

“Once More With Feelings”

A new story by *(the)* Night Hawk

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Chapter 6: Patti Passes The Test

Next morning, Linda and Julie woke me up at 6am.

“Sorry Patti, but Dr. Mallard wants X-rays before breakfast,” Linda said.

“And blood work,” added Julie.

And so, dressed in a hospital gown, they wheeled me to the front desk of the pediatric ward where an orderly took over. I could have walked, but hospital rules being what they are...

Julie and Linda said they would see me tonight and wished me luck with my tests today.

Today?

I thought I would get some advance notice, but it seemed the good doctor wanted to catch me unawares. Having me tossed out of a very pleasant sleep did the trick. I was nervous and yet strangely, eagerly anticipating what was to come. I might not know everything there was to know about Patti’s life yet, but these tests were to determine my mental state and my ability to reason. My own mind was as sharp if not sharper than ever having been thrown into circumstances that defied the laws of science.

I waited for the X-rays to be completed, not a big deal, and sat through the blood sucking that followed. Then it was on to a secluded room where I met an obese man with a goatee. He introduced himself as Dr. Getty and announced he was here to administer and proctor a series of psychological tests.

The MMPI took just over an hour to complete and then Dr. Getty had an orderly take me to breakfast while he ran the test through a Scan-Tron reader.

Half an hour later, I was back in the isolated room facing the good doctor. His face was expressionless as he proceeded to administer the “Cognistat” test. He followed this with an abbreviated SAT test and after four hours in his ‘care’, I was wheeled back to my floor.

My lunch was waiting for me as well as another note. I guess that as long as the Head Nurse didn’t see anything in the notes that might be problematic, she allowed them through. This one was a bit more complex, but it raised my hopes. It became clear to me

that Patricia had been a Trekkie in her former life and was counting on me to understand the code.

My name was clearly printed on the outside of the note, but the text inside showed that Einstein was having a jab at me.

*Peppermint,
“Q” (the nurse wrote it as cue), has passed judgment and allowed further exploration. Voyager has been dropped in the DQ. The path has changed. Future uncertain but promising. Crew in good spirits. Satellite requires another trip around the moon before it can begin broadcasting. Safe journey.
Einstein*

Well, things were looking up indeed! I realized that Patricia had really wasted her previous life as the note showed extraordinary intelligence. Using Star Trek jargon from the future, she told me the doctor, my parents and the cops had accepted her story, and she was exploring the limits of that goodwill. The reference to Voyager being lost in the Delta Quadrant meant that she thought that the future was uncertain – my memories of my past were no longer relevant. The crew remark had to refer to his parents and it appeared they were getting along well as a family. It was the comment about the satellite that bothered me the most. Obviously, he was still under scrutiny and he figured it would take at least a month or a lunar phase before he could talk freely one on one.

I was dying to know details, but figured that Einstein would find a way to contact me before too long.

Things were definitely looking up. I knew I would pass the tests I had taken this morning, and according to Einstein, I should be out of the hospital and back home by tomorrow afternoon.

But the best laid plans of mice and men...

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Father Roberto had been busy making his own plans while I had been preparing to face the real world. I should have known better than to mess with the head of a priest. They were much more experienced with it than I was, and my impulsive trait had once again caused me grief.

I got the bad news the next morning.

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The good news was, as I was told by Dr. Mallard with Mom and Dad present, I had passed all of the tests with flying colors. Though there were still obvious gaps in my

memory, my brain was functioning perfectly, and I had scored above normal in the general intelligence tests. My blood work and X-ray showed nothing out of the ordinary and based on a new option that had presented itself, I was to be released the next day, and I could start school the following Monday.

I wasn't sure what the 'new option' was, I was just glad I was going to be released, and I would have one more night to properly say goodbye and thanks to Linda and Julie.

Doctor Mallard wished me the best and a speedy full recovery of my memories and to feel free to drop in and see him anytime.

I was dying to hear what this 'new option' was especially since Mom didn't particularly seem overjoyed at hearing the test results. But I was learning patience and after we had another family lunch in the cafeteria, I was hit with the news.

Father Roberto had been in touch with the Bishop and had approached my 'parents' with his concerns about my well-being and safety – and his solution.

I could feel my blood start to boil.

"So..." Mom was saying, "Father Roberto thinks that until you regain all of your memory, for your safe being you should attend St. Ursula's Girls College."

"But Mom..." I pleaded. "I'm feeling fine." I remembered this school from my previous life. Uniforms and nuns.

Mike tried to make the peace. "Honey, Father Roberto is only concerned that since you don't remember who your friends are that you might be led into temptation at Beal. And you know that St. Ursula's is a really fine school. They have the best business program anywhere. Parents from all over the country send their daughters there."

"But Dad, it means I won't be able to live at home. I'll be stuck in a dorm and that means I won't be able to find a job."

Ann looked like she was going to cry. "I'm sorry baby, but Father Bob is our family priest and he's only looking out for your interests."

Yeah, I'll bet he is, I thought. I'd fix that fucker good as soon as I could. Life was going to be difficult enough trying to pass for a female, and he hadn't been smart enough to leave well enough alone.

BUT... My brain was kicking me hard. It would remove the problems I might face living at home with Mike and Ann and I remembered the school did have a fantastic reputation, along with a scholarship program that would see me all the way through university if my grades stayed above 80 percent.

I decided to bite the bullet. I would turn this into an opportunity and a challenge, but I had also decided what I was going to go to university for!

I sobbed a little bit just to let Mike and Ann know that I would miss them for the extended periods of time. If I remembered correctly, the school ran year round with 11-week semesters and two-week holiday breaks between semesters. I could feasibly finish High School before I turned 18. “Father Bob” had actually done me a favor, but I still planned to get even with him for this.

“Okay,” I said trying to sound unhappy. “If you think that it’s for the best, then I’ll do it and I’ll make you proud of me.”

“That’s the spirit Patti,” said Mike, though I could tell from the expression on Ann’s face that she had not planned to lose me to the world so soon.

With a promise to pick me up Wednesday morning, they left.

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It was well after midnight and Linda and Julie were listening to my horror story.

“I can’t believe the church has that much control over a family’s life,” Linda said.

“They do,” said Julie. “I was raised Catholic. Women don’t make decisions in that society.”

“But I really, really need to ask you guys for a big favor,” I said. “I can handle this school without a problem. Trust me. It’ll be a piece of cake compared to some other choices they could have made for me.”

“What do you need Patti?” Linda asked.

I explained that even though Einstein was a boy, and I was so totally *not* into boys (which got a laugh) I said that I thought he and I had made a spiritual connection. Both Linda and Julie seemed to accept that at face value. I think at this point they were pretty sure I was a lesbian.

“What I need is a way to write him and get messages to him. They will never let me use a phone without supervision, and all my mail will be checked as well.”

“That’s an invasion of privacy!” Linda said.

“She’s right though,” said Julie. “Privacy will be considered a luxury. She’ll be in a dorm for the first year, and then if she gets exceptional grades she’ll get to share a room with three other girls in the second year. If she maintains honors every semester,

by the time she's in her third year, they'll let her have a semi private room with a choice of room-mates."

"But," I said, "If I excel at a sport, I could be in a semi private room in my second year!"

"You know this?" asked Linda.

"Yeah, I guess I do. I must have heard it somewhere," I said.

"Well, with your height, you'd probably be a shoo-in for basketball or volleyball," said Julie.

"Don't forget track," I added. "Sports all year round, and that will give me a chance to travel as well."

Both of them laughed.

"You seem to think pretty quick under pressure," said Linda. "So, what can we do to help?"

I handed her my first letter to Einstein. I was sure I could trust these two girls, but unless Einstein had been able to change the way Tom and Rita thought, they wouldn't like Patrick receiving unusual mail.

"I want to pretend I'm writing a pen pal who shares an interest in astronomy. It will really seem innocent on the surface, but I'll be able to get my message across to him without any problems. What I need is a woman to write to, so I can get it past the nuns, and then to have it forwarded to Patrick. Basically it's just a mail-rerouting scheme. I'll pay for the postage," I said.

Linda laughed. "That's okay Patti. I think we can cover the cost of a few stamps. Here's our address," and she quickly wrote out an address on her pad and gave it to me. It was then that it dawned on me that Linda and Julie were lovers themselves.

"You two?" I asked.

Julie blushed; Linda lit up another cigarette and smiled.

"You hide it so well!" I said. "I would never have guessed."

"We all have our little secrets," Linda said. "Nobody thinks twice about two nurses living together."

"You know," said Julie. "If you don't write too feminine, and just sign yourself as Pat, we can just forward it on. Being that all you will be writing about is astronomy,

and I hope you have a good background in it, Patrick's parents will just think you are another boy."

"The only immediate problem I have is that he's been leaving notes for me here, and after tomorrow, I'll be gone. I need to get this one to him right away."

Linda looked at Julie. "I think a home visit by two of the nurses who took care of him wouldn't raise any suspicion. What do you think Julie?"

Julie looked at me before answering. "It's the least we can do, just to see how his leg is mending."

"Do you mind if I read your letter to him?" Linda asked. "I'm not trying to be nosy, but we've heard about the strange notes he has called in for you."

I laughed and told them to feel free. Linda opened the note I had spent most of the afternoon composing. Linda read it out loud.

***Einstein,***

***I would love to hear how your study of the DQ is progressing. I've had my study of the Alpha thwarted and I've been assigned to the Gamma expanse. A black hole caused the shift. Details will follow. I have had to move DS9 so please note my old coordinates are no longer valid. I will be studying the new celestial ceiling as of Monday, full time. To see my new region of space look to Ursula Major. You were right - I've confirmed that the speed of light is not constant. I have yet to enter in the new variables but I am hoping to gain some help from Gemini. I'll transmit new coordinates as soon as I finish triangulation.***

***Second star to the right, stay the course.***

Linda and Julie looked at each other and then laughed. "Are you sure you just turned 14?" Linda asked. "We've been really good at codes and secrets, but if you hadn't told me, this would sound very much like astronomy to me."

I laughed with them and explained, what parts I could, what the note said.

"I'm telling him that the school I had said I would be attending is no longer where I will be, and that I won't be living at home either. I've also told him that this change is not because of family problems but an outside influence, that's the black hole. The reference to my region of space is a not very subtle hint as to where I will be, and if it wasn't for the jargon, it would probably be spotted. The reference to the help from Gemini is the two of you. I let him know that 'twins' might be my only salvation, and then ended with the promise I would find a way for us to keep in contact after some planning."

“Wow,” said Julie. “That is really cryptic. I take it Patrick will understand all of this?”

“He’s the only person that **will** understand it,” I said. “If the two of you will fill him in on how I will be signing my notes in the future, and your address, this should make it really easy for us to stay in touch.”

“You two have a really special bond don’t you?” Linda asked, “and yet it’s not a physical attraction. It must be something out of this world.”

Out of this world is right I thought.

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Linda and Julie and I stayed up late that night telling stories and generally avoiding saying goodbye. They promised they would visit on the weekends when they could. It would be the only time I would be allowed visitors.

To be continued...