

Thursday, April 26, 2068, 1:45 p.m., enroute to Christchurch in Tracy One.

The air in the cockpit was strained as the two men flew westward. John was itching to ask Christopher what had happened. He had an idea; his father would usually deputize Scott to fly someone to or from the island and for him to be sent, especially during lunchtime, was highly unusual. That meant this had some significance that only he would know.

Christopher, for his part, was feeling miserable. He had put on a brave front, and tried not to blame Jeff Tracy for his dismissal, but the words they exchanged still smarted, and he still felt it was all inherently unfair. Not only that, he missed Asterix. He was beginning to think that leaving the cat behind wasn't a good idea, not because he thought Kyrano wouldn't take good care of the furball, but because he was fond of the little bugger.

Finally, John could stand it no longer. They didn't have much farther to fly and he wanted to know. He turned to Christopher and asked, "So, what happened?"

Christopher glanced over at John, then turned his attention out the cockpit's windshield. "I'd rather not talk about it," he said, the words coming out clipped and much more harsh than he intended.

John made a deduction. "Were you in the dining room when my father and I were chatting?"

Chris started, and John grimly thought, ~Gotcha!

"Well, if you must know, yes, I was. I overheard you talking about your... your stepmother's indiscretion."

"And?" John asked, challenging the man.

Christopher scowled and his voice turned angry. "And it was not fair! Your stepmother should have been subjected to the same treatment I was! And for your father's shortening my discipline? That was only to assuage his guilty conscience!"

John could see that this man, disgruntled as he was, might pose a security threat of an entirely different kind. So, he decided to tackle the subject head on.

"Do you know the situation my mother was in, Jordan? Do you?"

This brought Christopher up short. "Not entirely, no," he admitted.

"She was about to come face to face with her own uncle. My Grandma Parkhurst's brother. Someone who she has known and who has known her all her life. Someone who was going to recognize her no matter what she did to try and camouflage who she is," John explained, his voice tight. "He's also a very old and dear friend of my father, and was the one to recommend Dianne for the post with us."

He paused to gather his thoughts for a moment. "This is a man that my father trusts, and has trusted for years. Now, before you go saying, 'Well, why didn't he tell this man sooner', it's because very, very few of my father's most trusted friends know about International Rescue. It's to protect them from people who might try and get to us through them. My father has enemies, people willing to kill for our secrets. Doctors, lawyers, accountants; those kinds of people can't defend themselves well against these enemies. So he keeps them in the dark unless he absolutely has to tell them."

"Dianne... Mom knows this, and she had to make a decision. Tell him upfront, or don't tell him and run the risk of him recognizing her anyway. She didn't have much time to decide or enough time to ask for instructions. Telling him was actually safer, since then he knew what was going on and wasn't going to be speculating about it out loud. He knew he had to keep quiet, and Mom knew he would. Why? Because she knew him and trusted him to. So, she seized the moment."

"But..." Christopher tried to interrupt, "it was still a breach of security! And your father can't afford to play favorites."

"Technically, yes, it was a breach. But it was a minimal one, a calculated one, and a decision made consciously, based on the people involved. Believe me, if that man had been anyone but Uncle Drew, Mom wouldn't have said a word." John looked forward. "Contrast that with your own 'indiscretion'. Caught off guard, forgot the protocol, talking to a stranger whose very purpose was to get a 'story', to plaster our secrets all over the news. Which one would you say was the bigger breach?"

"I wasn't aware of the entire situation," Christopher muttered. "Still, he wasn't being fair..."

"Who said he has to be?" John shot back. "It's his organization. He calls the shots, he makes the rules. But, seeing as he knew he really couldn't justify keeping you under discipline when he knew he couldn't really discipline his own wife, he cut back your sentence." John snorted. "Think about it. If you were the CEO of a company and your wife were, say, head of your I & M department, and she came in late to work three times because she had a meeting with some hardware supplier, could you give her the same dressing down and docking of pay that you'd give someone on your assembly line floor who did the same thing because he had a hangover? I don't think so. It's like comparing apples and oranges."

Christopher had nothing to say to this. John sighed and said, "Look, the only reason I'm hashing this out with you is because I can see you're disgruntled about the whole thing. I felt you really needed to know the big picture. I think, that when you think over what I've said, you'll realize that my dad was being generous to you." John stopped, then called into his microphone, "This is Tracy One to Christchurch Tower, requesting permission to land."

From Tikatu 8/1/2005