

Sunday, May 20, Tracy Island. Early evening.

Although the training session with Elise had ended a while ago, Virgil was still putzing around on Thunderbird Two. He always found something to fiddle with or re-check. It was more habit than it was routine. His mind wandered back over the events since lunchtime.

Elise had been tired all afternoon, and although she made small, very subtle errors, he had caught them. He'd not said anything to her, knowing how stressed she'd been, but he certainly was going to say something to Scott! No one needed to be pushed as far as Scott was pushing her and Virgil knew that his brother knew it, too! Virgil's mind then wandered back to the after lunch walk he had shared with Elise.

****flashback****

"So how are you adjusting to life here--besides all the training that is?" Virgil asked as they walked slowly along the shoreline.

"I'm getting there, slowly, but getting there all the same." Elise replied, looking out to sea.

"That bad, huh?"

She glanced sideways at him, noticing how the wind ruffled his chestnut hair. "Well, it's not THAT bad!" She laughed. "It's just SO different from New York. It's like a whole different world out here. It's almost like it's not real. It's paradise, but with a rescue squad attached!"

Virgil laughed out loud. "I guess I've never seen it like that! It's just 'home' to me."

They continued walking and chatting and laughing until Virgil steered the conversation towards a more serious topic. "Elise? Can I ask you something personal?"

"Sure. What?"

He stopped walking and she did the same. Elise looked at him, waiting for his question. "Are you still having nightmares about the helijet accident?"

She averted her eyes for a split second, caught off guard. She recovered quickly and answered, "No, not about the accident. I know I still have a few fears to face about it, but the nightmare stopped a while ago."

Virgil understood those fears. He'd faced a few himself over the years, but there was still one question he needed an answer to. It had been bugging him since the night he'd heard her scream in the guest room and she was in the throes of a nightmare. He'd been there to comfort her, but she'd said some things that didn't make sense to him.

"Why do you ask?" Elise said.

Virgil looked softly at her, seeing her honesty and trust in her eyes. "I was just remembering the nightmare you had when you were in the guest room; you seemed to be scared of something other than that crash."

She seemed quite surprised that he'd still be concerned about that night. "Virgil, that was ages ago!"

"I know, but I still think you're bothered by something. I'm just concerned, that's all."

Elise started to stiffen. "Concerned that I'm going to crack under all this training pressure?"

~Damn it! This isn't how I want this to go. "No! That's NOT it. I feel like something is holding you back, Elise, and I want to help, if I can."

The anger she had started to show deflated and she remained silent for a few moments. She knew eventually she'd have to share with someone other than Callie. The sound of the waves lapping on the shore suddenly became louder and so did the silence between them. "Okay, you really want to know?"

"Yeah, I do."

"Fine. I'm ...," she drew in a breath before continuing, "I'm terrified of drowning. I still have nightmares about that day... that day when my parents... when they died." A sudden rush of unexpected emotion threatened to spill out of her in the form of tears, and she turned away from Virgil, who clearly saw that she was struggling. He took a step closer to her, then she continued talking. "That whole tsunami brought it all back again. If it hadn't been for your dad, I would've drowned. The water got me, and he grabbed me just in time. It was like being 9 years old again, struggling to stay above the water, watching the waves suck my parents under."

"Elise, I'm so sorry, honey." Virgil sincerely meant it, and just hearing him say it so compassionately almost broke her. But she was tougher than that and held it together. She turned back around to look at him.

"Virgil, I feel like I escaped death when I lost them, and I wasn't meant to. It's like death or fate is chasing me down. I've spent years flying and staying as far away from water as possible. Even if I had to fly over it, I took the route with the most land, and now I'm surrounded by water and I'm scared."

Virgil saw before him a frightened young woman who was trying to stay brave and mask her fears. He instinctively drew her close and put his arms around her in a comforting gesture which she accepted willingly. They stayed this way for a while, neither one speaking. Virgil was the first to eventually say something. "Do you think you'd like to talk this over with Dianne?"

"Maybe. I dunno. Maybe I'm just overreacting because I'm tired and stressed, and don't want to fail anyone."

"You won't fail, Elise. I'll make sure of it. Besides, Thunderbird Two told me she's starting to like the way you handled her!" He smiled and winked at her and she laughed a little.

"Yeah, I'm sure she did. Speaking of 'her' we'd better get some flying time in today."

"Yes, we should." They started making their way back towards the villa.

"Thanks Virgil, for listening and for understanding, I didn't mean to dump it all on you like that."

"S'okay, I have knack for getting 'dumped on'!"

They both laughed out loud, the tension from earlier now gone. The afternoon continued with training, the nightmare conversation was not brought up again. But Virgil noticed how it had affected her and he noticed how tired and irritable she became when things didn't go as smoothly as she wanted when flying Two.

****end flashback****

Virgil came back to the present. Glancing at his watch, he decided now was the perfect time to have that little chat with Scott! Elise was becoming a great pilot and he'd be damned if he let his brother's bullying and pressuring bring her down.

revelations by FrankieCTB2 Sent: 10/15/2005
