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Subject: Re: Growing as a Team  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 15:29:10 GMT  
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Thursday, March 15, 2068, 3 p.m. local time, somewhere over the Pacific (having crossed the IDL)

"How's everybody doing back there?" Dianne called from the cockpit.

"Fine!" Alex replied, not looking up from his computer game.

Tyler sighed. "I'm bored!" he whined.

"Well, then. Read your book!" Cherry chimed in.

"I already did," Tyler continued.

"Shhhh!" Lisa cautioned in a low tone. "Don't wake your father!"

"Too late," Jeff muttered from the chair where he had been napping. "Tyler, find something to do. Take out your computer game, your music player, whatever. But find something to do."

"Young man, perhaps your grandmutter and I could play cards wid you," Lena suggested, catching Lisa's eye and winking.

"I think that's a fine idea!" Lisa said with a grin. "I think we have Dutch Blitz back here." She got up to find the game.

"Dutch Blitz? I don't tink I know dat one," Lena said.

"Oh, you'll like it! It's lots of fun!" Tyler eagerly assured her.

"Can I play, too?" Cherry asked, moving to one of the four seats that now faced each other.

"I guess so," Tyler replied, less than enthusiastically. He leaned over to confide to Lena, "She always wins."

"Not today, Spud. Grandma Parkhurst is in the house!" Lisa said triumphantly as she brought back the card game. Sitting down, she began to explain the rules of the game to Lena, Tyler and Cherry jumping in to help, until poor Lena was totally confused.

"Don't worry. We'll play a couple of practice hands and help you learn," Lisa said hastily. She dealt out the stacks of cards and the game began.

Elise smiled as she watched the game progress. She was not very comfortable, not because she was feeling any pain, or because the Tracys hadn't made her welcome, but... well, she didn't really know. Jeff had gone back to sleep and was snoring slightly. Alex was totally absorbed in his computer game, and this left Elise at loose ends and with time to think.

"You're mighty quiet back there, Elise," came Dianne's voice. "Why don't you come on up here and keep me company?"

"Sure," Elise said. But as relieved as she was to have something to do, part of her was reluctant to make her way to the cockpit.

This is ridiculous, she thought. Dr. Tracy's not going to bite you! So get up and go!

With a deep breath, she heaved herself out of her seat and slowly made her way to the cockpit. As she stood between the pilot and co-pilot seats, she looked out the windshield to see the light, fluffy clouds ahead, floating in a peaceful blue sky. Suddenly, they weren't light and fluffy anymore; they were gray and threatening in a rapidly darkening sky. Elise gasped sharply and closed her eyes, and when she opened them, the clouds were back to being white and benign.

Dianne had not missed the gasp and turned to see the sudden paling of Elise's face and the wild look of terror in her eyes. Then the eyes closed and when Elise opened them, blinking, the look of terror faded.

"Are you okay, Elise?" she asked gently.

Elise gave her head a little shake and smiled wanly at Dianne. "I'll be okay. Just... just it's been a while since I've been in the cockpit of a plane."

"You're sure you're all right?" Dianne pressed.

Elise nodded. "Yes. I am." She moved forward and took the co-pilot's seat, putting the headphones on and strapping herself in.

"We're really glad you decided to come on board with IR," Dianne said with a smile. "We really need more pilots. And from what Scott tells us, you're a crackerjack one."

Elise snorted a laugh. "He's a bit biased, I think. I was in his flight and he'd never say that anyone under his command was less than the best. Something to do with his ego...."

Dianne laughed. Elise looked at her carefully. "I seem to remember saying something about going home the last time you examined me and all you did was smile. Was recruiting me some sort of conspiracy or something?"

"Welllllll," Dianne drawled, "I knew that Scott was pushing for you to be asked and frankly, I was hoping you'd accept. But I wasn't going to say anything one way or another until Jeff and Scott had had a talk with you. If you had said 'No', we wouldn't have kept you from returning to New York, really we wouldn't have. But Scott was certain you'd say 'Yes'. Personally, I'm glad you did. It's good to have someone on board who keeps their head under pressure."

Dianne's offhand comment silenced Elise for the moment. Behind them in the cabin, Jeff stirred and made a sound. Elise looked back, and suddenly, she saw him as he was in the helijet, gray and lifeless, buried under debris. A whispered, "No!" rose from her lips and she shut her eyes

tight, wrapping her arms around herself and shivering as if she were cold again. Dianne shot her a keen, concerned glance. Then Elise opened her eyes again and drew in sharp breath. Jeff was now just sleeping, looking healthy beneath the blanket. She let out the breath in a shuddering, relieved sigh.

"Elise?" Dianne prodded.

"It's nothing," Elise lied. She smiled shakily at the physician. "Just... a memory."

Dianne didn't press the issue again. She suspected that being in the cockpit was triggering flashbacks in the helijet pilot.

Elise unbuckled her safety straps, removed the headphones, and rose. "I... I think I'm going to go back to the cabin and try to get some rest. How much longer to LA?"

"Three and a half hours," Dianne replied. "I think you've got a good idea there. Get some sleep if you can."

Elise nodded and carefully made her way back to the cabin. Dianne turned back to watch the gauges before her and listened to the air traffic talkback. But her mind was on what she had just seen. I'm sure she's suffering from PTSD. There's nothing I can do about it right now, but later... later it will be time to put on my psychiatrist hat again. Been doing a lot of that lately with the rescue and all. Not to mention Jeff's own flashbacks to the crash. She sighed internally and called back to Alex. "Son, why don't you bring that game up here and keep your mother company?"

"Sure, Mom," Alex said agreeably as he rose to join her in the cockpit.

Post by Tikatu on 18/11/2004

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