

Frankie and Johnny
(Prologue)

Some couples get together via prearranged marriage. An old tradition that often worked out better than expected. Both parents were aware of status levels and were always looking out for the best match for their son or daughter.

A matchmaker's job is to connect single individuals for romantic relationships or marriage. Historically and today, they operate as human liaisons who use deep psychological insight, network databases, and personal interviews to assess compatibility, coordinate introductions, and provide guidance to help clients find lasting partnerships.

Matchmaking dates back over 2,000 years to ancient China. The earliest institutionalized matchmakers emerged during the late Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 BC), where a formal government position was established to register marriages and ensure unions aligned families of equal stature.

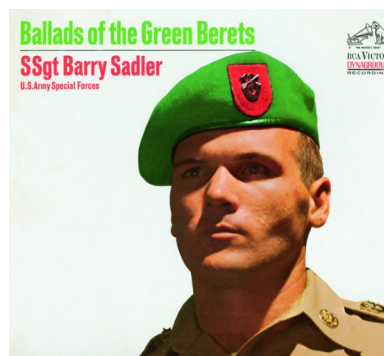
Others met up and married their high school sweethearts. More often than not, these marriages ended up in divorce. The couple was too immature, too young, too selfish, and had high expectations that their partner could not meet.

Today, all that is handled by Internet dating sites.

Frankie and Johnny's match occurred in an unexpected way. Frankie had had too many disappointing relationships. She had practically given up. Johnny had similar experiences. He vowed to remain single his entire life. His sister was constantly trying to hook him up with her friends. She kept pestering him until he gave in one evening. She had arraigned a blind date. She didn't know much about the prospective date, other than her friend had said she was nice. Expecting a boring and awkward evening where they pretended to be interested in what the other person was saying, he agreed to go. In past trials, one girl spent most of the time looking at her phone under the table. Another spent the entire time complaining about her ex-boyfriend.

Driving to the planned rendezvous location it started to rain. Great, that matched his mood anyway. On the way there, he passed a car with the hood up with steam rising. A woman was looking inside drenched in wet rain. He pulled over and approached. What's wrong? If I knew what's wrong I wouldn't be standing her all wet. Not the greeting he had expected, but he continued. Let me take a look, if you don't mind. Be my guest. Steam had been coming from the radiator. That was definitely a clue. He looked down and wiggled the radiator hose. It was definitely loose. Retrieving a screwdriver from his car, he tightened it. Then he took some anti-freeze that he always carried in his trunk and filled the radiator being careful not to burn his hand on the cap. Try it now. She cranked the starter, and the car came back alive. Peering out the window she said, sorry for my abrupt response. I am having a bad day. I was supposed to meet a blind date, but I am sure he has already left. What a coincidence. I was on my way to one also, maybe my plans are up too. She offered to pay him for his help, but he begged off. When he got to the restaurant, he made his way to a table. He would wait a short while just in case. Ten minutes later, the woman whom he had helped walked down the center of the restaurant and sat down at his table. No way! Yes way! I suspected that we would meet again and I wanted to surprise you. You certainly accomplished that. No awkward silence this time. They both talked like they had know each other for years.

That was how I met Frankie. Like many young men, I had done a tour in Afghanistan. I had joined the Army and aspired to the very top. Not many men win the "Green Beret". As had been touted in the song by Barry Sadler. Only 3% make it through the training to reach that level. I had left all that behind. I had done my share of killing and wanted no more of it.



Frankie, who's given name was Francine, had tried teaching. But the sternness that had been present in the 50's and 60's was replaced with a lack of discipline leaving classrooms run by unruly children with no desire to learn. The dedication she had started out with got lost in the bureaucracy imposed on the teachers stripping them of any real authority. Her dear uncle had passed away and left her with an inherited farm in the rural country side near the Mexican border. Not far from the Imperial Valley, the climate and soil was ideal for growing avocados. In California agriculture, these green tasty "fruits" were called "Green Gold". Avocados went for \$1 each. Yes, I did not make a mistake.

Avocados are botanically classified as fruits (specifically, large, single-seeded berries) because they develop from the ovary of a flower and contain a central pit. However, because of their savory flavor and common use in culinary dishes, they are often used as vegetables and categorized as such by the USDA. Whatever, they are highly prized for making everyone's favorite dip, guacamole.

Frankie and Johnny saw a lot of each other in the following days after their blind date. Their relationship blossomed into a real romance. So much so that Johnny wanted to help Frankie run her farm. He had bounced around doing different jobs, mostly being a mechanic. In reality, he was a jack of all trades. So taking up farming was just another thing he needed to master.

There was only one thing wrong with the farm. It was too close to the Mexican border. Dangerous events were about to spill over that affected them both.

Frankie and Johnny *(Chapter 1)*

Frankie told Johnny that her uncle's farm had been passed down from generation to generation. When she was a little girl, she used to come out there in the summers. She loved doing the chores associated with a farm. They had chickens, goats, pigs, and a couple cows. All that was gone now.

Only the avocado fields were left. She had kept one of the farm hands on that had worked for her uncle for decades. His name was Jose. Johnny quickly had become friends with him. He treated Jose like the experienced hand he was. Jose, at first thought Johnny would boss him around, being that he was the boyfriend of the misses. It was not like that at all. Johnny deferred to him knowing he himself had a lot to learn. One of their first tasks was getting rid of some tree rot that had invaded a section of the acreage. They needed to burn down those trees and remove the stumps to plant new ones.

Frankie had asked both of them to venture into the small village nearby to buy some fresh vegetables. Jose had bargained with the woman proprietor trying to get the best pricing. Apparently, this was a common thing between them. Satisfied with his purchases, it was time to head back to the farm. As they started to leave, a couple expensive looking trucks pulled into the parking area. Several unsavory Mexican looking dudes got out. Jose told Johnny, we need to leave pronto. One of the guys was arguing with the woman. She was objecting to something and then he slapped her. Johnny started to get out of the truck, but Jose grabbed his arm and shook his head. As they started to drive away, they witnessed the guy, who was clearly in charge, suddenly pull out a gun and shoot her.

What is going on Jose? That was cartel business. Something that we need to stay out of. As they headed back toward the farm, the two trucks that had stopped at the market came barreling down the road behind them. Johnny knew enough that this was not going to end well. He always carried his service 45 with him. It gave him a measure of comfort. The echoes of war were still alive in his head. It had only been six months. Jose kept saying, drive faster. Johnny had already set up a battle plan. Jose, are there any turn offs on this road? Yes, about another ¼ mile is a dirt road only farmers use. When they got there, Johnny turned into it hoping that the advancing pursuit would drive right by. No such luck. OK, plan B. He turned his truck into the soft dirt and told Jose to stay in the truck. He got out and virtually disappeared behind some trees. At first, Jose thought Johnny was chicken. Leaving him vulnerable alone in the truck. The cartel guys pulled up and got out. They waved Jose out of the truck. I guess you saw what went down

back there at the market. No, I didn't see anything. They had Jose down on his knees and it looked like they were going to execute him right there on the spot. Do you know who I am? Not really. This seemed to piss him off. I am "El Mencho's son, Julio. Jose really did know who he was and he thought this was his end.

Author's note:

Nemesio Rubén Oseguera Cervantes (alias "El Mencho") was the founder of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. He was killed in a raid in 2026. At least he won't hunt me down for using his name in my story.

Red splotches suddenly appeared on two of the guy's chests. When the other two looked up into the trees, both of their heads exploded in a fine red mist. A 45 caliber bullet will do that. Johnny walked out of the trees asking if Jose was all right. Johnny took two shovels out of his truck bed and tossed one to Jose. I need you to help with this, are you in? I'm in. After burying all four, they set the trucks on fire. It will just look like some farmers were burning some rotten trees. Don't say anything to Frankie when we get back. My lips are sealed.

Johnny thought this would be the end of their troubles. He was wrong. About a week later, a finely dressed man, and what looked like his body guard, showed up in their fields. Johnny said, this is private property, please leave. Oh! Sorry I didn't know. Actually, I am a business man and I am a world wide exporter of avocados. We already have our own distributor. It wouldn't hurt to hear my offer would it? I guess not, but I am just a hired hand. You would have to talk to the owner. Johnny was aware that it was not a coincidence that this man showed up so soon after their encounter with the cartel hoodlums. He needed to find out the real reason this guy was here.

Frankie, having no knowledge of what transpired before, welcomed Edwardo and offered him food and drink. I never turn down a sip of tequila. You don't look like a farmer. This was directed at Johnny. I agree. This is all new to me. I have other interests that keep me here. He said this as he glanced at Frankie. I understand. Frankie reiterated the fact that they already had a long time distribution network and didn't want to change. Well, I thank

you for your time. If you change your mind, here is my number. He got up and left. Johnny's 6th sense kicked in. Where is Jose? He should be at his bunkhouse. Call him. We are both in danger and so is he. The call went unanswered. Pack a suitcase. What is wrong? I will explain everything to you when you are safe. For now, meet me at the restaurant we frequent. I will go check on Jose. Frankie dropped Johnny off at Jose's place then drove away.

As he walked up Jose's gravel driveway, a man with blood splattered on his shirt walked out of the front door. He started to pull a gun. Johnny shot him before his gun was even raised. He cautiously entered Jose's door and called out to him. He found him in the bathtub. It was obvious he had been tortured then murdered. As he retreated out the door, two fancy trucks came down the drive. Inside was the man, Edwardo, whom he had just talked to. Without a ride, Johnny took off running. He knew that the odds were not in his favor and there was no shame in retreating. Edwardo's bodyguard took off running after him. Johnny was still in tip top shape. The Green Beret training never left him. It was easy for him to out distance Raul. When he was a sufficient distance away from the rest of the pursuers, he waited for Raul. As he came around a block wall Johnny jumped him. Raul was no slouch in arm to arm combat. But Johnny quickly disarmed him. The fight wasn't like in the movies. Ten minutes of back and forth fighting. A punch to the mid section and a spinning round kick sent Raul to the ground long enough for Johnny to start running again. When the rest of the group arrived, Raul had just picked himself up off of the ground. Edwardo saw Johnny running down the hill. He is fast, no one was going to catch him. He may be fast, but he can't outrun a bullet. He took aim with his rifle and heard Johnny cry out. Raul started to go after him. What are you doing? He already kicked your ass. Besides, I hit him. He will probably be dead within the hour. Johnny was indeed hit. Not a fatal blow though, but a substantial wound. As he slid down the rest of the hill, he spotted Frankie waiting in the truck. I thought I told you to meet me at the restaurant. Well, it was a good thing I didn't listen. It looks like you need me now. Let me see. You are bleeding. It is just a superficial wound. Not from what I see, as Johnny passed out.

Frankie had some safe places she knew about herself. Johnny woke up three days later with a patched up side wound. How long have I been out? Three days. You had an infection and high fever. What is our next move. I imagine that Edwardo has taken over the farm. I think we should head north and start a life somewhere else. That farm has been in my family's possession for decades. I really don't want to see this villain take it over. OK, if that is the way you feel. I need some help. Who do you know? I know of one of my buddies from the war. We have saved each other's life more times than I can count. He also has a unique ability. He can shoot someone from a mile away.

Frankie and Johnny
(Chapter 2)

Who are you going to call? My buddy Tex. If the cartel thinks they can beat two Green Berets they are in for a bloody awakening.

Tex arrive two days later. Where were you? I was just finishing up a business venture in El Salvador. He had hired out as a mercenary. It was hard to transfer his skill over to civilian life.

What is the skinny? Why do you need me? Johnny gave him a rundown on what had happened in the past two weeks. So you want to reacquire your fiancée's farm. Fiancée for now, but after wife after this. Frankie spoke up. Is this your way of proposing? Well, I was heading in that direction. Save it. I need a real proposal, not some flippant comment on the spur of the moment. Tex spoke up. I can see why you are hooked. Not many woman would capture your favor and this one is full of fire. Tell me about it.

Johnny and Tex formed up a battle plan. I think I should go back to the farm alone. Frankie objected. This is my farm and I am the one who is risking all our lives. I knew better than to argue with her when she sets her mind to it. Well, at least let me teach you some defensive moves and how to shoot. It wasn't much, but learning some basics can be useful in some situations. Out back behind the building, Johnny had set up some bottles on a log not too distant. OK, aim the barrel straight at the target, hold your breath, and gently squeeze the trigger. Frankie took aim and shattered all the bottles without

missing. Are you messing with me? My uncle taught me to shoot during times we went squirrel hunting. OK, no need for further training.

Before we barge down there, we need to do some recon. Let me do that. It still looks like you could use some recovery rest. A day later, Tex returned. I did see a fancy dressed man there at the farm. That would be Edwardo. So he really did take over the farm. He had mentioned that he used to be a farmer. I guess he likes that life. I only saw a body guard and two sentries. It should be easy to gain entrance.

Frankie and Johnny
(Chapter 3)

When they arrived, Edwardo came out of the door of Frankie's home. You sure have some balls coming back here. Balls yes, brains, not so sure. What do you want? Frankie wants her farm back. I see. And how do you intend to accomplish that? That remains to be seen. Edwardo was sure there was something else going on here. He had already seen what Johnny was capable of. Maybe he can work this to his favor. Come inside and lets talk. It is good that you came. I informed "El Jefe" that I knew who had killed his son. He is personally coming here to talk to me about that. No better one to tell him about that than you. I think there is a way you can come out of this OK. If you kill "El Jefe", I am next in line to take over. A short while later a big caravan arrived. It was all to clear who "El Jefe" was as he stepped out of his vehicle. Edwardo said, I am sending out the guy who killed your son. After I kill "El Jefe", will everything be OK. That depends on if they start shooting or not. Johnny stepped out of the front door and stood on the porch. His 45 was behind him tucked into his waste band. So it is you who killed my son. Your son was a coward hiding behind unearned bravado. He had slapped a woman because she wouldn't give him free groceries. Then he shot her in cold blood. Before I killed him, he begged me for mercy. I gave him the same mercy he gave that woman. You are better off without him. He said this as he pointed his finger in his direction. Tex had positioned himself a short distance from the gathering. Short by his standards. He can hit a target from a mile away. This is like shooting fish in a barrel. "El Jefe" started to

raise his hand to signal Johnny's death when a bullet fired from 400 yards away knocked him ten feet back, his body ricocheting off of the truck's fender. A .308 Winchester cartridge with do that. Then all hell broke loose. Johnny retreated back inside the house firing with deadly accuracy. Edwardo and Frankie added more fire power. Johnny said, I work better in the open. He said this as he dove through the side window. Tex was doing his thing. Taking out as many of the cartel soldiers that stuck their heads up. Johnny moved like a lightning fast ghost, mowing down enemies before they knew what hit them. It wasn't long before the battle was over. When he returned to the house, Raul had Frankie with his arm around her throat and a gun pointed at her head. Edwardo told Raul to let her go. I have a beef with Johnny, not you. Frankie remembered the short training Johnny had given her. She stopped her boot hard on Raul's foot and simultaneously elbowed him in the gut. That diversion was enough for Johnny to put a bullet right through his left eye. Edwardo said, I will miss him. He was a competent body guard right up until he refused to obey my order.

What now Edwardo? You won your farm back. That would be Frankie's farm. Whatever. I still have a business proposition for you. I was serious when I told you I can distribute your avocado crop world wide. I always wanted to be a framer. It's in my roots. If you let me partner up with you, I will assure you there will be no interference from below the border. That sounds like a good move. What do you say boss? Frankie nodded her acceptance.

Life returned to normal. Too bad about Jose. Frankie said she would miss him.

There was only one thing left to do. A couple weeks later, Johnny called Frankie outside. I need to show you our new avocado crop. I've seen many avocado crops. What's so special about this one? This new fruit has some unique qualities. She followed him down one of the furrows. He picked what looked like a ripe avocado off of a branch. Check out these seeds. When she pried open the skin, the brilliance of a shinny diamond was exposed. When she looked to Johnny for an explanation, none was necessary

as she saw him down on one knee. Before he could utter a word, she said yes, yes, and yes!

The End

Frankie and Johnny
(Epilogue)

This story takes place close to California's southern border near San Diego not far from Imperial Valley. Not sure if there are really any avocado orchards in that area. The Imperial Valley in southeastern California supplies between 50% and 90% of the nation's winter vegetables. Thanks to its warm desert climate and steady water supply from the Colorado River, the valley operates as "America's winter salad bowl," producing the vast majority of US. leafy greens, broccoli, and cauliflower during the colder months.

Southern California is definitely suitable for growing avocados though. Not far from my home in Beaumont on route I15 is an area know as "Avocado Alley". AKA Paradise Valley. The hills are loaded with numerous avocado orchards. The ocean breeze flows up and through those hills to provides an ideal climate for growing. The same breeze flows into Temecula and does the same thing for dozens of wineries. It also explains why I can buy avocados at my local market for 50c each. A bottle of good wine cost \$4. I can survive on red wine and guacamole dip.

You might wonder how can Frankie and Johnny team up with a cartel boss? If you recall, it wasn't Eduardo who killed Jose. It was one of "El Jefe's" minions. Life is not always black and white. Sometimes you have to chose something in the middle if it benefits you.

The End