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Subject: Re: New Beginnings

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 02:32:42 GMT

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Tuesday, January 8, 10:20 p.m., Tracy Island.

Scott, dressed in shorts and a t-shirt, plugged his earphone into his ear, and pulled out his phone's keypad. Ever since John had mentioned Alan's shutting down during their conversation, Scott had found the incident bothered him more and more. He was used to his youngest brother's moods...even now, it was hard to stop thinking of Alan as the youngest--his occasional sulkiness and flashes of temper. He also knew that, like their father, Alan tended to keep his pain inside. So, with a sigh, Scott dialed his brother's satellite phone.

Three rings later, and a puzzled-sounding Alan answered. "Scott? Why are you calling so late? Is everything okay?"

Scott grimaced. Might have known the kid would think something's wrong. I barely call him at all, never mind after 10 p.m. "Everything's okay, Al. Everyone's fine."

"Oh." There was a pause on the other end. "Then why are you calling?"

"I'm taking advantage of the ability to call. It's about time I did, don't you think?" Scott stretched and settled back in his chair. "It hasn't been that long since this was set up, and you've been home most of the time in between."

Obviously, this hadn't occurred to Alan. "Ah, okay. So, what's up?"

Scott snorted. "The sky, the clouds, Dad's... no, Dad's blood pressure isn't up. Everything's cool down here. Thunderbird Eight had a shakedown cruise and our latest recruit and his family seem to be settling in okay. There's a party brewing for Lady P, and I think Dad wants to meet with his latest agent candidate then, too."

"A new agent?" Alan sounded intrigued. "I hadn't heard about this."

"Neither had I until the other day when he was giving Jenny some instructions about the guest room. With Lady P and Parker staying out in the Round House these days, the guest room doesn't get used so much. He wanted her to clean it up and make it ready for the party."

"Yeah, you're right." There was another pause. "So, did you ask him who it was?"

"Of course." Scott grinned, pleased with himself.

"And?"

"And what?"

"Who is it? Is it someone we know?"

Scott contemplated drawing the tension out, teasing his brother with the lack of information. He decided that Alan needed a bit of teasing.

"It's someone we all know. You'll never guess who."

"Ned Cook?"

Scott snorted a derisive laugh. "Like Dad would ask a member of the mass media to be an agent."

He swore he could hear Alan thinking. "Okay, then. How about..." The pause was long and dramatic. "...the Duchess of Royston!"

This time Scott laughed out loud. "Not a bad idea! Then Virgil would have to take his turn dancing with her. But she gets soused... a lot. I don't think she could be counted on to keep a secret."

"I agree." Alan chuckled. "Okay. Here's one: Wilbur Dandridge."

"Hm." Scott was thoughtful. "He'd be a good one, I think, being in Chicago and all. Dad thinks pretty highly of him. But, nope. Not him."

"Okay, okay. I give up. Who is it?"

"You're not going to believe it." Scott grinned.

"Just tell me, Scott." Alan was beginning to sound peeved, and Scott didn't want him to be that way.

"Okay. The newest agent that Dad's looking at is... drum roll please... our dentist."

There was silence on the other end for a long, long moment. "Our... dentist? You mean, Dr. McCann?"

"Nope, not him. Our new dentist. Dr. Izarra Soto Fernandez."

"Huh." Alan sounded unsure. "I've never met her."

"I have," Scott said firmly. "I took the kids to her office for their yearly cleanings."

"So, was she impressive? She must have been for Dad to try and recruit her."

Scott paused while trying to think of what to say. "She came across as a competent enough dentist. She kept the Spud calm while she cleaned his teeth, and that's saying something. But she's..." He tried to think of a word to describe her. "...on the petite side."

"Petite."

"Yeah. Petite. As in as short as or shorter than Kat."

Alan's low whistle sounded in Scott's ear. "Wow. Wonder what made Dad recruit her as an agent."

"I don't know," Scott grumbled. He got up to pace around. "He didn't see fit to tell me. Just that Penny recommended her. So she'll be here at the party and Dad will talk to her about coming on board."

"Wish I could be a fly on the wall for that conversation!"

"Me, too!"

There was a long moment of quiet between them, and Scott decided to shift gears. "So, have you heard from Nikki lately?"

"I got an email the other day," Alan told him, his tone sounding blasé. "She's having a good time catching up with her old friends."

"That's good to hear," Scott replied. "Any idea on when she'll be back this way?"

"She's going to Auckland from London to look for an apartment, then will come back to the island to pack everything up."

"Yes, but when? Will you be here when she gets here?"

"I dunno. I guess so. She hasn't said." Alan paused, and when he spoke again, his voice was suspicious. "Why are you asking all this anyway? It's not like you've showed an interest before."

"Well, I am interested now," Scott drawled. "You and Nikki seemed to be hitting it off well, like Virge is with Elise. It's about time."

" 'Seemed'? We were... we are hitting it off well," Alan said, his tone sullen. "It's just..."

"Just what? That she's moving away and you won't be in each other's pockets all the time?" Scott's voice was just short of sarcastic. "I mean, that's what you're used to, isn't it? A girlfriend who is always there, always available. Just like what you had with Tin-Tin."

"Tin-Tin has nothing to do with this."

"She has everything to do with this. You pushed her away with that 'my life's too dangerous' crap, then when she went elsewhere, you didn't like it."

Alan made a noise as if to protest, but Scott wouldn't let him. "Oh, I heard about that, Alan. Why didn't you pull that 'my life is too dangerous' line with Nikki, huh? Why?"

"Because she would have called for the crap it was, that's why."

This brought Scott up short, and he sat down suddenly. Alan being truthful about himself? That's a new one on me!

"I'm going to miss her, Scott. And I'm afraid that the distance will..." Alan took a deep breath. "I don't want to lose her, Scott. That's all."

"You're not very far away, you know." Scott's voice was softer; he was trying to be encouraging.

"Yeah, I know that in my head. Trying to convince the rest of me is kinda hard right now. Maybe you're right. Maybe I am too used to having a girlfriend so close by that I can see her anytime."

"Have you talked to her about it?"

"Why do you think she's in Auckland... besides the fact that they start classes at a different time of year than schools in the Northern Hemisphere? It's not just because she's eager to get started. She could have gone to Australia or somewhere else, but she decided to stick close to... home. Close to me."

Scott smiled, and the smile sounded in his voice. "Then I'd say that the only thing standing in the way of your pursuing your relationship is you. You want this to succeed, right?"

"Of course I do."

"Then make it so. Visiting isn't the only way to keep a relationship going, y'know."

"Says the man with no girlfriend." Alan was back to being snarky and sullen. "Listen, it's late. I've got some diagnostics to run and I want to get some sleep. I'll talk to you later, Scott. Goodnight."

Stunned by Alan's quick dismissal, Scott barely had time to utter, "Goodnight" before the call terminated. He sat there shaking his head. His brother's last sentence rang in his ears. Brows narrowing in a scowl, he went in search of the gym where he intended to imagine that the heavy bag was his sarcastic younger brother.