

Thursday, March 15, 2068, 1 p.m., Tracy Island

Christopher finished his mopping of the deck plating in Thunderbird 2. Wiping his forehead, he looked around. "Come on, Christopher," he muttered to himself, "pull yourself together."

Virgil, who was restocking the oxyhydrite tanks, was also keeping an eye on the new recruit. He noticed that Christopher was vigorously working on Thunderbird Two's maintenance duties. Working a little too vigorously.

Time for that talk I promised myself I'd have with him, Virgil thought as he stowed the last tank. He pulled two bottles of water from the newly-stocked fridge and headed out to the flight deck.

"Here, Chris. Time to take a break," Virgil said with a smile, holding out the bottle of cold water.

Christopher's head whipped round, startled. Then he saw his colleague approaching, and Virgil saw him visibly relax.

"Thank you, Virgil." Christopher accepted the bottle, then sat down. He opened the bottle and took a long swig. "That is good stuff, what do you put in it?"

"Nothing, really. We import it from New Zealand," Virgil said before taking a drink. They sat quietly for a moment, then Virgil asked, "What's that floor done to you lately? You seem to be giving it a brutal mopping."

"Was it that noticeable?" Christopher looked at Virgil. "I've seen things that would make your Grandma's hair curl, but death is something I've never experienced before."

"Hmm. It's hard, isn't it? Especially when it's someone you've tried your damndest to save," Virgil observed, his voice full of understanding.

"Maybe it's the stereotypical British reserve." Christopher looked at his feet. "But I was always taught not to express my feelings. It was a hangover from my father's upbringing."

"A military man?" Virgil asked.

"No!" Christopher laughed. "He was a bank manager. But his dad was in the RAF, so was his dad before him."

"Ah. I see now. I do understand. My dad was military. Air Force and Space Agency. He brought us up with that 'stiff upper lip' attitude, too. Especially after our mother died. He grieved silently for years," Virgil said, sitting back against a bulkhead. "He expected us to suck it up, too. And to some extent, we do. Or we did. Now our stepmother makes sure we have an outlet when we need one."

"Can I ask you something?" Christopher took another swig. "What did Scott think of us RAF people? You know, when he came over for an inspection tour?"

"I don't know. He never really talked about it. At least not to me. He might have talked about it to Dad, them both being Air Force and all," Virgil said mildly. "And even if he did, he'd probably not have been complimentary. Our grandmother has drummed it into our heads that if we're not going to say something nice, we're not to say anything at all." Virgil rolled his eyes and took another mouthful.

"Belinda and me had a lot in common." Christopher's eyes misted over. "We knew the same parts of the world. Probably knew all the same places to get a good bag of chips, or the best pubs. I wish I could have gone back there with her." He smiled faintly. "I wonder if I can ever learn to be detached and in control like you established people." Christopher wiped his eyes. "Kat was beside herself about those orphans."

"What would you have done if you had gone back into the surgery with Belinda?" Virgil asked.

"I wouldn't know anything to do," Christopher admitted. "All I'd be good for was to hold hands and try and encourage her, but that wouldn't have been very good at the time."

"You're right, there. There was nothing you could have done but encourage. Which you did before she got there. But it wouldn't have changed the outcome, would it? And you might have even... delayed things. So, it was best that you didn't go back." Virgil sighed. "As far as being detached and in control? You'll learn, through practice. You'll learn that in a rescue, you live in the here and now. Get out the next victim. Follow the plan. You can't take time for grief or even joy until it's all over. And you do learn to count your successes, like Dom said. Otherwise, you get overwhelmed by the loss."

Christopher sighed. "You are right. It will take me some time to get used to." He looked at Virgil. "I'd better get on with learning to fly this craft, and looking after Asterix. I won't let any of you down." He finished his water. "I'm feeling rather peckish."

"You should be," Virgil said, looking at his watch. "It's past time for lunch. C'mon. Let's get something to eat and I'll schedule you for the simulator at four. Will that work for you?"

"Perfect." Christopher got to his feet. "Thanks for the talk. I needed it."

"You're welcome. Anytime," Virgil said, meaning every word.

Post by TheWrongTrousers and Tikatu on 10/11/2004

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