

Angel in a Red Porsche

ROTC CPL Rodney Clancy Jones the Second, better known as Jonesy, had a problem. He wanted to go to the ROTC ball with his betrothed of the last five years but seems as his gal was a little laid up and couldn't go.

This was disappointing because all his ROTC buds were banding together as brothers to attend the soiree. Just like in the days of old, they were taking a day off from preparing to lead men into battle for no reason to recreate with the fairer sex. For one night they would shine in their dress blues as bastions of freedom, lights in a world of darkness, sweltering in ignorance, and the hot Alabama night.

However, things went a bit awry when Jonesy went to tell his beloved, Patricia Louise Candy Kasinzkowalski, better known as Lou, that they would be going to the ball on Saturday. When he got to her abode, he was distressed to find that she wasn't willing to go with him.

He drove up in his first generation, 1976 Chevy Luv, a classic vehicle that had been in his family for two generations, to Lou's house, about thirty miles north of Campbell over into Champlain County, Alabama. Lou's family had hit hard times about fifty years before and had never been able to make much of their hundred acre farm, not that her father Maynard or brothers, Zeb and Pete, tried too hard, it seemed to Jonesy.

Lou was the only girl in the household since Praline, Lou's Mama, died when Lou was little. Lou tells the story about how Mama Praline set Lou up on a tomato box when she was just six years old and told her how to roll out biscuits and how she'd been

rolling ever since. Jonesy didn't like it much that Daddy Kasinzkowalski and them boys set around so much while Lou did all the work, but when he had enough money saved and had done two tours in wherever we're making wars these days (I don't know; I can't keep up), he had a mind to take Lou away from all this and let her cook for him.

Anyway, when he walked up the rickety steps of the back porch and knocked on the door, nobody answered. Jonesy thought it was strange because usually Lou was either in the kitchen, outside in the garden weeding the tomatoes, or at her job at the Super Center in Opelika, but he knew her schedule like the back of his hand, and he knew she wasn't at work.

Jonesy couldn't imagine where else Lou could be since it wasn't a church night, so he knocked again and leaned forward to put his ear to the door. As his ear touched the wood, it flew open, and Jonesy, precariously positioned as he was, went barreling forward into his beloved, almost knocking her down.

"Jonesy," said Lou breathlessly and shoving her fiancé away from her.

"Lou," cried Jonesy in return, holding his arms out to her, puzzled by her rejecting tone.

Lou straightened the leather fringes of her stylish halter top and crossed her ample arms. "What in the hell are you doing here? Didn't you get my message?"

"Your message?"

"The one I left on the dang cell phone you never have on."

"You know I don't like to talk on that contraption, Sweetie."

Lou pointed her pudgy finger at him. "You are trapped in the past, you know that?"

Jonesy hung his head. He knew it.

Lou sighed and pulled her man to her ample breast. “Jonesy, I love you, but you don’t know how to communicate. Dr. Phil says that the most important part of a relationship is communication.”

“I know, Sweetie, but...”

“Didn’t I buy those cell phones so we could communicate more?”

“Yes, you did, but I...”

“Didn’t you stand here in this very kitchen and tell me you would try to utilize your cell phone that I bought with my employee discount so that you could communicate with me?”

“Yes, Lou, I’m very sorry.” Jonesy took the opportunity to interrupt his dearest. “But let’s talk about it later. I got some exciting news. We’re going to the ROTC ball this Saturday night.”

Lou didn’t say nothing.

“Aren’t you excited?”

Lou still didn’t say nothing.

“I thought you’d be excited. I mean it’s a ball and all. We ain’t never been before.”

Lou just kind of looked up at Jonesy and suddenly knew he was in trouble. He was figuring how he should have checked his messages on that blamed cell phone.

She stood over him. Once again, he was overwhelmed by her powerful presence. “Would you look at me?”

Jonesy looked. It was only then that he noticed his gal was a little off of her usual standard of beauty. He'd seen her hair up in a scrunchie and that green stuff on her face before, so that didn't bother him, but when he started looking at her crossed arms and her bare legs under those little red tight shorts he loved so much, he wasn't taken aback with the magnificence of her form as he usually was.

All over her arms and legs, tiny pustules encircled in red erupted from her normally smooth alabaster skin. When his eyes traveled the circumference of her womanly form and returned to her face, he saw that her eyes were red-rimmed from crying and her face was puffier than usual.

"My word, what happened? Did you get into some fire ants or something? You look horrible."

For a moment the two stood staring into each other's eyes, until Lou's began to fill with tears, and at last she dropped down on the couch and broke into deep racking sobs.

"Oh, honey," said Jonesy, "I didn't mean it that way. I just saw all those bumps and I..."

Lou let out a strangled yelp and said in her deepest voice, and that gal could go down low, "It's tomatoes."

Jonesy was confused.

"It's not ants. It's tomatoes."

Jonesy was still confused.

Lou pushed herself up, running her hands up and down her arms and legs.

"Infantigo. Infintigo. Impetigo. It's known by many names according to the internets."

Jonesy was really confused. “I sure didn’t know you could ever eat too many tomatoes.”

Lou sneered, struggled to her feet and stomped toward Jonesy, her lower lip protruding in a way that brought fear to Jonesy’s heart. “Finally, we get a bumper crop of something and this happens!” She cried, scratching some of her many bumps with abandon.

“I still don’t understand, Sweetikins.”

“Well, you’re ‘bout as bright as a small appliance bulb, honey muffin.”

Jonesy was a little hurt at his beloved’s tone. Her “honey muffin” didn’t sound at all sincere. She stuck a somewhat bumpy index finger in his face. “Let me slow down and use small words.” She was shaking, and so was Jonesy.

“I ate tomatoes with my eggs two mornings in a row,” she said, and Jonesy could feel her heat. “I ate tomato sandwiches for lunch and Bolognese sauce with fresh tomatoes on penne pasta for supper last night.” Jonesy could feel her tomato-tinged breath. “I ate so many dang tomatoes I got red bumps popping out everywhere.”

“I mean everywhere.” Jonesy knew what she meant. “And if you think I’m going to go to some soiree and let a bunch of GI Joe-Yos make a mockery of me, you got another think coming. I ain’t going nowhere!”

“I’m so sorry, honey,” said Jonesy, putting his arm around her and leading her to the couch. “But I bet those bumps are going to go away before Saturday night. Say you’ll come with me. We can start praying for a miracle right now.”

To prove his sincerity he got down on his knees before her, folded his hands, and squeezed his eyes shut. “Oh, Lord, I beseech...”

“Knock it off, Jonesy. I don’t need praying. I need modern medicine.” She bolted from the couch and grabbed the fake Gucci-like handbag Jonesy bought her at that new department store. He didn’t tell her where he got it of course. She would have felt betrayed being a loyal employee of Wally World.

She took a small white square of paper out of the purse and held it out to Jonesy. “Dr. Makneesh gave me this here subscription last time I ate too many tomatoes. I never filled it because Daddy had me drink Scuppernong wine mixed with castor oil until it healed. An old family remedy. Well, it took two weeks afore those bumps went away, and I ain’t waiting that long again. I want the antibiotic. Family remedies be damned.”

Jonesy was definitely confused.

But he reached out and took the prescription anyway and stuffed it in his back pocket. “Alright, honey. But my mama always told me you can’t eat too much of a good thing.”

“You know I loved your mama, but, no offense, I don’t remember her having no medical degree. Now go on! Cause I swear I ain’t stepping one foot out of this house until my skin is as smooth as a baby’s butt.”

“I guess I better get going then.”

“I guess you better.”

Turning toward the door, his head lowered in dejection, Jonesy realized he hadn’t set eyes on Daddy Kasinzkowalski, Zeb or Pete. He turned back to his beloved. “Where are your daddy and the boys, honey?”

Lou dropped back on the couch. “They left the minute the first pus bump appeared. Gone fishing at the lake house.”

Jonesy nodded and turned away again. Fishing. He couldn't say he blamed them.

* * *

Next thing you know, it was Thursday, and even though Jonesy had diligently done his duty and filled Lou's prescription, he wondered if it would work in time. He sort of thought his Lou might have been better off with scuppernong wine and castor oil—worked on just about anything that ailed you. Truth be told, he didn't hold much with modern medicine, or foreign doctors. Of course, Susie Makneesh had graduated from Campbell High School, but he knew for a fact she went to medical school up North somewhere—Harvard or someplace like that.

In his heart Jonesy knew that the good Lord would provide a miracle if he just believed. But he had to truly believe. Knowing that his prayers would have their fullest effect if he were sequestered somewhere, Jonesy volunteered Thursday night to watch over the Eagle, Campbell University's blessed mascot, the stone version that graced the southern entrance to the beautiful village on the plains.

It seemed fitting that the eagle was Campbell's symbol of victory now as it was during the Confederacy. Of course, it hadn't worked then, but it sure had done a good job with football over the years, and maybe, just maybe, the lordly bird would do something for his sweet Lou's pus bumps as well. Couldn't hurt, anyway.

Ever since some viscous vandals had dared to apprehend the original stone war eagle from its perch, the stalwart men of the ROTC had taken turns standing diligent watch over the honorable replacement fowl to guard it from danger. It had been two months, and some of the men had grown weary of their watch, complaining that nothing

else had happened and that the new eagle was safe, but Jonesy was convinced that the scoundrels would try to purloin the magnificent bird once again.

However, his watchfulness was dimmed by his concern for his fiancée and her uncomfortable condition. He closed his eyes in supplication on her behalf.

At the same time Jonesy was beseeching the deity, Randall Morganton, member of Sigma Kai Alpha, better known as SKA, had set out on a mission. Having imbibed more than a little alcohol in preparation for the job, he was feeling unusually giddy and confident. Randall was new to the fraternity world but had embraced it with abandon. Just the night before he had impressed his brother SKAs with his fortitude and his sister Phi Epsilon Omegas with his aptitude, and longitude, if you know what I mean. Everyone said that Randall was on his way to becoming a Sigma Kai legend.

If he could just swipe that bird one more time.

Randall knew that one of the ROTC dolts would be waiting in the bushes guarding their precious monument, and sure enough, when he drove by in his Porsche, a graduation gift from Mom and Dad, he saw the front end of some redneck's pick-up sticking out from the bushes. He drove on past, about a quarter of a mile, and parked in a red dirt driveway behind a stand of pines. He walked back to where the truck was in sight, slowed and crouched, making his way to the side of the truck.

He hadn't really thought out exactly what he would say, but Randall was known for his quick wit and extemporaneous speeches, so he wasn't much worried. When he snuck to the passenger side window and peeped in, he was surprised to see the good ole boy sitting there with his eyes closed, his hands clasped in prayer. Randall couldn't believe his luck. The windows were rolled down too.

Randall ducked down out of sight, put his hands over his mouth and spoke in a low voice, “What is your request, my son?” He felt the truck move violently with the intensity of its occupant’s reaction.

“Is that you, Lord?”

“Of course.”

“Yes, of course it’s you. Did you hear me calling?”

“Of course.”

“Of course you did. Then you know my affianced Patricia Louise Candy Kasinzkowalski is in deep trouble.”

“Yes, I know this, but what kind of trouble is she in?”

“Don’t you know?”

“Of course I do, but I want to know if you know it.”

“Don’t you know?”

“Of course I do.” Randall was getting annoyed. “I’m omnipotent.”

“Don’t you mean omniscient? Lord?”

“Oh, right.”

“And omnipresent?”

“Yes, that too. Now just answer the question.”

“What question?”

“What is wrong with your girl?”

“Well, she’s got Infpetigo.”

“What?”

“Don’t you know?”

“Humor me.”

“Sort of like hives.”

“Yuck.”

“You can say that again. She’s got little tiny bumps all over...”

“I know. I know. I’ve seen her.”

“Oh, yeah.”

Jonesy sighed with relief. Talking to God, really talking to him, wasn’t that hard. He was like a regular person, sort of. “Well, Lord, the real problem is that if Lou’s, that’s what I call her, Lou, if her bumps don’t clear up by Saturday, she won’t go to the ROTC ball with me.”

Randall waited, crouching by the side of the car and thinking about what to do. It would come to him.

“Do you hear me, Lord?”

It came to him.

He put his hands up to his mouth again. “I’m going to send you a messenger.”

“An angel, Lord?”

“An angel of the Lord to help you out of your trouble, my son. You must wait for him here. He’ll drive by in a red Porsche.”

“A Porsche?”

“A Porsche, my son.”

“I’ll wait, Lord.”

Sneaking away from the truck and then running as fast as he could, Randall went back to his Porsche, fired it up and raced past the old pick-up doing 65. Then he put on

the brakes, causing the car to flip around in a 180, its tires squealing. Randall proceeded to drive prudently up to the pick-up, lowered the passenger side window, grinning from ear to ear.

“Are you the angel of the Lord?”

“Oh, yeah.”

“You gonna help me out with my problem?”

“Oh, yeah.”

“Bless you.”

“But first you got to prove to the Lord that you’re worthy.”

“I do? I thought I just had to pray and believe.”

“Well, you thought wrong, big fella. God wants a little more from his followers these days. He wants to see some action.”

Jonesy shifted uncomfortably in his seat. “Well, what can I do?”

“You really want my help?”

“Yes, sir.”

Randall pointed to the stone eagle perched on the large brick pedestal marking the entrance to the city. “Then take that bird down and put it in my trunk.”

“What?”

“You heard me. The Lord says that abomination should not stand before Him anymore.” Randall banged on his steering wheel for effect.

Jonesy was confused. “But I’m here to stop people from taking it down.”

“But it is an idol. It stands for all the things people put before the Lord. It stands for money. It stands for intellectual pride. It stands for lust. It stands for football.”

“Oh,” said Jonesy, looking dejected. “I see.”

“I’m glad you do, my son. What’s your name? I don’t want to keep calling you my son.”

“I’m Rodney Dangerfield Clancy Jones the Second, sir. But everyone calls me Jonesy. What’s your name?”

Randall hadn’t expected this. “Well, I’m...I’m...Gabriel.”

“Really?”

“Not THE Gabriel. I’m just one of many. Just your ordinary run of the mill Gabriel in a Porsche.”

“A red Porsche,” said Randall, admiring the car. “Did God let you pick the color?”

“Can we just get on with it?”

Reluctantly, Jonesy left the comfort of his pick-up and walked over to the brick pedestal, leaning against it.

Randall waited but Jonesy didn’t move. “What’s the hold up?”

“I’m asking the Lord for strength.”

“Who do you think you are, Samson or something? Just get the bird.”

“All right,” said Jonesy, somewhat indignantly. “I thought an angel of the Lord would be a little nicer.”

“You want to see an Angel of Wrath, you just keep it up.”

Jonesy decided the prudent thing would be to get the eagle down as quickly as possible, but reaching up to grab the base of the statue, Jonesy realized it was a little too high for him to get a good grip. “I’m going to need a ladder.”

Randall hopped up and opened the back seat of the car. “I happen to have one right here.” He had come prepared to do the work himself after all.

Jonesy was impressed. “Well, alright. You are an angel, aren’t you?”

“Some women, I mean, people, have said so.” Randall took the step ladder out of the back seat and sauntered over to the pedestal, leaning the ladder up against the brick wall. “Here you go.”

“Why, thank you, Gabriel,” said Jonesy.

“Don’t mention it.”

Jonesy climbed the ladder and began to tug on the stone eagle, but the bird stood fast. “It must be clamped on there or something.”

“You want a sledgehammer. I got one.”

“No.” Jonesy was aghast. “We don’t want to damage it.”

“You’re right. They’ll want it intact.”

“They?”

Randall winced. “Yes. They. You know. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

“Oh, yeah, right.”

They definitely needed to change the subject. “So how are you going to get it off?”

Jonesy thought and thought. All his plans were at stake here. “Maybe I could use that sledge hammer.”

“I thought you said that would break it?”

“Well, maybe I can just knock it loose.”

Randall nodded and went to the trunk to get the sledge hammer. While his head was in the trunk, he heard a car pull up behind him and a groan erupted from Jonesy. He turned around to see one of Campbell's finest staring at him from the squad car.

"What the hell are you doing, boy?" asked the officer kindly.

"Me?" said Randall, hoping he wouldn't be recognized, "I'm not doing nothing. I'm with him." He pointed at Jonesy, still perched next to the eagle, blinking in the bright lights.

The policeman looked ahead. "Jonesy, is that you? What in the hell are you doing, boy?"

Jonesy came down the ladder and rubbed his hands on his pants, holding out his hand in greeting. "Oh, hi there. If it ain't Bob Simpson." The two men shook hands heartily. Randall stood in awe. "Bob, How in the hell are you?"

"I'm fine, Jonesy. How in the hell are you?"

"I'm fine."

The two men finally dropped hands but still stood chuckling and grinning at each other. Randall cleared his throat, and Jonesy came to life. "This here's Bob Simpson, a friend of mine from high school ROTC. Bob, this here is Gabriel. He's my ang...my assistant here tonight."

Bob smiled and chuckled. "What kind of assistant?"

Jonesy looked at Bob and then at Randall who looked at Bob and then Jonesy.

"Well," said Jonesy and stopped.

"Yeah?" asked Bob.

"Gabriel here is helping me remove the eagle for safe keeping."

“Safe keeping?” asked Bob.

“Safe keeping,” said Jonesy.

“And who authorized you to remove said war eagle?” inquired Bob, still smiling.

Jonesy rubbed his sweaty hands down his pants and swallowed hard. “My colonel.”

“Your colonel?”

“My colonel.”

Bob looked over at Randall and then at Jonesy. Then he put his hand on the butt of his gun. “I’m sorry Jonesy, but your colonel doesn’t have the authority to remove the city of Campbell’s property for safekeeping or any other reason.”

“He does if he’s the chief of police,” said Randall, taking the sledge hammer from the trunk and leaning it gently against the side of the car.

Jonesy and Bob turned toward Randall and said, “What?”

“The chief of police is the colonel of Jonesy’s ROTC unit. Didn’t you know that, Bob?”

Randall moved closer to Bob and Jonesy. “You should make more of an effort to get to know the chief. He’s really involved in the community. A great guy. He’s real good friends with my father, Stanley Morganton.”

Jonesy whispered, “I thought God was your father.”

“You’re Stanley Morganton’s son?”

Randall smiled. “That’s right.”

“The one who gives all that money to the football program every year?”

“Yep.”

“The one who owns half the state of Alabama?”

“But that’s not saying much, is it?”

“I’ll say it is. Stanley Morganton. Well, I’ll be. So he’s friends with the chief huh?”

“That’s right.”

Bob was looking a little nervous now—just as Randall suspected he would. “And the chief says this is okay?” Bob was backing towards his car.

“Uh huh.”

“Well, I guess I’ll let you boys get on with it then.”

Next thing you know, the cop had driven off, Jonesy was off to tell Candy about the miracle to come and how to achieve it, having been convinced that Randall Morganton was merely an earthly identity. And Randall, once again victorious, drove his little red Porsche away, a large stone bird in the passenger seat. He had given his acolyte the secret to his fiancée’s healing. He almost, for once, felt virtuous.

It wasn’t bad being an angel.

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Jonesy’s buddies hadn’t been too happy when he told them the eagle was gone, but they calmed down a little when he mentioned Stanley Morganton and how he knew the colonel and all. They hadn’t known about that either. He didn’t tell them that Randall Morganton was really an angel. After watching and listening to his buddies for a while, he realized they didn’t have the same kind of faith in the other worldly as he did. He didn’t think they even believed in angels. But Jonesy sure did.

He had seen a bona fide miracle with his own eyes.

That Saturday, CPL Rodney Dangerfield Clancy Jones the Second escorted Miss Patricia Louise Candy Kasinzkowski, to the ROTC ball. He was grand in his dress blues, his saber by his side. She was gorgeous in her low-cut silky frock of hot pink, her décolletage as smooth as a baby's butt.

She insisted it was the antibiotic prescribed by Dr. Makneesh, no miracle, she said. But deep in Jonesy's heart, he knew the cure had been heaven sent by the Angel in the Red Porsche. Jonesy had only needed to kiss her three times, just three times, to bring down the rain from heaven and dispel the demon Infintigo, but it hadn't been that easy.

Finally, when he had kissed her three times, she turned over and said, "You kiss my ass again, don't count on having any kids."

"Don't worry, honey" he said. "Three times is the charm," he said smiling. "An angel told me so."