

Chapter 46

“...and then I woke-up with the wider vision of a squirrel. I checked to make sure I wasn’t still wearing the suit. Noted it was the middle of the night and leapt over to my wife’s cot and snuggled down for a few more hours.”

The psychologist jotted down some notes on his tablet computer with a stylus. “Interesting. And the last four weeks or so?”

“Much as Pistachio had experienced my memories, what I have of his are similar. It’s like someone else’s life, though I know it was my body and his part of my mind.”

“Interesting. And where is Pistachio now?”

Rick drooped his tail. “Right here. He’s part of me.”

“May I speak to him?”

“I don’t know how to let him take over if there is some way to split him off again to do that, Doctor. He is a part of me.”

The psychologist nodded. “Would you mind if I try hypnosis to draw him out? I have a few questions specifically for him.”

Rick shrugged. “I don’t believe in that mumbo jumbo, but you’re welcome to try.”

“It will only work with your full cooperation.” He started an old school wind-up metronome. It tick-tocked slowly. “I need you to relax. Just concentrate on the sound of the metronome.”

Tick tock, tick tock, tick tock.

“Clear your mind of any thoughts. Just relax.”

After a while, Rick actually started to nod off.

“Good, good,” the psychologist said in a calm voice. “I need to talk to Pistachio the squirrel.”

Rick’s tail wigwagged nervously and he chattered briefly. His eyes snapped open and he looked about with a bit of fear before locking eyes onto the psychologist.

“What have you done!?” He lashed his tail about and chattered angrily. “I worked so hard to bring him back to reality. Why am I now here instead of him?”

“Please remain calm, Pistachio” the psychologist continued in a steady tone. “I only have a few questions for you and then Rick will return.”

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Pistachio sat up and glared at the psychologist. “Now I remember you. You tried to help before, but you couldn’t draw him out. It took me hunting for him up here.” Pistachio pointed to his head with his tail. “And it wasn’t easy, doc.”

“I’m sure he’s thankful for it.”

Pistachio nodded. “So much so, he’s going to swap out his middle name for mine.”

“Yes, so he told me.”

“So why am I here?”

“I’m curious as to how you did it.”

“It’s just like he explained to you. As he already resigned himself to death, he couldn’t surface back to reality on his own. So, I basically grabbed onto him and dragged him back to the surface like a lifeguard would do to a semi-drowned swimmer. His will to live joined in at the last moment.”

“Represented by Sheila the Folf and Cantaloupe Raccoon.” The psychologist took some notes with his stylus. “Sacrificing yourselves in the process.”

“Not really. If I had sacrificed myself as you have stated, how is it we’re having this discussion now, Doc?” Pistachio wigwagged his tail in annoyance. “Once Abbie had jogged our/Rick’s memories, I knew it was his body. I was just a made-up character and the body was on loan to me. I started as an imaginary friend when he was quite young. I evolved into his furry character once he discovered the fandom. To truly ‘sacrifice’ myself would imply I had more right to our body than the one who created me. As for Sheila and Cantaloupe, if his will to live had sacrificed itself as you imply, Rick would be dead.”

“Ah, but you’re more than some made-up imaginary friend, aren’t you?”

“I’m trying to be humble, Doc. Yes, I’m part of him. Always have been, and probably always will be. For lack of a better term, remodeling with him was the only way to save him and bring the human side of him back. But, as long as you haven’t messed this up, when you wake him out of this, I’ll still be here, just under the surface helping him/us where I can, to help us better cope/live as a giant talking Eurasian red squirrel.” Pistachio whirled his tail proudly. “Without me, he’d probably spend the next several months learning how to move about as a squirrel and cope with his new body.”

“Very good. I wanted to make sure there were no hard feelings between you and him.”

“None. Why would there be any? He made me, after all. This is his world, not mine. It’s best that he’s in charge. It’s his body and mind, after all.”

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The psychologist jotted a few more notes. “Good. Now if you’ll just relax again as he did, I’ll bring him back up. Thank you for doing what I couldn’t do, Pistachio.”

“It’s my life as much as his, Doc.” Pistachio settled down and relaxed to the tone of the metronome. Soon he nodded off much as Rick had done.

The psychologist stopped the metronome and snapped his fingers. Rick’s eyes snapped open. He blinked and looked at the psychologist. He shook his head as a wave of dizziness washed over him.

“Okay, that was weird. And I’m experiencing the same kind of dizziness I use to get from taking the fursuit head off too fast.”

“Other than the dizziness, how do you feel?”

“I’m alright, despite not having any control over my body during your conversation with Pistachio.”

“You remember that?”

“Yes, and it was really eerie to have Pistachio in charge briefly while you talked to him. I hope you got the answers you were looking for. He didn’t seem too pleased to be on the surface again, so to speak.”

“Interesting that you recall the conversation.”

Rick chittered. “As he told you, he’s just under the surface. As he pointed out, I’d probably would have had to relearn how to scamper, eat, and drink without Pistachio where he is. Back when I was human, I considered myself squirrel-therian, though I never used the term itself. Pistachio has always represented that side of me.”

The psychologist jotted down a few more notes.

“So, your verdict?”

“If Pistachio could surface on his own, I’d list you as having Dissociative Identity Disorder.”

Rick gave him a puzzled look.

“It used to be called Multiple Personality Disorder.”

Rick nodded. “So, I’m nuts, huh, Doc?”

“I didn’t say that. Considering the trauma you’ve been through, physically and mentally, it’s to be expected you’d have some sort of identity issue. However, compared to how you were right after the accident, you’re close to recovery or close enough to as full a recovery as you can get.”

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“Thanks. So, no padded cell for me, huh?”

“Mr. Michaud, we haven’t locked people up for being crazy in more than a generation. If you needed treatment, we’d discuss options. But you don’t need treatment.”