

First Aid



“Bob? **Bob!** C’mon, snap out of it!” The voice was insistent – like that of an aggressive adobe hat salesman – but Bob was just a milligram or two this side of consciousness and couldn’t quite generate the motivation to respond. He’d rather that whoever it was would just go away so he could go back to sleep. Or to whatever warm and fuzzy place he’d been. But before he could turn his mental lights back off, he suddenly got a whiff of something awful. Simultaneously, he felt some *thing* – a badger? – pressing against his nose. Involuntarily, he snuffled. “That’s right, just breathe these smelling salts,” the same voice said. *Why?* thought Bob. Since it smelled so appalling, logic dictated that he *not* breathe it. So he held his breath. “Oh my dog, he’s stopped breathing!” exclaimed another voice, a female. He felt a hand – the badger’s? – underneath his head, trying to lift it up. “*Bob!* Can you hear me?!” That strident female again. Well, *sure*, he could hear her. But did he want to do anything about it? No, he sure did ... Before he could finish his thought, he felt his left arm being pulled, hard, as if some huge brute of a badger intended to yank it clean out of his shoulder socket. “Hang in there, Bob.” It was Mr. Adobe Hat again. “We’ll have you breathing again in no time!” This was ridiculous! thought Bob. Why, he could breathe any time he wanted. And now that the smelly badger seemed to have vacated his nasal area, he did chance a quick inhalation. “Look, he’s *breathing* again!” It was that shrieking female again. “Yes, but continue to apply tractive pressure to the brachialis lefticus. He could suffer an inhalationary relapse at any time.” Dear dog, that was *Brenda’s* voice! But how could *she* be here?! When he saw her fall into that Guatemalan volcano, he figured her goose was cooked. (In fact, it was. Brad, a brant that Brenda always carried with her, vanished without a trace into the bubbly cauldron. But Brenda managed to cling to an outcropping under the volcano’s lip and eventually pull herself out – long after Bob had given her up for dead and left.) He hated to think that a spook was tended to him! Better to return to that land of Unconsciousness and let things he didn’t understand sort themselves out. “We’re *losing* him!” screeched the Loud Lady again. She pulled even harder on his arm. And just before Bob’s lights switched off, he felt something in his left shoulder pop loose. Oops!