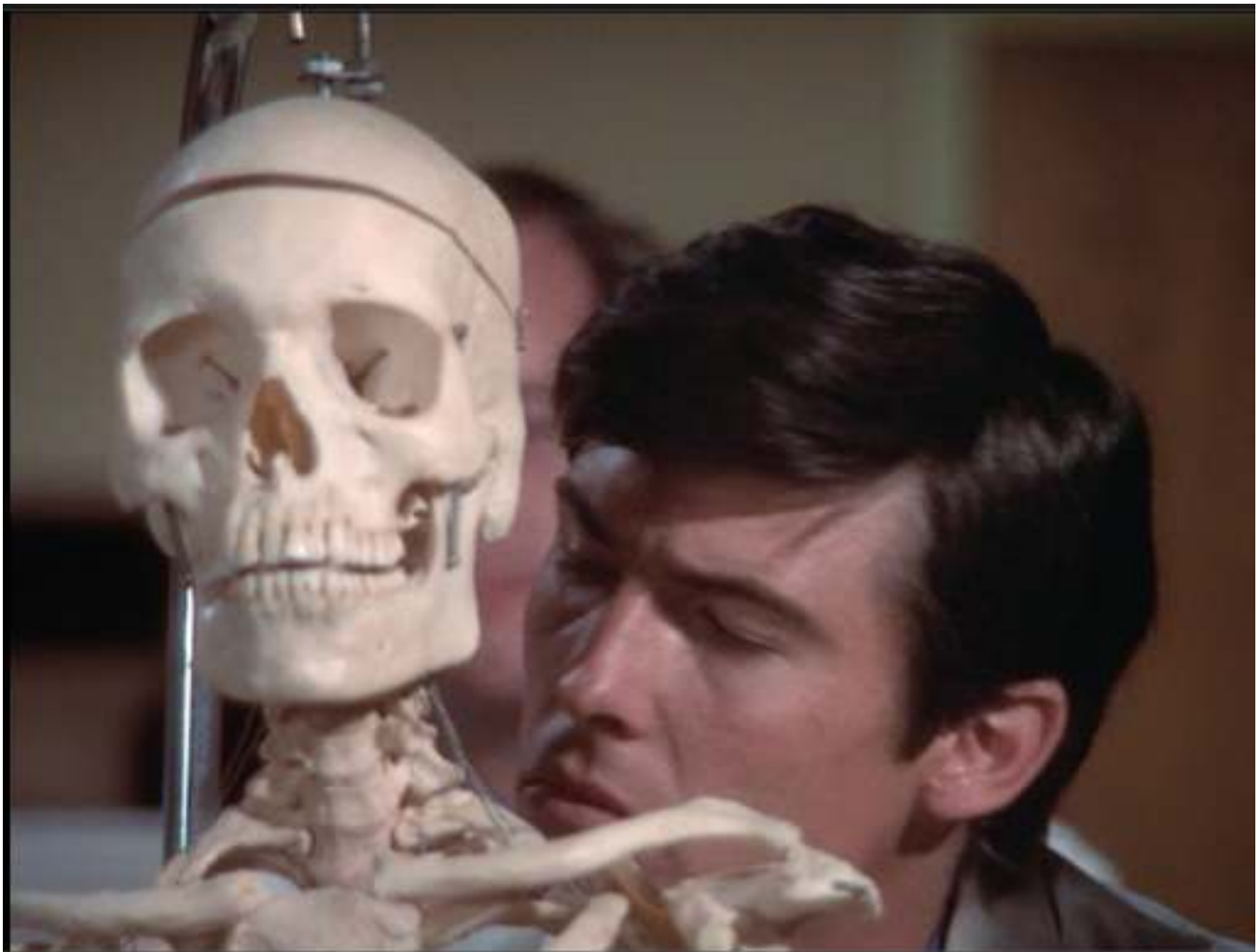


Something Smells

By: The Delirium Threemen



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Somethin' Smells
The Delirium Threemen
December 2010 ©

Part I of II

Captain Stanley sat behind the desk in his office catching up on paperwork while the engine crew busied themselves cleaning up the kitchen. Several moments later he heard the squad containing the station's two paramedics return. He heard one door slam as the squad's engine became silent. The voice of Johnny Gage echoed in the bay as he carried on about something. He heard the thudding sound of the other door of the vehicle closing. A part of him felt some sympathy for Roy DeSoto for having to endure Johnny's incessant gibbering during their drive back to the station. He noticed Johnny's voice fading as the two men made their way into the kitchen. It wasn't long after that the voices of Chet Kelly and Mike Stoker filled the bay.

Johnny continued his tirade to his captive audience of two while he leaned against the counter. Roy poured himself a cup of coffee and glanced towards Marco Lopez who sat at the kitchen table thumbing through a magazine. He looked up at Roy and the two men began a silent form of communication between them. The expression on Roy's face told Marco everything he needed to know. There was a new nurse at Rampart and Johnny was coming up with a game plan to ask her out.

"You watch pally, if I play my cards right I'll have her eating out of the palm of my hand within *the* week," Johnny declared with gusto.

An unspoken challenge was issued from Roy as his eyes narrowed into slits. Marco returned the same look back at Roy. They placed their bets on what Johnny would say next. Was she *the one* or was she *just incredible*? Roy raised an eyebrow to indicate that she would be *the one*. Marco gave a slight nod of his head placing his bid on *just incredible*.

"Oh man, I tell you the way she handled herself in that treatment room, well she's...she's *just incredible*," Johnny blurted out.

Roy shook his head in defeat while Marco gave a triumphant smirk. Both men knew the next thing out of Johnny's mouth would be the 'Gage strategy' that would be used to woo the nurse into a first date. Roy and Marco continued with their silent conversation while Johnny raved over his latest female obsession.

Roy raised his mug to his lips while peering over the rim which meant '*Yeah, she's pretty enough.*' Johnny continued describing the attributes of his new flame of the week oblivious to the interaction going on between the other two men in the room. Roy rolled his eyes to indicate '*No, she's not all that.*' Roy bobbed his head slightly signaling '*He has a 50-50 chance of landing a date with her.*' To Roy's relief the sound of the klaxons filled the station followed by the voice of the dispatcher.

"Station 51, construction site accident. Man trapped and buried. 1709 East Bach Street. 1709 East Back Street. Time out 0315."

Marco followed Roy and Johnny into the bay and headed towards the engine while the other two men entered the squad. Captain Stanley handed Roy the call slip which he passed onto Johnny as he pulled the squad out of the bay turning westward in the direction of Wilmington Avenue. The Engine followed closely behind the squad.

"Left on E 200th Street and another left onto Pontine Avenue," Johnny directed Roy from the passenger side of the squad, "Keep on Pontine because after East Albri it changes to East Bach Street once you go around the bend."

Roy parked the squad at the site of a partly-built house before jumping out as the engine pulled in behind them. After exiting the vehicle they began grabbing their equipment from the squad's side compartments.

"Can you fill us in on what happened," Captain Stanley asked.

"We were drilling out back when one of the columns collapsed. Tony fell into the hole and the sand poured in on top of him. Uh-one of the other guys is down in there trying to keep his head from getting buried," gasped the panicked worker.

The foreman was standing at the edge of the trench watching while another worker was down inside scooping sand away from the trapped man's face. Captain Stanley examined the site and the surrounding area near the trench while Johnny and Roy set down their equipment nearby.

Captain Stanley turned to his engine crew, "Okay guys, we're gonna need ropes, shovels, and anything we else got on hand to brace the walls of that trench." He turned to the foreman and requested some plywood.

"Yeah, sure....sure. Whatever you need," the foreman replied.

Mike and Marco quickly began shoveling the dirt surrounding the trapped man out while Roy went down into the trench. Their effort proved futile as more sand from trench's wall came cascading down onto the trapped man. Roy managed to keep the sand from burying the victim's head entirely.

"Chet, Johnny, tie off all that flotsam and jetsam hangin' over that hole. If the ground at that end of the trench gives way it'll all come down on top of the victim," Captain Stanley ordered.

Chet and Johnny began tying off some of the broken concrete that loomed over the trapped man. Roy tried to ascertain if the victim had any serious injuries. The victim was conscious but having trouble breathing from the pressure of a couple of thousand pounds of dirt and sand covering him.

"No pain...heavy...hard to breathe," the man said between gasps.

"Roy, how's he doing," Captain asked about the victim.

Roy answered back as he continued scooping sand out of the trench using his hands, "Can you pass down the oxygen? Hard to tell how badly injured he is or what those injuries might be. He's having trouble breathing. I think it's mostly pressure from the weight of the sand."

"Cap, it keeps caving in faster than we can dig it out," Marco yelled out to the Captain.

Roy stopped scooping the dirt away from the victim's face for a moment to grab the canister of oxygen that was handed down to him. He quickly put the mask over the worker's face. "Marco's right, as soon as they shovel the dirt away more falls in. I'm having a hell of a time keeping his head from getting buried."

"Damn, no way we're gonna dig him out using just shovels," Captain Stanley muttered in frustration. He turned to the Johnny and Chet who had finished securing the refuse surrounding the trench's perimeter.

"Okay, how about we work on shoring up the walls of the trench first. Chet, Johnny, grab some of that plywood." he ordered as he motioned towards the small group of construction workers, "See if those guys can't help with cutting it. The sooner that guy's outta there, the better. It's impossible to tell how badly he might be injured."

Once they got the sides of the trench shored up, Mike and Marco resumed shoveling the dirt out of the trench. Slowly they managed to make progress in unburying the trapped worker. His chest was uncovered and his arms were now free. Roy noted that he could breathe much better now since the weight of the sand had been removed from his chest. He started an IV on the man as instructed by Dr. Early. Johnny manned the biophone from outside of the trench while Roy continued using his hands to dig around the worker stopping periodically to monitor the man's condition.

Roy used some plywood to build a protective barrier around the patient. This would prevent the victim from becoming reburied if the shoring happened to give way. Slowly they began to uncover the victim's body one inch at a time through a tedious process of digging and shoring, and more digging and shoring. A couple of hours had elapsed before they had half-way unburied the man. They would soon be able to free the man once they finally uncovered him below the waist. Johnny and Chet had rigged up a pulley while Marco and Mike continued digging.

"Okay, I think we can pull him out the rest of the way," Mike called out while Roy attached a lifebelt around the patient's waist.

"Pass down the Stokes," Roy called out.

Johnny and Chet began pulling once Roy gave them the signal. In a matter of moments the man was freed from the sand that had imprisoned him for the last three hours. Roy and Mike quickly transferred the patient off the pulley and into the Stokes. Marco attached the basket to the pulley and gave the signal to Johnny and Chet to begin pulling again. Johnny quickly took a set of vitals on the man once they had him top side. In fact, the patient seemed jovial and relieved to finally be free. Johnny could find no signs of any serious injury. A sand-coated Roy emerged from the trench joining Johnny and the recently 'exhumed' patient.

Johnny couldn't help but make a wise crack, "Being you 'unearthed' this guy it's only fitting that you ride with him in the ambulance."

Once the ambulance containing Roy and the patient were on their way to Rampart, Johnny started to pack up their gear. He couldn't help but overhear the angry rumblings of the owner of the construction company. Oscar Van Dorn had arrived at the site a little over an hour ago after receiving an urgent call from his foreman.

"I hope you're all happy that half a day has been wasted not to mention we're now two weeks behind schedule," Oscar continued berating the small group of construction workers that encircled him.

"Listen Oscar, it's not like *WE MADE* that column fall apart on purpose," one of the more seasoned members of the crew added.

"We'll be lucky if the client doesn't fire our asses over this. Can't you guys do anything right?" Oscar yelled at his employees.

A senior crew member shouted back at his boss, "Don't blame us for what happened, Oscar. You were *TOLD* that we needed to take the time to shore the area up a bit before we started working on the back end of the house, but you refused to listen."

The owner grumbled something that Johnny couldn't make out before ordering the workers to begin cleaning up the mess. Johnny wasn't sure but he had a feeling some building inspectors would be arriving at the scene shortly to investigate the site. He busied himself with packing the equipment away in the squad before heading over to Rampart to pick up Roy.

Johnny was half paying attention to the argument anyways as Oscar Van Dorn stormed off heading towards the portable john. He heard one of the workers shout out a warning not to go in there which his boss ignored. The warning was enough to capture Johnny's attention as he saw the door to the portable toilet close. He looked at the ground where it was set up and noticed some of the sandy ground below it started to deteriorate on one side. Johnny stood there in opened-mouthed amazement as the portable bathroom tipped over onto its side.

"Ummm...Cap," Johnny called out, "Looks like we have another 'accident' to tend to."

The engine crew caught up to Johnny as he stood near the fallen porta john. At least it landed on its side leaving the door still accessible. "*HEY!* Are you all right in there?" Johnny yelled.

A muffled voice responded, "Get me outta here."

"Well Gage, open the door and do as the man asks," Chet responded with a tone of merriment in his voice.

Johnny let out a disgusted grunt as he opened the door as the contents of the portable toilet spilled onto the nearby ground and his shoes. The utterance of a loud "*Oh CRAP!*" escaped from Johnny.

Chet couldn't contain his amusement over his coworker's situation, "Yep-pers, that's *EXACTLY* what it is Johnny-baby."

Johnny huffed, "Well just don't stand there hold the door up for me."

Marco helped Johnny slip into his turnout coat which earned him a grateful look from the beleaguered paramedic. Captain Stanley ordered Chet to hold the door for Johnny while he assisted the man out of the small closet-like structure. Johnny put his gloves on before bending under the door to assist the man out of the stinking structure.

Mike whispered to Captain Stanley who stood nearby, "Think I'm gonna need to hose this guy down?"

"Let Johnny see if he's injured first. I just put out a call in for a second ambulance just in case," Captain Stanley whispered back to his engineer.

Johnny could feel the bile rising up in his throat from the stench. The unfortunate victim was liberally coated with the contents from the fallen outhouse which now filled the air. Johnny asked the victim for permission to hose him down. Their latest victim suffered a dislocated knee and a badly twisted ankle. After it was determined the man was not seriously injured, Captain Stanley gave the okay for Mike to 'power up' a hose from the engine.

Mike adjusted the water to a low pressure setting, while Captain Stanley helped Marco to hose the guy down. Chet tore the plastic wrap off of a blanket that he had grabbed from the squad. There was some sniggering as Marco turned the hose onto Johnny's shoes and pant bottoms. Johnny had stripped off his turnout jacket and left it on the nearby grassy area along with his gloves for Marco rinse off.

Johnny wrapped the blanket that Chet offered around the man before applying a splint to the drenched man's knee and another to his ankle. Hosing the man down didn't eradicate the stench but it did help make the odor slightly tolerable. A second ambulance had just arrived and Johnny assisted his patient onto the gurney before climbing into the back of the vehicle with him. Captain Stanley ordered Chet to drive the squad in for the paramedics.

Roy accompanied his patient into the treatment room that Dr. Early ushered them into. So far the man seemed to be fine. He actually felt the man had truly lucked out despite have a couple of tons of dirt almost suffocate him to death. There was a layer of moist sand that still coated the victim. Roy looked down at his uniform noticing he was also pretty well coated.

"So what was it like playing in a giant sandbox for the last three and a half hours?" Dr. Early greeted both men.

The patient on the treatment table answered, "It's no fun when you're the 'relic' that's being unearthed."

Roy returned a slight smile as he scratched uncomfortably at the sand trapped beneath his clothing. "Well if you don't need me anymore I think I'm going to go out to the parking lot and brush off this sand while I wait for Johnny."

"Sure Roy, I think this fella is going to be just fine," Dr. Early said before turning his attention back onto the patient, "However, I just want to check you over just in case."

Roy left the treatment room and headed down the hall to the exit into the parking lot. He noticed Johnny hadn't arrived yet with the squad. He managed to do a passable job of brushing the sand off. He couldn't wait to get back to the station for a shower to get rid of the gritty, uncomfortable feeling of the sand that was still trapped underneath his clothes. He waited several more minutes for the squad to arrive. He knew something must be holding his partner up so he headed back inside. He walked over to the Base Station to make some inquiries. He needed the reassurance that Johnny didn't have an accident or any other calamity involving with his precious squad.

"Hey Dix, any other calls come in from Squad 51?" he asked.

Dixie looked up at him, "Uhhh...yeah, seems a man was trapped in a portable toilet that tipped over at that construction site you were just at."

Roy's face split into a grin knowing that Johnny was the one left on scene to deal with that unpleasant sounding situation. "I think I'll go grab a coffee while I wait for him."

Roy entered the lounge and headed towards the coffee pot that was sitting on the counter. He poured himself a cup and set it on the table. He could feel the sand inside the back of his pants scratching against his skin. Realizing he was alone in the room, he grabbed a handful of fabric from the back of his pants pulling it away from his body and began shaking his butt. Roy felt a good deal of sand loosen and slide down his pant legs. Dixie entered the lounge just in time to catch Roy's last 'booty' shake. She threw him a scolding look as sand fell out from the bottom of his trousers.

Dixie cleared her throat before speaking, "I hope you don't try to impress Joanne by doing that too often. I just bet she gets 'turned on' by that trick."

Roy was mortified that Dixie caught him and stood there frozen for a moment while his face flushed with embarrassment. His shoulders slumped as he sat down at the table with his cup of coffee.

Dixie threw him a non-nonsense look as she spoke, "So Mr. Itchy Pants, I heard that man you just rescued is going to be fine."

Roy fidgeted uncomfortably before responding, "Yeah, he sure lucked out. Good thing one of the other workers managed to keep him from suffocating until we arrive at the scene."

"Well it looks like Kel is going to be the 'lucky one' who gets Johnny's patient," Dixie chuckled merrily.

"Yeah...poor Johnny he has...well he has that type of luck," Roy responded without resorting to using a four-letter word. He was never comfortable using that type of language in front of a female.

"Now Roy, don't you feel the tiniest bit sorry for Johnny," Dixie admonished him lightly.

Roy gave Dixie a sheepish smile, "I'm kinda surprised that it wasn't Johnny in the poop house when it fell over."

They were interrupted by Paula, the new nurse that was Johnny's latest obsession. She informed Dixie that the ambulance containing the second victim from the construction site had just arrived. Dixie told her that Treatment Room 3 was ready and that she could assist Dr. Brackett with the patient. The expression on the pretty Paula's face became grim. Roy threw a quizzical look Dixie's way a little puzzled that she wasn't going to be assisting Dr. Brackett.

Dixie got up from the table and placed her empty cup in the sink before throwing a raised eyebrow Roy's way, "That's one case I won't be assisting Kel on," she said as she paused by the door, "One of the perks of being the head nurse happens to involve 'delegating.' Besides it might make Johnny feel better having a pretty face in the room."

Dixie returned to the nursing station and watched the Johnny walk by as Dr. Early exited Treatment Room 4. He wrinkled his nose as he caught wind of the foul stench that laced through the air as Johnny passed by them. He made his way to the nursing station and slightly tilted of his head in Johnny's direction.

"I already *KNOW* what Roy was playing in but *WHAT* on earth did Johnny get himself into?"

Dixie sighed heavily, "Johnny had to rescue a man from a fallen porta potty right after the ambulance left with Roy and your patient."

Dr. Early chuckled back, "I guess that explains why Johnny smells like something a giant cat would bury in the sand. So...ummm....Dix, tell me whose the lucky doctor that got that patient."

"Why our highly-esteemed Head of Emergency," she said sweetly with a slight wickedness in her smile.

Roy was almost finishing his second cup of coffee when Johnny opened the door and huffed, "I'd rather wait outside for Chet to bring the squad in."

Roy got up and followed Johnny catching a whiff of the scent that drifted over from his partner. He dreaded the ride back to the station. Even with a good hosing down, Johnny knew he was going to need to purchase new shoes as soon as this shift ended. Dr. Early and Dixie looked on as the two paramedics exited the staff lounge and walked by. Johnny held his head down and walked briskly by while Roy purposely followed several paces behind him.

"I see 'Stinky and Scratchy' are headed back to work," Dr. Early quipped as the two men walked by them.

Roy had just finished taking a quick shower and donned a fresh uniform. He headed out into the back lot of the station where Johnny was trying to scrub the offensive smell from his shoes. Neither him or Johnny kept a spare pair of shoes at work. Roy poked his head out into the back lot to see how Johnny was making out with getting the smell out of his shoes.

Roy hesitantly walked up behind Johnny and softly cleared his throat, "Soooo, how you making out there?"

"Remind me to buy an extra pair of shoes to keep in my locker," Johnny grumbled.

Remembering the numerous times he walked around in wet shoes Roy replied back, "That's probably a smart idea."

Johnny rinsed the pine-scented soap off of his shoes, "Maa-nnn, I don't think I'll ever get *THAT* stench out of those shoes."

"Why don't you let them dry out a little while you take a shower and put on a fresh uniform? You probably got most of the smell out of your shoes."

No matter how hard he scrubbed or how much soap he used, the rank odor seemed to be permanently embedded in his shoes. Johnny let out a 'hummp' in frustration as he left the shoes on the pavement before heading off towards the shower. When he was finished cleaning up he joined the rest of the crew in the kitchen wearing his turnout pants and boots. His putrid smelling shoes were drying out in the sun in the back lot of the station. He grabbed a cup of coffee and joined the other men at the kitchen table. Chet greeted him with a huge grin, which caused Johnny's stomach to sink.

"You know, Gage, the ancient Egyptians had toilets thousands of years ago. Of course, back then it was nothing more than a stool with a hole in the middle and a clay pot beneath it," Chet said waiting for Johnny roll his eyes in annoyance before he continued. "They even buried the more prominent members of their society with 'em."

Johnny kept a stoic look on his face while the rest of the crew snickered lightly over the history lesson that was now being foisted upon them. Chet waited for the crew to settle down before he proceeded to further 'educate' his shift mates.

"The Middle Ages introduced chamber pots. Now the bad thing with those pots was people threw the contents out their windows. Bet they didn't walk to close to the buildings in those days. You know, I bet people didn't walk the streets either because that had to have smelled, man, can you image people throwing their ca-ca out into the streets."

"I bet you guys don't know the word '*commode*' is French for '*convenient*'? You know those cabinet kind with the wash basin are considered collectable and worth some real cash. Can you image, something someone once crapped in is worth good money."

Johnny snorted, "Next you're gonna tell me the origins of the word 'crap'."

Chet beamed ear-to-ear, "Now the word *crap* actually has it's origins from the Middle Ages. It comes from the term '*crapping ken*'. The word '*ken*' means house hence the term '*crap house*'. Now certainly other origins of the word *crap* could have come from the Dutch word '*krappen*' or word '*crappe*' which is French by the way."

"Chet, you know what your full of," Mike muttered.

Chet ignored Mike's comment and continued, "Did you know the phrase 'going to the crapper' was the result of World War I. In fact it comes from the first portable toilet. You see, back in World War 1 infantry men from the good old U. S. of A. used portable toilets and stamped on those toilets was 'T. Crapper'. That stood for Thomas Crapper & Company who provided the portable toilets for our soldiers."

"Well Chet, you certainly *KNOW* a lot about crap," Roy piped in accompanied by a light twittering from the other men in the room.

"That *IS* mostly comes out of Chet's mouth," Johnny whispered back

Marco guffawed before muttering his own comment, "I bet next he's gonna try to convince us a poop deck is the area on a ship where the sailor's used to hang their butts over the rails."

"Funny you should mention ships Marco. Did you know the first portable johns originated over at the shipyards in Long Beach back in the 40's," Chet said accompanied by a chorus of grumblings from his shift mates.

"Come on guys I'm trying to explain something here," Chet replied. "Anyways, the shipbuilders used wooden cabanas located right on the docks with a draining bin for waste. It wasn't so much for the convenience of the workers but a means for the employers to keep the workers close to the job site. If you ask my opinion it was purely for cost saving measures that they built those..."

Captain Stanley cleared his throat, "Okay Chet I think you *dumped* enough information on us for one day."

"But Cap, I haven't got to telling Johnny why everyone refers to a bathroom as *the...*," Chet began to protest as Captain Stanley held up his hand to signal him to 'stop.'

"Chet, what I find amazing is how you can remember all this stuff about *crappers* but only managed to place 74th on the Engineer's Exam."

It was now Johnny's turn to grin ear-to-ear over his Captain's last statement. The other men let out a few snorts and chuckles amongst themselves. The Captain turned Johnny up and down as he finally noticed the paramedic's attire.

"You know pal, you're gonna roast to death wearing those turnout pants. You have a spare pair of regular pants?"

Johnny could feel the heat of embarrassment rush through his body, "My problem is a spare pair of shoes. I'd be willing to put up with sopping wet shoes but I *CAN'T* get that *SMELL* out of them."

"What is it with you two?" Captain Stanley said as he shook his head at the two paramedics, "I mean, Roy can't get within a few hundred yards of a swimming pool without falling in and *YOU ALWAYS* manage to find your self in the most unusual predicaments."

"I guess I'm luckier," Roy to sniff at the air, "*AND* I smell better too."

Johnny narrowed his eyes at his partner, "Don't *EVEN* go there, pally. I had to listen to you and Chet complain about my smelly shoes all the way back to the station."

"Just be thankful we you ride in the cab instead of hanging off the running board," Roy teased.

Johnny huffed, "Ha-ha. Well at least I didn't track sand all in the inside of the cab."

Captain Stanley decided to break up the little squabble that had just started between his two paramedics, "Gentlemen, I'm sure after that last run that the squad could use a little cleaning."

"But Cap...", both men protested in unison.

"Now fellas, it's only fair that you clean out the squad for the next shift."

Both men grumbled as they headed out of the kitchen into the bay. Captain Stanley clapped his hands together assigning the remaining men various tasks that they could do around the station. He headed into the bay to find Johnny cleaning the squad by himself. He looked towards his office and spotted Roy emerging from it.

"He just couldn't wait to tell Joanne about my 'outhouse rescue'," Johnny muttered.

Captain Stanley gave him a sympathetic sigh, "Well John, it could have been worse. You could have been in that thing when it tipped over."

"Not a chance, Cap. Roy makes sure I 'go' before we take any long drives together," Johnny replied with a slight tone of humor.

Roy gave his Captain a hapless shrug as he opened the squad door and began sweeping the sand out with a rag. Captain Stanley headed to his office shaking his head at the two as he closed the door. He had a feeling that there was a little more to Roy's phone call than just informing Joanne of the latest

predicament his partner had managed to get into. He had an inkling Roy had called his wife to secure a new pair of work shoes for his partner.

His suspicions were confirmed almost two hours later when Joanne arrived juggling a three-year-old on one of her hips while Christopher carried a shoebox into the station. Chet took Jennifer from her mother's arms and set her down on the kitchen table. He beckoned for Chris to come over to join them. Chet formed a three-way huddle with the two children while Mike went to fetch Johnny and Roy from the back lot.

In a lightly hushed tone Chet spoke to the two youngsters, "Uncle Chet has a song he'd like to teach you. It's called 'Skip to the Loo' and your Uncle Johnny is *JUST* gonna love it."

Somethin' Smells
The Delirium Threemen
December 2010 ©

Part II of II

"Chris, Jen, simmer down. I'm on the phone," Roy covered the end of the phone with his hand as he tried to quash the voices of his boisterous children.

"But Daddy! We want Uncle Johnny to hear us," Jennifer protested as her lips formed into a huge pout.

"Jennifer," Roy said her name sternly before switching to a softer tone, "I'm trying to talk and Uncle Johnny can't hear me with the ruckus you two are making."

Joanne caught the wearisome look Roy cast her way. She responded by ushering the children into the living room. A few seconds later she had managed to lower the noise level on their offspring. Roy was able to continue his conversation on the phone without having to shout to be heard.

Roy let out a heavy sigh, "Yeah I know, Joanne and I have been working on it."

"Well, it annoys me too. They live here, remember," Roy replied back into the phone.

"Trust me, I thought about gagging them, but Joanne won't let me."

"Okay, we'll see you around four," Roy said as he hung up the phone.

Roy made his way to the living room and sat down on the couch beside Joanne as their children played at the other end of the room. He leaned his head onto her shoulder and whispered, "How did you manage to turn the volume down on them?"

Joanne gave his waist a gentle squeeze, "I didn't actually win that battle. They're still humming it."

"This has been going on for almost a week. Most kids would have moved on to something else by now."

"They started up when they found out who you were on the phone with. Just mentioning 'J-O-H-N-N-Y' gets them going."

"Shhhhh, not to loud. Chris knows how to spell."

"Why don't you take the 'fruit of your loins' outside with you while you finish up the yard? Maybe they can burn off some of their *excitement* before Johnny gets here," Joanne suggested patting his knee before heading off towards the kitchen.

Johnny's arrival sent another rendition of 'Skip to the Loo' echoing through the DeSoto house. Roy finished changing into some clean clothes before heading downstairs. The singing mysteriously stopped just before he entered the living room. He knew the reason for the miraculous silence as he spotted Johnny in the entrance way with a couple of 'Toys 'n' Us' bags in hands. Johnny managed to lure the two children into the living room.

"I have something for the two of you, but first I need you to promise me something," Johnny said as he knelt down beside the two children wrapping an arm around each one, drawing them in closer.

Chris and Jennifer looked up at Johnny with the same questionable expression that their father was currently wearing. Roy often gave him that same look whenever he tried to convince him that his latest 'get rich scheme' was a sure thing.

Johnny took a small gulp of air as two sets of innocent blue eyes bared down on him, "If you two promise not to sing THAT song 'Uncle Chet' taught you for the rest of the day I'll let you see what's in the bags."

"But he told us that you loved that song," Jennifer replied as clouds of disappointment filled her eyes.

Chris looked at Johnny, his eyes mirroring his sister's "You really don't like that song, do you?"

Johnny squirmed uncomfortably for a moment, trying to think of a plausible explanation, one that wouldn't hurt the children's feelings. He wanted to strangle Chet for misleading them into thinking he enjoyed that damn song.

"I do - I-I really do like that song, but-but," Johnny softly spoke taking a moment to lick his lips before continuing, "Ya' see kids, its getting on your Dad's nerves hearing it all the time."

"Mommy is always telling Daddy he's an ole' poop," Jennifer added gazing forlornly at her father.

Roy glowered at Johnny who returned an awkward smile towards his partner's. Johnny quickly directed his attention back to the children. Joanne stood in the kitchen doorway looking on in amusement as Roy huffed over being made the 'bad guy' in front of his kids.

Chris cast a leery glance towards his father before finally releasing a 'man-size' gust of air, "Oookaay, we promise not to sing that song anymore."

Johnny clapped his hands together as he dug into one of the bags, "Well then, let's check out what 'Uncle Johnny' brought for the two of you."

Jennifer let out a high-pitched squeal of delight as she pulled out a Tug Boat Shower for her Rub-A-Dub Dolly. Chris was equally excited but expressed it with a loud 'Neat-O' instead as he pulled out a new Evel Knievel figure that came with his own stunt cycle. Johnny assisted the children in getting the items out of their packaging. Joanne and Roy exchanged looks between each other. They *KNEW* the reason for Johnny bringing 'gifts' for the children – *bribery*.

Joanne convinced Jennifer she needed to wait until bath time before she could use her doll's new shower. Jennifer was content to play with her doll and shower set on the living room floor and imagine 'real' water was coming out of the Tugboat Shower. Johnny was helping Chris set up the stunt cycle. A few moments later they launched the action figure and stunt cycle down the hallway.

"Hey Chris, why don't you grab some stuff so we can build a ramp for ol' Evel Knievel," Johnny suggested.

Roy watched as Chris returned from his room with some books and blocks for the ramp. He shook his head in amusement as he watch Johnny and Chris playing while Jennifer sat nearby watching the action. Roy threw the family dog, Fergie, a sympathetic glance as he watched Evel Knievel perform a 'death defying' jump over 'Furry Dog Mountain.' He headed off into the kitchen to see if Joanne needed any in the kitchen while Johnny and his two children continued to come up with more dare escapades for Evel to perform.

Roy watched Johnny's Land Rover head down the street until it became a small speck in the distance. He watched the speck round the corner at the end of the road before heading back into his house. He heard the squeals delight from his daughter Jennifer reverberating from the bathroom and filling the house. Roy sat down in the living room to watch a documentary on the Salmon River that was airing on National Geographic.

A short time later, a pajama-clad Jennifer climbed up onto his lap to snuggle in her father's arms. Twenty minutes later, Chris joined them and leaned up against his him. After the show ended, Roy carried a sleeping Jennifer to bed and tucked her in. He checked in on Chris to make sure he was settled in for the night before heading off to his own bedroom.

He grabbed the book from the nightstand as heading into the adjoining bathroom. He started running some water for a bath as he undressed. A couple of inches filled the bottom of the tub as he climbed in. He turned the hot water up a little more before opening his book. He wanted to enjoy some solitude and unwind a bit before turning in for the night. He didn't notice Joanne standing beside the tub until he felt something pelting against the skin of his back. Roy looked up and saw his wife clad in a robe standing above the tub with a box of Calgon in her hand. A sly smile spread across her face as she poured more of the scented soap into the foaming water. A strong flowery scent filled the misty steam that rose from the hot water.

Joanne let her robe slip off as she uttered "Mind if I join you?"

Joanne proceeded to enter the tub without waiting for her husband's response. Roy's mind became focused on 'one thing' as he moved to the back of the tub to make room for his wife. Joanne turned off the water before positioning herself between her husband's long legs. She turned her head slightly so she could look into his grinning face as she leaned back against his chest.

"Rub-A-Dub-Dub, your wife needs a scrub," she said in a mischievous voice as Roy's arms tightened around her.

Roy smiled down at her, "I don't recall THAT particular chore on the list."

Joanne scooped up some bubbles with her hand and decorated his shoulder with them. She pulled his head down for a kiss, "I'm sure you'll put your back into this chore."

Roy grabbed the sponge from her hand and lightly rubbed her shoulders with it. She laughed in delight as she heard him softly sing in between kisses on her neck and shoulders.

"Rubber ducky you're the one, you make bath time lots of FUN."

Roy entered the locker room and quickly began to change into his uniform. Mike and Marco were already in the kitchen enjoying some coffee before roll call. He was almost finished dressing as a whirlwind named Johnny rushed into the locker room with Chet following closely behind him. Johnny quickly started peeling off his street clothes as Roy finished buttoning his shirt. Suddenly Johnny stopped and sniffed at the air around him.

"Do you smell that Roy? Someone spraying perfume in here? It almost smells like a flower shop in here."

Roy realized that he still carried the scent of that Calgon stuff Joanne put in their bath last night. Johnny was close enough to him to smell it. The last thing Roy wanted was Johnny needling him all day long over this. Perhaps if he pretended everything was 'normal' Johnny would let the issue drop.

"Sorry, Johnny, I don't smell a thing," Roy answered nonchalantly.

Johnny said as he continued to sniff at the air, "You sure? Something smells flowery around here."

"Could be from outside. You know, the flowers are starting to bloom this time of year," Roy said as he grabbed his paramedic jacket and put it on. Hopefully, the jacket would stifle some of the floral fragrance that was emanating from his body. He quickly did up the zipper and hurried off towards the kitchen.

Mike and Marco were conversing at the kitchen table as Roy poured himself a cup of coffee and leaned against the counter. He figured it was a bad idea to join them. If he got within arm's length of the other guys they might also notice his unusually feminine smell just like Johnny. He knew he would have a tougher time pulling the wool over their eyes.

"Hi Roy, how were you days off?" Marco asked.

"Joanne had a list of stuff for me to do that lasted until late yesterday afternoon," Roy said with a grimace.

"Yeah, Gayle had me working my tail off too," Mike said.

Roy grinned, "Makes you wonder if our wives are conspiring together to work us to death on our days off."

"I wouldn't doubt that. I never had a list of chores to do on my days off until Gayle and Joanne started hanging around together," Mike snorted.

"I have no doubt that Joanne taught her that trick." Roy chuckled.

"Morning, morning, morning," Johnny said as he entered the kitchen.

He quickly poured himself a coffee joining Mike and Marco at the kitchen table. After they had finished their coffee, they headed into the bay to and lined up for roll call. Roy made sure he was at the end of the line. He knew he could pull one over on Johnny but he wasn't sure if the rest of the guys would be so gullible. Johnny stood beside him while Captain Stanley was handing out the chores to his crew when he noticed Johnny sniffing at the air.

Knowing Johnny had a tendency to try and hide what he considered minor injuries or illnesses, Captain Stanley was compelled to question the paramedic, "Gage, are you coming down with a cold?"

"No...no, everything is fine, Cap," Johnny answered. Captain Stanley gave him a dubious look before continuing. The other fellows didn't notice the flowery smell so maybe it was just him or maybe it was drifting in from outside like Roy suggested, Johnny thought.

Johnny commented about how busy Rampart as Roy drove the squad back to the station after their last run, "Man, Rampart was a zoo this morning, usually busy for this time of day"

"Yeah, most of that was from that five car pile up on 405 earlier this morning. Looks like Squads 99 and 14 had a pretty hectic morning handling that one," Roy replied.

Johnny sighed deeply, "I guess we should count ourselves lucky we weren't called out to that one."

"It looked like things were starting to get under control there," Roy added

"Maybe by this afternoon I'll get a chance to test the waters with that new nurse, Shelly?"

"Shelly? Don't tell me you noticed a pretty nurse among all that mayhem? What happened to last week's romantic interest? Polly or something," Roy inquired.

"It was Paula. She really wasn't my type anyway." Johnny corrected him.

Roy exhaled deeply, "Yeah whatever, Junior. I'm sure you'll have this one eating out of the palm of your hand in no time as well."

"Roy, you know what your problem is?"

"I'm sure you're gonna tell me whether I want to hear it or not."

"You've been married for too long. You've lost your sense of romance a long time ago. Heck, Joanne and the kids think you're an OLD POOP."

"What makes you think it was my sense of romance that they were referring to? Joanne sticks around for a reason," Roy said defensively.

"Yeah, well the only thing she needs an OLD POOP for is to mow the lawn, lift heavy objects and squish bugs."

"*Yeah, well,* for your information something romantic happened at least twice since we've been married."

"I often wonder about that. Face it Roy; you're just not the romantic type."

"Next you're gonna tell me the stork dropped off Christopher and Jennifer," Roy said in annoyance.

"That wouldn't surprise me. Either the stork or you and Joanne went to the cabbage patch," Johnny scoffed.

Roy replied dryly, "Actually we bought them at a two for one sale."

Johnny leaned over and grabbed the mic. Once he let Dispatch know the squad was available he started to sniff at the air in the cab of the squad. "That's the same smell that I noticed at the station. You didn't get into some of Joanne's perfume or something, did you Roy?"

Roy knew the best thing to do in this situation was to try and convince Johnny that his fragrance was all in his head. "I think that incident with the outhouse has ruined your sense of smell. I recall a few shifts ago you were hearing imaginary noises coming from the squad. Now you're experiencing imaginary smells." He knew he could always nail Johnny on the mysterious noises the squad made that nobody else heard.

Johnny snorted out a retort to Roy's last comment. "I *DID NOT* imagine that rattle in the squad and I'm *NOT* imagining that smell either," he paused to sniff before adding, "*AND NO* I don't have loose seeds in my gourd".

"Maybe the next time we're at Rampart you can have your next future conquest examine your nose."

Dixie McCall looked at the clock on the wall above the nursing station. She couldn't believe it was 12:30 already. She had been on shift since seven this morning and had been running her tail off since she walked through the doors at Rampart Emergency. This was the first moment she had to sit down and organize some of the paper work that had piled up at the nursing station.

Dixie just finishing sorting through her paper work when Dr. Kelly Brackett walked over to the coffee pot behind the station and filled his cup. Taking a sip of the sludge he grimaced. "This stuff's been sitting too long. Tastes like motor oil. Wonder if the stuff in the lounge is any better?"

"Joe just went in there. I imagine he's starting a fresh pot," Dixie answered.

"You look like you could use a good cup of coffee yourself. Care to join me in the lounge with Joe," Dr. Brackett asked.

"I think I'll take you up on that. After the morning from hell I sure could use a break and a *good* fresh cup of coffee," Dixie replied back as she got up from her chair and followed Dr. Brackett in to the lounge.

Roy and Johnny walked into the staff room to find Dixie, Dr. Early and Dr. Brackett sitting at the round table. Roy quickly grabbed a cup and filled it with coffee. So far he had managed to deflect all of Johnny's remarks about the source of the aroma that was following him around all morning. He sensed that Johnny wasn't quite convinced that the smell was imaginary. Roy had actually prayed for a run that would either involve water or some type of messy situation where he could at least wash or rinse to get rid of the fragrance on his body.

"My partner thinks there's something wrong with my nose," Johnny told the tired trio sitting at the table as he waved an arm towards his partner.

Dr. Brackett let out a deeply exaggerated sigh, "I'll look at it the next time it's broken."

"Well, its like this Doc," Roy began to addressing the trio sitting at the table, "Johnny seems to have gone from hearing imaginary rattles in the squad to smelling imaginary smells."

"Ha, ha, very funny, from a man that smells like a floral garden," Johnny quipped backed.

"See, there's that imagination of his running wild again. I bet those chemicals from that poop house rescue last week affected your sense of smell."

Johnny snorted, "You're just a barrel of laughs."

Dixie eyeballed the two paramedics before getting up to refill her cup. She noticed Roy slowly moving further away from the pot almost as if he was distancing himself from her. She targeted her eyes on him suspiciously. She *KNEW* he was hiding something from Johnny. Roy tried to scoot away from her as she deliberately took a step in his direction.

"Hold right there mister," Dixie said while sternly pointing a finger at Roy. He stood frozen in place. She closed the gap between them and took a quick sniff into Roy's shoulder.

"Just as I suspected. Johnny's not imagining things. Roy's trying to pull one over on him," Dixie said giving the paramedic a stern look as she sat down at the table.

"So Johnny is right. Roy smell a little floral today?" Dr. Early inquired.

"Roy smells a lot like Calgon," Dixie answered.

Johnny couldn't hide the rising triumph in his voice, "Ah-ha, *I KNEW IT!*. *IT'S* Roy that smells like a flower garden."

"Calgon?" Dr. Brackett asked.

"Yeah, you add the stuff in your bath water then it *'takes you away'* from it all or so the slogan goes. Joanne bought me a box of it to thank me for keeping an eye on Roy when he got his tonsils out," Dixie replied.

"Nope, not ringing a bell," Dr. Brackett said with a slight shake of his head.

"Come on Kel, everyone's seen at least one of those commercials. You know the lady shouts out '*Calgon, take me away*', after complaining about the traffic, her boss, the baby, the dog," Dixie replied.

Johnny's face split into a grin, "The one with the girl in the tub full of bubbles with the great legs, Doc."

"Oh yeah, I remember *THAT* commercial," Dr. Brackett smiled at the image that filled his mind.

A devilish look transcended upon Johnny's face as he began his interrogation, "Here's what I'd like to know, pally?"

"There's nothing to know." Roy replied as flatly as he crossed his arms in front of his chest.

"Oh really? I'd like to know why you were using Joanne's bubble bath stuff?"

Dr. Early couldn't hide the mischief that twinkled in his eyes or in the tone of his voice, "I'd like to hear the answer to that one, myself."

Four pairs of eyes gazed at Roy waiting for his answer. A wave of heat transcended over his body as he felt his mouth suddenly go dry. Finally, his voice squeaked out the answer the others were waiting for, "Joanne put the stuff in my bath water."

"Are you telling me that Joanne just waltzed into the bathroom and poured the stuff in the water? Don't you lock the door when you're in there?" Johnny pressed on as Roy grew more uncomfortable.

"I-I, w-we, only lock the door to keep the kids out," Roy stammered.

"Come on, Roy, Joanne has no business walking in on ya. Unless, of course, she's up to no good," Johnny continued grilling Roy. He was thoroughly enjoying watching his partner flounder around in embarrassment.

Dr. Brackett whispered to his two companions, "That's probably why Roy doesn't lock the bathroom door."

"Maybe Roy had something in the tub to amuse himself with, like his favorite bath toy," Dr. Early responded with a loud whisper causing the other two sitting at the table to break down in laughter.

"Come on, Junior, I think its time we make our exit," Roy said as he tugged on Johnny's arm.

Johnny grinned evilly at his partner, "Not so fast pally, you still haven't explained to us *WHY* Joanne put the Calgon in your bath water."

The heat of embarrassment rose higher within Roy's body. The cute little rhyme Joanne whispered as she joined him in the tub along with a couple of commercial jingles began swirling around in his brain. Four pairs of eyes remained fixated on the hapless paramedic waiting for his response. Roy opened and closed his mouth several times without actually emitting a sound.

"I'm not letting you off the hook, buddy boy," Johnny replied as he impatiently tapped his foot on the floor.

"You see...it's like this...."

"Go, on."

Dr. Brackett couldn't resist helping Johnny out now that the tables were turned on Roy. "Yes Roy, please, do go on," Dr. Brackett said in a deep, serious tone before bowing his head down to let a hearty chuckle bubble up from in his throat.

"Well, you know, ummmm," Roy took a deep breath and let the kaleidoscope of phrases and jingles currently filling his mind pour out of his mouth, "Rub-A-Dub-Dub, two people in a tub, cause two in the tub is more fun than one. AND YES! I lost myself in luxury amongst other things."

The three of them renewed their laughter as the normally sane half of the paramedic duo finished his diatribe. Roy's face was almost purple as he lost the last remaining threads of his composure. The only thing on his mind at the moment was getting out of the lounge. Roy quickly left the room without looking back. Johnny quickly said good-bye as he hurriedly followed his partner down the hall leaving Dixie, Dr. Early and Dr. Brackett still chuckling heartily in the break room.

Dr. Early scratched his head, "You know that's the funniest case of role reversal I've every seen."

"Tell me about it. How often do we get to see the calm, cool and collected part of that duo become unraveled?" Dr. Brackett added trying to get his laughter under control.

Dixie started to rub her sides which were aching from the amusement provided by her two favorite paramedics. "You know fellas, after the morning we just had, those two just made the rest of my day much brighter."

"Yeah, moments like this make it hard to believe that those two happen to be our best paramedic team," Dr. Brackett concluded.

Dixie got up from the table and placed her empty coffee cup into the sink. "Well, I think the three of us better headed back to work. I don't know if I can survive a follow-up visit from those two. My sides are killing me from laughing so much," Dixie said as she left the break room followed shortly by the two doctors.

"Not another word out of you, *partner*," Roy grumbled putting the breaks on whatever verbal assault Johnny was thinking of hurling his way.

A twitter of laughter escaped Johnny as he thought of another way to torment his partner, "Rub-a-dub dolly, soft pretty dolly, she takes a bath when you bathe too. Taking a bath can be lots of fun, 'cause two in the bathtub is more fun than one."

Roy looked over at Johnny who had an ear-to-ear grin plastered on his face. He shook his head and returned his gaze back to the road in front of him.

"Ya' know Johnny, there's something disturbing...almost perverted hearing a grown man sing that."

The grin on Johnny's face disintegrated into a disgruntled frown, "You know Roy, you're right. Huh, I guess that puts the kibosh on getting the rest of the guys serenading you with it."

"Besides the engine should still be out on that call for the garbage truck that flipped under that overpass."

"Au contraire *MON frère*," Johnny gave Roy a triumphant grin as he pointed to the squad radio, "I overheard on the squad radio on the way to the hospital that they finished up. They could be back at the barn by the time we return."

Roy threw Johnny a triumphant grin as he parked the squad in the empty bay. Johnny pointed straight ahead as the Engine began backing into the bay. Johnny playfully punched Roy in the shoulder before he jumped out of the passenger side to greet the Engine crew. Roy leaned against the wall of the bay.

Captain Stanley was the first to exit out of the engine and before his feet even hit the pavement he shouted out an order to Chet, "Kelly, I want you to hit the showers pronto. Marco and Mike, work on getting rid that stench inside the cab."

"You should have made Chet ride on the back of the engine," Mike muttered.

Both Johnny and Roy couldn't help but wrinkle their noses at the sour-rotten smell that drifted their way as Chet walked briskly by them on his way to the shower. Johnny placed his hand on Roy's arm and nodded towards the kitchen. Roy followed his partner's lead.

"Peeee-yewww, what the heck did Chet get himself into," Johnny said as both men plopped down into a couple of empty chairs at the kitchen table.

"I imagine it has something to do with trash," Roy answered stoically.

Captain Stanley entered the kitchen and approached the two paramedics sitting at the table. He dropped heavily into an empty chair beside Roy without saying a word.

"So Cap, how on earth did a garbage truck manage to tip itself over?" Roy inquired.

"Well, it seems the loading arms on the trash compactor were still raised and caught on the overpass. When we arrived at the scene, the truck was on its side and some of the garbage it was carrying spilled onto the road. The driver seemed more shaken up than hurt. Squad 24 brought him on in to Rampart to be checked out once we got him out of the truck. We mostly washed down the gasoline from the wreck."

"So uh, what happened with Chet?" Johnny couldn't hide the curiosity in his voice.

Captain Stanley drummed his fingers on the table in frustration, "Chet managed slip and land flat on his ass in the midst of all that wet, smelly garbage."

"Probably trying to 'rescue' a piece of vintage barb wire, no doubt," Johnny scoffed.

Johnny leaned over and took a few exaggerated sniffs into Roy's shoulder, "Ahhhh, you smell much better than Chet. You're lucky I'm in a merciful mood today my finely scented friend."

"Really?" Roy replied dryly.

"I'd rather work with sweet-smelling, little old you over 'Trashcan Chet' any day," Johnny said patting Roy on the shoulder as he got up and headed towards the phone. He turned back towards his partner before he picking up the phone, "Besides, I have bigger fish to fry now."

Captain Stanley looked over at Roy before leaning into his other shoulder and inhaled deeply. He smiled and winked knowingly at Roy, "My wife uses that stuff too."

"Hello Joanne, its Johnny. Oh Roy's fine. Listen, are the kids around?" Johnny said into the phone as he pulled out his notepad and pen from his shirt pocket. "Can you ask them if they know the words to that song Oscar the Grouch sings about trash?"

There was a long silence as Johnny quickly wrote in his note pad. Once he stopped writing he spoke into the phone, "Okay, let me read this back to you and see if I got this right. '*Oh, I love trash! Anything dirty or dingy or dust, Anything ragged or rotten or rusty, Yes, I love trash.*' Okay Chris, I'm ready for the next verse."

Captain Stanley gave Roy a pleading look, "Am I wrong? Please tell me that you twits aren't deliberately trying to drive me straight to the funny farm?"

Author Notes:

The garbage truck incident was based on one that happened on July 22, 1975 in Mansfield, Ohio. The loading arms of the trash compacter were raised and caught on the overpass which caused the truck to flip over and spill some of its load on the road. The 62-year-old driver of the truck was unhurt.

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