Tracy Island, Tuesday, May 22nd 2068. Early morning.

Even though the sun had barely started to rise on the horizon, some of the inhabitants of Tracy Island were already up and about to start their day. Virgil Tracy was one of them. Although he was known for his usual habit of sleeping later than his brothers, today was not one of those days.

He poured himself some freshly made coffee and headed out through the lounge to the balcony. Sipping the hot liquid carefully, he gazed out over the ocean admiring the glorious colors of the early morning. His keen artist's eye noted every color and hue as the hazy sun began to rise. It was peaceful this time of day, unless there was a rescue being launched. Then there would be a buzz of rushed activity with his brother Scott in full Commander mode.

Virgil looked about him. Scott would be shocked to see him up before the sun! Scott was always first up, but not this time. Nope, Virgil was up and it was Scott's fault that he was.

Gulping down another mouthful of coffee, Virgil's mind recalled the reason for his lack of sleep this past night: Scott and his training methods with Elise.

****flashback****

Virgil had intended to find Scott when he'd left Thunderbird Two on Sunday night but Scott had been engaged in a serious game of pool with Gordon and Brandon and by the time they were done, Virgil had fallen asleep watching a movie. So it was Monday morning before the two brothers were able to be alone long enough to have 'a chat'.

"What's on your mind, Virge?" Scott asked, knowing automatically by the way Virgil walked onto Thunderbird One's gantry and into the cockpit that something was bothering his brother.

Virgil thought he had carefully planned what he was going to say, but the more he thought about how miserable Elise was, the more angry he got about it.

"Scott, just what in the hell are you trying to do to Elise?"

Scott's blue eyes met his brother's brown ones. He sighed. "I'm trying to do what Dad wanted me to do. Cross-train her to fly One ASAP." He turned his focus back to what he was working on.

"Well, it's not working! You need to ease up on her, Scott. She's exhausted and making mistakes!"

Again, Scott stopped what he was doing and looked his brother in the eye. Virgil rarely raised his voice to anyone and the fact that he was doing it now showed Scott that there was a problem.

"Damn it, Virge! We need backup pilots and if I didn't think she could handle it, I wouldn't push her! She knows the expectations and she's more than capable of meeting them!"

"That may be, Scott, but your pushing her harder than you need to. She's not one of us! You can't expect her to live up to the Tracy standard that we've all had to since we were born. It comes easy for all of us and I think you're forgetting that."

Scott didn't like his brother's outburst and didn't appreciate being told how to train Elise. "Don't you dare stand here and preach to me about forgetting who I am and why we're here." Scott was now pointing an angry finger at Virgil. "I trained her in the Air Force and I'll have her trained as backup on Thunderbird One before you know it!"

"Great, Scott, just great," came the reply, dripping with sarcasm. "And just when do I get to train her on the pod vehicles? Hmmm? Not to mention she needs practice in dropping Four with Gordon on board!"

Scott hadn't actually thought about that aspect of the training on Thunderbird Two. His concern was getting her checked out as a pilot for both aircraft. He sighed deeply.

"We need to refigure this schedule with her, Virge. I don't want anyone feeling like they're being pushed over the edge." He thought for a moment. "How about I get her for one full day, she takes a day off and you get her for...say, 2 days? Then she gets one off and I get her back?"

Virgil digested this proposal and looked at his brother. "Sounds even crazier than what we're doing now, but I guess we'll try it."

Scott was offended. "What do you mean 'even crazier'? Damn it, Virgil, you got a better idea?"

"What I meant was that neither one of us, especially you, can take her for more than half a day without want to kiss her or strangle her! And no, I don't have a better idea." He sounded defeated, but managed a smile when he saw Scott grinning at his comment.

"I told you, bro, she does that to you! Now, who owes who the hundred bucks you mentioned at the start of all this training with Elise?"

****End of flashback***

Virgil swallowed the last gulp of his coffee. Today they started the new schedule. He would have Elise for 2 days, but at least Gordon would be there for part of it. Why did he have to be the one to break the news to her about the revised schedule? He turned around to head back into the villa and all but bumped right into Scott.

"You're up early. Are you okay?" asked Scott, genuinely concerned. Virgil was never up first, not even on Christmas morning. That was always Gordon's shining moment.

Virgil looked at him. "Elise. Two days. Remember?"

"Ah. Yes. I do remember. It'll be okay; underneath it all, she's an ace in the air."

"I know, Scott. It's on the ground where I fear for my life!"

They both chuckled, glad to be once again at ease with each other.

From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 10/24/2005