

“Once More With Feelings”

A new story by Night Hawk

© 2004 by **Night Hawk**

Chapter 13: A Present for Wendy

At quarter to eleven, two friendly familiar faces showed up in my room.

“How do you feel, Patti?” asked Linda.

“Just a little sore, but nothing worse,” I said.

“We’ll be in shortly,” said Julie. “The ward is nearly empty because of the weekend, so let us do our rounds and then we’ll both be back.”

The candy striper who had sat with me since Einstein left was clearly pleased to be able to move on to something else. I hadn’t been much company for her, as my thoughts had been elsewhere.

~~~~~ // ~~~~~

“What were you guys doing at the school on Saturday?” I asked Linda and Julie when they came back.

“Shall we show her now?” Julie said, “Or wait till tomorrow?”

“Maybe we should make her wait since she obviously doesn’t appreciate the extra effort we put in,” said Linda.

“Ah, come on you guys!”

They both laughed and Julie explained that since it was obvious that I wanted something special for Wendy’s birthday, the two of them had gone shopping for just the right thing.

Linda took a package from her pocket. It looked like a pretty fancy jewelry store box to me.

“Ready?” she asked.

I nodded, and she opened the box to display a beautiful gold heart pendant on a fine gold chain. The heart had a tiny heart-shaped cutout on the left side.

“Oh, Linda, it’s beautiful!”

“And this is for Wendy to give to the one she loves,” said Julie, drawing another box from her pocket and opening it to show me a matching necklace with a very tiny heart pendant on it. “This way the missing piece of her heart will always be with the one she loves. You can let her decide.”

“Oh, this is way too cool!” I said. “But it must have cost a small fortune. I tried to tell you how much I could afford.”

“We know,” said Julie, “but we also know how you feel about this girl. If we hadn’t been sure before, what we saw today told us how she feels about you. Guess our intuition was pretty accurate eh, Linda?”

“Very much,” Linda replied. “So we figured that you deserved at least this much from us.”

I thanked them profusely and after promising they would have it gift wrapped before morning we got down to some serious talking.

I told them that Patrick had been in earlier in the evening and thanked them for letting us use them as messengers.

“We talked with him for some time,” said Julie, “and it’s kind of funny, but he seems to have the same kind of selective memory loss that you do. It’s interesting nobody noticed it when he was still in the hospital. Must have been all that police business that distracted everybody.”

“Yeah,” said Linda. “He seems to be fooling a lot of people, but not in a bad way. His mom and dad are happy with him and he managed to change schools as well. It’s almost like you guys had planned to change everything so you wouldn’t have anybody from your past around. Like people who might notice small changes?”

They were uncomfortably close to the truth although my changing school was by accident and not by choice. I tried to shrug it off and said they read too much Sci-Fi, but clearly they weren’t buying it.

They weren’t badgering me or anything like that, but they clearly had an idea of what was going on. I had to decide how much I could trust them.

“Okay,” I said. “Ask me a question. I will answer it as truthfully as possible, on condition that you don’t ask me how I know. And I should warn you that I don’t know a lot about this time period.”

***“This time period?”*** Linda asked.

“Yep. Remember that I’m only 14.”

Julie’s eyes narrowed and she pulled Linda aside. For a few minutes they whispered quietly then came back to my bed.

“Okay,” said Julie. “We won’t ask how you know, but we finally settled on a question that will confirm our suspicions.”

I took a deep breath and said, “Fire away.”

“Do the Beatles ever reunite?” asked Linda.

I chuckled. These girls were much smarter than even I had given them credit for. I thought about it for a couple of moments, trying to decide how much information I should give them.

“No,” I said. “The Beatles were a musical phenomenon that will never be repeated. The Beatles are finished, though all four of them will continue with solo careers. At various times they will join in groups of two or three to add to each other’s singles but as a group the Beatles are done.”

As they mulled that over, I realized that if I had told them about the death of John Lennon in 1980 at the hands of a crazed assassin they might try to prevent it. At least I could answer this question without compromising the time line as I knew it.

“Does Patrick have the same knowledge?” Linda asked.

Hmm... a second question, but not about the future. I thought about how far on a limb these girls had gone for me and Einstein, and told them, “Well, more or less. After all, he’s a boy and I’m a girl.”

“And you two have never met before?” Julie asked.

Tough one, though the honest answer was easy. “No,” I said. “Prior to waking up in this hospital, I can honestly say we had never met before.” Which was true in the strictest sense of the word. I knew the body and life of Patrick because I had been him, but I had never met Patricia until I became her.

“This is Twilight Zone stuff,” Linda said. “It’s hard to understand. We’re looking forward to the full story when you two are ready.”

“So,” I said, changing the subject, “I hear that you shocked Patrick when you asked him if he was able to ‘relieve’ himself.”

Julie laughed. “The look on his face was priceless when he eventually figured out what we were talking about!”

“He’s a good kid,” Linda added. “Cute and sweet. We offered to set him up with someone if he had a need that self loving couldn’t satisfy, but he seemed pretty cool with it. I thought he might be queer.”

“I thought he might be as well,” I said, “but from what he told me tonight, that doesn’t seem to be the case. By the way, Linda... thanks for the condoms. I’m not sure when he will need them, but as he said, better to be prepared than to be caught short.”

~~~~~ // ~~~~~

Despite the fact that I was stuck on liquids, and had a neck that hurt like hell, we had a great night. I don’t think we finished talking until three in the morning when I must have dozed off.

Neither Linda nor Julie broached the subject of the future again that night, and instead we talked about our plans for the future. Julie wanted to go back to school and become a doctor. She wasn’t sure whether she wanted to specialize in pediatrics or become an obstetrician. I suggested that she concentrate her studies towards infertility and alternate methods of conception.

Okay... so I was already playing with fire, but Julie would just be finishing medical school when artificial insemination became an accepted method for reproduction.

Linda wanted to continue working for a few more years and then have a baby. I asked if she had picked a father out yet, which caused her to laugh.

“Not yet,” she said putting her arm around Julie. “Why? Do you know of any good candidates?”

I smiled at them. “I think you’ll find Patrick would be willing, and he won’t try to interfere with the way you two want to raise your child.”

Both of them thought that was a great idea, but it raised an obvious question... How did I know, could I know, that Patrick would be agreeable?

“Let’s just say that I can speak for Patrick and he can speak for me.” I said.
“Besides, nobody knows him better than I do!”

~~~~~ // ~~~~~

I woke up late Sunday morning, regretting that I had fallen asleep on my two friends. There was an envelope on the bedside stand addressed to me and I opened it to find a note from Linda and Julie.

***Dear Patti,***

***You looked so peaceful sleeping we thought we would leave you alone. We left the two packages wrapped at the nurse’s station for safe keeping and to avoid questions. When you want them, just ask one of the nurses for them.***

***Love,***

***L&J***

That was so sweet of them. I hoped that Wendy would be allowed to come and visit today so I could give her the present.

Doctor Mallard came by just before lunch and asked how I was doing. Since I could now tell him details about my current life, it didn’t take long for him to wish me the best and move on to other patients.

It was the visit after lunch from the neurologist that made me realize that no matter how invincible I felt, I could still be hurt. He insisted on getting me wheeled back down to X-ray for another series of pictures. The swelling had gone down considerably thanks to the quick response from Linda and Julie at the school, and the ice packs they had kept on my neck most of the night, but I was shocked at the bruise I saw in the mirror. The entire side of my neck was purple-black from the force of the blow.

It was after one o’clock before he came back with several sheets of film in his hands.

“You were incredibly lucky, young lady,” he said to me. “I’ve seen injuries like this cause paralysis,” he looked at me soberly, then concluded, “Or worse.”

I told him that I was thankful to be alive and that indeed I must have been lucky.

“If it was up to me,” he said, “the man would be charged with attempted murder!”

I could see that he was quite upset, but I just bit my lip knowing that since I hadn't died, there was no police officer in the world that would attempt to arrest a priest. It just wasn't done, especially when the priest had probably already been whisked away to one of the church's rehab monasteries.

He checked the film once more as if trying to verify for his own peace of mind that I didn't have any chipped bones. Finally he said he wanted me to come back in a month for more X-rays and then six months after that.

He did a visual and physical inspection of my neck once more, and then wished me good health and luck.

He had only been gone five minutes when Mike and Ann walked in.

~~~~~ // ~~~~~

Ann looked gray with worry, and Mike didn't look much better.

"Mom, what's the matter?" I exclaimed.

"We've been here since noon," she replied, "but we were told that you weren't allowed any visitors until the specialist authorized it."

"Ah, Mom..." I said, "I really wish I didn't cause you so much grief. I'm trying my best to make you both proud of me and all I seem to be doing is making you come to the hospital."

"We are proud of you, Patti," Mike said. "We were worried about you not having any friends and then your memory loss, but now you seem to have more friends than ever and you've matured so much."

"Does this mean I can start dating?" I said with a laugh.

Ann laughed as well, finally breaking the tension. She knew I would never be allowed to date while at St. Ursula's but reminded me that while makeup was one thing, dating would still have to wait.

I smiled at both of them. "Don't you worry about me dating," I said. "I've got plans for my future and boys would only get in the way!"

They told me they were just on their way to visit me when an ambulance screamed by them. When they saw it in the parking lot a few minutes later, they became

worried. Predictably, Ann had figured that out of 600 girls it had to be me the ambulance was for. They didn't even have a chance to get into the school when Linda, Julie, and Wendy came rushing out with the paramedics, me on the gurney. Wendy had told them briefly where I was headed and something about a head injury. Mike and Ann had rushed back to their car as the ambulance roared away. Julie had dashed off to her car as soon as I was in the ambulance and it became a three vehicle race to the hospital. Sister Elizabeth Ann and Father Ed arrived minutes later.

"Wow," was all I could say. "That's two rides in an ambulance and I wasn't awake for either of them."

"Let's make this one the last one, okay sweetheart?" Ann said.

I gave her a hug and promised I would do my best.

We didn't mention Father Roberto at all, and I certainly wasn't going to bring up the subject. I didn't want Dad to go looking for him. We talked about their jobs and how things were going at home without me there to pester them

Mom did say that things had improved at work since she had confronted Belinda.

"I just told her that if I needed to take time off to visit my sick daughter, I *would* take time off!" She laughed and continued, "Her jaw nearly hit the floor!"

She patted my hand fondly. "I have you to thank for that, dear. Since we had that little talk, I've been noticing things at the shop."

You go, Mom! I thought, but just made an enquiring sound. "Like?"

"Well, like Margery does as little as possible. She seems to spend the day either smoking out the back or chatting on the telephone. Belinda doesn't know half the stock, and she's supposed to be in charge! I think the only reason either of them has a job is because they're related to Wilma and she's away so often."

"So, are you going to stay there, Mom?"

"I think so for the moment, dear. I like the job and since Belinda and I had our little chat, things have settled down a lot. Although..." she trailed off, looking thoughtful.

"Mom?"

"Never mind, dear," she said, patting my hand.

I looked at Mike. He in his turn looked questioningly at his wife, who gave a little shrug, then returned his attention to me. "Please don't say anything to *anybody*, Patti. Your Mom thinks either one or both of them might be tickling the till."

"Oooo! Mom, you have to tell someone!"

She looked uncomfortable. "It's only a feeling, dear, and if Wilma and her accountant don't see anything wrong, I don't see that it would do any good to bring it up. After all, Belinda is Wilma's husband's cousin's sister-in-law."

I didn't like it, but let the subject drop and we spoke of happier things. "Have you rented out my room yet, Mom?"

She turned to Mike. "What a good idea! Darling, how much do you think we could get for it?"

He pretended to consider it for a moment. "I don't know... How about thirty dollars a week?"

"Awww, Dad!"

It was a fun visit and though I didn't have old memories to rely on, I was making some great new ones with them.

"Oh," said Mike, "we nearly forgot with all the commotion."

"What's that, Daddy?"

"You tell her, Ann," he said. "After all it was your idea."

"Mom?"

"Well, I think you've forgotten this, but for nearly a year you've been asking if you could have your ears pierced," she said.

"Hounded is more like it," said Mike smiling.

Ann elbowed him and continued. "Seeing how your new friend didn't have earrings either, we thought..." she stopped and gave Mike a look.

"That the two of you might like to have matching pairs," said Mike and pulled a box out of his jacket pocket. Inside the box were two identical sets of matching pearls on gold studs.

"I called your principal earlier this week to see if it was okay for you girls to have earrings," Ann said. "The school rule is as long as they are studs and are dainty and

ladylike they have no problems. But while you can have them, you need to see the school nurse about the actual piercing.”

It felt rather strange to me to actually be thinking of how nice it would be to have pierced ears. It was not something I had gone for as a male when it first became fashionable, although I did get a tattoo to prove my machismo when I was running with the gang, and eventually regretted it. I’d have to remember to tell Einstein not to bother getting one!

I gave both Mom and Dad a big hug and kiss, thanking them for being so generous and thoughtful. “I’m sure that Wendy will love this as much as I do!”

They stayed and visited until nearly four o’clock. Dad asked me if I wanted a TV again, and thanking him for the thought, I declined. I told them that between the nurses and the tests, I would rather rest and hopefully get back to school on Monday.

“Let’s hope next weekend we see you **at** school,” Mike said.

We exchanged more hugs and for a second, as Mike’s eyes looked at the bruise on my neck I saw that anger again, but he brushed it away and said, “Be good, Patti-cake.”

“I love you guys!” I said as they headed out the door.

To be continued...