

“Once More With Feelings”

A new story by Night Hawk

© 2004 by **Night Hawk**

Chapter 23: It's beginning to look a lot like...

Bob wasn't about to give up that easily, and he said to Mike, “We'll talk about this later, Mike. I wish my employees were as loyal.”

“See you at the game?” I asked Einstein.

“Wouldn't dream of missing it,” he said, and then drove off with Mike.

Mr. Denure was going to drive the bus himself tonight. We had waited till the panel was put back into place on the fancy coach and after a quick check of the sound system, he thanked Mike with a vigorous handshake, expressing his gratitude that the bus could leave on schedule next Monday.

We were going to be cutting it close time wise, but Annette's father had years of experience driving a bus through London, taking streets that I didn't realize existed in either lifetime, and to him, the speed limit seemed to be only a suggestion.

We had gotten about a dozen blocks from the bus depot when a London City Police cruiser lit up behind us. At the next stoplight, Bob opened his window and waved for it to pull alongside. “I got half the Saints team on this bus,” he hollered out the window, “and I have to get the other half or we forfeit the game!”

The cop gave him a thumbs up and turning on his siren, pulled ahead of us with a squeal of tires and led us all the way to St. Ursula's where the rest of the team stood waiting. Bob wheeled the big coach around on the gravel and with a hiss of brakes stopped in front of the waiting group, the doors open even before the big vehicle settled on its air springs. “Good evening Sisters, Father,” he greeted them as they climbed aboard. “Ladies, please take your seats, we have to hustle!”

He turned to his still open window, looking down at the cop car beside the coach, lights still flashing. “Wheable!” he shouted in answer to an unheard question, and I saw the cop raise his thumb again. No sooner were the girls in their seats than we were off again for the run across town, arriving in time for the four of us to change into the uniforms our teammates had brought with them.

The game itself was uneventful. No bad feelings or animosity. I remembered they had a great football team, mainly because I didn't make the cut. Wheable was the high school that Einstein would have attended but for his insistence on being allowed to

take the placement tests. I remembered it as a very average school. No great intellectuals graduated from Wheable, but no losers either. Just a very business oriented school.

Although it was corny, I was starting to enjoy the brass band. In my first life, brass had never really appealed to me, but I was starting to see why it had thrived and survived all these years and why it was being used in more and more popular tunes. Hell, Disco was coming so I might as well enjoy it this time.

As Bob made the turn onto Adelaide, heading north, I looked out over the Thames. It was dark and I could sense the chill of the water. There was snow in the air.

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

On our first day back in school, it did snow.

We actually arrived on Sunday night after a tearful goodbye with Mike and Anne. I reassured them that they weren't losing us – we'd be home again in four weeks for Christmas, and they'd still see us on weekends and game nights.

I guess Mike and Ann had become used to having the two of us around. It still didn't really make sense to me though because while we were on our two-week semester break, Mike and Ann had still worked. I think we saw them more when we were in school!

We spent that Sunday at home and I had a sneaking suspicion we did that because Mike and Ann wanted us to themselves, although Ann invited Linda and Julie over for lunch. I still hadn't learned why Mike and Ann were so sympathetic toward them and understanding of their relationship, but figured that they'd tell us when they were ready, so I didn't ask questions.

Mike was really thrilled that Bob Denure had contracted his shop for all the radio and sound system repairs for the entire London Bus Company fleet, telling us that he'd come to the shop on Friday to discuss it.

“Actually, I think he really came over to get me to help him persuade Patrick to do those vinyl repairs for him, but first he asked for my bill.” Mike smiled. “He looked at it, then said ‘How would you like to do the lot?’ I said, ‘The lot of what?’ and he said ‘The whole fleet’. That sat me back on my heels, I can tell you!”

“And so,” he went on, “we had a talk about it, and now I'm his preferred supplier for electronic repairs.” He grinned. “And all I have to do now is persuade Patrick to do vinyl repairs for him one evening a week!” His voice took on a slightly awed tone. “You would not *believe* what he spends on seat repairs each year!”

Mike drove us back to school mid-afternoon after we had washed up the dishes, taking with us a special ‘back to school’ cake that Linda had baked to share with the rest

of the team. We unpacked and settled in, then hooked up with everyone in the big seniors' common room, where we talked excitedly about what we all did on our semester break. Annette and Mandy were already there and we greeted them with the special affection we would share for the rest of our lives.

That night, we sat on our bed and cuddled in what had become our favorite position, nude with my darling sitting in my lap by the light of a single candle.

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

Wendy and I still had the same homeroom and religion class with Sister Mary Francis. Monday morning we were deep in discussion on the Trinity versus the One God, when Helen Lompata injected "Hey, it's snowing!"

St. Ursula's had a continuous intake program, with new students arriving each semester, and Helen was one such, having been introduced to the class that morning. I thought I had had an attitude at her age, but Helen had attitude with a capital 'A'. 'If this was the year 2000,' I thought, 'you'd have a nose ring and black mascara just to get a rise out of your parents.'

While Sister Mary Francis didn't particularly appreciate having the discussion interrupted, she skillfully led the remark into a comparison of the uniqueness of individuals.

"Yeah, just like sheep," Helen interjected again, "As unique as white wool."

"Some of us appreciate just how unique each of us are," I said evenly. "And the miracle of life."

"Oh, so you think you're something special?" she sneered. "You think God knows you're alive?"

"Damn right!" I snapped.

"Miss Johnson, I will not tolerate profanity!" warned Sister Mary Francis.

"Oh, please!" Helen laughed. "She can swear! God knows who she is!"

I was out of my chair and standing over her before she finished her sentence. "Listen, you little dipshit, you have no idea just how precious life is!"

"Fuck you!" she said defiantly. "This isn't living!"

I leaned in close, my hands clenched and saw her expression get a little fearful. "Listen, *Puta*," I hissed into her ear, "if you don't think life is worth living, you might

want to consider the alternative!” She shrank away from me as if she thought I was about to rip her throat out. I was straightening up when sudden pain burst from my earlobe!

My eyes tearing, I heard Sister Mary Francis say, “Miss Johnson, you come with me.”

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

“Patti,” said Sister Elizabeth. “I’m disappointed in you. Of all the girls in the school, you were the last one I thought would be a discipline problem.”

“I’m sorry, Sister,” I said, and I meant it too! I had let my temper take over when I should have just let it go.

“I’m sorry too, Patti, but I can’t just let you off without some kind of disciplinary action. It would show favoritism. Just because you are on the volleyball team doesn’t give you the right to use profanity in the classroom or to physically threaten another student.”

**“But, Sister** ... I wasn’t going to hit her or anything. I wouldn’t do that! I was just so frustrated with her saying life wasn’t worth living!”

Sister Elizabeth thought on that for a few minutes. Damn! I liked the nuns, and got along with all of them. I wasn’t sure why I reacted the way I had. Finally, Sister Elizabeth told me to come back at lunchtime and she would decide what my punishment would be.

As I turned to leave, I said, “I really am sorry, Sister. It’s just that life *is* worth living, and people who take it for granted or don’t care if they live or die, they need to take a serious look at the alternative.”

Sister Elizabeth nodded solemnly and said she would see me at lunch.

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

“Are you in deep shit?” asked Wendy when I caught up with her.

“Not as deep as that new girl, Helen. At least I didn’t say ‘fuck’ in class!”

Wendy giggled. “You’ll be okay, Pete,” she said. “God, what a way to start off a new semester eh!”

I laughed too, gave her butt a squeeze, and told her that I had to go back at lunchtime, but I would catch up with her afterwards.

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

There were butterflies in my stomach as I approached Sister Elizabeth's office, not knowing what to expect. The secretary greeted me with a "Hello, Patti, go on in, you're expected." The look she gave me was strange, and I knocked on the door, thinking 'Was that pity on her face?'

"Enter," came Sister Elizabeth's voice, and I opened the door to see Father Ed, Sister Mary Francis along with Mike and Ann! I froze, feeling the blood drain from my face, knowing Sister had taken this very seriously indeed!

"Come in, Patti, and close the door." I complied, and then stood stiffly under their combined gaze. "Sit down, Patti," Sister Elizabeth directed me, and I saw Mike wink at me as I made my way to sit nervously on the edge of the only unoccupied chair. On her desk was the good tea set and plates of sandwiches - it seemed they'd been here a while!

"We have been trying to decide what to do with you, Patti," Sister Elizabeth Ann said as she poured. "Sandwich?" she asked, passing me the tea.

"No, thank you, Sister," I replied, carefully taking the cup and saucer.

"You are an honor student," she went on, "and so far without a blemish on your record. Sister Mary Francis said you didn't physically threaten Helen as much as you just got too close, which we can probably all understand as coming from the intense way you girls play volleyball."

I took a sip of tea, my hand slightly trembling. I was waiting for the other shoe to drop.

"And though we all slip once in a while with our language, Sister Mary Francis isn't even sure what the second remark you made was, she has explained she believes you were unintentionally aggravated by the other girl's comments."

I was keeping my mouth shut. Sister Elizabeth was doing a much better job of talking me out of my predicament than I could have done!

"And Patti is very outspoken and adamant in her beliefs about Our Lord," said Sister Mary Francis. "She has on a number of occasions expressed deep felt emotional statements that are truly inspiring."

Father Ed was trying not to smile.

"Well, Sister," said Mike. "I may be to blame for the language Patti used. I'm a church going Catholic, but I work in the real world, and sometimes it just clings to you and I forget to shake it off before I get home. I'm afraid that Patti might have overheard me on a few occasions using words that I wouldn't normally use in mixed company."

“Be that as it may, Mr. Johnson,” said Sister Elizabeth, “it was still Patti who uttered them. Provoked or not.”

Bless him. Mike was trying to take the blame for me cussing. I wondered how he would feel if he heard how I talked when it was just Wendy and me or when we were around Linda and Julie!

Mom spoke up as well. “It’s possible that Patti responded the way she did because she had been so close to death.”

“Actually, Mom,” I said, having decided I better say something, “I did die. I know you decided it was best not to tell me, but I’ve known since the day I woke up in the hospital.”

Ann’s eyes started to mist.

“Don’t cry, Mom, please?” I pleaded. “I’m okay now. That’s why I get so excited about living. And probably why I get so upset when people say life isn’t precious.”

“Oh, Honey,” said Ann. “I don’t know how you found out, but you’re right. You did die on the operating table. The doctors said it was a miracle that you came back.”

“It was a miracle, Mom,” I said. I didn’t say just how big a miracle it was! “That’s why I know there is a God and he does watch over us, each and every one of us.”

I turned to Sister Mary Francis. “I’m sorry that I allowed my feelings to disrupt your class, Sister. I promise I’ll try and be more careful in the future.”

“How about never using such language again?” asked Sister Elizabeth.

“I’m sorry, Sister, but I can’t promise you that. I can try, but I would never make a promise knowing that there’s a chance I might break it.”

“Besides, Sister,” said Father Ed. “I get promises from a lot of girls and every week they come back confessing to the very same things they promised not to do the week before. All any of us can do is try. We are after all only human, and I seem to recall an incident not too long ago when a great many people spoke words that did not fit with their position.” He gave Sister Elizabeth a knowing look.

“Very well,” said Sister Elizabeth blushing slightly. “I do appreciate your honesty, Patti. But now I’m in an awkward position. I can’t confine you to your room for the next week because then I would have Sister Gabriella to deal with. I also can’t very well take away your TV privileges, because I know you don’t watch it.”

“I have an idea,” said Sister Mary Francis. “Patti has been taking advanced classes in public speaking as one of her English electives.” She had everybody’s attention now. “How about a speech, to the student body, about the joys of being alive?”

And that’s how I ended up at Centennial Hall facing 10 judges and an audience of 300 in April 1975.

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

Yes. I had taken public speaking as an English elective.

Yes, I did believe that the ability to speak well would serve me in the future, but I had not expected to start until later in life. When Sister Mary Francis had suggested as “punishment” that I address the school on the joys of being alive, I was a bit stunned.

Father Ed thought it was a great idea, and Dad, after verifying that my record would remain untarnished, quickly added his vote of support. Mom was nodding as well. Damn but I was outflanked and outgunned!

I tried to smile, and in retrospect, it was a fit reprimand for speaking out of turn in class, but... Was I ready to talk to a crowd?

It turns out that I was more than ready. Wendy sat by my side that night as I attempted to draft my ten-minute speech. I had no clue as to where to start.

Wendy grabbed a pad and a pen. “Okay, Pete. How about just telling me what’s so great about being a teen? This is your second time at it. Tell me why you enjoy life so much.”

I could have kissed her. I guess that’s one of the things that I enjoyed so much in this life!

We worked until nearly midnight, Wendy taking notes as I talked.

Sister Elizabeth had given me the week to prepare, and that Friday, I was to do my first public speech at an open assembly.

Helen, the girl who had started this ruckus, had refused to apologize to Sister Mary Francis or to the class and spent the next month confined to the school. She didn’t come back after the Christmas break.

By the time I had written out my ten-minute speech based on the notes that Wendy had taken, I felt more alive than ever. It was like I was seeing for the first time all the reasons I was so happy all the time. Aside from a few minor run-ins with jerks and religious fanatics, I had a good life. I couldn’t understand why kids were so unhappy in high school.

I’m still not sure if it was my speech that got all the applause Friday morning at the general assembly or the fact that the night before we had hosted Tecumseh High on our court and righteously whipped their ass! It was the only game we would play in our own school for the entire season.

Either way, the speech was well received and I got a standing ovation for it. It was not until after Christmas that I found out that my name had been submitted to the

London Public Speaking Contest. When I asked Sister Elizabeth about it, she just smiled at me and said my English teachers were so impressed they felt I should represent St. Ursula's at the contest.

Christmas came first though, and what a Christmas it was. Wendy's first real Christmas.

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

School ended on Friday the 20<sup>th</sup>. We had 12 days off. Kind of fitting when you think of the twelve days of Christmas. There was no game during the week we had off.

Mike slipped Wendy and me some money so we could buy gifts for each other and for our friends. We protested, but he said that we had earned it. Then Ann slipped us more money. All we could do was thank her.

After confession on Saturday, Wendy and I met up with Annette and Mandy, and we took off for the mall. Mandy was staying in London again with Annette. The weather was beautiful. Snow on the ground and just a light chill in the air with the sun causing everything to shine.

Annette and I took off so we could shop in private for our lovers. Wendy and Mandy did the same. We arranged to stay to one side of the mall for one hour and then we would swap sides. It was hard since what I wanted to buy Wendy, I simply couldn't afford. Other things that I had in mind, I couldn't give to her in mixed company. Annette was in a similar quandary. Money wasn't her problem, but appearances were.

"Damn!" said Annette. "This is harder than anything else."

"Too true!" I said, and then I spotted the Coles bookstore. Thank God, I had a memory from the future! Annette couldn't figure out why I was buying a book about Aviatophobia, but I quickly explained to her that the author was not really talking about a fear of flying but of taking chances. What I couldn't tell Annette was that the book was also about our alternate lifestyles.

After the book, I picked Wendy up a few small trinkets. A little engraved heart box for her to keep her earrings in, and other such things that she wouldn't buy for herself.

We swapped sides of the mall at the appointed time, and then after another hour we had lunch. Annette paid for all of us.

Over the years that followed, Annette was a large contributor to many worthy causes, but I'm proud to say that I first saw her generous nature when she was still in high school.

We shopped as a foursome to pick up gifts for our teachers and Sister Gabe, pooling our money to buy Sister Elizabeth a desk set. A rich burgundy pen set with a beautifully carved oak holder with a matching desk pad with real leather edges. We had it wrapped at the store, and we all signed our names on the card.

For Sister Gabriella, we bought a gleaming silver plated whistle from a sports store and a towel that said, "Winners, no Whiners." For our regular teachers, we found a series of nice calendars for 1975. Then with regrets, Wendy and I said we had to split. Mike and Tom were planning on taking all of the toys they had made for the kids stuck in the local hospitals up tonight, and we still had to pick up and wrap the dolls and the clothes that Ann and Rita had made for them as well as the clothes the nuns had made.

"How are you guys going to pack that all in one car?" asked Annette.

"We'll probably make a few trips," I said. Mike and Tom and Einstein had managed to make a lot of really neat wooden cars and trains and trucks.

Annette asked us to wait a minute while she called her dad.

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

Since that day Mike fixed the bus's sound system, he and Robert Denure had become pretty friendly. Mike convinced Einstein to do the repairs on the bus seats, and the two of them went every week to do ten seats together. They were still repairing them.

Well, Robert called Mike who called Tom and then Robert called the school and the next thing we knew, arrangements had been made to load everything into the Saints bus, along with six of the nuns who sang in the church choir. That part was especially cool because one of the nuns played guitar just like the Singing Nun had in the movie.

Somebody must have moved really fast, because by the time the bus pulled up at our house that evening, the back was loaded with other toys as well. Annette and Mandy were on board and Robert was driving. All the stuff that Tom had made before Einstein and I swapped lives, and all the stuff he and Mike helped make was at the O'Donnell house, along with the dolls and clothes. We made short work of loading it all up and then we took off for the school. Ann and Rita were excited, while Einstein just smiled a lot. Tom and Mike were trying to just be cool, but were sitting up at the front chatting with Robert as he drove.

At the school the rest of the doll clothes were loaded and the six nuns, one carrying a guitar climbed on board, and then from the school walked Santa Claus!

It was Father Ed, all padded up and complete with the beard. We started our journey at 6 o'clock and though there were five hospitals in London, Robert insisted on taking a ten-mile spin south to the St. Thomas hospital as well. It impressed me, it impressed Einstein, but the one with eyes the size of saucers was Wendy. Though she

had heard kids talk about Christmas and Santa Claus before, this was her first experience with the whole ritual. By the time we pulled back into the school parking lot it was close to 11.

It was a happy group of travelers that got off the bus to enjoy the snack prepared for us by Sister Elizabeth and her secretary. The irony was not lost on any of us – we were having hot chocolate and biscuits in the same room where we fought for and won Wendy's freedom.

Annette's dad drove us all back home again, but would not let any of us off until he had a promise that we would all get together at his house over the holidays for a Christmas meal. Ann was the one who said we would if Linda and Julie were invited as well.

"Of course they're invited!" boomed Robert. "I haven't forgotten how they took care of my baby that night at Beal."

We agreed to join in celebration on Boxing Day.

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

We were pretty exhausted on Sunday when we attended mass, but it was a good feeling. Even Tom and Rita attended.

Monday, Wendy and I met Einstein downtown. We still had to buy gifts for the parents, but more importantly, we had to buy something for Linda and Julie.

Einstein had suggested matching ankle chains, but I wasn't sure how practical they would be with them having to wear nylons everyday. We were having lunch at Eaton's. Wendy joked that our waists couldn't afford too many days off, but Einstein said that with as much walking as we did each day, we could all afford to splurge. So we did.

Even though I knew it wasn't the best for me, I had a thick chocolate shake, same as Wendy and Einstein. We had hot beef sandwiches and followed that up with hot apple dumplings with ice cream. I was so full that I just wanted to find the bedroom furniture department and lie down, but Wendy and Einstein kept dragging me away from the escalators.

We staggered out of the mall and headed for Simpson's, crossing King Street at the four way pedestrian crosswalk. As we passed Novak's Army Surplus, Einstein told me he was buying old war medals, a few at a time from this store and their sister store on the uptown side of Dundas Street. On one of our many talks at Linda and Julie's, I had suggested to him that he start looking at collectibles. In 1974, it wasn't a fad yet, but in another 15 years, it would be a rage and the prices would surely reflect it. I had also told him to start to buy every new comic book that he could spot. First issues only. I

remembered how pissed I was at having thrown away my X-Men comics when I had moved out on my own the first time then discovered how much they had gained in value over such a short period of time. Since Einstein was working, he could afford a little careful spending, and I told him how to protect them from finger oil and not to split any spines.

Because of his own semester finals, and the time he was spending with Mike working, we hadn't had much opportunity to get together with Linda and Julie. A fact that bothered Wendy a bit since she wanted to explore Einstein's cock a bit more. I reassured her and said we would have plenty of time after Christmas, and then as we headed up Richmond Street, looking in store windows as we walked, I spied the identical ring the lady from the CAS had been wearing. Something was clicking in the back of my mind. Ankle chains might not be practical, but I instantly recognized the name of the store as the place they had thought of Wendy and me with the necklaces. I think I might have accidentally discovered London's first gay oriented jewelry store!

Dragging Einstein in, we were instantly aware that this shop was not your average gift store. Everything was designed in pairs.

It didn't take much convincing for Wendy and Einstein to agree that we should buy Linda and Julie matching rings, for their right hand ring fingers! Wendy and I didn't have a lot of money, but Einstein came to the rescue, again.

It felt weird, to me, who had always been self sufficient, to need others to help me out, but damn it... I was a girl who just didn't have a way of earning money yet. I couldn't even baby-sit since I stayed at the school 42 weeks out of the year!

The rings were 10 karat gold in a beautiful scrolled pattern that reflected the light. We had them gift wrapped, and then went out to buy a card for the three of us to sign.

Wendy and I had already bought Einstein's Christmas present when we were at the White Oaks Mall. We still had to keep up appearances for the sake of the parents, so I bought him Eric Clapton's latest album, "461 Ocean Boulevard" which contained the Bob Marley tune, "I Shot the Sheriff." Wendy opted for something she had gotten addicted to herself listening late at night on our radio, "Barry White and the Love Unlimited Orchestra." Hey! If Einstein and I were going to have to relive the Disco Era, it might as well start off with style, and Barry White had style and a voice that made Wendy wet! That was something I would have to tell Einstein about!

Since we were done early, and Einstein had told Mike he was taking the whole day off for Christmas shopping, we bought a big tub of buttered popcorn, three sodas and sat through a special holiday matinee of "The Towering Inferno."

Special effects were way different in the 70's compared to what was to come, but even though we knew the building was obviously a miniature, we still enjoyed it and each other's company. Einstein of course had the seat of honor between us and I could swear

he was feeling Wendy up during the movie. Of course I couldn't see Wendy's hand either, and I was NOT going to reach under the tub of popcorn perched on Einstein's lap!

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

Tuesday night at 10, we headed off to St. Ursula's for midnight mass. It was quite something to see. Tom and Rita came with Einstein, and sat next to Mike and Ann and Wendy and me. Julie and Linda had come right over after their shift had finished and they had showered and changed, and rode with us. Wendy and I rode up front with Mike while Ann managed to get herself between Linda and Julie. I didn't understand what was going on, but Ann held both their hands for the drive over.

Annette and Mandy and Mr. Denure were waiting out front for us. Annette said her older sisters were arriving in the morning with their families, but could only stay the day. She said she was glad that we were all coming for Boxing Day, as Christmas was one of the worst times of the year for her dad feeling lonely and I made a mental note to pass that on to Mike and Einstein.

Mass started at 10:30 and between the Nun's choir and the School's choir we had quite a concert going. Father Ed looked great. Hell, the church looked great all decked out in garlands, and lit up with hundreds of candles. At midnight we all took communion and then the chapel bells started ringing in a glorious carillon.

After Mass, we exchanged greetings with our schoolmates and their families and of course with all the nuns and our teachers. We were pleasantly greeted by falling snow when we stepped outside. It was the perfect beginning to a perfect Christmas. I cried all the way home.

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

When we woke up Wednesday morning, the ground was covered in snow. At least four inches had fallen through the night! Wendy was still going through that "Gee Whiz" stage, as this was her first real Christmas. I had heard enough stories of her past experiences to empathize.

We ate a very light breakfast around the Christmas tree that Mike and Ann had decorated with us the day before. No artificial trees for this household! Mike had cut this one down himself!

It was just the four of us this Christmas morning. Linda and Julie had to work though thankfully they would join up with us later at the O'Donnell house. Father Ed had his own tasks to perform Christmas day and would not be able to join us at all. I had ribbed him about joining a union so that he wouldn't have to work all those Sundays and holidays. He laughed with us, enjoying the joke. Wendy and I had bought him a box of Dutch Masters cigars. He thought we didn't know about his affection for them, but

during his many visits to our room after classes, we had grown very fond and close to this man.

Mike opened the gift Wendy and I had got him. Okay, it wasn't unusual or even imaginative, a shirt with matching tie and handkerchief, but the way he carried on over it. Sheesh! What the hell did I know about gift buying anyway? Ann had been much easier to buy for. We got her a pearl brooch. We did have one surprise left for the two of them, but that we would save for last. Mike was the only one dressed, you see. Ann was still in her nightgown, and Wendy and I had thrown on flannel pajamas when we got up.

Wendy and I were spoiled rotten. Satin baby dolls, sweaters, blouses and perfume and make up!

We had picked the best cards for them, and I saw a tear in Mike's eye as he read not just the printed verse about being a father in good times and bad, but the hand written note Wendy and I had composed about what it meant to have a father who really cared and showed how much he loved you in everything he did.

Ann's card was also a carefully chosen one. It talked about mothers who were also friends, who you could confide in and count on when your back was against the wall or someone to lean on when you needed a shoulder. Our handwritten part told her how much we enjoyed spending time with her on our special days, and thanked her for being so understanding.

"We wanted to give you guys so much more," I said, "but my great plans for getting a job seem to have vanished."

"Oh, Patti-cake," said Mike. "Both of you make us so proud. I'd much rather have daughters that I can be proud of than to have all the tea in China."

"Well," I said. "There is one other gift, but it's for Mom, but really Daddy, we think you'll enjoy it more than her."

Ann's eyes grew wide with curiosity, and I ran to our bedroom and pulled the single box out from under the bed. Mike's brow wrinkled as he gazed at the fancy wrapped box, obviously as curious as Ann was. It was something Wendy and I had picked out from the new lingerie shop at the White Oaks when Annette and Mandy were with us. They couldn't believe we would or could give something like this to Mom.

Ann carefully opened the package and her eyes lit up brighter than the lights on the tree! It had taken a lot of our money, but there she was, standing up and holding it in front of her. A black widow negligee!

"Why don't you try it on, dear?" Mike asked nonchalantly, and she quickly slipped into their bedroom, appearing a few minutes later draped in sheer black folds that exposed nearly as much as it hid. The only color on it was the red rose that hooked the

two sides of the top together. Wendy and I grinned at each other as we both noticed Mike hide the swelling in his pants. Mom was nearly as nude as she was dressed. Her own excitement showing by the obvious dents her nipples made in the top. Mike got up with a bit of discomfort and with a growl, picked Ann up and closed the bedroom door behind him. Wendy and I stifled our laughter and picked up the paper and ribbons and just generally cleaned up the room.

We tried on our Baby Dolls, and commented on how we could tease our friends at school with them. They weren't sheer, but clung to the skin a lot closer than I think Ann had expected. We packed them away before anybody had second thoughts.

Even though Mike had Christmas carols playing on the stereo, we could hear the bed from their room groaning in a familiar rhythm. We discreetly turned up the music and made ourselves a cup of tea in the kitchen where Mike and Ann found us an hour later.

"You were absolutely right, girls," said Ann. "It definitely was more a gift for your father," but the dreamy glaze in her eyes told us that she had enjoyed the results as much as he had. Mike just blushed.

Wendy's gifts to me were of a more personal nature. Camisoles. In both cotton and satin with matching boxer style panties. I suspect that Wendy liked seeing me in these as much as I liked wearing them. But Wendy was overwhelmed with the gifts she had received. She loved the Erica Jong book, and I knew that soon I would be enjoying the results of her reading it. The other trinkets she adored as well as everything Mike and Ann had given her. This was a long way from the Christmases where at the best she could expect a piece of fruit, some nuts, and maybe some candy.

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

After a light lunch, we packed up our gifts for the O'Donnells and Mike just drove through the snow. The big station wagon with its V8 engine easily purred a pathway.

The O'Donnell house was all decorated and more Christmas carols were playing. We shook off our coats and took off our boots and placed our gifts to them under the tree. Actually it was the gifts for Einstein and Julie and Linda. Mike and Ann had given Tom and Rita a gift pack containing a good bottle of wine and two glasses.

It must have been a good idea, as Linda and Julie had brought the same for Mike and Ann as well as for Tom and Rita! For us "kids" though, they had brought wrapped presents.

Strange as it seems, I was actually looking forward to opening more presents! I was curious as to what Einstein had gotten for me. But first we had to drink some

eggnog. Mike and Tom spiked theirs with rum, then we gathered around the O'Donnell tree to hand out our gifts to each other.

Mike had bought a Starrett tool kit for Einstein, which was a surprise to everyone. "Can't have a future electronics engineer using junk," said Mike. I saw Einstein go misty in the eyes for a second and then he brushed his arm over his face trying to regain his composure. It had to be hard on him to be so accepted by Mike in this lifetime as a boy, a virtual stranger who happened by one day while Mike was trimming the tree. In the course of barely four months, Mike's former daughter had established a new relationship with him based on trust, friendship, and admiration.

Ann had bought him a sweater, and he gave her a big hug.

Wendy and I gave him his albums, and he grinned at me, and winked at Wendy.

Tom had made Wendy and me each a small jewelry box in his workshop, and Rita had used her sewing skills to make us both a white three quarter length terrycloth housecoat. We would certainly put these to good use for the rest of the winter! We gave them both a big hug.

From Einstein, Wendy and I got matching Tennis bracelets. In gold of course! He really shouldn't have spent that much money, but we were too happy to argue with him. Julie and Linda bought us matching watches. We had hugged everybody we could, including Einstein. Then he brought out the rings we had bought for Linda and Julie.

They read the card first, one that we had clearly written our feelings in for them. They nearly cried over the card, and came closer when they saw the rings. They didn't have to be told which hand or which finger they belonged on. Einstein said we would go with them to have them sized properly after Boxing Day.

Then came the big surprises! Mike and Ann pulled out matching necklaces for Linda and Julie, and Mike put one on Linda's neck while Ann put the other on Julie's. "We can't thank you enough for watching out for our girls," said Ann. Julie finally broke down and cried. It was Ann who hugged her, stroking her hair as Julie sobbed into her shoulder. With her other hand she reached out for Linda and the three of them just hugged. It wasn't until Linda turned that I saw the thin gold necklace now around her neck. Swinging from the bottom were two entwined hearts.

We certainly were an emotional bunch!

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

After a great turkey dinner with all the trimmings, and a small glass of wine for us 'youngsters,' Wendy and I shooed everybody out of the kitchen while she and I washed the dishes. Einstein insisted on helping. Helping himself to free feels is what I think he

meant. With the adults in the living room, mostly out of sight, he had no hesitation grabbing my ass!

“What do you think you’re doing?” I asked him.

“Feeling your bum,” he said with a smile. Then he grabbed Wendy’s! “Mmm,” he murmured. “Very nice. Both of you!”

Wendy blushed, but didn’t make any moves to get out of his reach.

Okay, so I didn’t move either. It did feel good, and different from the gentle way that Wendy touched me. Wendy and I moved closer together to sandwich him in between us. “When we get together,” I whispered, “we’ll get closer yet, and naked!”

“God, don’t tease me, Peppermint,” he said. “You two have each other. I get so horny all the time now. And of course I haven’t had a chance for any more lessons from Julie. And I wake up in the middle of the night dreaming about what you two did to me that afternoon at their place!”

“You liked that? Wait till next time, Einstein,” I said.

“We’re going to swallow your cock!” added Wendy

Beads of sweat were breaking out on his forehead. I felt bad for him, knowing he was right. Your own hand just doesn’t match the feelings of having someone else touch you or kiss you where you most want to be pleased, by someone who wants to. I didn’t know how soon we would get a chance to be alone with him, but he told us as we were finishing the dishes that Linda had given him a key to their place in the event that an opportunity came up for the three of us to get together while they were at work. But fate had other plans in store for us.

When we returned to the living room, Mike announced that he and Ann were going to a New Year’s party at the Moose lodge with Tom and Rita. He said that Linda and Julie had offered to take us ‘kids’ for the evening since they didn’t have plans of their own.

Hmmm... New Year’s Eve. Maybe Wendy and I could bring 1975 in with a bang! I looked at Einstein and watched him cross his legs to hide the swelling in his groin.

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

Rita put a couple of home made pies into the oven, and said they would be ready in time for when we got back. Got back???

“Time to walk off some of that turkey,” Tom said.

Rita had a nice stove with an auto timer, and she set the temperature to 325F and to start at 6 o'clock. "That should give us two hours," she said.

We all got our boots and coats on and walked through the fresh snow to Victoria Park. Every year, the park was lit up with thousands of Christmas lights. All the trees were decorated and there were Nativity scenes and Christmas scenes and winter scenes all through the park. Wendy and I were certainly grateful that Ann had bought us winter boots on one of our shopping trips!

We crunched through the snow, made some snow angels and laughed like a big happy family. Which I guess we were.

To be continued...