

Delayed Fallout, pt. 2

"There wasn't enough room for Thunderbird One to set down," she began, her voice distant, as if reciting something that had happened to someone else. "Scott got down t' within about three meters befoah Ah bailed."

They were walking slowly uphill, stirring up the grass as they went, Dianne looking back every so often to try and gauge where everything was. Finally she stopped, one meter to the left of a flattened, rotting tree stump. "Heah. Heah's where Ah landed. God, it was cold! An' it was dark. All Ah could see was th' whahte o' th' snow, an' th' whahte on black o' th' trees, th' dark angry gray o' th' skah, an' th' black mess that was th' helijet." Her mind's eye brought her back to that time, and she shivered as if she was cold. "Th' snow was still falling, coverin' everythin' on th' ground, making mah depth perception useless. Ah still jumped. Once Ah reached th' ground, Scott threw down mah medikit."

Jeff looked around at the clearing from this point of view and agreed silently that Scott could not have put down, not with his wings out. Nor could Virgil have dropped the pod. He glanced at Dianne, who was crouched down, as if she had just jumped from Thunderbird One's belly. He was about to put a stop to the whole proceedings when she stood, one arm extended but not pointing. Then she walked quickly back down the hill a bit, bearing to her left.

"Heah's whayah th' fuselage was."

Jeff could see the patch of bare ground, still dark with oil and other fluids that had leached into the soil. The bare spot wasn't big enough to indicate the helijet's entire form, but that didn't matter to Dianne. "Th' doah was off, an' th' entryway was crumpled, but Ah still could climb inside. Ah shone mah flashlaht around an' called foah Elise."

She walked down the hill a few paces, passing him, her mind still in the moment three months ago. "She was heah, next t' you. She had broken ribs, an' she was cold, but my first priority was... you."

Uttering the pronoun seemed to bring her back into the here and now, and she took a deep shaky breath. "Th' doah an' some o' th' seats had fallen on you. You don't know how happy Ah was t' feel yoah pulse! Ah ran mah medical scannah ovah you an' read off th' injuries. Theyah were so many. You were gray. You were hypothermic. You had a concussion, an' broken bones, an' internal injuries. Ah tried t' bury mahself in mah work, tried t' be th' professional. It worked some..." She stopped and took a deep breath. "Ah was able t' tear mahself away long enough t' prepayah Elise foah transport. Ah got her ready an' Gordon, Brandon an' Dom came down. They helped me put her on an A-grav an' Brandon an' Dom took her up t' Seven's sickbay. Gordon stayed behahnd t' set up th' winches."

She paused, a long silence that concerned Jeff. When she spoke again, her voice was hesitant and very low. "Ah almost lost it heah. Twice. Two tahmes Ah saw you as mah husband an' not

mah patient. Th' first tahme was befoah we sent Elise up. Ah begged you not t' die on me. The second tahme was when Ah was gettin' ready foah th' boys t' lift th' debris off o' you. Ah was goin' ovah mah equipment an' suddenly, you were mah husband again. Scott got me through that one. Tole me not t' give in oah give up. Tole me Ah had t' be strong, foah you, foah everyone. He helped put me back on track. Then Brandon came back down... an' he an' Gordon started liftin' th' debris off o' you. An' Ah got too busy t' think 'bout anythin' but bein' a doctor."

She wrapped her arms tightly around herself again. "Ah stayed with you in th' surgical bay all th' way t' New York, an' had t' disguise mahself a bit t' help bring you down t' th' ER. Brains tole me Ah had t' get mah drawl undah control. It was hard, but Ah did. Then... Ah had t' leave. It was th' hahdest thin' in th' world t' leave you theah at Mount Sinai, t' leave you theah in th' hands o' strangeahs. About broke mah heart. But Ah did it, an' Ah chivvied Virgil t' let me off at th' penthouse so Ah could put in mah appearance as Missus Tracy. Th' bad weathah had turned cooperative bah then, workin' foah us an' not against us lahke it did heah. Scott, who was followin' in One, dropped Gordon off so's Ah wouldn't be bah mahself. Good thin', too. Ah needed his support. Ah needed everyone's support. 'Cause Ah was so damn scayahed Ah was gonna lose you, lose mah beloved husband... lahke Ah lost Rick. An' Ah knew... Ah knew Ah wasn't strong enough t' go through that again."

tbc....

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