

Tracy Island, Saturday May 26th, 4:00 pm

"What a day," Brandon sighed as he walked on the beach. His training on Thunderbird Four was continuing and soon he would begin training on one of the other craft. I wonder which one I'll be assigned to. Looking up, he spied Tyler and Alex running along the beach, laughing at something only they knew about.

Brandon looked around for Cherie, wondering where she was. It wasn't like her to allow the boys to roam unsupervised. Shouting at them to wait up, he hurried to catch up with them.

Finally getting close to them, he looked at the two young boys, wondering how to ask what he wanted to know. Not wanting to appear worried, he decided to approach them slowly. "Hey guys, what's up?" he asked casually.

"Not much," Tyler piped up. "We're just exploring the beach. You should see some of the things we found." He proceeded to describe some of the small marine life they'd found in the tide pools. Alex backed his brother's description of things, adding a few scientific embellishments of his own.

"That sounds neat, you guys," Brandon said with a chuckle. Then his face turned serious. "Does Cherie know you're out here by yourselves?"

Both boys looked at Brandon with wide eyes and Tyler was the first to answer him. "Cherie's working on a report for school and doesn't know we're out here. But Mom does. She's the one that said it was okay as long as we're careful and don't get too close to the water."

Alex folded his arms and rolled his eyes. "Besides, it's not like Cherie is our babysitter or anything. We can go places without her, y'know."

Brandon met Alex's defiant gaze and stared at the boy questioningly. "How do I know you're telling the truth?"

"We are telling the truth," Tyler said, anger creeping into his voice. "If you don't believe us, you can ask Mom when we get back."

Brandon put his hands up in mock surrender. "Hey, Tyler, I didn't mean to upset you. I care about you and Alex and I didn't want anything to happen to you," Brandon said by way of apology, reaching out to ruff Tyler's stiff brown hair. The nine year old glanced up at Big Mac, a smile on his face. Satisfied that a crisis had been averted, Brandon asked the two boys, "How about you guys show me what you found?"

"ALL RIGHT!" both boys shouted in unison as they took off up the beach, Brandon following behind.

The trio spent most of the afternoon exploring the beach and observing the marine life. At one

point, Brandon pointed out a school of dolphins swimming offshore. The boys, in return, showed him a small octopus that had gotten trapped in a pool of water. The six inch gastropod was lying still, trying to be inconspicuous.

"Hey, Brandon, have you ever touched an octopus before?" Alex asked as he and his brother watched the small creature swimming in the tide pool. The intrusion of the boys caused the octopus to squirt out ink in an attempt to hide. Brandon squatted down beside the boys and looked at the small marine animal. He smiled, recalling an incident that happened while he was diving in the Bahamas.

"No I haven't," he replied, "but I did have one swim up to me when I was diving in the Bahamas.

"Was he as big as this one?" Tyler asked.

Brandon laughed as he answered the young boy. "Oh no, he was a whole lot bigger than our friend here. He was closer to six feet long from his head to the end of his tentacles." Brandon described what it was like to see a creature that big reach out and try to touch his mask.

"Whoa!" Alex said in awe. "Weren't you scared it would do something to you?"

"I was a little scared, but I realized he was curious more than anything else. So I just stood still and let him look me over. After a few minutes he swam away."

In another spot, they observed small crabs scurrying about, jostling each other for space in the small pool of water. The hole was only eight inches across, too small for the fifteen tiny crabs occupying it. "No wonder crabs are so crabby," Tyler remarked. "I know I'd be if I had to share my room with that many brothers and sisters

The three continued their exploring, going from one spot to another, seeing how many species of marine life they knew. Besides the octopus and crabs, they found numerous types of shells that Alex and Tyler identified. They were checking out another tide pool when the sun's descent indicated that it was time for them to head home.

As they were walked up the path towards the villa, they started talking about the day's adventure.

"You wanna know what the neatest part was for me?" Tyler piped up.

"What was that?" Brandon answered, taking Tyler up on his shoulders.

"It was seeing the dolphins and finding the octopus. I never knew there was so much life in one place."

Brandon turned his attention to the other boy. "What about you, Alex? What did you like about our little outing?"

The older boy thought a moment. "For me, it was being able to see the octopus up close. The nearest I ever got to one of them before was seeing them on the vid shows."

The boys continued talking animatedly as they entered the upper level of the villa, Brandon bringing up the rear. Dianne heard the noise as they started down the hallway. "Did you guys have fun?" Dianne asked as she came out of her suite, taking notice of her sons' dirt stained faces and grubby hands.

"It was cool, Mom. We actually saw an octopus and crabs and all sorts of neat stuff in the tidal pools..." Both boys tripped over themselves trying to describe what they saw.

"You can tell everybody about your adventures at the dinner table. Hurry and get washed up. We'll be eating in a few minutes." The boys nodded and hurried to clean up.

After the boys left, Dianne faced Brandon, a puzzled look on her face. "Did they do anything wrong?"

"Well," he began, "I was on the beach and saw them by themselves. I was concerned about their safety when I didn't see an adult with them."

"Didn't they tell you that it was okay with me that they were out there?"

"Yes, they did. But, to be honest, I wasn't too sure. You know how kids tend to stretch the truth sometimes." Brandon ran his hand through his hair nervously.

Dianne sighed. "I've raised my kids never to stretch the truth. Considering, though, that we have so many new people here, I understand that it's not always so easy to judge that."

"I'm sorry I didn't believe them."

"Brandon, this is their home and they have a big backyard to explore. As long as they let me know where they are, I don't mind them going out on their own."

"Doc, I'm sorry if I tried to take over being a parent to them. I was just concerned."

Dianne smiled. "It's okay, Brandon. I understand how you feel. Any of the new recruits probably would've done the same thing if he or she saw Alex and Tyler by themselves."

"You do have a point there," Brandon acknowledged. He smiled, recalling the time he spent with the boys. "I hope we can do it again real soon. They were both a pleasure to be around."

"I'm glad to hear it. If you don't feel comfortable about something you see the boys doing, don't hesitate to come to me, okay?"

"I will, you can count on that," the young man replied. After making a little more small talk, Dianne excused herself and headed to dinner. Brandon walked away and thought to himself, I wonder how I would have handled the situation if I were a dad? Hopefully I won't find that out for a long time.

Post by Magicmaster8 Sent: 10/26/2005

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