

“Once More With Feelings”

A new story by *(the)* Night Hawk

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Chapter 4: Memories of Another Life

I had a quiet day on Friday. I couldn't relate to the rest of the kids on the ward, and courtesy of Mike, I had my own TV. Not that there was much on worth watching. It made me wonder why I had been so addicted to the boob tube when I was 14 the first time around.

The physiotherapy nurses were up and had me walking and decided that I could get around without a wheelchair. I read the newspapers, listened to the news, and just mostly ambled around. The nurses were great and even though they were technically a lot younger than me, they made for good company and being 'one of the girls' I was privy to a lot of gossip.

I was polite and friendly with the doctor when he made his rounds, and was waiting for the shrink to come back and test me again. I still didn't have all the answers, but I figured I could show enough recovery for him to believe that it would all come back in time.

I hadn't seen Patrick all day and wondered how things went last night. I was dying to ask, but decided I would wait and find out from Linda and Julie.

After supper, I was surprised when a head popped into my doorway. A freckled strawberry blonde head with a turned up nose led the way for a body that was not quite five foot tall though very curvy. Farrah Fawcett hair, I liked it. She was wearing a halter top and cut-offs.

“Hey Pete, how ya feelin’?”

“Cathy?”

“Duh, who else?”

I shrugged.

“Jeez, your folks weren't kidding about your brain attack.”

“You've talked to them?” I asked. For some strange reason, I wanted the familiarity of them. It was like I missed them.

“Yeah, they talked to me, told me that you might not even remember your old partner in crime. I thought you were just trying to stay out of school.”

“Cathy, you’ve got to help me,” I pleaded. “I can’t remember anything important and, you know, stuff that only my best friend would know about me, that maybe Mom and Dad don’t. If you don’t help me, I might be stuck here for months!”

I could see genuine concern on Cathy’s face. I got the impression that she had been a good friend to Patricia. It was a pity that post puberty hormones would take her away. She looked over her shoulder and seeing nobody there whispered, “Okay, but I can’t do it now. Your folks brought me here with them. They’re downstairs talking to some doctor.”

“That’s probably the shrink,” I said. “I could be released on Monday but only if he says that I know who I am.”

“How much do you remember?” she asked.

Being Einstein had only been able to give me a Reader’s Digest condensed version of my life, I told Cathy all that I knew.

“That’s it?” she asked in shock.

“That’s more than I knew three days ago,” I replied with a sigh.

“Wow. No details at all eh? Not even serious stuff like when we smoked our first cigarette together?”

“Ugh, please don’t tell me that I’m a smoker already!”

“Already a smoker? God, Pete, you need some serious memory jarring. Remember? I got one off Jimmy Broadbent in exchange for his getting a look at my titties? Creep that he is. Told me they weren’t worth half a cigarette and then you ended up coughing until you puked.”

I laughed so hard that my stitches hurt. “I’m sorry I put you through that Cathy. That had to have been embarrassing for you.”

She raised her eyebrows. “Embarrassed? Hell, I would have shown him anyway,” she snickered. “Besides, they were big enough to interest him cause a month later he scored a coke bottle of his Dad’s homemade wine for us just for another look!”

“When did all this happen?”

“Just last spring during the Easter break. But hey... don’t you be using this to convince the doctor that you’ve got your memory back. I need to keep up my good girl reputation or else Father Roberto will keep me in confession for hours grilling me.”

I laughed again. At least this was something I knew something about. Catholics and their confessions, though I wasn’t looking forward to that experience.

“Look Pete, I won’t have time to fill you in on all the years we’ve been together but I’ll catch the bus tomorrow and come back and see you on my own. Then I can fill in some of the blanks for you. I don’t want to be discussing this stuff and have your folks overhearing any of it.”

“Deal,” I said. Remembering what Patrick had told me about Cathy going to a different High School, I asked her how she liked it.

“Saunders is okay I guess,” she said. “It feels weird being at the bottom of the grade scale though. I swear the next turkey that calls me a minor niner is going to get a black eye! I think we got spoiled last year being in the graduating class of St. John’s, being able to rule over all the younger kids.”

“Don’t sweat it Cathy, time will fly by so fast that you’ll be out and in college in no time.”

“College? Hell, when I finish High School, I’m getting married. I don’t want to go to college. That’s your thing. You’re the one with the brains remember? I’m the bod, and you’re the brains.”

I sat quietly for a minute wondering if Patricia had let this friendship lapse because of her own insecurities with men and maybe jealousy of Cathy’s obsession with them. I guess that looking at it from my point of view, I could see things in a different light. Cathy seemed like a really close and good friend, and it certainly wouldn’t bother me if nobody paid attention to me as a girl in High School.

Cathy was looking at me closely. “You’re wearing makeup,” she finally said, “and you’ve changed the way you do your hair.”

“Just a little bit,” I answered. “Mom finally gave in on that, but she’s holding out on the dating rule.”

“Bummer. That means you won’t be able to date until you get into grade 11.”

“Yeah, well that’s okay by me,” I said. “I think I can live without boys for a few more years.” Just the thought of kissing a guy was enough to make me want to puke. Ugh. Shivers ran up and down my spine.

“All the more for me,” Cathy laughed. “So? What are you gonna do when they cut you loose?”

Jesus. I hadn’t even thought about it. Probably go through school and see if I could find some part time work so I could save some cash. In my former life I had always just managed to get by, but my work record was a lot like my track record with women. Getting a fresh start, and knowing what I had learned the hard way, I promised myself that I wasn’t going to waste my money on useless toys, but save so that if there was something I really wanted, I could get it. But what could a 14-year-old girl do in the way of work?

I laid out my plans to Cathy, about going to school and finding a decent part time job.

“You mean baby-sit?” Cathy asked.

“If that’s all I can get, yeah, I guess. Gotta start somewhere.”

“Start what honey?” Ann asked as she and Mike entered the room. I noticed that Cathy sat up straighter and her whole attitude changed.

“I’ve got to find a job,” I said.

“Whatever for?” Ann asked.

“Implants?” Cathy suggested with a snicker.

“Catherine!” Ann said sharply, “Patti just hasn’t finished growing yet, and besides, God gave her all that she needs in life.”

“I’m sorry Mrs. Johnson,” Cathy said, “but you don’t know how much teasing she’s put up with.”

“Just the same, I don’t think that’s a worthy goal.”

“Actually,” I said. “They can tease me all they want. I don’t care anymore. Maybe seeing life from this side of the hospital bed has put things into perspective for me. What I really want to do is start saving for University.”

I could see the surprise on everybody’s face. “Hey, it’s time I start thinking about my future,” I said. “I can’t expect Mom and Dad to foot that kind of bill, and I’ve only got five years in which to save enough to pay my way in.”

Ann was at a loss for words. Mike was nodding his head, agreeing with me. “That’s pretty profound Patti. Very mature thinking.”

“Yeah,” I sighed. “The problem is, at my age, there aren’t a lot of jobs available.”

“That depends on what you’re willing to do,” Mike said. “There’s work out there, but most kids are too lazy or think the job is beneath them. If you’re really serious, I think I can help you find something that pays reasonably well.”

“Mike! The poor girl is still in the hospital. And I don’t want to see her grades suffer because of work.”

“Mom,” I butted in quickly. “I promise you that if in any class this year at any time, if I get less than an A, I will stop working.”

Cathy’s jaw dropped. “Hey Pete, this ain’t St. John’s anymore you know.”

I nodded. I knew, but I also knew that High School was the least of my worries. I had passed easily enough my first time through and hardly ever cracked open a book. Learning had always come fairly easy to me; I just never used it before. Doing it a second time should be a breeze, especially since I now knew exactly what teachers looked for.

Ann was about to speak but Mike cut her off. “You’re that serious Patti? And you think you can pull off straight A’s?”

“Dad, I know I can do it!”

“Ann,” he said, putting a hand on her shoulder. “We always complained that we didn’t get the chances we felt we deserved and we said we would never limit our own kids when we had them. Now Patti seems determined to follow her dream. The very least we can do is support her.”

Ann got a bit teary eyed as she agreed. I slid out of bed and hugged them. “Thanks Mom.” And I realized how much taller than her I was. Then I hugged Mike, nearly able to look him in the eyes. “Thanks Dad... I won’t let you down.”

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The visit was nice but tiring. I knew more about who I was, but besides not being able to blurt it out like footnotes from a text book, I had to try and associate what I had learned with what Mike and Ann were talking about. Cathy interceded, though my ‘parents’ would have said she was interrupting. But she saved me a few times when they mentioned something that I should have known about.

Mike said he liked the change in my hair and that the makeup looked good on me. Ann allowed that I did look a lot more mature and healthier.

After they left I stayed in my room and tried to watch some of the Friday Night Movie, but I would have much rather had a computer for research or at the very least CNN. With a sigh I realized that those days would be a long time in coming.

Linda and Julie came in just before their shift started at 11. It seemed they had taken a particular liking to me, and enjoyed 'helping' me recover my basic memories.

I asked Linda what had happened to Patrick and she said she would find out and if I was still awake after they did their first round, would stop by, and fill me in. I was going to be awake.

One of us, whether it was Patrick or me, would have to get into the outside world so we could help each other. We were the only ones who really knew the truth, knew about the future, and knew about each other. While I firmly believed that Einstein was going to make the best of his new chance, I felt responsible for his life. Actually, I had a fear that if he did something totally moronic or dangerous, both of our lives would be affected.

Watching Carson again, I realized how much information I could gauge about the current state of the world just by listening to Carson's comic reflections on it. I learned a valuable lesson from Johnny... Don't take yourself or life too seriously.

Linda and Julie came in just as Johnny had his last act on. Linda sat back by the window and lit up a cigarette while Julie joined me on the bed.

"It's always quiet on Friday nights," Julie said after Carson was finished. "The doctors want to get as many kids home as possible for the weekend."

"What about you two?" I asked. "Do you get the weekend off?"

Linda rubbed my head affectionately. "Afraid not kiddo. We're on till Tuesday and then we have three days off and start back on days."

"I'm glad," I said, "I really like you guys." And I meant it. They were really caring nurses and I'd hate to leave them. I knew them better than I knew my own family, and though they didn't realize it, they knew me better than anyone in this life.

"As for your friend Patrick," Linda was saying, "I don't know all the details, but Mrs. MacDonald said that she heard Patrick was up to all hours with his parents and the psychologist. The police came in at one point, stayed about an hour and left. Seems they won't lay charges. Patrick's father offered to pay for replacing the windows, but the police said then they would have to officially charge him. I don't know what that boy said last night, but they decided to let the insurance company pay for it as an act of random vandalism, with no suspects found."

"That's strange isn't it?" I asked.

“I don’t think so,” said Julie. “It sounds like he was really sorry and this was his first time in trouble. Why ruin a young boy’s chance of success by starting him off with a Juvenile Offender record?”

“You think he really meant it?” I asked trying to see how well Einstein had convinced everyone that he was sorry.

“I think he meant it,” said Linda. “Dr. Mallard is a hard one to fool. He’s been around too long to be taken in by a hoax.”

“Especially in the middle of the night,” laughed Julie.

“I wish him a lot of luck then,” I said, and I really meant it!

Linda looked mischievously at Julie. “Shall we give her a sponge bath now?”

“Aw, come on you guys!”

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True to her word, Cathy was up to see me Saturday morning at 10. Since the ward was pretty well empty, she was allowed to spend most of the day with me.

The day nurse shooed Cathy out at 11 to check on my progress, checked out the scar and after putting a fresh, even smaller dressing on it, told me I could slip on my own clothes if I wanted as long as they weren’t too tight. I was also given permission to go outside with Cathy and enjoy the fresh air.

I wanted to walk as much as I could to keep the physiotherapists happy and I wanted to do it outside. I had been cooped up inside for the better part of the week.

I told Cathy the good news and then instantly regretted it.

Cathy whooped for joy, closed the door to my room, and pulled the overnight bag out of the closet that Mike and Ann had brought with them on one of their visits. She opened it up and started going through the selection of clothes I had telling me what I should wear.

“I can’t believe your Mom packed your bra in here!” Cathy exclaimed.

“Why not,” I asked, “Don’t I wear one?”

“Pete... Look at you. You don’t *need* one! I know your Mom is just trying to make you feel good, but what have you got that needs holding up?”

I took the garment from her hands. It really wasn't much more than an undershirt, though I could see that it was padded in the cups.

"It's a training bra Pete!"

At first I thought she meant an athletic bra, until I realized this was exactly what they gave young girls to make them feel grown up.

"Well, you know," I mumbled, "I could still grow."

"Well when that happens maybe you'll want to wear one, but I don't," she said lifting the bottom of her halter up to show a perky set of tits, "I like being a liberated woman."

"Okay, forget it," I said. It felt strange but somehow, even though I knew size didn't matter to me, I knew that in the real world, especially that of teenagers, this was a rite of passage. Just another defining moment on the way to full womanhood. If I was going to pull off this role of being a teenage girl, I would have to wear the padded bra to show the world I was a woman! Not a child. Besides, whether or not I needed one wouldn't make a bit of difference to Ann. I had the feeling that she wanted her little girl to be proper, and only the hippies didn't wear bras.

Cathy put a pair of shorts on my bed, a pair of panties, and a t-shirt. It was an awkward moment for me. Cathy was supposed to be my best friend, yet she wasn't a nurse, and I felt a bit embarrassed undressing in front of her. But I couldn't very well ask her to leave the room, after all, we had, according to Einstein, grown up together.

I pulled off the hospital housecoat that covered the nightgown Ann had brought and then slipped out of it, just slightly hurried and slightly turned away from Cathy.

"Hey! Not so fast," she said. "I want to see your scar."

"Ah... the nurse just put a fresh dressing on it," I stammered.

"Well then let me see where they shaved you," she countered.

"How did you know I was shaved?" I asked.

"When my cousin Jill had her appendix taken out they shaved *her* pubes," she said.

What was I going to do? I didn't mind letting Cathy see me, but I was afraid of my reaction to her looking at my crotch. I still had very vivid memories of Marcie. She had said she could see that I was aroused and Cathy was the kind of girl I used to jack off thinking about. There really is an advantage to not having a cock give away your feelings.

With a sigh and a “If you must,” I turned around and let her look.

“Why didn’t they shave it all?” Cathy asked from below.

“I don’t know, I wasn’t awake when they did it. Maybe I should have asked for a trim at the same time!”

“Get dressed,” she said, snickering.

I slipped on the panties and the shorts and threw the t-shirt over my head. Thankfully there were no heeled shoes to fight with, just a pair of socks and plain white sneakers. Before I went out, I ran the brush through my hair and surprised myself by checking my makeup in the mirror before I allowed Cathy to lead me to the elevators. This was strange. Who would have thought I would so quickly adapt to makeup?

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By the time Cathy left that day I had a much better understanding of who I was.

Cathy tried telling some really off the wall stories, but I caught on pretty quick that Einstein would never have participated in these stunts so I told her to smarten up, that I really needed to know the facts about my life. She settled down after that and told me things like when I had my first period, where I was and how upset I had been. She was a veritable fountain of information about my personal life and most of which I would never have thought to ask and even more that I’m sure Ann didn’t know about.

My first kiss from a boy had been during a school trip to Niagara Falls in grade six, but it didn’t go any farther than that. While Cathy was chased after by a lot of boys in our last year of school together, I was pretty well left alone. Seems that most guys in grade eight are more interested in tits than they are in brains, duh! And Cathy liked to show hers as well. Besides having gotten us our first cigarette and bottle of wine by showing them to Jimmy Broadbent, she had gotten all kinds of favors from exposing herself.

Damn... where had the girls like her been when I went to school!

One thing I was sure of, as much as Cathy loved sharing her sexual exploits with me, we had never fooled around together.

*To be continued...*