

Tracy Island, the beach, sunset...

Elise walked barefooted along the edge of the surf. She held her sandals in her hand and hummed softly to herself. She wandered over to a cluster of boulders and settled herself down, watching as the sun dipped lower on the horizon. She rested her chin on her knees and smiled.

After a late breakfast, Virgil had headed home to change while she packed a picnic lunch. They meandered through the jungle, finally arriving at a secluded pool, complete with waterfall. They swam and frolicked in the water like children, then made love in the sun-dappled clearing. She sighed happily.

I can't believe the way my life has turned around in a year. From a job I was only mildly happy at to working for International Rescue. I've found a new "family" in my friends and co-workers, and even more in Virgil. He loves me. And I love him. I've never told that to anyone before.

She watched as the sun dipped lower, turning the sky a brilliant shade of red. I've never met a man so generous before. He's always giving me things! My necklace, the comb, even those little notes and sketches in my mailbox. She smiled. Let's not forget the physical. He's certainly perfect there too! Elise giggled to herself.

"Elise? Am I disturbing you?"

She looked up to see Tin-Tin standing near. "Of course not! I'm just watching the sunset. Here, pull up a rock and join me."

Tin-Tin sat down and looked out over the sea. "It's a beautiful night."

"It is."

They were quiet a few moments. "I often walk here in the evenings. I hope I wasn't bothering you. You seemed very deep in thought."

"Not really. Just daydreaming." Elise glanced over at the young Asian woman. "Tin-Tin? Did you ever have something inside you, so exciting that you wanted to share with the world, yet at the same time, keep it secret to enjoy all yourself?"

Tin-Tin's thoughts wandered to a certain blue-eyed scientist. "I do indeed," she said quietly.

Elise shot her a glance, and smiled to herself. The two women sat in comfortable silence, and watched the sunset.

The Lounge, early evening....

Scott made his way down the hallway, following the sound of the piano. He stepped into the

lounge and smiled at the scene in front of him. His parents were sitting on one of the couches, Jeff's arm around Dianne's shoulder. Alex and Tyler were on the floor, heads bent over a book of some sort. Virgil was at his piano, playing something Scott didn't recognize.

He smiled at his parents, then made himself comfortable on one of the other couches. "What's he playing?" Scott asked his father.

"I'm not sure what it's called. Something he's been working on," Jeff replied.

Scott nodded. "It sounds good."

"Doesn't he always?"

They listened for a few minutes before Dianne sat up. "All right, boys. Time to get ready for bed." Tyler and Alex both groaned, but Dianne shook her head. "It's a school night and you both need showers. Let's go." With much muttering, both boys shuffled out the door. Dianne smiled after them. "I think I'd better go with them." She leaned over and kissed Jeff. "Don't be too late," she said with a coy smile.

Scott and his father sat listening to Virgil for a few minutes longer before Jeff got to his feet. "I'm going to go call Alan then give your mother a hand. Good night."

"Night, Dad. Tell Al hi," Scott said.

"I will."

"Bye, Dad," Virgil called out as Jeff left the room.

Scott got up and grabbed a beer from the bar fridge. He watched his brother at the piano, then carried a second bottle over to him. "Here, take a break."

"Thanks," Virgil said gratefully, flexing his fingers before taking the bottle.

Scott settled himself on the sofa again. "So, I noticed you never came home last night," he said conversationally.

Virgil met his brother's gaze evenly. "No, I didn't."

"You and Elise weren't playing Parcheesi, I take it."

"No, we weren't." Virgil took a long drink from his beer. "And frankly, I don't see that it's any of your business." He got up and went out to stand on the balcony. Scott waited a few moments, then followed after him.

He found his younger brother leaning on the railing, looking out over the ocean. "So," Scott said after a few minutes of silence. "Want to tell me what that outburst was all about?"

Virgil sighed. "Do you know how hard it is for us to have any kind of relationship? I mean, besides

IR, the whole tropical island thing, not to mention the rich playboy persona the press has pinned on us." He shook his head. "I feel like we...like I live in a fishbowl. I can't even stay over my girlfriend's without being interrogated."

Scott raised an eyebrow in surprise. "Virg, I wasn't interrogating you. Believe me, you'd know if I were. And yeah, I know exactly how you feel."

"I'm sorry, Scott." Virgil smiled sheepishly at his older brother. "Guess I'm just feeling testy."

"You are? No kidding, I never would have noticed." Both brothers stood in comfortable silence for a few minutes. "Well, who won the Parcheesi game?" he asked, sipping at his beer.

Virgil chuckled. "I think it was a tie." He glanced over at Scott, his expression sobering. He paused and took a deep breath. "I'm in love with her, Scott."

Scott nearly choked on his beer, coughing and spluttering. "You what?"

"I've never felt like this about anyone before. It's like...like there was something missing in my life, something that I never noticed, until I met her."

"That may be, but, Virg, love?"

"Yeah, love." He sighed. "She's beautiful, smart, funny..."

"Stubborn, pushy, annoying."

"She's all that, too. And it's just more of the reasons why I care about her." He turned to face his older brother. "You've known her longer than I have. After her folks died, she could have curled up and lost herself. Instead, she pulled herself up and made a life for herself. Sure, she still has issues; hell, who doesn't? She didn't ask for this life, or even this job, but she's doing it anyway. She's finally found her place, and she's happy."

Scott frowned. "How does she feel about you?"

"She loves me, too." He shook his head. "Look, I know it's not going to be this perfect all the time. I'm sure there will be things we'll disagree on and even argue about. But life is full of risks. I'd rather see what happens, then always wonder what could have been."

"I just don't want you hurt. Either of you."

Virgil smiled. "I know."

"Good." He paused a moment. "So, when's the wedding?" He had the pleasure of seeing Virgil's eyes widen in shock.

"Marriage? I never said anything about marriage! We barely..." he stuttered, his face pale.

Scott burst out laughing and draped his arm around his brother's shoulders. "Gotcha."

