

Monday, January 7th, shortly after lunch . . .

Jeff carefully throttled the speedboat as he maneuvered it into place. He followed Cassie's gaze to settle on the shining form of Thunderbird Eight bobbing on the water. The knowledge that his son was inside the hydrofoil craft made his heart give the slightest hitch. I don't think I'll ever fully come to terms with Gordon's accident, he thought, careful not to push the thoughts aside as he had once done. He allowed the feeling to wash over him, and it ebbed as though the salty waves of the Pacific swept up and took it away.

"Speedboat One and Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Eight," Gordon's voice came over the comm. system.

"Receiving you strength five, Thunderbird Eight," Cassie said.

"Same here, Thunderbird Eight," Alan's voice sounded.

"We're ready to commence testing," Gordon said.

"FAB, Thunderbird Eight," Jeff said, nodding to Cassie. "Standing by."

"Area is clear of all air and sea craft. You're clear to begin test," Alan said.

"FAB," said Gordon.

Inside the hydrofoil, Gordon gave Vince a wink.

"Ready?"

"As I'll ever be," Vince replied from his seat beside Gordon.

"Here we go," Gordon commented, as he pushed the throttle forward slowly. The craft came to life, picking up speed.

Onboard the speedboat, Scott watched as the latest addition to the Thunderbird fleet came to life. The big brother in him would have preferred to be the one testing the new hydrofoil. The rational part in him told him that it wasn't his place. Thunderbird Eight, like Four, was Gordon's craft, not his. Gordon never would have stood for someone else testing her.

I can't protect them from everything, Scott reminded himself.

"Speedboat One, we are at one quarter speed and running smoothly," came Vince's voice over the radio. The excitement in his voice was obvious.

"Copy that," Jeff replied.

At that speed, the vessel would not yet be foilborne. The speed needed for the hydrofoils to lift it out of the water would soon be reached though.

"Increasing speed," Gordon informed them.

"Keep in mind this is a field test. No hot-dogging out there," Jeff reminded his son.

"FAB," came Gordon's response.

Thunderbird Eight quickly accelerated, and inside the craft Gordon gave Vince a grin. "Let's do this thing," he said.

Vince grinned back, and the two men configured the controls for the lift. The upwards force created by the foil began to lift the craft out of the water. They felt the turbulence drag decrease substantially and Gordon couldn't help but give a cheer.

"We are foilborne!"

His face twitched briefly as memories sparked in his mind. The crash, the pain, the darkness; but also the recovery. He curled his lips back into a grin.

"Thunderbird Eight, status update," Jeff's voice called.

"Speedboat One, we're recording surface speed of 30 knots. Permission to increase speed?"

There was a short pause.

"Permission granted. Increase speed to approximately 40 knots, but no more."

"FAB. Increasing speed now," said Gordon. He turned to Vince. "Would you like to do the honours?"

"All right!" Vince said. "Throttling up now."

Thunderbird Eight shot across the surface of the water as the speed increased, and the two pilots grinned at each other.

"40 knots," Vince said. "And she's purring like a kitten." Forgot what a rush it is being behind the wheel of a hydrofoil

"Thunderbird Eight from Speedboat One. I think we can call this a successful test run," Jeff informed them. "Why don't you throttle down and head back to dock?"

"FAB," Gordon replied, unable to keep the disappointment out of his voice. Now that he was out in the hydrofoil, he didn't want to end the run but he knew better than to argue with his father.

Beside him, Vince was just as disappointed at seeing the test run come to an end. However, he knew his boss was right to call an end to it. The first time out was never the time to push a new vehicle to its limits.

Slowing Thunderbird Eight down, Gordon steered her in a smooth arc to head back to Tracy Island.

TB8 Test Run by ArtisticRainey and icarus1982[/color]

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