

Sunday, May 20th, Tracy Island, Lunch time.

Elise rubbed her tired hand across her forehead. The headache looming in the back of her brain was threatening to burst forward at any moment. She inhaled deeply, then let it all out in a huff. Looking at her surroundings, she decided that Thunderbird One's interior wasn't as welcoming and, well... as cozy as Thunderbird Two's. Of course, now she'd be lucky if she could tell them apart. Sometimes it seemed as if the two machines were melded into one.

"Cross training? Whose bright idea was that?" she said aloud to herself.

Since the announcement had been made that she was to begin cross training on TB1 as well as continue training on TB2, Elise had been more tired than she'd ever been, more confused than she'd ever been and, to top it all off, she was now more burnt out than she'd ever been. "Flying used to be fun! What the hell happened?" was another thought spoken aloud. She knew exactly what the answer was: Scott Tracy. Sure, he was a great pilot and a great teacher, but did he have to be such a great pain in the rear?

Elise thought back over the last few days. She had read and re-read chapters of both manuals of One and Two and found herself mixing the two aircraft up. Not good! When Scott had first shown her the controls of One, she'd told him he was nuts.

"Are you SERIOUS? The ASI says 15,000 mph? That's ridiculous!" She smiled, as she remembered her statement and Scott's reaction.

"I'm VERY serious. Yes this 'Bird can reach that speed. I need to get to the disaster zones ASAP and assess the situation. I need a craft that can do the job, and I need it running at 110 percent, 24/7." His stern look had told Elise that it was best if she kept any further comments to herself for the moment.

The training had gone on like this every day. She'd question something and Scott would all but bite her head off. He was stressed because she had to split her time between Thunderbird One and Thunderbird Two, and yet he needed her to be a fully checked out pilot on One in less time than it would normally take. Elise was giving both aircraft everything she had. Unfortunately, she was now thinking she'd run out of everything she once had.

A sudden noise brought her back to the present. "Ready to try this again?" It was Scott. He was not happy and hadn't been since the practice flight earlier that morning.

Elise had powered up too fast; her launch was sloppy and the whole "horizontal-to-vertical-flight" changing thing had thrown her for a loop. She'd gotten the nose too far down once she'd attained horizontal flight and Scott had "reminded" her of it at least 3 times even after she'd corrected the problem. Wing retraction had been okay, and her vertical landing on an open strip on the other side of the island had improved, but tilting One and reversing her back into her launch bay had proven tricky. Needless to say, the ensuing conversation between teacher and student had been

a very heated one!

"Yeah, sure, whenever you're ready," Elise replied.

"Well, don't look too enthusiastic. You might have to do this for a real emergency someday."

That did it! She was done! She mentally counted to ten before she spoke. "You know what? I've had it up to here!" she said loudly, a hand flattened out by her brow indicating just exactly where she'd 'had it' to.

"I'm done, Scott! I can't do this any more today! I need some food, so I'm going to lunch!" With that, she unbuckled her seat belt, and clambered out of the aircraft. She paid no attention to the yells and comments coming from Scott.

Without turning to look at him, she simply said, "Fly the damn thing yourself!" and walked off.

Scott muttered his own "Damn" and watched her go. He didn't want to be the bad guy, but he needed to get her trained. He knew she was giving it all she had, and in spite of himself, he admitted that she was very good and handled his 'Bird almost as good as he did. But there were times he didn't know whether to hug her or hit her! Memories of his Air Force days with her danced across his mind. "Good luck this afternoon, Virgil," Scott muttered aloud.

From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 10/9/2005

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