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Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:26:32 GMT

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Monday, October 1, 2068, 3:30 p.m., Thunderbird Three

"Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Three." Alan touched his earpiece. It's nice to be hands-free, even on Thunderbird Three, he thought as his hands moved over the command console.

He turned his attention to the lift, where John was making an appearance, a mug of coffee in each hand. "Here," the older blond said, giving the pilot one. "You'll need the energy for unloading."

"Thanks," Alan replied, taking a cautious sip of the drink from the spill-proof travel mug. "Should be hearing from Callie right about... now."

In the space station, Callie smiled when she heard Alan's voice. "Thunderbird Three from Thunderbird Five, reading you strength five. Ready for docking?"

"Ready, willing and able," Alan replied, smiling. "Let's get this show on the road!"

He put his mug down, and began to fire the positioning rockets that would bring Thunderbird Three's sleek nose into line with Thunderbird Five's docking bay.

His hands moved expertly across the controls; his eyes watched the targeting screen that mutely told him if he was lined up properly. A quick glance at the speed indicators showed him how fast he was moving, and he cut out the rear thrusters. The ship began to slow, though the lack of friction would keep it moving even without propulsion at the rear.

The opening of the docking bay grew nearer, and he applied a brief burst from the front thrusters to slow the ship even more. "Docking in five... four... three... two... one."

A mechanical voice declared, "Docking complete," and lights across the control board flashed green.

"Thunderbird Three from Thunderbird Five, confirming completion. Opening airlock now. I'll meet you guys in a moment."

After pressing another button, Callie took the elevator down to the lower level, where the airlock door was opening. "Hey, guys. Welcome back."

"Hey, Callie!" John strode through the airlock first, coffee in hand, while Alan followed, his garment bag draped over one shoulder, a laptop case over the other, and a overstuffed gym bag in one hand.

John took a sip of his coffee, then wrapped an arm around Callie's shoulder to give her a squeeze. "How's it been up here?"

"For the most part, everything's been fine." She had no intention of bringing up the nightmare from

the week before. "Had the usual flagging calls; Alabama's doing well in the standings, just the usual happenings."

Alan's face wrinkled into a puzzled frown. "Alabama? Standings?"

John laughed, and smacked Alan lightly on the shoulder. "Don't tell me you don't know! Callie's one of the most rabid college sports fans I've ever met. We had a little bet on during the basketball season." He turned back to Callie and gave her a wink. "Guess this means you're football fan, too, huh?"

"Let me put it this way, John," said Callie with a smirk. "When it's college football season in the South, it's not a sport. It's a religion!"

Alan shrugged. "They love football that much?"

"Oh, just wait until next month, when Alabama and Auburn go at each other. The state's divided in two that day."

Alan shook his head. "I knew major league football could get hairy, but not college."

"You haven't been to a Yale versus Harvard game," John told him. "The campus gets worked up into a positive frenzy!" He stopped to think for a moment, then a sly grin crossed his face. "Hm. I wonder if Scott would like to put a little wager on that game this year."

"Well, while you're working that out, I'm going to put my stuff in my cabin and start unloading," Alan said, a touch of exasperation in his voice. "You coming, Callie?"

"Yeah, all right, Alan," said Callie. "Come on, John, let's get going while His Royal Highness gets his stuff stuffed away."

As John and Callie started unloading supplies, she asked, "How are Doc and the others doing?"

"They're doing okay, I think," John said, manhandling a cryofreeze cooler full of prepared meals out into the docking bay. "Mom is still seeing Anna; I understand she should be okay for full duty soon."

"Nikki and Dom were both on that panda rescue," Alan said as he joined them. "I guess they're getting over things, too. The real test will be when we bring Seven back online."

"Dad's hired a new mechanic, and a firefighter, to add to the crew," John added. He looked at Callie, a light frown on his face. "You did hear about Kat leaving, didn't you?"

"Yeah, I did." She let out a sad sigh. "I honestly thought things would've worked out between you and Kat. I thought I knew her, but apparently not. She was a good mechanic."

"Uh, yeah." John's face went red with embarrassment. "She was a good mechanic." He drew in a big breath and let it out in a sigh. "But... there was really nothing but friendship between us... at least, that's what it was on my end."

"I'm just sorry she couldn't--" Callie turned and noticed John's face. "Are you all right?"

Alan grinned as John cleared his throat. "Yeah, I'm okay, Callie; thanks for asking." He secured the cooler to the float they'd brought. "Let's just get this food put away, okay?"

"Okay," Callie said with a shrug, obviously not wanting to know all the details.

With that, the three astronauts pushed the float through to the galley, and began to unload the meals Kyrano had prepared for Alan's month as space monitor.

--changing of the guard by TracyFan4Ever and Tikatu on October 2, 2007

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