

The phone rings. A man with with a snappy voice picks it up and speaks, "Johnny Diaper."

"Johnny, this is Ray Hutchens, Security Liability and Trust. Can you be in my office tomorrow morning at nine?"

"Sure, what's up?"

"We have a claim that we need to investigate, and they tell me you're the man for the job."

"OK, see you then."

*Ladies and Gentlemen, the Daily Diapers Network brings you the man with the action-packed expense account. America's favorite diapered insurance investigator:"*

"Yours Truly, Johnny Diaper."

*Expense report, submitted by special investigator Johnny Diaper. The following is an account of my expenses incurred during my investigation of the Soggy Bottom Matter. Item one, seven-fifty. Uber fare over to Ray Hutchens office.*

Security's offices are shiny and new, but the company has been around for over a century. I wink at the secretary and enter Ray Hutchens's office. In stark contrast to the rest of the building, Hutchens's office looks old, smells old, even sounds old. The floor is covered with an ancient Persian rug. On top of that sits a comparatively newer but still ancient desk. Behind the desk, Ray Hutchens, a relatively newer but still ancient man. He got right to the point.

"Glad you are available, Johnny. This one is going to be a sticky one."

"Lay it out for me."

We represent the Metropolitan Transit Line. One of their buses got into an accident down by the harbor. We've paid out most of the complaints, the usual stuff, a few scrapes and bruises, some alleged whiplash, still easier to settle than fight them."

"So, what's the problem?"

"Metropolitan was served with a lawsuit yesterday. Ten million dollars."

"What's the claim?"

"That a Ms. Kristin Johnson suffered permanent injury in the accident."

"And you don't believe it?"

"No, Johnny. My gut tells me this one is fake. We, of course, will pay off it is real. But we don't want to give away millions on a false claim."

"I see, so you want me to find out if she's trying to pull something. Just what injury does she claim merits ten million dollars of compensation?"

"She claims the accident has left her incontinent."

"Ah, right up my alley."

"Yes, we figured if anybody could spot a phony in this aspect, it would be Johnny Diaper."

*Expense report, item 2, Two dollars and seventy-five cents. Copy charges to get a copy of the accident report from the city police.* The report showed the accident to be a low-speed affair. A sudden stoppage threw the passengers on the bus forward. City buses are not equipped with seat belts. Sixteen passengers were treated at the scene and released. One, Ms. Johnson, was transported to General Hospital for further observation. Well, there you had it. My copy of Security's records showed sixteen modest payouts for injuries. Nobody hit the personal injury jackpot there.

I noted the driver's name, one Carlos Mendez. I took out my cell phone and called the contact I was given at the transit department. The dispatcher told me Mr. Mendez was back driving the number eight bus and would be passing my location in ten minutes. I went out and stood by the street.

*Expense Report, Item 3. One Dollar. Bus fare on the number eight bus.* I boarded and sat in the front right seat, affording me a view of a young Latino driver. "Carlos Mendez?" I asked.

"Who wants to know?" came a fairly accented reply.

"I'm Johnny Diaper. I'm investigating your accident for the insurance company."

"Oh, man. I went all through this with the insurance guys and the police the day it happened."

"Can you please run through it again?"

"Nothing much to say. I'm in the middle of the number eight route. I'm coming down the middle of the block between Fourth and Fifth Streets, and this guy in a Porsche shoots out of the alley right in front of me. I stand on the brakes to avoid hitting him. He drives off. Doesn't even look back."

"Did you get a license number?"

"No, man. The passengers are all screaming and groaning. Then there are people trying to pry the doors open to get on the bus."

"Pry the doors open?"

"You ever seen a bus accident? You get a dozen clowns who see it and try to hop on your bus to say they were on it when it happened and got whiplash or worse."

"So, did they get on?"

"No way. I got on the radio, and the police and ambulances were here in a minute. There's not anybody hurt, except this woman is saying her back hurts. The paramedics strap her to a board and take her away."

"That was Kristin Johnson?"

"I think that's her name."

"And that's all you remember?"

"That's it. Frankly, I wish I'd hit that bastard in the Porsche. Then they'd be trying to sue his ass, not mine. But since I can't show that there was another car at fault, everybody wants to sue the bus company."

I mull this over as the bus makes several stops. Soon we're back within a few blocks of my office, so I get off. The insurance company was busy trying to discover the medical reports for the woman, but I decided it might be time to do a little research on her myself.

*Now, ladies and gentlemen. Here's our star to tell you about the next intriguing episode of our story.*

Well, sometimes when you read about someone, you imagine what they should look like. My imaginary image of Ms. Johnson was all wrong. The reality of Ms. Johnson was that of a stunningly beautiful woman. Join us next time, won't you?

*Join us again next time for the next episode of Yours Truly, Johnny Diaper.*

The hunt was on. I had a plan of how to get started. And I was getting paid five hundred a day plus expenses to boot.

*Ladies and Gentlemen, the Daily Diapers Network brings you another episode of the man with the action-packed expense account, America's favorite diapered insurance investigator."*

Yours Truly, Johnny Diaper.

*Expense report. Item four. Nineteen dollars and ninety-five cents. Background Report for Kristin Johnson.*

I walked the two blocks from where I off the bus back to my office. I woke up my computer from its self-induced slumber and checked my mail. Hutchens had sent me a copy of the complaint from Ms. Johnson. It didn't tell me much. Mostly it was boilerplate stuff. Ms. Johnson was an unmarried woman, a resident of Center County. The Bus line was operating in Center County. This gave jurisdiction to the courts here. The complaint had scant additional details than Hutchens had briefed me. She claimed that she had life-altering injuries in the form of incontinence as a result of the accident.

I brought up the web browser and connected to one of my investigation sites. I typed in Ms. Johnson's particulars and got a hit. The site warned me to go further would run twenty bucks, but that would be on Security's nickel, so to speak. A minute later, I had what could be found by scraping all the public databases and some of the private ones. Ms. Johnson was nearly twenty-two years old. Her birthday was coming up next week. I had an address, a cell phone number, and an email. Her credit was average, and there were no signs of previous lawsuits, bankruptcies, or

anything like that. She owned no real estate. I clicked through the address link and found it was a small townhouse in the center part of the city. She had a driver's license but no car registered to her. Not uncommon for city folk. Public transit and Uber worked well, and I suspected that the townhouse, almost assuredly a rental, didn't come with off-street parking.

I went back to the lawsuit filing. The plaintiff's attorney was one Lewis Ramsey of the firm of Ramsey and Tapper. I goggled them. Typical personal injury lowlifes. "We're here for you" and "We don't win, you don't pay." Of course, that comes at a high price on a ten-million-dollar lawsuit. They'd keep four million for themselves. Trying to get information out of a lawyer is even more challenging than pulling teeth. All you need to pull teeth is a good grip on the pliers and to pull.

*Expense report. Item five. Ten Dollars. A four-pack of Red Bull and two Northshore Megamax diapers.*

I decided to put my eyes on Ms. Johnson. I didn't know why, but I was at an impasse in my investigation. I needed to know the medical aspects of the case, and that would come with Security's lawyers requesting discovery on Ramsey and Tapper. I just wanted to size the woman up. I tried to avoid it, but an image of Kristin popped into my mind. Short, dumpy, homely. Not overly successful in life, and now dollar signs filled her eyes. She'd even happily wear diapers until after the trial was over to sell the story.

I popped into the bathroom next to my office and dropped my pants. I stripped out of the diaper I was wearing. It was wet anyhow, and I always wore a heavier one for more prolonged surveillance. I could wear them all the time, but they were pricey. Again, it was on Security's nickel, and so were the caffeine and sugar drinks to keep me sharp during a long wait. I drove over to Ms. Johnson's neighborhood and located the townhouse. I surveyed the neighborhood and found a parking space diagonally across the street. I parked and opened a Red Bull. I reached over and pulled a pair of binoculars out of the glove box. I quickly set the focus on the townhouse front door and then put them in my lap. I took a long pull on the drink and sat in to wait.

A couple of Red Bulls later and I felt myself wetting the diaper. Fluid in, fluid out. That's the way these things went. Suddenly I caught a glint. The front door of the townhouse was opening. I assumed she'd be at work, wherever that was, and would arrive home on foot. But someone was coming out. I put the binoculars to my eyes and caught my first look at the object of my investigation.

My jaw dropped. The woman indeed matched the age as shown in the background report, but the rest of my imagined persona was all wrong. This woman was tall and slender. I'd have to guess she was close to six feet. I moved my view down. She was wearing fairly flat sandals. The height was not augmented by heels. I panned back up and caught a mass of blonde hair surrounding a charming face. Between the sandals and hair was a mid-length sundress in a bold red and yellow motif. I changed my gaze to her midsection. Decades of wearing diapers myself gave me a keen sense of these things. I watched her as she made her way down the steps and turned to her left. After a few more steps, I was convinced. She indeed had a diaper on now.

What to do? I didn't want to tip my hand at this point. Or did I. But I did want to get closer to this beauty. I threw the binoculars on the passenger seat and got out of the car, and started a loose tail on her. I didn't know what I was going to do after that.

*And now a word from our sponsor. Ladies and Gentlemen, do you wear diapers? If you do, you know the importance of keeping your skin protected. That's why Johnny Diaper and thousands of other diaper wearers always use Dr. Sanford's Caboose Creme. Caboose Creme protects your skin from irritation from both urine and feces while providing necessary moisturizing and nourishment for your skin. Available wherever incontinence products are sold. And now, here's the star of our story with a preview of our next episode:*

I stood there regarding Ms. Johnson and felt a strange pang. A pang that might lead me to a conflict of interest with my client. But a pang I might not be able to resist. Join us next time, won't you?

I walked half a block behind her, mesmerized by the sweep of her blond hair, the swing of diapered hips underneath that flowing dress. I had to follow. I had to find out what she was about.

*Dr. Sanford's Caboose Creme brings you another episode of the man with the action-packed expense account, America's favorite diapered insurance investigator.*

Yours Truly, Johnny Diaper.

I followed her down two blocks where she turned in the Fresco Grill. The place was a small neighborhood joint on the corner. One side featured outside tables for when the weather was nice, and today the weather was nice. Close to the side of the building was an outside bar. Ms. Johnson took a stool at the end of the bar and nodded to the bartender without saying anything. She must be a regular, and the bartender was starting her order.

I discreetly entered and took a seat at the far end of the bar. I could look down the bar like I was trying to get the attention of the bartender, but I was actually checking out Ms. Johnson. My initial appraisal was right. Young, tall, and beautiful. Could she possibly be involved in scamming my client out of ten million dollars?

*Expense report, Item six. Twenty Dollars. One Woodford Reserve with minimal ice and a hefty tip for the bartender. Call it research.*

I looked at the bartender's nametag. "Joe, do you know that girl at the end of the bar?" I said as I pushed the bills back toward him that was the change from a six-dollar drink from the twenty I'd given him.

He scooped them up. "Kirstin?" She's a regular. Lives down the block. Comes in here a couple of times a week. More often when the weather is nice."

"Does she have a boyfriend?"

The bartender gave me a long look. He was sizing me up. He looked down at her and then answered. "She's had guys in here once or twice. Don't think they ever amounted to anything."

I followed his gaze down to her. She was finishing the drink she had.

I pushed another twenty his way. "Send her another of what she's having on me. I'll have another Woodford. Same way you made it last time."

Joe set up another bourbon in front of me. I saw him set a drink in front of Ms. Johnson. He motioned with his head over in my direction to indicate the source. I decided to make my move. I picked up my drink and moved down to the stool next to her. "Hi. My name's Johnny."

"Kristin. Johnny what?" she asked.

I sighed. "Johnny Diaper."

She broke into a hearty laugh. "You don't say. Is that really your name?"

"It is."

"Do you wear one like me? Or is it just your name."

"I do wear them. I know you do as well. I was following you because I noticed you had one on."

She looked concerned and looked down at her dress, smoothing it with her hands around her waist.

"Don't worry. Nobody else would have noticed. When you've worn diapers as long as I have, you develop a sense about these things."

"How long have you worn?"

"All my life."

"So you were never toilet trained?"

"Not for want of trying. My mom spent months trying to get me trained, but it didn't work. Eventually, she took me to a doctor, and they figured out that my sphincter just wasn't up to it."

"That must have been hard for you."

"It was once I started school and realized that I was different. Kids would find out, and you know how they are. Girls would laugh. Guys would taunt. I'd just get embarrassed with the girls. The boys sometimes came to blows."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't worry. It made me the man I am today, I guess. Have you always worn?" I knew the answer, I thought. But I wanted to hear it from her."

"No, I'm a comparative newcomer to them. I was in an accident a while back."

"Automobile?" I prompted.

"Yes. Three years ago. I was riding with my uncle. It wasn't his fault. The road was icy, and we hit a tree. He always blamed himself. He's bent over backward trying to make it up to me, despite me telling him I don't expect anything from him."

I tried to hide my surprise. If she was telling me the truth, and I sensed she was, this blew the doors off the lawsuit. I hoped I hadn't given anything away on my face. She continued.

"He's been nice. He owns the house I'm staying in. He was renting it out, but when I got back from college, he insisted I stay there."

"He sounds like a nice guy."

We made idle chit-chat. She did admit that she hadn't had any relationships since the accident. Most men didn't want to have much to do with her once they knew she was diapered. She had some run-ins with creeps on the internet but stayed away from that now. "Telling you that I had a diaper on was a test for you. I don't want to waste my time if it's a deal-breaker."

It was not a deal-breaker. I avoided pushing further. I suggested that we meet again. Without tipping my hand, I couldn't give her my card, so I wrote my number on a napkin. She did likewise. She excused herself, saying she had shopping to do. I bid her goodnight.

*The proper term for it is Contact Dermatitis, but the common name is diaper rash. And it doesn't matter if you are a baby or an incontinent adult; if you wear diapers you risk getting it. Prevent this with Doctor Sanford's Caboose Creme. Caboose Creme provides a barrier against irritation while keeping your skin soft and healthy. Available wear incontinence supplies are sold. Now our star gives us a heads up on the next episode.*

Now, I had a problem. From what she said the lawsuit was a sham. I had to find out what was going on. And I had to find out more about Kristin. Join me next time.

The phone rings. "Johnny, this is Ray Hutchens. I hear you found something."

*Dr. Sanford's Caboose Creme brings you another episode of the man with the action-packed expense account, America's favorite diapered insurance investigator.*

Yours Truly, Johnny Diaper.

"Yes, Ray. I had a drink with Ms. Kristen Johnson last night, our plaintiff. She says she's worn diapers since she was eighteen. A result of an accident in her uncle's car."

"Hmm," Ray said into the phone. "You think that's the true story? Wasn't asking her that kind of risky?"

"She doesn't know I'm an investigator. She volunteered that information when I told her my last name was Diaper. I had just bought her a drink at the neighborhood bar."

"You don't think she said that just to get rid of you?"

"It's possible, but she seemed sincere. We traded phone numbers. I haven't checked to see if she gave me a phony. That's happened before."

"Well keep on it, Johnny. This is very interesting."

Very interesting indeed. I hung up the phone. I shook the computer mouse to get the system back to life and pulled up my earlier dump on Kristin. The cell number was included. I dug the napkin out of my wallet where I had stuffed it the night before. It matched. At least she hadn't tried to ditch me that way. And I suspected confessing to wearing diapers wasn't intended to scare off another diaper wearer.

I was about to do some searching on the computer. Maybe there was a newspaper article on the car crash. I knew Kristin didn't show up in any articles from my search the other day. But papers are a little reticent to list a minor's name in an article. I needed to search with the uncle's name. I was trying to come up with a strategy to find that. I was musing to myself when the phone rang.

"Johnny Diaper," I said into the mouthpiece.

"Well, hello, Mr. Diaper. Kristin Johnson. Remember me."

"How could I forget?"

"I hope I didn't scare you off last night."

"Not in the least, but I thought maybe you were just looking for an excuse to get away from me."

"Oh, no. I seriously had to do things. I was wondering if you wanted to get together."

"Sure, dinner tonight? Maybe Mama Rosas?" I didn't want to go too over the top, even if I was charging the dinner to the expense account. "Sevenish?"

"Sure. Can you pick me up at my townhouse? It's just down the block from where we were yesterday. I don't have a car, and I don't like riding the bus that late at night."

She gave me the address, not that I needed it, and I told her I'd see her then.

It then occurred to me. She said it was her uncle's townhouse. I keyed the address into the county real estate site. The owner came up immediately. Well, well. The owner of that townhouse was one Lewis Ramsey, Esquire. No doubt of Ramsey and Tapper, Attorneys at Law.

I decided to do some searching on Lewis Ramsey. I did find a news article on the car wreck. Both Lewis and Kristin had landed in the hospital. The article just described the second occupant of the vehicle as Ramsey's teenage niece. I went to the court's website and pulled up a list of suits where Lewis represented the plaintiff. It would cost serious money to download them all, and I didn't think I could justify it to Hutchens. I stabbed at one at random. The boilerplate looked familiar. This time, a Mr. Joseph Cramer was alleging that a taxi driver had caused him "life-altering injuries."

I slid back from my desk and pulled a bottle of Knob Creek out of the credenza. I tipped a measure into my empty coffee cup and took a swig. How should I play this? I should run direct to Ray, and I'm not one to pad my expense report, but how many opportunities do I get to have dinner with a lovely woman, and at the company's expense. I'd call Ray tomorrow. I finished the rest of the

bourbon and headed home. I wanted to shower, shave, change my diaper, and dress nicely for tonight.

*Expense report, Item seven. Eighty-five dollars. Dinner and wine. More research on Ms. Johnson.*

At six forty, I got into the car and drove over to Kristin's. I double-parked in front of her house and hoped she would be ready as I took the stairs two at a time to her front door. I rang the bell, and she appeared immediately. She looked lovely. She was wearing a knockout of a red dress this time and lipstick of the same color. I led her back down to my car and held her door open for her. See, chivalry isn't dead.

We got to the restaurant and sat at a table on their rear terrace. A bottle of Chianti loosened things up. I tried not to dig too hard lest I tip my hand and destroy the magic. We had finished our antipasto and were waiting for the next course when she asked me, "So what kind of diaper does Johnny Diaper wear?"

"Depends on my mood and what I'm doing. Tonight I have supreme lites on. They're still pretty absorbent, but don't feel like I've got a blanket stuffed in my pants like some of the heavy-duty ones. Plenty of opportunities to change. Diapers have come a long way in the past few years. Nothing like when I was a kid."

She laughed. "I know what you mean. I tried all sorts of things when I first found I had to wear them. If I'm home, I'll wear something lighter. I hate changing when I'm out so if I'm out running errands like last night, I'll have to resort to the blankets. What did you wear as a kid?"

"Well, I stayed in Pampers until I couldn't fit in them anymore. Then the only option my mother found that would work was cloth diapers. They just didn't make a lot of youth diapers back then."

We moved on to other subjects. She explained that she was studying to be a nurse now. She asked me what I did. I had to be careful. I said I was an investigator.

"A private eye, like Cormoron Strike," she said, referencing the creation of J.K. Rowling's alter-ego Robert Galbraith.

"Something like that."

"It must be very exciting."

"At times. But usually, it's a lot of boring sifting through computer databases and other records. You a fan of Galbraith?"

"Yes, I grew in the Harry Potter generation. When Jo started the Strike books, it was a natural thing to try."

We talked and had our wine. Far too soon, it came to an end, and I paid the bill and drove back to Kristin's apartment. This time I found a space at the end of the block. I helped her out of the car and walked with her to her door, anything to prolong the moment. At her door, I bade her good night. I was staring into her eyes, and since she was almost my height, all she had to do was lean forward slightly when she kissed me. "It's been a wonderful night, Johnny. Let's keep in touch."

I watched her as she entered the house and closed the door behind her. Not an unpleasant evening, and a promise of more to come. I headed back to my car with a spring in my step. I was just reaching for the car door handle when I felt something heavy slam behind me pressing me to the vehicle. I tried to go for the gun under my jacket shoulder, but before I could work my arm out from under the mass holding me, someone knocked out the lights.

*Is your skin red and irritated under your diaper? Diaper rash is no laughing matter. You need Dr. Sanford's Caboose Creme. Caboose Creme protects your skin from the irritation of urine and feces. Plus, it helps soothe and heal any irritation you already have. So whether you're trying to recover from diaper rash or wanting to prevent it, Dr. Sanford's Caboose Creme is what you want. Pick some up, today! And how here's our star to tell you about our next installment.*

A slap in the face and I woke up with a headache like you wouldn't believe. And only part of it was due to the wine. The slapper was probably the same large mass that pinned me to my car and was the source of my headache. What was I going to find out now? Join us next time and find out as well. Yours Truly, Johnny Diaper.

*And now, Dr. Sanford's Caboose Creme brings you another episode of (ringing sound):*  
Yours Truly, Johnny Diaper.

*Yes, the man with the action-packed expense account, America's favorite freelance insurance investigator, Johnny Diaper.*

The ringing sound was in my head. I opened my eyes and tried to focus. I was sitting on wet pavement. It's times like this the diaper came in handy, its waterproof shell was keeping my skin from whatever was in this puddle. It was dark, but there were no stars. Then I realized what was blotting out the sky: The man who rang my bells, to begin with.

"What the hell?" I said, trying to get up.

A heavy hand pushed me back down. "Shaddup and listen," a coarse voice said. "This is a warning. Stay away from Kristin Johnson. Get it?"

I shook my head, trying to get my composure. Stay away from her? "Get it?" the voice asked again. This time the question was accompanied by a kick to my ribs.

"Yeah, I get it," I said.

"Well, you do it. I wouldn't want to have to come and discuss it with you further."

"Just who are you?"

"Never mind. Just stay away from Kristin." This was punctuated with another swing at my head.

When I was able to sit up again, he was gone. I struggled to my feet and looked around. I was in an alley. I could see the street ahead and my car. Big Bubba hadn't dragged me far after he hit me the first time. I shuffled to my car and got in. I was going to have to puzzle this out as soon as the pain subsided enough for me to think.

*Expense report, Item 8. Forty-four dollars. One bottle Extra Strength Tylenol, One bottle Extra Strength Advil, One bottle Extra Strength Bourbon. Put it down as medical treatment. Two shots of each and call me in the morning.*

I got home and stripped out of my clothes, hoping they were salvageable. I figured a hot shower couldn't hurt, so I got in there, hoping that it would clear my head. So someone didn't like me being around Kristin Johnson. Who could it be? Was Bubba an old boyfriend or some secret admirer she didn't know. I suspected I wouldn't have to work hard to describe him in a way she could identify.

But I was getting far afield from the job. I wasn't being paid to get cozy with Kristin. That was on my own dime. I was there to figure out what was going on with this ten million dollar lawsuit. I needed to focus on that. Only after that was resolved should I give attention to my potential relationship with the girl. I still didn't know what to do next, so I took another dose of the bourbon and hoped I'd feel better in the morning after I slept on it.

I woke up with the room already bright from the sun. I looked at the clock. Almost nine. I reached down and felt my diaper. Pretty saturated. I got up and looked at the sheets. Fortunately, no leaks, so I didn't have to worry about that. Hell, I didn't even feel like making the bed at this point, let alone changing the sheets. I stepped gingerly toward the bathroom. I was sore all over. I stripped out of the diaper and decided to try another shower. It seemed to help.

Getting dressed, I pulled the last diaper out of the box of daily wearers. Had I ordered more? I better pop over to Ace Medical and pick some up. I headed into the kitchen and started the coffee. Two Tylenol, two Advil, and two cups of coffee. Breakfast of champions. Feeling better, I got in my car and drove the half mile to the medical supply.

"Hi, Johnny," Jill, the clerk, said. "How's it going? You look like hell. by the way."

"Feel about the same. I had a goon deliver a message to me last night. I'll be OK. I need a case of Supers."

"No problem, size large right? We should have some in the back."

"Yes, thanks." Then it occurred to me. "Jill, do you know a girl named Kristin Johnson?"

"Ah, yes. Nice woman."

"She's a customer here?"

"Yes. She's been getting diapers from us for a few years now. Too bad. She's such a pretty girl to have that problem."

"It should only happen to ugly lugs like me," I countered.

"I didn't mean it that way, Johnny."

"I know."

"I'll get your diapers."

So there it was. The diapers had not been a recent addition to Kristin's life. Score another for Kristin telling me how it was and something being wrong with the lawsuit. I went to the office and got out my file on the case. Sometimes it helped me to write out my report to put things in perspective. Something was wrong here. Insurance fraud was happening for sure. Was Kristin the instigator? Was it her ambulance-chasing uncle? And who was the guy who decked me last night?

I figured it was time to confront Kristin. It might ruin my chances at a relationship, but I had to put food on the table. I picked up the phone.

"Hi, Kristin. It's Johnny."

"Oh, hi Johnny. Thanks for dinner last night."

"You're welcome. I had a good time as well. I was wondering... I have something to discuss with you. Can we meet for drinks this evening?"

"I hope you're not going to try proposing marriage already," she said.

"No, no. Not quite that serious."

"Well, I'm going to see my uncle at five. Perhaps I could meet you at six at Fresco? I don't think Uncle Lou will take that long."

"Very well, see you then."

I mulled over how to approach this. But maybe I was approaching the wrong person. Ramsey obviously knows what is going on with this lawsuit. He had to, he was the lawyer. Perhaps it was him I should be confronting, not Kristin. At least I should put some eyes on him and figure out what he was doing. I changed my diaper and grabbed the last of the Red Bulls, and drove over to the law offices of Ramsey and Tapper. Their office was in a two-story professional building that contained two attorney offices, a chiropractor, and a financial planner. I walked down the street, grabbed a roast beef sandwich from a nearby deli, and returned to the car.

I was washing the last of the sandwich down with the end of the Red Bull when I saw someone emerging from Ramsey's law offices. I knew what Ramsey and Tapper looked like respectively, they were vain enough to plaster their mugs on the advertisements for their services. But this guy I recognized as neither. It was Bubba from the alley last night. It was beginning to come into focus. Bubba probably worked for Uncle Lou. Was he sent after me because I was investigating the case, or just because I was a man getting too close to his precious niece?

I looked at my watch. It was 4:45, time to find out. I wanted to confront Ramsey before Kristin got there. I made my way up to the office. The outer door was unlocked, and I entered the office. The outer office was unoccupied. The secretary, if they had one, had obviously left. One large office was empty. I got close enough to make out Clark Tapper's law school diploma. Wrong office. I went over to the other office in the suite. The door was closed. I swiftly opened it and stepped inside. There, seated behind the desk, was Lewis Ramsey. Good ol' Uncle Lou.

"What is this? Who are you? Why are you barging in here?" He was stabbing at something on his desk. So he didn't know me by sight. Maybe he didn't know me at all.

"My name is Johnny Diaper. I'm an independent insurance..."

I didn't get it out when he snapped, "The great Johnny Diaper. I finally meet you. Yeah, I know who you are. You've caused me a lot of pain on cases before."

He suddenly motioned with his head toward me. For a second, I didn't know why but then I realized as Bubba grabbed me again. "Disarm him, Thomas. Then sit him down."

Bubba's rough hand felt me over and discovered the 38 under my jacket. With one hand, he pushed me into a waiting chair. He dropped the gun on Ramsey's desk. Ramsey picked it up and pointed it at me. "You can go now, Thomas. I think I can handle Mr. Diaper myself now."

Bubba made his way out of the room. "So, Mr. Diaper. What do I owe the pleasure of this visit? What are you investigating?"

"So you don't know?" I asked.

"No, I don't, but I'm sure you're going to tell me."

"I thought you might know since you sent Bubba there to rough me up the other night."

"What interest do you have with my niece?" he said, any trace of humor now gone from his face.

"My intentions are purely honorable," I stated.

"I somehow doubt that. Get to the point."

"I'm working for Security Liability and Trust. They represented the bus line."

"I see. So you thought you could seduce my daughter for evidence to use against her."

"That's not the case at all. Though I suspect now that she doesn't know anything about this suit."

"Your suspicions are correct, for all the good it will do you. She doesn't."

"She's going to have to find out eventually."

"Yes, and I'll tell her soon. She'll be upset, but I'll tell her it's for her own good. I'll also tell her that she needs to go along or it will go very badly for me. She's very devoted. She will go for it when I tell her that if the truth came out now, I'd be disbarred."

"Why?"

"Because I wanted to provide for her future. Not that she's ever asked for anything. Far from it. Do you know what she asked me for?"

"No."

"She was involved in that bus wreck. She decided that maybe she should have a car. All she wanted was me to cosign the loan. But she deserves more for what she's gone through, what she is continuing to go through. I can't fix the soggy bottom, but I can make her more comfortable financially."

"But, that's blown now. I'll testify to all this."

"You aren't going to be in a position to testify about anything," he pointed the gun squarely at my forehead.

"I've already given a preliminary report to Ray Hutchens at Security."

"Inadmissible. Hearsay. I'll get it excluded even before the trial starts."

"But murder over this?"

"I love my niece more than you could ever know."

I stared him down. This was a desperate man in a desperate situation, and he was holding my gun on me. That and Bubba was probably waiting in the outer office. I was biding my time trying to come up with an idea when the door opened again.

"Johnny, What are you doing here?" She then looked at the gun in Ramsey's hand. "Uncle Lou? What's going on?"

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I was beginning to sweat. Partly because my gun was being held on me, partly because of the threat that I wouldn't live long, and partly because the girl of my dreams was standing there gaping at the whole scene. What I did know was I was uncertain how this was going to turn out. We'll find out in the next episode. Join me then. For now,

Yours truly, Johnny Diaper.

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Yours Truly, Johnny Diaper.

I was sweating. I'd walked into a bad situation, and now my adversary was holding my gun at me and making crazy talk about killing me. And Kristin was there, lovely as ever. She had a short white dress on as if she'd come from playing tennis.

"Johnny," Kristin said again. "What happened to your face."

I raised my fingers to my face. It was still tender and must have looked worse. Jill at Ace Medical had made a similar comment.

"Your uncle sent his galoot to deliver a message that I should stay away from you. It came with some physical punctuation."

"Uncle Lou?" she turned to him and noticed the gun. "What is this?"

"Don't listen to a word he says," Ramsey began. "He's not who he claims he is. Everything he's told you is a lie." Kristin turned back to me with concern. "He's here to ruin your future."

"Everything I told you was the truth," I countered. "I did make an omission. I am an investigator, but the case I'm investigating is a lawsuit. But then I met you, and it jeopardized my professional handling of the case because I was falling for you."

"What case?"

"Kristin Johnson versus the Metropolitan Transit Line. Ten million dollars for injuries sustained during a bus accident."

"What lawsuit?" Kristin said, bewildered. "I wasn't injured in the bus accident."

"Do you want to tell her? Or should I?" I said to Ramsey.

"Uncle Lou?" Kristin inquired.

"Kris, dear. I am just trying to assure your future."

"But how could you?"

"It's easy. You know that specialist you saw a few weeks back. He had no problem providing the medical documentation needed. Normally, he'd charge a pretty penny for this service, but I send him enough business that he did this one as a courtesy. That and the receipts for me purchasing your diapers is plenty of evidence."

"But you weren't even going to tell me about it?"

"I was, once things were set. I knew you'd not go for it out of the box. But, I figured once things were underway, I would be able to convince you. Understand, at this point it's more than your future at stake, but mine as well. If the truth came out, I'd likely be disbarred."

"Uncle Lou!" she said, confused.

"The only problem is how to deal with the interference of Mr. Diaper here. His breaking into my office this afternoon just allows me to resolve that." He was now waving my gun around and then brought it back to bear on me. Thomas will corroborate my story. It was purely self-defense."

"Listen, Ramsey. You won't get away with it."

"But I will," he said. He now stiffened his arms and sighted straight at my head. As I saw him go for the trigger, my breath hitched. Then Kristin stepped between us. I heard the gun fire. Kristin started to fall, and I stepped forward to ease her to the floor. A red stain was rapidly growing across her chest. I instinctively put my hand over the wound and pressed.

"Call an ambulance," I said.

"Is she dead?" Ramsey asked with a gasp.

"She may well be soon. Call an ambulance."

"Johnny," I heard Kristin's voice say weakly. I turned to her. "I love you."

"Save your strength," I said. Ramsey hadn't moved. He was sitting in his chair crying.

"Everything is ruined," he sobbed. Bubba returned to the room, having heard the gunshot. Ramsey took the gun and turned it on himself.

"Ramsey, NO!" I yelled. But the second shot of the day rang out. "Bubba, call an ambulance." The galoot just stood there stunned. I remembered his name, "Thomas!" he snapped out of it and looked at me. "Call an ambulance." Finally, spurred into action, he reached over and picked up the phone.

It seemed like an eternity, but the ambulance arrived. One paramedic came to me, and the other went to Ramsey. "I'm fine. The girl took the bullet headed my way,"

"This one's gone," the paramedic attending to Ramsey said. He came over, and both started to work on Kristin. A few minutes later, she was in the ambulance and on her way to City Hospital. I wanted to ride with her, but by then, the police had arrived, and they wouldn't let me leave the scene.

*Expense Report. Item 9. Eight Dollars. Parking fee at City Hospital.*

It took two and a half hours to relate the history of events to a series of police officers, each at a higher level. Not to discriminate, Thomas was being grilled by his own set of police in Tapper's office. I thought I may end up meeting the chief of police, but they finally released me.

I drove over to the hospital. I inquired and was told Kristin was in surgery. I decided to wait. I was fortunate that I knew the nurses and even the surgeon. I'd taken a gunshot myself two years earlier and ended up in the same facility. Eventually, the doctor appeared

"She'll be OK, I think. She was shocky when she came in. She's lost a lot of blood. The bullet punctured a branch of the pulmonary artery, but I've got that taken care of. She's still unconscious. She'll have to come out of that in her own time."

I thanked the doctor and sat vigil outside her room. Thomas came and sat with me. "I always liked that girl," he said. He seemed sincere enough. Maybe enough that I'd forgive him for kicking the crap out of me. Eventually, he left. Every time a nurse or doctor went into Kristin's room, I craned my neck trying to get a look at her.

I realized that my diaper was getting soaked. I managed to charm one out of one of the nurses. It was your average hospital issue thing, but it would do for now. I excused myself to the men's room to change and then resumed my vigil. On one of the nurse checks, I slid over to the doorway for a better view. I saw an eye open and heard a voice rasp, "Johnny."

I pushed myself into the room, waiving off the complaint of the nurse, and approached the bed. Kristin tried to speak again. "Just rest. I need to tell you some things. I know I can't hold you to something you said as you were about to pass out from being shot, but I need to say that I love you too. I'm sorry everything went down the way it did."

She didn't try to speak. She didn't even try to turn her head to look at me. I knew my apology was feeble and that rightfully, it could be over between us. Then her hand reached out and took mine. She gave a little squeeze. And I knew everything would be alright.

So, Ray, thus ends my account for the Soggy Bottom Matter. I suspect that once Ms. Johnson is back on her feet, she'll withdraw that lawsuit. Her attorney has already withdrawn himself, so to speak. Respectfully submitted, this 24th day of August. Yours Truly, Johnny Diaper.