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Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:51:43 GMT

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Saturday, September 15, 2068, 8:30 pm Tracy Island

Cassie was relieved when dinner had come to an end. Once again, she had felt nervous all the way through it, though she had tried to be a little bit more sociable than the evening before. Having Luke there with her had helped a little. Still, she was glad to be able to escape the dining room table.

"So, Cass, you haven't made any plans for this evening, have you?" Luke asked, with a smile.

"Actually, I have a date with a good book," she told him.

"Well, can the book wait? We haven't really had a chance to catch up yet. I was thinking we could go back to my place. You can see what the apartments are like... if you want to take the job that is," he added quickly, not wanting her to think he was pressuring her to join IR.

"Yeah, I think the book will wait for me. Lead away."

Luke guided her back to where Jeff and Virgil had taken her earlier. "Isn't this place something?" he asked as they arrived at the elevator terminus. He let the hand scanner do its thing and punched in a code. "I was totally floored at how big the complex was."

"It is pretty amazing," Cassie said as she followed Luke. "You would think I'd be used to complexity coming from New York City, but some of this stuff could give the city a run for its money. The fact that there is no smog, beeping car horns or people yelling profanity at you from their cars is a nice change of pace, too."

Luke laughed as they entered the monorail car. "I have to admit, though, the humidity is something else. Even though we're coming out of winter into their spring, it takes some getting used to "

"Can't take a little heat, Morel?" Cassie joked, as the monorail car started moving. She looked out the window as the car moved through the underground facilities of the island. "Now this I don't mind. I feel right at home - or, well, on the city subway going home. Less crowded though."

Luke laughed again. "You know me, Kishi, just a mountain boy at heart. Although," he gave her a wink, "I wouldn't mind climbing to the summit of this one. Never climbed an extinct volcano before."

They continued bantering with each other until they got to the platform at the Cliff House. "Here we are, home sweet home," he said as they left the car. "My side of the building's over here." He led her to the glass door on the right. "The elevator's interesting, too," he explained. "Transport and front door all in one."

"I was assigned to one of the one bedrooms on the third floor," he continued as they rode up the

lift. "Great view! Ask Rom; he lounges out on the balcony all day watching the birds.

Cassie laughed at his comment. Not many apartment buildings allowed dogs in them in the city. It was the reason she had never had one herself.

The elevator reached the third floor and came to a stop. The door opened and Luke led her off the lift and into his apartment. Cassie looked around the area they had stepped into. Like her room at the villa, the apartment was bigger than she had expected.

Luke looked at her face and grinned. "Bigger than you expected?" he asked.

"You could say that," Cassie replied looking at her friend. "I suppose there isn't any chance of finding any mice or roaches either," she said, thinking of the one bedroom apartment she had lived in while going to NYU. "Not that I miss those guys, mind you."

"Not a one," Luke assured her. "But I've had a gecko or two find their way inside. Kinda startling to find one in the bathroom while you're showering."

Rom finally eased himself off the couch to greet Cassie as Luke went into the kitchen. "Want something to drink?" he asked.

"Water will be fine," Cassie told him, as she reached out to scratch Rom behind the ear. The dog looked up at her with a grateful doggie expression. "You're just a big lovable mutt, aren't you?" Cassie said affectionately to the dog. She had seen pictures of Rom before, but this morning had been the first time she had met the German Shepherd. Luke had left him with his parents when he had visited her in the city.

"You know my brother, Mark, was worried the Tracys were trying to kidnap me," Cassie said, Luke rejoined her. She took the glass of water from him. "Wanted me to take the job in Thornville and not even come. He'd really freak if he knew where I was at right now."

"Yeah, he'd freak " Luke said, thinking of her younger brother Mark. He was the only one Luke knew who could be more suspicious than himself at times. Guinness in hand, he sat down on the sofa. "My parents would do the same if they knew. They think I'm in Los Angeles..." His voice trailed off.

Cassie sat down next to Luke. His sofa taken up, Rommel settled himself on the floor near Luke's feet. "Yeah, and my family would think I'm in Wichita if I came here," she said. She took a sip of the water. "I'm really not sure what I want to do. I mean, I started this job hunt to start over. Get out of the city and away from the memories. Do you know how many times I've been just jogging or running errands and I think - 'Alex and I did this here' or 'Alex kissed me here'? I haven't even ventured anywhere near Central Park since I moved out of our apartment. Not only are there too many memories of Nathan haunting it but that's where..."

Though she let her sentence trail off, Luke didn't need her to finish it. He knew what she had been going to say. Cassie had told him about Alex proposing to her on the carousel in Central Park.

Cassie dabbed at the tears starting to leak from her eyes. "I guess this isn't exactly what you had

in mind when you mentioned catching up, huh?" she said giving a nervous laugh, and trying to will the tears away.

"Hey, it's okay," Luke said softly, putting an arm around her. "I've got the same problem in a way. I'm nowhere over Barry yet, but... the pain will lessen in time." He swept his arm in an arc, indicating the apartment, and what lay beyond it. "Coming here, taking up this challenge... it's helping. Though, at first, I did have to do some soul searching about my motives, especially when I thought I'd be based in LA."

He smiled. "I can hardly wait to get out in the field and start putting my skills to work... though I'm not too excited at the prospect of learning how to fly."

Cassie nodded, glad for the comforting arm around her shoulders. "Flying could be fun," she admitted. "Although I have a feeling Thunderbird 2 might handle worse than the fire engine in rush hour traffic."

Luke laughed again, long and loud. "You are so right about that, Cass. Better watch out though, I get the feeling that Virgil's none too happy when people insult his Thunderbird!" Taking his arm from around her shoulders, he glanced at her with a twinkle in his eye. "You should see how these beasts launch! It's mind-boggling. I've seen Thunderbirds One and Two so far... well, let's just say you've got to see it to believe it." He paused and continued in a quieter, less excited tone. "God, it's good to see you. I don't want to influence your decision, but if you ask my opinion, you'd do well here. Could probably teach these veterans a thing or three."

"Maybe," Cassie said thoughtfully. Her thoughts drifted to Scott. Yes, he had apologized but she still got the feeling he wasn't completely happy with the thought of hiring her. "However, I think I'm going to have to prove to Scott that I should be here, more so than any of the others. I got the impression he wasn't thrilled about the prospect of bringing me on board. Gives me pause about taking the job."

"Oh sure, anywhere I go, I'm going to have to prove myself to some extent. It would be like when I started out as a paramedic and again on the fire squad. The veterans are always a little leery of the rookies and it's understandable. They don't know you. Don't know what you're capable of. Still, there's a difference between wariness and not being wanted on the team."

Luke turned thoughtful for a moment. "Did Mr. Tracy tell you why they wanted to hire you?"

Cassie nodded. "Said they had some problems on rescues involving fires. He wanted someone on the team that knew more about how they behave and how to fight them."

"From what I've seen, Mr. Tracy knows his team well. So, if that's the reason he wants you on it, that means there's something that even Scott can learn from you if you join up." Luke took a swig of his Guinness, and put the glass back down. "Obviously, HE thinks you're worth it, or he wouldn't have told you about IR in the first place. Scott will just have to deal."

Cassie smiled at Luke's last comment. He had a point though. Ultimately, it was Mr. Tracy in charge of IR. It was his confidence she needed, not Scott's, and she apparently had that. Though if she took the job she certainly planned on trying to earn Scott's confidence in her abilities.

Besides, she had never backed away from anything in her life just because someone had said she couldn't do it or she shouldn't do it. If she had, she certainly wouldn't be here right now. How many times had her father told her not to pursue being a firefighter? "It's too hard and dangerous for my little girl." Sure, he was only trying to look out for her. Protect his only daughter. Still, that had only made her want to do it more. I never backed down from my father; why should I back down from Scott Tracy? she thought to herself.

The thought of her father brought a small smile to her face. "You know, I'll feel a little weird about lying to Mark and the rest of my family, but there's something to be said for telling my father that I'm taking a nice, easy consultant job, off of the streets. He's been on my back ever since I told him I planned on joining FDNY, more so since his accident. Taking this job would give him peace of mind if nothing else."

"Don't make that your reason for taking it though," Luke warned her. He sighed. "The lying is hard. I have been told that I'll spend some time in the office, actually earning my keep with Tracy Industries, but I'm not sure how that works yet. A couple of people here actually work for the family, so they're covered, but I don't see how I'm going to be able to do this consultant thing and still be available for rescues." He shrugged. "I suppose that means you'd be going out to do the instruction as well."

"Yeah, supposedly I'd be making sure fire codes and safety protocols are up to date and being put in place correctly at the different sites. That in itself could be interesting work. Definitely something different than what I've been doing. Don't get me wrong; I love my job, but it can get monotonous after awhile and some days you're sitting around the station thinking of what you could be doing at home if you weren't stuck waiting for a call to come in."

Cassie paused briefly, realizing how what she had just said probably sounded. "Argh, that sounded horrible. It's not that I actually want some accident or fire to happen but ... forget it, I don't think I can actually put into words what I mean."

"Still, it's helping those in trouble that means the most to me. Like the traffic accident I was at last week, there was this little girl trapped in a car. We had to use the jaws of life to cut her out, and all I did was hold her hand and talk to her, but I know that made a difference. That's what I like about the job, and that's why I never wanted to take a desk job or instructor position in the city like my father wanted. I wouldn't mind doing that but I don't want to lose the feeling of actually making a difference in someone's life. This job would actually allow me to do both."

"That's the way I feel about it, too," he admitted. "Working with the best ... God, who wouldn't want to work with IR?" He brought himself up short, and gave Cassie a lopsided grin. "Oops. And here I said I didn't want to influence you."

Cassie smiled. "Too late for that, Morel," she said jokingly. "But seriously, if I'm going to take the job, I need to do it for myself. If I'm honest with myself, I started this job search to get away from the city. To start new. I can definitely do that here, while still doing the job I love."

"And you get to hang out with me and Rommel, too," he replied with a grin. "Not a bad perk, I'd say."

"Well, hanging out with Rommel would be a perk," Cassie said with a sly grin. "Hanging out with you, that may be considered one of the hazards of the job."

She tried to slide out of his way, as he batted at her for her comment.

-- Written by starrynebula and Tikatu with input from Lillehafrue on August 21, 2007

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