

## Just What the Doctor Ordered

August 2021 – Commission

### Chapter Three

Today's the day!

I shift nervously in my seat, watching the blurry world slip past through the rear window. Mommy's driving me to the doctor's – to the doctor that is the only person besides Mommy and me who knows my little secret. To Dr. Liu, who is about to insert a tube up my nose and down, down, down into my belly...

Adult me is undeniably nervous, of course. But here in the back seat of our little car – strapped in with my tiger stuffie beside me and my paci tucked discreetly behind my face mask and my padded butt crinkling beneath me – well, I'm already half-submerged in the cotton-candy fuzz of little space. And my little self is more than simply nervous. He's scared stiff of the big scary doctor and the ouchie tube she's going to put in my nose!

I fight down a brief swell of panic, my fist clenching instinctively into Sir Shripes's comforting fur. *No, I'm fine. This is completely ordinary. People get feeding tubes installed every day of the year, and they're just fine. Mommy says it won't even hurt...*

"We're here, honey!" she calls sweetly – and I jolt out of my reverie and realize we're easing into the parking lot of doom. *No, not doom. It'll be okay, it'll be okay-* "Don't worry, honey," she tells me as she shuts off the ignition and glances back in the rearview mirror. "It'll be okay, I promise."

*How the heck are Mommies such incredible mind readers? And even when I have my mask on?*

*Easy, I think to myself as she help me out and, completely unbidden, gives me a quick hug. She loves me. And because she loves me so, she knows almost better than I do what I need.*

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Unexpectedly, in the end it's actually not the tube that gives me the most stress. It's my paci.

"Aww, it's so good you brought his binkie!" Dr. Liu beams, even as my eyes dilate in shock and sudden embarrassment upon the realization of what she's found hidden behind my mask. *Poopie, I didn't remember-* "Oh, of course," Mommy smiles – and with her hand strong and reassuring on my

shoulder, I sink slowly back into the cool plastic-covered seat of the doctor's chair. "He does love his paci! Can't get him to sleep without it most nights, to be honest. Though-" and here she breaks off. "Hmm, I don't suppose his paci will interfere with the feeding tube, will it?"

Doctor Liu smiles and shakes her head as she pulls on her second latex glove with a squeaky *snap*. "Fortunately, no," she tells us. (Or more correctly, she tells Mommy. As the Little boy in the equation, I stare up mutely as the grownups converse over my head.) "In fact, I actually recommend doing things to keep your Little boy's jaw muscles exercised while he's not using them to eat. So as long as they aren't causing him any issues with his teeth, I'd actually encourage you to let him use pacifiers and teethers and things like that any time he wants..."

And then within fifteen minutes, it's done: in a blur of fluorescent light and sterile-smelling plastic and rubber-gloved fingers pressing gently against my face. Full confession: I may have wee'ed myself a bit when the first tickling sensation began way up in my nose. Maybe. But embarrassing as it still is to use my diaper, of course it doesn't matter that much. My diaper is tucked safely away under my pants, and nobody can tell what a dribbly little accident I just had.

"No tugging on it, sweetie," Mommy admonishes as I reach up to feel the alien device now protruding from my nose. "Here, I'll show you all the care and keeping," Dr. Liu smiles, and then I'm sitting and listening like a good boy while she demonstrates how to tape it securely back along my nose, and how to hook it up for feeding, and the ins and outs of cleaning it. *Wow, Mommy's gonna have to do a lot. I hope she doesn't mind too much...?*

"Now then, I've got a few other things to go over with you," Dr. Liu tells her, and I bring my attention back to reality as they both take their seats. Mommy smiles reassuringly over at me and tucks my paci safely into my mouth before returning her attention to the doctor. "Okay, sure. Like how often to feed and those things?" "Exactly," Dr. Liu nods, and hands her a printout. "Now given his current size and weight, he should be getting at least two thousand kilocalories – most folks just call them calories, long story – every day. Maybe even twenty-five hundred if he's especially active. So, you'll see that the formula I've prescribed contains about 480 calories per liter. And that means a bit over four liters per day at minimum."

Mommy nods and lets Dr. Liu continue. "But of course, we want to take care of that dehydration, too, as well as keep his digestion regular. And so that's why you'll see some recommendations for this blend of Pedialyte and Metamucil. That's a low-calorie electrolyte replacement that will make sure he's not too dehydrated, plus a bit of dietary fiber to keep his GI tract healthy. One or two liters of that mixture per day should be plenty for now, though of course we can revisit next week

and see how he's progressing..."

I'm zoning out amid all this complicated talk. Sure, the adult part of me could definitely deal with it – but right now I'm still half-stuck in Little headspace. *Uhh... That sounds like a lot of complicated stuff. I wonder if I'll be able to taste any of it...?*

"Now you may be thinking, 'Doctor, that's a lot of fluids, isn't it?'" Dr. Liu goes on, turning in her seat and wiggling the computer mouse to wake up the PC before her. "And yes, compared with his current diet, it is. So I just want to give you a few recommendations on how to handle that, okay?"

"Um, sure," Mommy assents, pulling her chair closer and flashing me a quick smile. "I guess you mean like when and how often to feed him, and like...?" "Well, yes and no. A lot of fluid means his stomach will need time to take it all in," Dr. Liu tells her, clicking rapidly on the screen. *Poopy, too far away. I can't see what she's looking up...* "And *that* of course means you will need something to administer his feeding over a longer period of time. For active boys like Kennie, that means a backpack pump... like this."

"Ahh! Oh, that's interesting! I had no idea they made things like that. But I guess it only makes sense, doesn't it?" Mommy seems genuinely delighted, and I instinctively relax a tiny bit further, the comforting pressure of my paci against my lips helping to soothe my nerves. *Can't be too bad if Mommy likes it. And besides, a backpack sounds fun. I like my Cars backpack...* "So it hooks up like so, and runs up through like that," Dr. Liu is explaining. "I actually took the liberty of ordering one in to the local medical supply store for you, so all you need to do is go pick it up..."

"Oh, and one more thing. I'm sure you can guess what else happens when your Little one is taking in more fluids than before, hmm?"

Mommy is laughing as she turns to me with the most delightfully warm, yet condescending smile on her lips. "Hmm, I think I can imagine! My Little boy will need changes more often, won't he?" "Well, yes – or higher-capacity protection," the doctor smiles – and once again she's gesturing at the screen that I can't quite see. "I think you mentioned you're using a Tranquility product right now, correct?" "Well, yes. It's what Kennie's been using for a long time..." "Of course. But here, let me send you along home with some info on these brands, okay? Nowadays there are a lot of different options out there, fortunately, and most of them are going to be better and less leak-prone than what you're currently using..."

*They're talking about my- my diapers...* I'm blushing behind my paci, but there's absolutely nothing

to be done besides listen to Mommy and the doctor exclaim together about the wonders of high leak guards and wide crotches and refastenable hook-and-loop tapes and all sorts of things that I've never quite ventured to discuss with Mommy.

But it doesn't stop there.

"And of course I'd really recommend that you track his inputs and outputs for the first few days – just to ensure he's maintaining a healthy balance." The doctor is smiling at me again, and I squirm silently, wondering what else she has to recommend. "I'd just suggest a scale for weighing his wet diapers, and of course some means of tracking them. I've heard of some folks having great success with a potty chart of some sort: with adaptations, naturally..."

*A potty chart? But- but- Mommy doesn't want me to use the potty...*

Finally, after what feels like an interminable period of talking and form filling and brochure perusing, Mommy is finally rising and taking my hand in hers. "Well, then. Wave bye-bye to the Doctor, Kennie! Tell her thank you for being so nice to you, okay?" I nod and blush, unable to remove my mask and paci fast enough to respond in the coherent tone of the young adult I technically am. "Fank you, Thocktuh Weeoo," I manage, my eyes fixed on the floor as a wave of shy embarrassment sweeps over me. *I sound just like a toddler, don't I?*

But the doctor doesn't mind, of course. She merely smiles and waves us out – and before I know it, I'm slipping into the back seat once more and Mommy is strapping me in and we're getting ready to leave.

"Now then, baby!" Mommy is beaming at me in the rearview mirror, her face aglow with unmistakable delight and affection. "All done. And you did so well, too! I'm so proud of you..." She leans back and pats my leg lovingly before swiveling back and turning the key in the ignition. "Listen, Mommy just needs to run two quick errands now, and then we'll get you home..."

I relax into my seat as a wave of relief silently washes over me. It's done. I survived, and I'm alone with Mommy at last: alone with the person who loves me for who I am and knows just what I need. Which today means not only hugs and comforting words, but also being responsible and driving out to purchase those special things the doctor prescribed...

*(To be continued!)*