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Subject: Re: Winds of Change  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:04:26 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/17/2007 5:19 PM

Friday, August 25, 2068, 1:30 a.m., Tracy Island (11:30 p.m., previous day, Australia)

"It's no use." Dianne sat up, throwing aside her covers. She rubbed the fingers of both hands over her forehead. "Ah can't sleep."

Swinging her legs over the side of the bed, she pushed herself to her feet, leaning on the bed for support as she edged around to the closet, where her favorite bathrobe lay. She sat on the edge of the chair to put it on; she slipped her feet into leather moccasins, then stood carefully and tied the robe's sash. She found her cane and headed out of the master suite.

On reaching the study, she tried the door again, muttering under her breath. "Still locked." She reached into the pocket of her robe, but there was nothing there. "Damn. Forgot mah key." With an irritated sniff, she turned and headed back to her suite.

Picking up the remote, she began surfing the televid channels, looking for something to occupy her long enough to make her drowsy. The household had satellite feed, which meant dozens of channels to choose from, quite a few of them in languages other than English. She put her legs up on the spacious ottoman, staring at the screen as the shows flickered past, each lasting a second or two before she advanced to the next one. Finally, she resorted to doing a subject search, and input the words "ice skating" into the search bracket. The televid did a quick flash of images, and finally rested on a show where a perky young teen glided across the ice. Dianne frowned as she heard the commentary. "What's that in? Russian?" She muted the sound as low as she dared without losing the background music, and settled back to watch.

The girl finished her routine, took her bows, and exited to the kiss and cry area to wait for her marks. The results came up... in Cyrillic. Dianne sighed and shook her head.

The program kept her busy for a half hour or so, then she changed the channel again. This time, it was a news report on the fire in Australia that caught her eye.

"...Breaking news. We have heard from official sources that the firefighters whose helicopter went down have been rescued and that Thunderbird Two is airlifting them to a local hospital. The name of the hospital is being withheld for security reasons, but the families of the firefighters will be notified as soon as possible." The commentary was accompanied by video of the fire from above.

Dianne looked carefully but couldn't find any sign of the Thunderbirds. "Least somethin's goin' right t'night," she drawled, folding her arms.

"Tell me, Julie," the anchor said to the on-site reporter. "What can you tell us about this foam that International Rescue is using?"

"Well, Brent, from what I've heard, the stuff is really amazing," Julie said. She was outside, the

wind blowing through her hair and the fire burning in the distance. "It seems to smother the fire instantly. There had been some danger to the nearby rum plant from the spreading fire, but International Rescue's speedy response -- and their fabulous foam -- made quick work of that."

"We've heard of this foam before." The scene went back to the anchor room, where a bulky, balding man sat next to the young anchor. His name appeared near the bottom of the screen: Dr. Daniel Eberhart, PhD. "If you'll recall, a NASA spokesman recently revealed that the foam they used at Cape Canaveral mixed with some fuel to create a super fertilizer. There's no telling what it will do when mixed with the materials found in the outback."

"So you believe it could be a hazard to the environment, Doctor?" Brent asked, his face serious.

"It could be. We won't know until we see the results of its usage during this particular fire."

"Pffft!" Dianne sputtered, waving a hand. "What d'you know? Yoah just an ol' Fud!"

"Julie, any sign of Thunderbird Seven or of its operatives?" Brent asked.

"No sign of Thunderbird Seven reported, Brent," the correspondent replied, "but we have heard rumors that at least one medic accompanied the rescue crew today. Whether or not this was one of those involved in the tornado disaster..."

Dianne abruptly turned off the televid, and sat silent with the remote in her hands. Then she put it aside, and reached for her cane, sighing.

"Ah might as well do this now an' get it ovah with," she said. "Ah need t' do this by mahself an' foah mahself. A final step in healin'." She hauled herself to her feet, and limped back into her bedroom.

Need something a bit warmer down below, she reasoned as she shrugged out of her favorite robe and into something thicker. She hesitated, wondering if she should tell her husband where she was going, but shook her head. I won't be long, she said to herself as she left the suite.

She took the lift downstairs, and proceeded quietly through the silent hall. She thought very briefly of waking her mother, but pushed the thought away just as quickly. She's tired and I have to do this myself.

Dianne waited for the elevator car, leaning against the wall, giving her still stiff leg a rest. She leaned in the corner of the car all the way down, and sat in the monorail as it took her to the lab. The light was green next to the lab door, and it opened to her easily, the lights coming on as she stepped within.

For a long while she stood at the door to the pod vehicle repair bay, then she licked her dry lips, reached out to turn on the lights, and opened the door. Stepping through, she stood at the metal landing looking down at the parts of Thunderbird Seven.

Didn't realize it was so scratched up, she thought as she descended the stair, keeping her eyes on the large medical section. Needs a good cleaning, and a new paint job.

Slowly she made her way to the back of the medical cabin. There was a gaping hole there now where the dent used to be. The back corner, back door, and the entire morgue section had been removed, and she could see into the storage lockers and part of the surgical suite. A panel, the one with the biggest dent in it, lay to one side propped up against the wall. She crouched uncomfortably and reached out to smooth a hand across the dent, but stopped before she touched it. A flash of memory; a vision of the medical cabin filling the view screen, the sudden, heart-stopping horror of realization, all came back to her in a rushing flood of sight, sound, and emotion. She closed her eyes convulsively, and drew her hand back with a gasp. So forceful was the withdrawal that she fell on her rump, barely catching herself from falling full length by a flailing hand. She sat there on the cold concrete for a long while, staring at the panel, until finally, she rolled onto her side and began the awkward process of regaining her feet.

Wrapping her arms around herself, Dianne rubbed her upper arms, the action providing a warmth that was more emotionally than physically soothing. Leaning on her cane more than before, she circled the back of the medical unit to the side. The ramp was down, and the side doors were opened, but it was dark inside. She stood at the base of the ramp, looking up into the darkness, but made no move to enter it. Finally, she took a deep breath, let it out slowly, and turned from the doors. To her left, she noticed a pile of salvaged materials: the bare diagnostic beds, which were stacked neatly in three piles, two of four, and one of five. The surgical bed was there, too, in large, unwieldy pieces, its overhead screen covered in plastic and lying beside the bed itself. Guess they think they can reuse them... if they rebuild this. She smoothed a hand over one of the beds, noticing a light accumulation of dust that gathered on the edges of her hand. So much else to do that's more important, especially since Kat's away.

Dusting her hand off by clapping it against the other, she finally turned to the cockpit. Slowly, she approached it, noticing the wavy lines where the door had been cut.

Dom, giving her a grim smile as he covered her leg and donned the protective visor and gloves, picking up the cutter's nozzle... the trembling of her own limbs as he began to cut... the faint smell of oxyhydrite in the air, growing stronger as Gordon cut through the door...

She circled slowly around to the front, and stood staring up at it. The engine was exposed and covered in plastic, the hood and front of the chassis were nowhere to be seen. The windshield was cracked, and dirty, and marred further by a sizable, angular hole.

The... whatever-it-was... smashing up against the windshield, shattering to pieces against the polyhexane and sliding away... the dizzying view as the cockpit tumbled over and over... the nauseous feeling in the pit of her stomach as they rolled, helpless, tossed about like an empty paper cup in the wind... Nikki's scream of horror as the medical cabin came straight for them...

Dianne gasped, almost a sob, and shuddered, wrapping her arms around herself again. Then she took a deep breath, and walked back to the open rectangle that had once been a door.

She bit her lower lip as she came close, gazing up into the semi-darkness of the cockpit. Gotta go inside.

She leaned her cane on the scraped metal of the cockpit's side. Reaching a hand up inside the door -- the outer hand holds had been sheared off -- she began to pull herself into the cockpit.

One rung, then another, she got her right knee onto the control cabin's floor. Using it to lever herself further inside, she glanced upward... and stopped. On the ceiling, illuminated by the light of the repair bay, was a dark spot, one that had little streaks of dusky color running from it, forever staining the ceiling. She collapsed to one side, ending up sitting half in and half out of the door, back leaning up against the cut, her damaged leg dangling out. Her moccasin dropped to the floor.

She swallowed heavily, and breathed deeply. The sudden, acrid, metallic smell of the cockpit filled her nostrils, and abruptly she was upside down again. Her unseeing eyes focused on the dark spot; she wrapped her arms around her abdomen. Her breath began to hitch.

Oh, God, it hurts... it hurts... make it stop! I can't breathe! Help me! I can't breathe! Dom! Nikki! Where are you?! I can't breathe! My leg! It's bleeding... make it stop! It hurts! Help me! I can't... I can't move! Pain! Oh, God! Get me out of here! Scared... so scared! I can't breathe! Please, get me out of here! It hurts!...

Seeing Seven, part 1

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