

Tracy Island, May 24th

Tin-Tin asked for clearance to take off.

"You're cleared for takeoff." Scott's voice came over the radio. "Have a good birthday, Kat. See you when you get back."

"Thanks, Scott," Kat replied.

Tin-Tin skillfully piloted the little Ladybird skyward and Kat settled down to enjoy the journey. Kat's thoughts went back to the previous evening and the surprise birthday barbecue her friends had held for her on the beach. It has been lovely, sitting on the beach, watching as Virgil and Scott had cooked. They made sure that there was plenty of vegetarian food. She blushed as she remembered that John had been particularly attentive, and she had enjoyed and encouraged those attentions. She also had fond thoughts about the girls' night that Nikki and Elise had arranged. She almost laughed aloud at the antics of Gordon and his brothers trying to find out just what was going on.

Thoughts of John brought back this morning and her present from him. She remembered clearly everything. He had sought her out, finding her in her apartment, doing a final check on her packing. She had been sitting on her case, trying to fasten it, when her door chimed. Sighing, she got off, and the suitcase instantly sprang open. Opening the door, Kat found a smiling John.

"Hi, John, come in. I am losing a battle to shut my case."

John entered, closing the door behind him and putting a small parcel on the floor. At her invitation, he sat on the case, managing to close and lock it.

"Gee, Kat, how long are you going for? A year?"

Kat smiled. "Only five days, but the British weather at this time of year can be so unpredictable. I'm catering for all weather types."

John shook his head and chuckled. He bent down to retrieve the parcel and handed it to Kat.

"Happy Birthday."

It was a fairly large, slim package, wrapped in pale blue wrapping paper. Kat opened it to reveal a painting of a Palomino mare and foal, grazing in a meadow in the summer.

Colouring slightly, Kat glanced at John. "It's beautiful. Thank you so much. I love Palominos." And standing on tiptoe, she kissed him lightly on the cheek.

"I'm glad you like it. I thought that something with horses would be okay."

"Okay? Oh, John, it's lovely and I know just where I'm going to hang it."

John had offered to help her hang the picture. She had been unable to offer him any refreshment, explaining that she would be stocking up with provisions whilst she was home.

And now she was heading towards home and the family that she still missed very much. Watching Tin-Tin as she piloted the tiny plane, Kat's thoughts led to Mr Tracy's talk with them all following Christopher's departure, and his expressing the need for more pilots.

"Tin-Tin," Kat said, "After Mr Tracy told us all that Christopher had left International Rescue, everyone began discussing cross training. So I was just wondering, would you, could you?" Kat faltered, remembering that Christopher had had feelings for Tin-Tin. "I'm sorry. Maybe I shouldn't have mentioned him

Tin-Tin smiled. "Don't worry, Kat. Christopher is history now, I'm afraid. What were you going to say?"

"Well, I was wondering whether you would be prepared to give me some flying lessons. I have had some time in the simulator, but now I think that perhaps I should try piloting a real plane again. I have to say that I have tried in the past to learn to fly with Lady Penelope and also in the simulator with Scott." Here Kat sighed. "I wasn't exactly a shining success either time."

Tin-Tin smiled at the young woman. "I would be happy to teach you, as long as we get the A-OK. We'll sort it out when you're back on the island."

The two young women chatted about the latest fashions and Tin-Tin expressed her keenness to shop in London. Soon Tin-Tin was requesting permission to land at Creighton-Ward Manor.

"Permission granted, Miss Tin-Tin," Parker's voice was clear. "Welcome, and welcome back, Miss Kat."

Parker showed Tin-Tin and Kat to their rooms. After they had showered and changed into fresh clothes they came back down to the dining room where Lady Penelope had laid on a special meal for them.

From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 10/25/2005

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