



N.Y. Post/Tamara Beckwith

AGONY: Frank Stewart and Tanya McCullough-Stewart, parents of tow-truck driver Gregory McCullough (inset), yesterday comfort good Samaritan Junior Suarez as he relives the torment of seeing their burned son.

By LEONARD GREENE

The mother of the tow-truck driver who suffered severe burns in the Midtown steam explosion broke down in tears yesterday when a good Samaritan described in excruciating detail the agony her son suffered in the moments after the blast.

Despite deep burns that were peeling the skin off his battered body, Gregory McCullough, 21, miraculously managed to stumble under his own power for nearly a block from the blast at 41st Street and Lexington Avenue before the stranger, 27-year-old Junior Suarez, came to his aid.

Suarez said he held McCullough's hand until medical help arrived and listened to McCullough's agonizing screams as debris rained around them in the chaotic streets near Grand Central Terminal in the minutes after the July 18 blast.

"He just screamed so loud," said Suarez, who works in a Midtown staffing agency.

"I didn't know what to do. He grabbed my hand

STEAM SCREAM HORROR

and looked me in the eye and said, 'Promise me I'm not going to die.' So I promised. Then his eyes went blank. I thought he was dead."

Miraculously, McCullough did not die. He was transferred to New York

Hospital in critical condition with third-degree burns over 80 percent of his body. A medically induced coma spares him from some of the pain involved in treatments to ward off dangerous infections.

"It's so difficult not being able to hear him respond, not being able to hear him laugh, not being able to see him smile," said the victim's mother, Tanya McCullough-Stewart, who announced plans to sue Con Ed, the utility



company that owns the pipes.

"It's devastating." McCullough was traveling with a passenger, Judith Bailey, when the blast lifted his tow truck nearly 20 feet off the crowded street and deposited it in a crater several yards away.

As searing 300-degree steam filled the truck, Bailey and McCullough held hands and escaped through the passenger door, said Kenneth Thompson, a lawyer representing McCullough's family, who spoke with several witnesses.

Bailey is hospitalized in the same unit as McCullough with burns covering 30 percent of her body.

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