

Thursday, September 13, 2068 almost 7 a.m. NYC (11 p.m. same day Tracy Island)

"Mark, have you seen ..." Cassie broke off as her brother held out her wallet to her. It had been sitting on the coffee table. "Thanks," she told him with a smile. She was usually much more organized than this but the upcoming flight to who knew where was starting to make her nervous.

"A little nervous?"

"You could say that," she replied as she shouldered the one travel bag she was taking with her.

"I don't think you mentioned where you're heading," Mark said.

"All I know is that the interview is at the Tracys' home," Cassie said as she headed toward the apartment door. "I won't know the exact destination until I get my ticket."

"What do you mean you don't know where they're flying you to?" Mark asked. Grabbing his keys, and following her. "Sounds kind of suspicious to me."

Cassie couldn't help it. She had to laugh at her brother's last remark. Sometimes he could be way too suspicious. "Relax, will you? Tracy Industries is a well known company. I'm sure it's fine."

"I'm just trying to look out for you," he told her.

"I thought I was the older sibling. Aren't I supposed to look out for you?" Cassie asked as they stepped into the elevator.

"I'm not amused," Mark told her.

The two were silent as the elevator made its way to the ground floor. The two walked outside to find a cab waiting out front of the apartment building. The cabbie was waiting beside the cab.

"Ms. Cassandra Kishi?" the cab driver asked, as he opened the door for her.

"That's me. I guess that makes you my ride to the airport?"

"Sure does, miss. Bernie Levine, atcha service." He made a motion toward her bag. "Wouldja like that in th' trunk?"

"I don't like the looks of him, Cass," Mark said softly to his sister as she handed the cabbie her bag. He kept his eyes on Bernie.

Bernie shoved back his leather cap. "Well, I know I gotta face only a mudder could love, but I'm honest." He motioned toward Mark. "Since yer so concerned over the lady's well-bein', why dontcha ride along? No extra charge."

"I think I will," Mark responded, not taking his eyes off the cabbie as the three got into the cab.

Mark was quiet for about five minutes into the trip to the airport. Trying to keep his voice down, he addressed Cassie. "I still thinks he looks suspicious. They won't tell you where they're flying you to. Why don't you just forget this and take the job in Thornville. At least it doesn't sound as if they're trying to kidnap you!"

"The Tracy's ain't in the business of kidnappin'," Bernie remarked from the driver's seat, glancing at them through the rear view mirror.

Cassie laughed as Mark glared at the cabbie. "You'll have to forgive him Bernie. He's a police officer. Being suspicious comes with the job."

"Oh, a cop! Well then! Never argue wit' a member of New York's finest, I always say. They tend ta increase yer fine... if ya know what I mean?" Bernie grinned at Mark, his gold front tooth shining in the mirrors. "So, this ya first time outta the city, miss?"

"No not the first time. Flew out to California a few years back and I went to Japan once as a kid. I have a couple of brothers who live up in Connecticut too now. Other than trips to the Catskills and field trips that's about the extent of my excursions out of the city."

"That's interesin'. Got family in Japan or just went for the culture?"

"On my mother's side," Cassie replied, nodding. "It was nice getting to see that side of my family. Other than my grandfather and uncle, none of them have left Japan."

"Musta been nice ta see 'em them."

They chatted the rest of the way to JFK Airport. After awhile even Mark quit sulking and joined in on the conversation. At the airport, Bernie got Cassie's bag out of the trunk for her.

"Now, I'm ta remind ya that yer ticket's waiting at the Delta counter." He handed her bag to a sky cap, then tipped his hat. "Have a safe trip, miss, an' tell ol' Mr. Tracy that Bernie sends his regards."

"Thank-you."

He motioned toward Mark. "You need a ride back seein' as ya know I didn't kidnap the lady?"

"No, I'm going to walk Cassie inside. I'll call someone to pick me up."

"Well, if that's whatchya want. G'bye now." He gave a jaunty salute, got in his cab, and started off again.

As Bernie drove away, Cassie and Mark headed into the airport. Cassie went to the Delta Airlines

ticket window and got her ticket. Her destination was LAX and there was a short note with it saying she'd receive further instructions once there.

"Don't even say anything," Cassie told her brother as she headed toward the security gate. She could tell by his expression that the note made him like the whole idea even less.

"Well, at least call, when you get to wherever they're taking you," Mark said, admitting defeat. He could see that he wasn't going to change his sister's mind.

"I will," she said, coming to a stop right before the lines that were forming to go through security. "Thanks for coming this far with me," she told him.

"It's no problem, Cass," he told her, wrapping her in a hug. "Have a safe flight," he told her as she stepped away.

"Thanks."

Cassie got into one of the lines, and started waiting for her turn to pass through security. Turning back toward the airport entrance, Mark took out his cell phone. He figured he'd give Mercy a call. His partner wasn't going to enjoy hearing from him at this time of the morning, but he knew if he threatened to call out this evening, she'd give in and come get him.

Posted by starrynebula on August 15, 2007

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