
Subject: Re: Winds of Change
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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/18/2007 5:16 PM

Thursday, August 16, Afternoon, Tracy Island

"John, I'd like you to meet Anna Hanson." The picture of John in his IR uniform had been replaced by a video screen showing John with a background of blinking lights. "Mrs. Hanson, meet my son, John."

"Ms. Hanson." John looked at his father. "How's Tyler doing? I saw him eating cake at Virgil's party."

Jeff sighed. "Much better than a few days ago. He's eating again and keeping it down. I was pretty worried for a while there, though. Dianne had been considering bringing Ms. Hanson on board to help with Callie and Elise before this. I called her and asked for her help with Tyler. She came here instead of asking me to bring him to the mainland."

"And I got several surprises while here. Including an explanation of why you left NASA. Get Tyler to tell you the story." Anna leaned forward in her chair. "I wanted to talk to you because I understand you are the brother closest to Tyler. Had you noticed anything?"

"Yes. He was too well-behaved when I visited him in LA."

"Maggie told me. Any time a kid wants to go to bed early any mother worries." John nodded and Anna continued. "How was he after the tsunami?"

"He kept getting quieter and quieter, and eating less and less. He's always been a picky eater so I didn't notice it at first. But he started losing weight."

"Do you do things together a lot?"

"We usually do things together whenever I can. I always play pinball with him the first night I'm home." John hesitated a second then went on. "The last time I was down, I'd agreed to have dinner with Kat. Tyler wanted to play pinball the same night. He was pretty upset when I said I couldn't. He hasn't mentioned it since then, though."

"Gordon told me about that," Anna commented.

"Gordon?" John looked surprised. "How did he get involved?"

"Apparently Kat went looking for you one day. She asked Tyler where you were and got the brush-off. According to Gordon, Kat said she was being friendly to Tyler but he was rude. Tyler told Gordon Kat was making 'goo-goo eyes' at you and she was only trying to be nice to him in order to get on your good side. He doesn't like her. By the way, Gordon said he has already talked to Tyler about his behavior, so please don't bring it up. It's been handled for now. He didn't talk to

Kat about her behavior. I met her over lunch yesterday and I want to talk to her later to see what she has to say about this. Apparently Tyler has met and liked all of the other new hires. He's done things with all of them outside of the normal interaction at parties and such. But not Kat. And Alex hasn't been all that impressed with her either, although he likes everyone else."

Jeff was surprised. "I hadn't realized there was a problem with Kat."

"There isn't, not really. But the others have done things with your two youngest boys. Kat hasn't. It's not that she's done anything wrong; it's more like she's missed opportunities. Right now Kat is not a problem. Tyler's feeling that she's coming between him and John is the problem. And we need to work on Tyler's side of it before we work on Kat's." Anna looked thoughtful for a moment. "John, when are you due back here?"

"September first. Do you want me to come back sooner?"

"No, for two reasons. I don't want Tyler to feel he can misbehave and get you to come down to be with him, and I want more time to figure this out. I need to talk to Kat as well as to Tyler and Gordon again. Does Tyler talk to you while you're up there?"

"We email, but we don't use the communications set up. That's for IR business only."

"What about regular phone calls? Are you set up for those?"

Jeff hit his head with his hand. "Talk about overlooking the obvious. I never thought about letting Tyler call you!"

Anna raised an eyebrow. John was amazed how much polite disbelief she could put into that one movement. "No one here ever wants to talk to anyone on TB5?"

John answered. "When we started out, Alan and I would call home once a day using the IR communications system you're on now. Sometimes someone would call me, just to talk. It kept me in touch with everyone. Alan and Tin-Tin used to talk a lot when he was up here. When we started to worry about someone tracing our transmissions, we cut back on the number of calls and usually used email for anything not IR related."

Jeff picked up the subject. "Before Thunderbird Five was operational, we had to set up our own communications satellite to allow cell phone calls, or any other sort of long distance communications to and from Tracy Island. We're just too far from anywhere else. We lease part of it to NOAA and to various communications companies. A security protocol was put into it to recognize when the cell phone being called was for whoever was on TB5. A quick code punched in by the person on duty would let the satellite know what phone was there. The satellite would do a security check on any incoming calls to that phone, then send the call on. As far as the phone network is concerned, the cell phone is on the island. A program is also in place to have the satellite detect when the emergency call frequency is in use. It automatically transfers personal calls to voice mail."

"It also helped hide the Thunderbirds from any other satellite surveillance while we were building Five. But now Five handles that. We really haven't used the satellite for anything in quite a while

except for the usual phone traffic. The system hasn't been updated for some time. I need to talk to Brains to see if we need any upgrades. But as long as they aren't talking about IR business there shouldn't be any problems with them talking on the phone."

"Does Tyler have his own phone?"

"No. I didn't want the kids to have a phone until they were older. Dianne agreed with me on that. It's not like we need them to have phones to keep in touch with them while at school or visiting friends. Plus, we had some problems with the older boys and cell phones."

"What, Scott was on the phone all the time with his girlfriends?"

John cleared his throat which sounded suspiciously like a laugh.

Jeff grinned and continued. "No. Now Virgil's girlfriends were a different matter. But someone got Gordon's cell phone number when he was eight. The guy was smart; he only called once a week or so and he made friends with Gordon. He knew who Gordon's scout leader was, who the pastor of our church was, the name of Alan's favorite stuffed animal, everything. So Gordon figured he must be ok. It was 3 months before we found out what was happening. He was trying to get Gordon to meet him somewhere and bring Alan."

Anna whistled. Jeff nodded. "I was out of town and Virgil overheard him on the phone. Virgil called me in Paris and I was on my way home in a half hour. After I'd called the police."

"Mrs. Magnusson was staying with us. Unfortunately, Mrs. Mags was out shopping that night and Scott was at football practice," John added. "Dad told Virgil not to let anyone in the house until Mrs. Magnusson was there. Virgil made the police wait outside for three hours until they found her. He didn't let the FBI guy inside either."

"Good for him."

"That's what the FBI agent said. He told Virgil he'd get him a job as an agent anytime he wanted. Virgil strutted for a week. When he wasn't being terrified." Jeff took a deep breath. "This could have happened without Gordon having a phone. But the phone made it easier. Dianne and I have considered getting Cherie her own phone for her next birthday. She is getting to the age where calling friends is important and is old enough to be responsible. But not the boys."

"Could Tyler call John from a household phone?"

"Sure. We have three different lines that can be picked up on any of the phones around here. There's one in my office, another in the sick room, our bedroom, the kitchen and a couple of others. He could use any of them. We just never thought of that."

"And, of course," John added, "I could call him."

"OK. I don't want Tyler feeling he can get whatever he wants if he's sick. I do want him to feel secure. So I would like you to call him just to talk for a bit. Make sure he knows he can call you. Don't call him more than every two or three days for now. But make sure he knows you're thinking

of him."

John nodded. "I should be reassuring. And this is just a normal, everyday sort of call. I'm not checking up on you or anything."

"Exactly. Ask about the kittens. I have a feeling that will be a major topic of conversation for a while. Later, when the phone system is secure, get him to tell you about showing me Thunderbird 3." Anna cocked her head. "By the way, how did you feel during the trouble with Gordon? You must have been about ten?"

John thought for a moment. "I wasn't sure what was happening. It was exciting, with the police car out front with its lights on. Gordon and Alan kept sneaking looks at it out the window. Virgil just sat there watching them and looking stubborn. He made me stay with Gordon when he took Alan to the bathroom. He wouldn't let him go alone. We all fell asleep on the living room couch. The next day we didn't go to school. Then Dad came home early and he was crying and hugging us. Scott and Virgil were really jumpy for a while. Scott almost quit football. Virgil played the piano a lot instead of going out with friends."

Anna looked at him and said softly, "John. I didn't ask how everyone else felt or what they did. I asked how you felt."

John froze for a second. Then slowly, as if he had to hunt for the words and drag them out, he said, "It was exciting. I knew Virgil was scared but I wasn't sure why. Then I realized Dad was scared, too. I tried to stay out of everyone's way. Whenever I'd been upset before, I would go look through my telescope. But I couldn't concentrate on it, so I sat by the window and just looked out at the stars. Even on the cloudy nights. Then we moved to Grandma's and I felt safe again." He looked surprised as if he hadn't realized he'd felt that way until he'd said it.

Anna turned back to Jeff. "Is this why you moved to Kansas?"

"Partly. We'd had some trouble with the press before this and I had considered moving the family to Kansas then, or just sending the boys to Grandma's for a while. Most of the press coverage had died down by the time this happened; this stirred it up again. I thought about sending the kids to private boarding schools, but I didn't want them to grow up without each other, or without me. They'd already lost one parent; I didn't want them to feel like they'd lost the other. I didn't want to break up the family. The boys supported each other. And," Jeff smiled, "I'd have missed them."

John looked out at Anna from the screen. "Do you always analyze the whole family like this?"

"Yes. I do work with trauma patients. Any sort of trauma affects the whole family. Besides," Anna grinned, "you meet the most interesting people. I think that's enough for one day though. I do want to talk to you some more when you get back to earth."