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Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:09:12 GMT

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Thursday, September 20, 2068, 5:45 p.m., Christchurch, New Zealand (same time on Tracy Island)

"I'm so excited!"

Cherie nearly squirmed with happiness in the seat of the family's sports car as Virgil pulled into the parking lot at the Christchurch Community Center. The two of them had come to the city early so Cherie could purchase the supplies she'd need for the class. They had dinner together at a local fast-food eatery; not one of Virgil's favorites, but Cherie had declared, "Sometimes I miss McDonald's," in such a pitiful voice that he couldn't help but indulge her.

He grinned as they talked over burgers and fries. I don't get to spend a lot of just brother-sister time with Cherie. This Thursday night thing could be a regular date. And while she's in class, I can shop for myself. It'll be a nice time away from the island, too.

As they pulled into the parking lot, they noticed a number of teenage girls and boys getting out of cars and vans, and heading into the center. A young woman stopped by their car on the driver's side, and Virgil rolled the window down. "Mr. Tracy?"

"Yes?" Virgil looked up at the dark-skinned girl, and surreptitiously pulled a picture out of a folder. Cherie looked at the picture, then ducked her head to see the young woman standing by Virgil's door. "You're our contact?"

"Yes, I'm Airini Wirihana." The young woman didn't look much older than a teenager, but Virgil knew better from reading her dossier.

"I'm Virgil Tracy, and this is my sister, Cherie," Virgil said, indicating the teen next to him.

Airini ducked her head to favor Cherie with a bright smile. "Nice to meet you both. I'll be your shadow, Miss Tracy, but will try not to get in the way."

Cherie nodded and sighed. She had already argued with her parents about the need for security, but Jeff had been adamant. "You'll have a bodyguard, Princess, but we'll work it out so won't be too onerous." He had put an arm around her and squeezed her gently. "You don't get upset about the security when you visit your Koch grandparents, do you?"

"No," she'd replied reluctantly. "They don't get in the way, but we know they're there."

"That's how it will be for your class," he had assured her. "You'll see."

Now the two Tracys got out of the car. Cherie grabbed her purse and her art bag, while Virgil took the bag of supplies they'd just bought. The last few stragglers were hurrying inside. Airini walked ahead of them and entered before they got to the door, while Virgil lingered a little at the doorway.

"Have a good time, sis," he said, handing her the bag. He held her by her upper arms and kissed her on the forehead. "I'll be back at 8:30 to pick you up."

"See you then," Cherie said, smiling hesitantly.

He stepped out of the way, and Cherie straightened her shoulders, took a calming breath, and went inside. Virgil watched her clear both sets of doors before turning, his hands in his pockets, and sauntering back to the sports car.

Inside, Cherie found her bodyguard waiting for her. Together, they walked down to the room where the art class was being taught. She noticed that Airini already seemed to know where to go. She probably scoped it out beforehand.

When they reached the room, Airini crossed the room and set her things on one of the drawing tables, leaving Cherie to look around for her own place to sit. There was a spot open by a dark-haired girl who looked to be about her own age. Cherie walked over slowly, and asked the girl, "Is this seat taken?"

"No, it's not." The girl smiled and indicated with a hand that Cherie was welcome to sit there.

Cherie smiled back, a little shyly, and set her things down. The girl leaned over. "By the way, I'm Anneliese." She held out her hand, and Cherie took it.

"I'm Cherie. Nice to meet you."

"You, too."

At that moment, the teacher, Mr. Jernigan, came in. Cherie settled into her seat, feeling a thrill that she was here, on her own, and doing something she loved. She glanced over at her neighbor, and smiled. Maybe I've even made a friend!

Posted by Tikatu on September 3, 2007

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