

PARADOX TWINS

A small matter of perspective

Marc Neuffer

1 JOURNAL

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Patient file: Riley Patterson

Reporting: Scott Freelin, Ph.D.

I saw a very unusual young woman in my office today. She is a resident here at the Henderson Foundation. While she is not legally required to stay here, she has made no request or attempts to leave. Her physicians and psychiatrist tell me she has no harmful psychosis and is not a danger to herself or to others.

The patient reported her name as Riley Patterson. She appears to be in her late twenties, intelligent, educated, and well-spoken. When she's impatient or irritated her dialog becomes a bit rough at the edges. She has some interesting anachronistic patterns in her speech and word selection.

Her psychiatrist says she's not schizophrenic. She has been diagnosed as having an asymmetrical delusion syndrome. Her condition doesn't fit in any of the recognized

categories. She does not have hallucinations, erotomaniac views, a grandiose self-image, or persecution complex.

There was a woman, with the name Riley Patterson, associated with the Foundation back in 2019. Those records simply indicate she was employed. Of course, she isn't the same woman. Before she is discharged, I have been asked to conduct and record a thorough interview.

2 ARRIVAL

May 19, 2165.

*<Transcriber on>***Recording**

I'm conducting an interview with Ms. Riley Patterson, age; in-determinate. Her apparent age is mid-to-late twenties. She seems in good health. She's alert and responsive.

Ms. Riley, are you currently taking any medications? No? Do you know the purpose of this interview? Very good; perhaps we can begin.

No, Riley, I'm not a medical doctor, I have a Ph.D. in Historical Aboriginal Socialization. Yes, it is a mouthful, and, yes, my mother is quite proud. Riley, you need to face the transcriber. Please, don't tap it; it's very sensitive.

Okay, Okay. Get your machine running, [tap-tap-tap], and I'll tell you the story as it happened. You'll get a first-hand account of the events leading up to the Great Shift of '28. That's 2028 to you. Yeah, I know it was a hundred and twenty-seven years ago. I was thirty-four at the time, by the calendar.

I was born in Plattsville, New York, on June 10th, 1994, so I should be a hundred and seventy years old next month. I skipped quite a few years coming here.

It started as a typical day; a workday for me. But one of me shouldn't have been there. Let me start from the beginning, or at least what the beginning was for us.

After we finish, ask the doctors how soon I will be released. Can this thing figure out the proper tense as I talk? I'll be throwing some future-perfect-past tense at it. Make sure it keeps up, book boy.

Riley

August 30, 2019, was the start of the Labor Day weekend. I'm a working girl, and I like my job. I like where it's going to take me. But I also like the break in my routine a three-day brings. Who doesn't? Well, maybe the folks who don't get one or the workaholics who get all twitchy if they're away from it for too long.

At twenty-five, I'm doing pretty good. Made it through college in the standard five years. It was a four-year curriculum, but nobody finishes a bachelor's degree in four years except the over-achievers. I saw plenty of those at school. I see them now at work, rushing, flaming, bright-light burnouts before they're thirty-five. Always trying to get five steps ahead of themselves, running like a dog whose ass is trying to pass its front end.

I'm not implying I was a slouch in college. I was in the top ten of my class at a good school. I threw my mortarboard in the air, the whole bit. Looking back, I guess I was an eighty-twenty student. Eighty percent applying myself and twenty percent, well, not always partying, just enjoying things other than books, research, writing, and 2 a.m. glazed stares at a computer screen, blah, blah, blah.

I had a few semi-serious relationships in college. None of them was a high enough caliber to bring home to Daddy.

Besides, I wasn't at school for a Mrs. degree. According to Mom, boys don't get their real brains or turn into men, until they're thirty. She married Dad when he was twenty-four. She never acknowledged the contradiction. Different times, I suppose.