

It's a dangerous world we live in.

Supposedly the powers that be are taking care of the larger issues. You know, watching out for UFO's and making sure we can all get our cable TV in nice and clear.

But what about on a human scale? Humans are delicate biological organisms. We are easily damaged. Our cities, parks, streets--even our own sidewalks--hold for us numerous untold dangers. Who's looking out for us?

Ouch has found four brave humans willing to share with us their tales of random disaster, who all in their own way were just living their lives when maybe they should have been expecting the unexpected.

### **Manhole Mishap**

Alex Klein was strolling with her boyfriend and sister in downtown Philly when random disaster hit. The three of them were walking on the sidewalk in front of Independence Hall on their way to see the movie Gosford Park. Suddenly, she was falling. Alex remembers, " I stepped on a manhole cover that hadn't been put back correctly (it looked fine from afar). When I stepped on it, the manhole cover pivoted and my right leg fell in, leaving me dangling above the sewers. My left leg slammed into the sidewalk while the rest of my body was wedged in the manhole." Since the incident took place in front of a National Landmark, two park rangers and a policewoman were witness to the accident and rushed over to help. The policewoman pulled Alexandra out of the treacherous manhole jaws of death.

Alex was rushed to a hospital where she says, "The nurse who admitted me asked how I hurt myself. I told her I fell in a manhole. The nurse said, 'Don't you hate it when that happens?' Recently one of my co-workers heard of another person falling in a manhole in Georgia. She had the exact incident happen to her! It's some kind of crazy epidemic."

While in the emergency room, the staff was making fun of her, asking her things like "Were you chasing the roadrunner?" Wyle E. Coyote has most likely sustained injuries similar to those of Alex's on more than one occasion.

All said and done, Alex managed to badly bruise her right leg on the manhole cover, and her left leg formed a painful calcium deposit on her knee from direct impact with the

sidewalk. A variety of treatments were used on her knee (cortisone shots, mild electric currents) but nothing took away the endless ache. Which is why last week Alex finally went under the knife and surgeons removed some of the injured patella tendon (the tendon that connects the kneecap to the shinbone) and the calcium deposit that had been irritating the tendon.

"My quality of life has definitely been affected by this. I can't run or jump or sit without it hurting."

### **The Pinky of Dorian Grey**

Accountants, engineers, lawyers--old friends of Chris McCartin's--collect in Lister Park in Lynnbrook, NY for an annual Thanksgiving morning football game. The full contact, tackle game is appropriately dubbed "The Turkey Bowl".

For years Chris McCartin played in the annual game. As tackle football is an aggressive display of sorts, he's experienced some injuries over the years. Five years ago he found himself walking with crutches because of an ankle injury for a month after the game. Two years ago Chris suffered a broken nose during "The Turkey Bowl". These seem common discomforts, almost to be expected if a person participates in a football game where there are no helmets or shin guards in sight.

The last game he played went something like this..

"I was playing defense and had just blown my coverage. I grabbed my friend's jersey so hard that my pinky finger gave out before the jersey did." Chris ruptured the tendon for the pinky finger on his left hand. The tendon, which extends from the elbow to the hand like a big rubber band snapped, causing the pinky to recoil into his palm. Despite this disturbing display, Chris went on to play and says he "...tagged a guy right after it happened".

Not one to easily give into pain, he waited about a week to see a doctor about his finger. It was then the damage was discovered. Chris underwent a four hour long surgery to his hand and arm, basically re-attaching the tendon that had snapped from his finger. This operation was followed by six weeks of rehab in hopes of regaining the use of his left pinky.

Chris considers the operation a success because the pinky can now aid in gripping onto a 20 oz. Imperial Pint glass, just like before the last "Turkey Bowl".

"My finger is like the Dorian Gray pinky. It's got no wrinkles in it because it doesn't really bend anymore. I had originally hoped the scar on the finger would impress the ladies. But the sad thing is, nobody wants to hear about your pinky."

### **Slingshot Cyber Aluminum Fingertip Hand**

Alix Lambert had just finished schlepping a taxidermied, tattooed pig into the basement of the building she'd just moved into. The way to the basement was through heavy metal doors that lie flat on the sidewalk. You see these doors all over the New York City area.

With the pig stored, Alix emerged from the basement to the sidewalk. Suddenly, one of the metal doors gave way to gravity with a loud crash. She looked down at the door and saw the tip of her finger poking up from between the two flat metal doors. Then she looked at her own hand and noticed the tip of her index finger was now an exposed broken bone.

"I think I need to go to the hospital," she said, picked up the tip of her finger from the sidewalk and handed it to the guy who was helping her move. It was at this point that the guy started freaking out, telling her to go get something to wrap around her bleeding finger. She then also freaked out and ran upstairs to her new apartment, grabbed some boxer shorts and wrapped up her hand. She went back downstairs and the guy handed her back her fingertip.

In the chaos they managed to procure a police escort and sped off to Brooklyn Hospital. The emergency room doctor told Alix they couldn't save her finger and that they'd have to amputate to the second knuckle. An ambulance driver walking by heard the doctor say this, took Alix aside and told her that she should go to Bellview Hospital in Manhattan since they had a special hand center. This ambulance angel, "Edward", put Alix in his ambulance, gave her oxygen and morphine and sped from Brooklyn Hospital to Manhattan's Bellview Hospital.

There she sat in the waiting room for 8 hours, high on whatever they gave her for the pain, with the tip of her finger in a plastic cup labeled BIOHAZARDOUS WASTE. That

night she slept at the hospital, awaiting an operation scheduled for the next day.

Surgeons cut open the palm of her hand, and sewed her finger to the palm so the skin would have a chance to adhere to the wound. Then the whole mess was put into a cast for 3 weeks. The cast came off and the newly grown skin that had gone from palm to finger was cut free. Her hand had to be straightened and the skin stretched out from being curled for 3 weeks in a cast. An aluminum fingernail was inserted into the nail bed in hopes a new fingernail would grow there. For about 6 months Alix was walking around with what she says looked like a "slingshot cyber aluminum fingertip hand".

Incredibly, the fingernail grew back as did the remainder of the skin at the tip of her finger. At first there was no sensation to the new fingertip, but Lambert says it's slowly coming back. Her finger is now only about a quarter of an inch shorter than it was to begin with. She has full use of her hand and finger.

#### **Janitor Break**

Lynn Frankel played a weekly indoor soccer game. She was a member of a co-ed team in Baltimore (home of the Baltimore Blast). Lynn reports, "I was playing defense when I collided with a really big man- at least two times my weight." She went flying into the air and landed on her arm. "I heard it snap."

The game stopped and she was helped up. An ambulance took her to the nearby Johns Hopkins Hospital emergency room. There was only one orthopedic surgeon on call that night. For some reason, the evening of Lynn's disaster there had also been a lot of car accidents, hence the long wait that followed.

She had to wait an hour and a half (despite the fact that the broken bone was protruding under the skin of her arm) for a diagnosis. When she was finally taken in to have her arm X-rayed, the technician lady said that she had what's called a "janitor break" -- even a janitor walking by looking at her arm would know it was broken. The picture taken and the break confirmed, Lynn was finally given some painkillers.

Because of the glut of other people's random disasters, Lynn and her husband waited for 10 hours in the hospital before her bone could be set and a cast put on her arm.

The re-set arm was in a cast for a week. Then a surgery repaired the distal radial fracture by placing a metal plate and screws in her arm to support it.

The doc said Lynn will now always set off metal detectors in airports and that she'll have to get a special medical I.D. card to get through security.

The orthopedic doctor said he'd never seen a break like this in a young person (Lynn is 34), usually just elderly people had their bones shatter.

" The most amazing thing about that night was that as I left the indoor soccer arena to go to the hospital, everyone applauded. At least I can say I hurt myself playing soccer."

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Homo sapiens are clumsy, reckless and just prone to bad luck. Aside from dressing in bubble wrap ensembles and never leaving the house, really, what can you do? It seems like there are a few lessons to be learned from the Alex, Chris, Alix and Lynn stories.

- 1.) Have some kind of reading material with you at all times. You never know when you could be sitting in some emergency room for 810 hours waiting for pain medication or a doctor to see you.
- 2.) Always wear clean underwear. Do we need to explain why?!
- 3.) When you least expect it, expect it.

Good luck!