“Conversation With A Q
(I Actually Like)”

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**Series:**  “Star Trek the Next Generation” and “Young Avengers”
**Pairing(s):**  Billy Kaplan/Teddy Altman a.k.a. Asgardian/Hulkling
**Spoilers:**   For “Star Trek”, you just need to know who Locutus of Borg is and you’re good. For “Young Avengers”, if you’re familiar with the Scarlet Witch, and with the alien races known as the Skrull and the Kree, that will help.
**Length:**  3, 737 words

**Rating:** G

**Summary:**  “*Picard never thought he’d ever see the day when he is rescued from Q by another Q. Much less a day where said other Q would also require their help.”*

"**Q!**" Picard startled at the scolding voice directed at the infuriating trickster, as it wasn't his own. "**Leave them be!**"

He whirled about to find its source, as did the rest of the bridge crew. Standing in front of the closed turbolift doors was a young, seemingly human, boy in a red Starfleet uniform. He was staring down the omnipotent miscreant.

Said miscreant, who was casually leaning against the captain's chair, smirked and drawled, "Yes, Q~?"

The stranger's face scrunched up in disgust. "It's Billy and you know it."

Q laughed. "If you insist... Billy."

"**I do**," Billy said with a withering glare which, for some reason, only elicited another laugh from the trickster.

Before the intruder could snap at Q, which the Picard would have loved to see, the Captain cleared his throat to interrupt. After all, the safety of his crew was in question and that takes precedence over his own self-satisfaction.

"Q, is he a friend of yours?" he asked, indicating the newcomer. His tone was teasing but he was extremely wary, quite familiar with the alien’s cruel theatrics.

Q rolled his eyes and let out a melodramatic sigh. "He's no friend of mine, Jean-Luc. But don't you worry your pretty head. He's a boring old pacifist, like you. No threat at all~!"

"Yes. Unlike a certain member of the Continuum, I can fight my enemies without causing collateral damage." Billy's lip curled up into a smirk, a dangerous glint in his eyes.

If he hadn't known any better, Picard could have sworn that Q paled at the threat. Considering that his skin wasn’t real and that he had no blood to rush from his false face, that couldn't have been what Picard saw. At least, it shouldn't have been. But looking around he realized that apparently he didn't know better because, judging by their shocked expressions, his crewmates saw this too.

Try as he might to hide it behind a nonchalant facade, at Billy's words the trickster's posture did, in fact, visibly lose all of its confidence and swagger.

"Very well, Billy." Conceded Q, only arousing more suspicion. "Let it be known that I do share... Sometimes." Before anything else could be said, Q snapped his fingers and vanished in a flash of white light.

Just when Picard thought he couldn't be any more confused by the situation, Billy—the one who had intimidated Q of all people—­let out a breath of relief and then smiled.

Not a smug or mischievous smile. No.

It was a genuine smile of happiness. It was so very… human.

Well, that's how it seemed. Picard wasn't letting his guard down based on appearances alone, not when the Q are involved. Especially not with the Q involved.

"Thank you for the rescue, Billy," the Captain said warily. "Not that I don't appreciate it but what brings you to the Enterprise?"

"Oh!" The boy startled. "I'm sorry, Captain."

His reaction and his apology only confused the Starfleet officers further. After all, the Q are omnipotent beings and therefore have no reason to apologize and definitely cannot be startled.

Picard was at a loss for words.

How could this seemingly human child be the all-powerful being that had scared off Q only moments ago?

The boy jogged down the ramp—so very like a human—up to where Picard stood in front of the command chair. He held out his hand to shake—a very human custom—and introduced himself with a shy smile.

"I'm Billy Kaplan, sir. Nice to meet you!"

Picard smiled, the kid's enthusiasm was infectious. "Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the U.S.S. Enterprise." He took the offered hand and shook it vigorously. "Though I suspect you already knew that."

"Yeah, I did." Billy looked away guiltily, taking his hand back and running it nervously through his dark hair. "I was going to meet you through the proper channels but then I heard Q was pestering you and..."

"Proper channels?" repeated Picard, baffled since the omnipotent beings he knew saw no need for decorum. "I'm finding harder and harder to believe that you're related to the Q I know."

"I'm not!" Billy snapped defensively but was immediately contrite. "Well, I am. I really don't like it, though..."

"Sounds like you have quite the story to tell. Perhaps we should move to my ready room—"

"Right! You're right. This is unprofessional..." Billy looked around the bridge, ashamed. "I'm sorry for intruding while you're all working—"

"Please don't worry yourself, Billy," said Picard in a reassuring manner. "This is, after all, a very unusual situation."

"I'm still sorry."

"Come, come, my boy." The Captain ushered Billy into his ready room, the bridge erupting into frantic whispers of gossip as soon as the doors closed behind the pair.

Picard immediately went to sit at his desk, but hesitated at his chair when he noticed the boy looking lost at the door. Billy was fidgeting nervously yet he was observing the room eagerly. It was as if he couldn't take in his surroundings fast enough. It was as if... He was in awe.

"Please, have a seat." Picard offered a little uneasily, motioning toward the chair in front of him.

Billy quickly did so, looking both relieved and unusually pleased. "Thank you, sir!"

"No need to be so formal," said Picard cordially, sitting down himself. "Picard is fine."

"Thank you, sir— Er... Picard," exclaimed Billy excitedly before bashfully correcting his immediate slip.

Picard became pensive at the boy’s contradictory behavior. He simply couldn't read the boy. Q had identified him as a member of the Continuum, had even run from him suggesting that Billy was higher in the hierarchy or simply more powerful than the trickster, yet here this 'child' was… respecting him, maybe even in awe of him: Jean-Luc Picard, a human and therefore a lower being.

It was unsettling.

"So, what brings you here, Billy?" he finally queried.

"Oh, um... Well... I need your help," the boy blurted out, evidently aware of how absurd the request would sound.

Picard was speechless for a moment.

"Curiouser and curiouser..." he eventually mumbled.

"What?"

"Forgive me but I'm confused. Are you not a member of the Continuum? How could you possibly need our help?" elaborated Picard, confirming that—yes—the question did sound absurd to the human Captain.

"It's a long story..."

"I have nowhere to be at the moment," said Picard, leaning back in his chair to emphasize his point.

"Oh, well... Um... Where to start? Um..." babbled Billy as he struggled for words. He finally settled with the topic sentence, "My father is Terran."

"What? How—" Picard wasn’t an expert in the field of Biology, far from it, but even he knew that a hybrid between a mortal organic being and an immortal being made of pure energy was... Unfeasible, to put it lightly.

"My mother gave up the Continuum for him. She's mortal now. You've probably heard of them. Dr. Vision and his wife Wanda?"

"She was a Q?!"

"Yes. And Tommy, he’s my brother, he has superhuman speed but is otherwise mortal. I, however..."

"Inherited more Q than human?" Picard couldn’t believe what he was hearing, but he was following the story easily enough.

Billy made a face. "Yeah... So much more that it eclipsed my Terran half. I don't know how it works, or if anyone knows since it's unprecedented, but technically I'm a full-fledged member of the Continuum."

Picard didn't mean to stare but he couldn't help himself, he was so astounded, and Billy squirmed under the scrutiny. "But the 'Q' genes didn't fully kick in until a few years ago, when I was fourteen..."

"Fourteen?! But that means you're only..." Picard didn't know why this hadn't occurred to him sooner. He knew that Dr. Vision and his Wife were middle aged and only had two teenage boys.

Amused, Billy quirked a brow. "...a child? Yeah, I'm only 17. A baby—a fetus—in the eyes of the Continuum."

"Then why did Q run from you?"

"That's… That’s a story for another time, Captain. This one is long enough as it is..." Billy paused, having apparently lost his train of thought. "Where was I?"

"Your powers manifested at the age of fourteen..." prompted Picard. Though he had yet to determine the veracity of the boy's tale, he couldn't help but find the story to be endlessly fascinating.

"Right! So... Having been raised a Terran, I had no idea how to control my powers. I was having accidents more and more... My family was scared and I… I was terrified."

Picard’s heart went out to the boy. "I can't even imagine—"

"I think you can," Billy interrupted, without hesitation.

That completely shattered any trust Billy had garnered from the Captain.

"What?"

"I've always admired you, Captain Picard,” the boy explained excitedly. “Because of you I wanted to join Starfleet when I grew up! That is, until my heritage put an end to that." When he finished, his mood wilted.

"I'm flattered, but how do you think I can relate?" asked Picard, the flattery not making him any less suspicious.

"Well..." Billy fidgeted, like he was worried that the Captain would not take what he said well. That in itself made Picard frown which only made the boy more nervous and...

After taking a deep breath, Billy broke the nasty cycle by blurting out, "The incident with the Borg."

A strained silence followed.

"I'm not saying it's the same!” The boy panicked. “Also I don't think it was cool or anything! I mean, I wish it never happened to you. It must have been horrible. The fear that comes with what your hand could do, or did, against your will..."

"I'm not offended, Billy,” said Picard softly but suddenly. “Merely... caught off guard. But you're right. I suppose I can relate.”

Billy let out a huge sigh of relief. The captain couldn’t help but smile at how the boy seemed to wear his heart on his sleeve: afraid to offend his role model but too honest to lie. This demonstrated nothing but good qualities.

That is, if this wasn’t an act.

“Is that why you were going to approach me, specifically, through the 'proper channels'?"

"Well, yeah…” Embarrassed, Billy’s cheeks flushed. “...and because, all in all, I'm a huge fan, sir."

Picard didn’t know what to say, so all he could come up with was a lame "Thank you."

“You’re welcome…”

The awkward silence that followed only lasted a moment before Picard prompted, "So... What happened next?"

"Wha— Oh yeah, right!” exclaimed Billy, before continuing his story. “One particularly bad night my mom told me everything. It took some convincing—I'm sure you can believe that—but once I’d accepted what she was telling me, she asked if I'd like her to contact the Continuum for help or If I'd like her to try to ask for her powers back so she can teach me. Neither option sat well with me, especially after everything she just told me… I didn't want to be more of a burden than I already was! But without help I would become an even greater burden so... I agreed she should reach out to them but not to rejoin them. I didn’t want to hurt anyone more than I already have..."

“You never asked to be a Q, boy…” Picard tried to reassure the boy. “None of this is your fault.”

"I know… But you understand that I can’t help but feel guilty.” Billy’s brown eyes went hard with an aged wisdom no one wants to see in a youth.

Picard nodded solemnly because he did understand. Not that he could deny that now as they had just established that he could relate.

Billy sighed, slumping slightly as if he was bone tired from having lived an eternity though he had only lived seventeen years. “As you can tell, they responded and, as you can guess, they were jerks about it. It took some negotiating but my mom finally struck a deal that didn't royally screw us... But the second the deal was made they took me away! I didn't get to say goodbye to anyone! Not my mom, not my dad, not my brother, not... Not anyone."

"I'm sorry, Billy..." Picard said sincerely, wishing he could do more but couldn’t fathom how he could.

"Thanks." The boy smiled gratefully. "I found my family as soon as my 'training' was complete—just before coming here, in fact—but..." His expression turned into the most heartbreaking look of sadness, "...I can't find my friend."

"How is that possible when you have the full power of the Continuum?!" Picard exclaimed. "I mean... Q listened to you and he wouldn't do that unless you were more powerful than him."

"You're right, I'm more powerful than him, which is what worries me..." said Billy, frustrated as he tried again to figure out the answer. "There aren't many ways to circumvent the Continuum's reach, and my reach is far by the Continuum's standards, yet I can't find him! My best guess is another member of the Continuum, someone high up in the hierarchy, is working on a project that's classified but... What could the Continuum be interested in that involves him, a Terran?!"

"If you can't find him, how could we?" Picard felt like he was starting to sound like a broken 19th century record.

"You're a Terran. You're a natural part of his society—his environment—so your presence would go unnoticed. Also, they don't consider Terrans to be much of a threat— No offense!" Billy added hastily.

"None taken," said Picard, rolling his eyes. "Q has rubbed that in our faces enough that we know how they view us. But I know you don't see us that way." He truly believed it, despite only having the boy's word to go on.

"I really, really don't," said Billy adamantly. "I was hoping you could look him up in your Federation databases? Maybe?"

"It's a very reasonable request so I don't see why not," agreed Picard. "Which is further proof that you are not like the other members of the Continuum."

"Aw, thanks Captain!" Billy beamed.

Picard leaned back in his chair and pressed the comm badge on his chest. "Picard to Data.”

"Data, here."

"Data, could you search all possible databases for a Terran named..." The Starship Captain gestured to Billy for the name, realizing too late he had never asked.

"Teddy— Er... Theodore Altman."

"...Theodore Altman?"

"Searching all Terran related databases now, sir. It will be completed in 2.45 seconds."

"Thank you, Data."

"Search complete. There is no Terran by the name of Teddy Altman on record—"

The crushed expression on Billy's face was heart wrenching.

"—however there is a  Starfleet cadet aboard by that name who is half Kree and half Skrull."

"Half... What?!" Billy exclaimed, thoroughly shocked. “That’s impossible!”

Picard couldn't blame the boy. He knew well that the Kree and the Skrulls have been at war for centuries. If Billy thought the boy was Terran, then to find out that not only he is not a Terran but a Kree/Skrull hybrid…

Though after discovering that humans and the Q can procreate, the idea of a half Kree and half Skrull child doesn’t seem quite so farfetched now...

"Yes. Half Kree and half Skrull. Strange... Other than his basic personal and medical information, his file is classified by  Starfleet."

"Classified?!"

"Could you please summon the cadet to my ready room, Data?" Picard asked hastily, aware they would learn nothing more from Data. The sooner they see the cadet the sooner they would get answers.

"Right away, sir."

"I... I don't understand..."

"I understand less,” said Picard in an awkward yet sincere attempt at comfort, “but we will soon enough."

Lo and behold, the door slid open and closed to admit a tall blonde into the room. "Cadet Altman reporting for—" At the sight of the young Q, his salute faltered and footsteps stumbled. "...Billy?"

Hope swelled in Billy's chest, recognizing the cadet's face. "Teddy?"

"Captain?" The poor cadet looked like he's just encountered a ghost. "I don't understand... What—"

"Teddy, it's me!" In his excitement Billy forgot to actually use his feet and suddenly appeared at an arm's length from the frightened cadet.

Teddy nearly jumped out of his skin and took a step back. "It can't be... You... That is, Billy... He... How did you..."

Picard cleared his throat, catching cadet Altman's attention. "Though I have yet to confirm his identity, he tells a compelling story that I'm inclined to believe."

Teddy looked from the Captain, to Billy's pleading face, then back to the Captain again. His expression said that he desperately wanted to believe this was the Billy he once knew, but couldn't.

He was just an outsider but Picard's heart ached at the sight of the pair, so he couldn't imagine what the two involved were going through. "Billy told me of his parents, Dr. Vision and Wanda Maximoff, and of his brother, Tommy."

"How can you know that he didn't look that up in a database?"

"He doesn't. But you'll know, Teddy." The cadet raised a brow at that, but Billy pressed on, smiling sadly. "Because I remember Tommy was an absolute douche when I came out, pointing at every passing guy and shouting 'Is he your type?'."

Teddy's eyes widened in surprise and welled up with tears.

"I remember that you were one of them. You were the only one he pointed to, could have pointed to, for whom the answer was 'yes'. But I had put all of my courage into coming out. *'We*Terrans are a peaceful and progressive species*!'* my ass..."

Billy shot a 'no offense' look at Picard, who was far too swept up in his story to be offended. Not that the Captain would have been offended, seeing as he himself agreed that prejudice is still an ailment humanity suffered from.

"My courage was all used up, so I lied. I was too scared to admit how I feel about you. I was even more scared to actually tell you how I feel. I really wish I had told you back then because I never got a chance after that..."

The cadet hesitantly closed the distance between himself and the Q. "Is it really you?" Warily, he reached out a hand and, when encountering no resistance, he cupped Billy's face.

The young Q leaned into the touch. "It's really me, Teddy..."

"I'm sure that, whatever happened, you had no control over it." More confident, the cadet used his thumb to wipe away a stray tear on Billy's cheek. "Right?"

"Right." Billy leaned forward to rest his forehead against Teddy's.

That's when the Captain cleared his throat again.

The cadet scrambled back to stand at attention. "Sir! I apologize—"

"No apologies necessary, cadet. After all, this is a very unusual situation. Right, Billy?" Picard shot the omnipotent boy a knowing look.

"Yes, sir— er... Picard," said Billy, grinning from ear to ear.

"Now, I'm sure the two of you have a lot of catching up to do but, alas, I have a ship to run. So if you'll excuse me..."

"Yes, sir!"

"In this very strange situation, and in this situation only, you may drop the formalities, cadet— oomph!" The Captain suddenly found himself with his lap full and being hugged ferociously by Billy.

"Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!"

"Er... Well... You're welcome." Picard had forgotten just how young this omnipotent being was until just now. Now that he remembered, his inability to handle kids was coming back strong so he breathed a sigh of relief when Billy popped back over to the cadet's side.

"I will cancel cadet Altman's duties for today, but I expect him to be at his post on time tomorrow," said Picard, kind yet stern.

"Thank you, sir," said Teddy, deeply heartfelt. He was beaming just as much as Billy.

"You're welcome, cadet." Smiled Picard, feeling warm and fuzzy on the inside as the youths left his ready room on foot. He leaned back in his chair to bask in the afterglow of such a touching reunion only to be startled by an unwelcome visitor.

"I think I'm going to be sick."

Q, the menace not the kid, was sitting atop his desk grimacing at the doors through which the couple left.

"What are you doing here, Q?!"

"Rela, Jean-Luc. I mean you no harm."

"You always say that." Picard ground out angrily.

"Well…” said Q, acting as though as he was reviewing his memories to confirm this fact. “Yeah, I guess I do."

"Q..."

"What, Jean-Luc? Oh. Oh yes! Why am I here?" With a snap, Q was next to Picard, leaning against the chair well into the Captain's personal bubble. "He's a good kid, Jean-Luc. Do be sure that this Teddy doesn't hurt him, hm?"

Picard was dumbfounded. Of all the reasons for his impromptu visit, of all of the creative excuses he could have come up with, ‘overprotective sibling’ wasn’t even on the list. Not even *close* to being on the list.

"What the Hell are you playing at?" asked the Captain suspiciously.

"Who says I'm playing?" Q retorted, not even trying to feign innocence. Not trying hard, anyway.

"Of course you're playing! All you do is play—" The Captain stopped short when a thought occurred to him. He had no evidence to support his sudden theory but it was so very Q that there was a possibility. "Wait, are you the one who hid Ted—"

Q pressed a finger to the human's lips, shushing him. "What can I say, Jean-Luc?" With a snap, he was suddenly leaning against the closed doors. "I'm warming up to this whole 'having-a-little-brother' business."

"But how could you—"

"Pull the wool over my 'messiah' of a baby bro's eyes?" Q griped, like a brother jealous of a successful sibling. "He still thinks like a human. Linear. So very linear. I have to take advantage of this before he learns better."

"Dear God…” Picard groaned. “Leave the poor boy alone, Q!"

The trickster grinned wickedly, waving daintily at the Captain. "See you later, Jean-Luc."

The Captain got to his feet and stormed over towards the smug Q.

"Stop coming back..." He trailed off when he realized he was gone.

"Well... It's good to know there's one good apple in that rotten bunch."

With a sigh, Picard activated his desk's console to research Dr. Vision and his family before returning to the bridge. A couple words into the first file, he suddenly realized that Q had dropped an extraneous bit of information.

"'Messiah'?"

**THE END**