
Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 04:21:54 GMT

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Monday, April 1, 2069, 4 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff Tracy was nervous.

Not that he'd never been nervous before, but the sensation had happened so infrequently during the past few years, he could hardly recognize it when it popped up. This time, however, he knew immediately what it was.

He fingered the connect button on his wrist-comm. "Jeff Tracy to Will. How are things going in the boat pen?"

Will Abbott locked the winch he had been using before he stopped to return the call. "It's slow goin', Mr. Tracy, but I'll get the smaller boats out of the water before lowerin' the door."

"Good man," Jeff replied. The new door over the entrance to the cavernous boat pen was a safety precaution put in after the tsunami last year. Hopefully, this time they had enough warning and wouldn't lose any craft.

"To be honest, Mr. Tracy, I'm glad we don't have that sea plane down here anymore," Will admitted. "That would've been a bear to try and secure."

"I agree." Jeff shook his head. It had been less than a month since Vince Crenshaw lost an eye in an auto accident on his way home from church, and less than that since he had tendered his resignation. He promptly moved his family to New Zealand, taking up the position that was supposed to be his cover story. Now he, his wife and children, were gone, and Jeff was looking at hiring yet another aquanaut -- something he was loath to do. He shook his head, clearing his thoughts, and said, "Keep at it, Will. The clock is ticking."

"Yes, sir!" came the reply. "Abbott, out!"

"Sounds like Will has things under control."

Jeff glanced to the other team member in the room, Callie Spencer. "Sounds like it, doesn't it?"

Callie nodded. "I'm glad the rescue is over now, and the rest of the team is coming home. Do you think they'll get here before that typhoon hits?"

"Well, let's find out." Jeff crossed to his desk, and the multi-screen computer that sat on it. One of the pictures was of Thunderbird Five, and its current space monitor, Alan.

"What's the latest on the typhoon, Alan?"

Alan turned from the screens he had been monitoring. He looked grim, and not only because of

the current situation. "Dad, it's still on track straight for the island and it's approximately two-and-a-half hours out."

"Does it look like the Thunderbirds will make it home in time?"

Alan nodded. "Scott will. Not so sure about Virgil, but if he keeps up his speed and heading, he should just make it."

Jeff blew out a deep breath. "Hopefully, we'll everything battened down in time..." Reflexively, he glanced up and out the wide windows to the balcony... and saw nothing. The gray metal storm shields were already down across the window. Turning back to Alan, he said, "Keep an eye on things up there, son. Let me know if there are any changes in their ETAs."

"F-A-B, Dad. Thunderbird Five on standby."

"Thanks, Mr. Tracy, for bringing me down early," Callie said, smiling. "I wouldn't have minded staying up there during the storm, but I'm thankful Alan insisted he go up early."

"You're welcome, Callie." Jeff sounded a bit distracted. He knew the real reason for Alan's abrupt desire for the privacy of the satellite: the break-up between him and his medical-student girlfriend, Nikki Jackson. "I'm going to check in with John and Gordon now; see how they're doing in the hangars." Touching his watch, Jeff called, "Jeff to Gordon. How are you two doing down there?"

In Thunderbird Two's cavernous hangar, Gordon waited until his brother, John, had maneuvered the Laser Truck onto a platform before replying. "Gordon here, Dad. We're winching up the last of the small vehicles." As he spoke, John climbed down from the cockpit, and activated the clamps that would keep the truck in place. Then he headed toward the pod's internal winch controls. This new system, put in place only recently, allowed the pods to carry more equipment. In this case, it would provide extra protection against any possible hangar flooding.

"How many more to move?" Jeff asked.

Gordon shot a look at his brother, who held up four fingers. "Four, Dad. The Jodrell, the Mobile Crane, and the Recovery vehicles."

"Sounds like you'll have that ready to go," Jeff said, sounding relieved.

"Yup!" Gordon said, sounding cheerful. "Have we battened all the hatches yet?"

Jeff chuckled. "Just about. Kyrano and Lisa are taking care of shuttering up the Round House. The Cliff house dome is engaged. And Tin-Tin is finishing up diagnostics on the other internal systems."

"And Grandma?" Gordon asked.

"Making dinner. It should be done by the time the crew gets home." Jeff smiled widely. "Then we can all ride out this storm together."

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The Pernons were your typical American tourists, and they were looking forward to their day at Ekka Amusement Park outside of Brisbane. The day wasn't too cool for autumn down under, and it made their visit even more enjoyable.

"Hey, Dad." Twelve-year-old Bobby indicated a brightly painted tower that rose up not far from where they stood. "What is that?"

His father, James, pulled out the park map. "That's the... Bonzer Bomber." He chuckled. "Weird names they have for these things." Squinting closer at the map, he looked surprised. "Hm. Sounds like this one's a crowd-pleaser. It's been here for over fifty years."

"Looks like fun to me!" Bobby said, grinning.

"Me, too!" James turned to his wife. "What do you think, Alice?"

Alice gave it a speculative look, then smiled. "It looks like fun to me three! Let's just hope the lines aren't too long."

"Well, then," James said, linking arms with his wife. "Let's go!"

After a patient 15 minutes, the family was seated, and firmly held in by safety harnesses. As the ride started, Bobby yelled, "Yahoo! Here we go!" Alice gripped James's hand as they rose steadily hundreds of feet into the air. At the top of the tower, the seats -- groups of four spaced facing out from each side of the tower's walls -- clicked into place. The Pernons held their collective breath, anticipating the moment when they would free-fall a hundred feet toward the ground!

Before they could take that plunge, the tower shook and vibrated, making the riders on all four sides scream. One of them shouted, "Earthquake!" and below, the panicked crowds milled around like ants when their hill was kicked. Many made for the exits, threatening to trample fellow visitors underfoot. Other rides stopped midway, or were brought to a halt, and park workers were hard pressed to bring the chaos under control for an organized evacuation.

At the controls of the Bonzer Bomber, however, that small quake had other consequences. "The emergency release isn't working," David Bard, the ride operator radioed to his supervisor. "The magnetic brakes are offline, too."

On the top of the Bomber, there was shouted discussion about the quake, with the natives explaining to the tourists about how infrequent they were. "The safeties will have us down soon," one of them said, "Just hang on, mates!"

But as time went by and there was no release, James furrowed his eyebrows. "Something must've gone wrong with the ride. I think we're stuck up here."

Bobby looked down to the ground and gulped. "Dad, do you think this thing'll collapse?"

"No, no, of course not," James answered, trying his best to keep his calm. In the back of his mind,

though, he couldn't help but think of that possibility.

"What do you mean, the controls are fused?" David's immediate supervisor, Elle Armstrong, had arrived to take over. "The safety features..."

"All the controls are fused," explained maintenance engineer Tom Pascal, coming out from under the control panel. He brushed off his dark hands as he stood. "Safety features aren't working and won't work. With a ride this old, it was only a matter of time. We'll have to find another way to get those passengers down before any aftershocks bring them down the hard way."

Elle shook her head. "The rest of the park is being evacuated; even a little shake like that means other rides have been compromised. Hopefully we won't have the same trouble with any of them!" She let out a frustrated huff. "I'll round up the rest of the engineering crew and see what they can come up with. In the meanwhile, go through the spare parts and see if you can find something that we can jury-rig. We have to get those people down!"

Up on Thunderbird Five, Alan kept an eye on the weather screen, and an ear to the transmissions. Even so, he couldn't keep from dwelling on the last few weeks. Nikki, his girlfriend and former team member, hadn't had much time for him because of her medical studies, and frankly, he was tired of it. They'd had a knock-down, drag-out row that had resulted in her throwing him out and breaking up with him. He had been nursing his wounded ego all week, and had jumped at the chance to get away from his family's near-constant advice -- mostly of the "suck it up and apologize" variety.

He pulled up short as the system picked up a news story with the word "rescue" in it. It was from an Australian TV station. "A small earthquake has struck just offshore," said news anchor Evelyn Gooles. "The magnitude is only 5.1, and so far there haven't been reports of any damage."

Gooles paused, glancing down at her laptop computer. "Wait a moment, please. I'm receiving some breaking news here." After reading it carefully, she said, "We have a report that Ekka Amusement Park has sustained some damage. The park is evacuating all visitors, but the popular Bonzer Bomber ride at Ekka Amusement Park is stuck. Sixteen people have been stranded at the top of a 52 meters tall tower." She paused again, then added, "This story is only now developing, and we'll give you more details as soon as we can get them."

Alan shook his head. "Do I tell Dad? Or wait for them to call us?" He shook head. "Dad's not gonna like it, but if they call after the Thunderbirds are home, he's not gonna like sending them out again either." He blew out a breath. "I'll tell him, and let him make the call."

Toggling a switch, he said, "Base from Thunderbird Five. Come in, Base...."

Beginnings by Tikatu and TracyFan4Ever
