

Friday, March 23rd, New York City.

After fond farewells to Lisa and the rest of Dianne's relatives that had stayed the night in Greenville, the Tracy clan headed back to New York. It was time to collect Elise and head home.

The limo pulled up in front of the penthouse building and Bernie quickly opened the doors. "Thank you, Bernie," Dianne acknowledged as she and Gordon assisted Jeff out of the car and into the building.

Jeff hobbled along towards the elevator. "The wheelchair was one thing, but getting used to these crutches is another!"

Gordon laughed. "You'll do fine, Dad. Besides it's not like we're going to let you fall or anything." The look Jeff gave Gordon indicated to the redhead that his statement wasn't very convincing.

"I'm gonna miss Grandma," Tyler piped up.

"Yeah, me too," added Alex.

"I know, boys, I will too." Dianne smiled softly at her sons. "You know, I'm very proud of all of you for the way you've all acted the last few days." She looked around to include Cherie, Gordon and Jeff in her statement. "Thank you so much. I'm so lucky to have such a wonderful family." She hugged all 3 of her children at once and then turned to Gordon, "And that includes you Gordon, even if you did try to provoke my mother's temper once or twice!"

He smiled boyishly, and replied, "It was nothing!"

Lastly she turned to Jeff and laying her hand against his cheek, gazed into his eyes. "I don't know what I would have done without you by my side. I love you so much."

He reached up to cover her hand with his. "I'll always be by your side, Dianne, and I love you too."

The tender moment ended when the elevator doors opened. Dianne herded the younger ones off to start helping them get their things together, and Jeff had a chance to talk to Gordon alone. "Son, Dianne has been through a lot these past few days, and I want her to rest on the way home. I want you to fly us home. Are you up for it?"

"Sure, Dad, no problem. I understand. Will we be laying over in L.A.?"

"No, I'd like to get back to the island as quickly as possible."

"Yeah, me too."

Jeff knew Gordon hated his turn at being a corporate Tracy, and understood his anxiousness to get back into action, so to speak. "Thanks, son." Jeff squeezed the boy's shoulder as he gathered up his crutches and hobbled off to find Dianne.

As Gordon started to make his way towards his own room, the front door opened and Elise came in. "Oh, hi! I take it you're all back then?" She closed the door, and walked towards Gordon.

"Yep, so you might want to get your stuff together. Dad wants to head out a.s.a.p."

"I'm all ready. I just went out to grab something to eat." She indicated the sub sandwich in her hands. Gordon gave her a look. "Don't worry, no one followed me and I didn't get stopped by anyone. Besides, I only went to the sandwich place next door."

Gordon relaxed a little. "Okay. I won't tell on you... THIS time!" Elise threw him a disgusted look and went to get her bags.

The aircraft was fueled and waiting for them when they arrived at La Guardia Airport.

"Dianne, I've already asked Gordon if he'll fly us home. I want you to relax on this flight."

"But Jeff, I'm capable of flying, really I am. Besides..."

"Besides, nothing. It's already settled. I want you to relax... and I want someone that I can relax next to!" He had a mischievous look in his eye and she giggled.

"All right, you win, but if Gordon gets tired, I'm taking over. Deal?"

"Deal," he replied, knowing full well Gordon wouldn't relinquish the controls once he had them.

Once everyone was settled and ready, Gordon completed his pre-flight checks and sat confidently in the pilot's seat. Elise had been watching him, admiring the pilot in him. Even though flying wasn't his first love, he was very at ease with the controls. She wondered if she'd ever feel that way again. Get back in the water. Gordon's words spoke aloud in her thoughts as the plane turned and began hurtling down the runway.

Dianne rested peacefully next to Jeff. She now realized that this flight home was indeed, the start of a very different future for her, and her children. The past had finally been laid to rest, and Rick could now rest at peace, not only in her heart, but in the hearts of all those affected by the events of 5 years ago. Her children could grow up knowing that their father was a good man, and remembering him that way. Dianne turned to look at the man who was her present and her future and smiled lovingly at him. He returned the favor with a chaste kiss and squeezed her hand.

"Looking forward to going home?" asked Jeff.

"Hmmm... yes, I'm looking forward to a long hot soak in the tub!" she chuckled. He whispered in her ear, making her blush. "Jeff! There are other ears present." Various looks were sent their way, but they didn't last. Jeff merely smiled.

Gordon eased the plane up to cruising altitude and relaxed a little. The weather was perfect, and the view clear. We should be able to make up some time with a good tailwind. He wanted to go home as much as anyone else on the plane.

After a few hours of solitary contentment, Gordon needed a distraction. When Dianne had offered to fly for a while, he'd flat out told her she was on strict instructions to get some R - R the entire flight home and she was not to come to the cockpit. He looked at the empty co-pilot's seat and thought.

The intercom crackled and woke a dozing Elise. "Hey, Elise? Would you come up to the flight deck? I need to ask you something."

Elise rolled her eyes and got up. As she walked past Jeff and Dianne, Dianne stopped her. "Will you be okay up there?"

"Sure, I'll be fine." Elise smiled gently and continued on her way.

"So, what's this burning question you need to ask me?" Elise said, as she sat down in the co-pilot's seat. Gordon pretended to fiddle with some of the controls and mumbled something about the altimeter and incorrect readings. Elise leaned forward to look and was soon caught up in the instrument panel and trying to locate what Gordon thought was a problem. After 15 minutes and finding nothing she told him that he was imagining things.

"Really? I'm wounded!" he announced, dramatically placing his right hand over his chest. Elise just shook her head and sighed.

Gordon grinned and noticed that while Elise had been engaged in something, she was quite calm and relaxed. His mind raced for a plan to get her 'back in the water' and being a man of the moment as it were, what better time to do it than now? After a few minutes of silence, Elise turned from looking out of the window to find Gordon frowning and rubbing his head.

"You all right?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered.

"Gordon, what's wrong? Is it a migraine or something?" She kept her eyes on him, as he moved his head as if trying to shake himself free of something.

"I'm not sure, suddenly this pain shot across my eyes... and then... Oh... I don't feel so good, I think I ...." His words ended as his body slumped forward over the controls.

"GORDON! Oh my God! Gordon can you hear me?" Elise shook him frantically to no avail. It took her mere seconds to realize the plane had started to descend. The thought of calling Dianne for help didn't occur to her. Instead Elise's training and instincts kicked in as she pushed Gordon backwards, off of the controls, and quickly switched control of the plane to her. Her hands scanned the controls efficiently, and without a second thought, she brought the nose up and leveled off. Once stable, she increased the altitude and monitored the engines. Everything seemed to be running smoothly. Only then did she let out the breath she didn't know she'd been

holding.

Her hand came away sweaty as she wiped her forehead, sweat she hadn't known was there until then. Realization hit her! I flew the plane. Oh Lord, I flew it. I did it. I haven't lost it. She looked briefly over at Gordon, who was still passed out. Programming the auto-pilot enabled Elise to have her hands free to try to wake him, and she shook him once again. "Gordon, c'mon, wake up! Please wake up!"

He made a small groaning noise as he started to come around.

"That's it! C'mon Gordon, wake up!" she encouraged. He was enjoying the great pretense of 'coming round' and inwardly applauded himself for being so convincing! He'd been awake the entire time, of course, and even watched her through slit eyes, as she took over control. I knew she'd do it! She's still got it. Just needed a prod to get it going again! His eyes opened and he looked around, confused. "What happened?"

"You passed out!"

"I did?"

"Yes, you did! You acted like you had a migraine and then slumped over. Are you okay? Do you want me to get Dianne?"

Elise started to leave and Gordon stopped her. "No, no. Don't get Dianne, I'll be fine. Blood sugar must have dropped, I guess."

Something in the way he said that made Elise leery. She slowly sat back down. "Blood sugar? You ate enough donuts and stuff earlier to keep your blood sugar elevated for the next 10 years!"

Oops! I didn't think about that! He averted his eyes towards to the controls, turned off the auto-pilot and resumed control. "Did you switch on the auto-pilot?"

"Yes, I did, after I had freaked when you passed out, and I leveled the plane out from a descent and gained some altitude. I needed both hands to shake you awake! That is, if you were really passed out?" Elise dared him, with her look, to lie to her. "What's going on Gordon? What happened just now?"

He looked at her thoughtfully before replying, "You got back in the water, Elise." Only later would he laugh to himself as he recalled the stunned look on her face as he told her that.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 08/12/2004

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