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Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:35:14 GMT

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Will's eyes nearly popped as the ramp door opened, and allowed the Thunderbird Two's passengers access to Mateo's secrets. He looked up at Thunderbird Two's chassis, suspended on what seemed to him to be spindly telescoping legs. Holy sh--! he thought. I knew I'd eventually be workin' on these beauts, but never thought I'd be ridin' in one, and on my second day on the job, too!

The cavern was dark, and smelled of something that Will recognized as lubricating oil. There was also another scent, more elusive, but that he finally pinned down as being fuel. Must be from Thunderbird Two, he guessed.

"Getting in here was pretty impressive, guys," Callie said. "But so far, all I see is dark. And all I saw on the way in was a cave."

"Ah hah!" Gordon said, in his best conspiratorial tone. "That's what you're supposed to see, m'dear." He paused, took a deep breath and shouted, "Lights!"

Bank after bank of lights, hidden in the cracks and crevices of the ceiling, came on, illuminating the entire room. Virgil rolled his eyes. "Don't think Gordon did anything spectacular, folks. He was just the one holding the remote, that's all."

Gordon stuck out his tongue at Virgil. "You take all the fun out of it, Virge."

"But..." Nikki said, her face carrying a puzzled frown. "It's still just a cave. A huge cave, but pretty plain."

"Things aren't what they seem, Nikki," Scott said with a grin. "Okay, Gordon; it's showtime."

There were gasps of amazement as the walls started sliding down, revealing equipment large enough, and complex enough to puzzle most of them. A larger wall disappeared into the floor, opening up another cavern, nearly as big as the one they stood in.

"You might be interested in this, Will," Scott said, coming near and indicating the machinery around them. "This is all computer-controlled emergency repair equipment. We have some of this equipment at base, but we prefer to get our hands dirty in repairing our own craft. Besides, the computers, as good as they are, can't do everything. Just the major hauling and positioning. Saves wear and tear on the back."

"That sounds good to me. Are the repairs permanent, or just temporary until you can get the vehicle in question back to Tracy Island?"

"Temporary, as we don't usually have Brains or Tin-Tin out here to give us a hand."

Will nodded. "Makes sense. You can't always rely on machinery to make good repairs; after all, what if they break down, too?"

Scott laughed. "I can see that we're going to get along just fine."

By this time, the lights were on in the other cavern, which had a huge turntable emblazoned with the IR logo on it.

"There's room in the main cavern for both Thunderbirds One and Two to land and be serviced," Virgil explained. "This is where the temporary quarters are, too, as well as access to the upper levels and the silo for Thunderbird Three."

"John mentioned possibly landing here if there was some kind of emergency," Callie said, looking thoughtful. "Said it would minimize collateral damage if we had to land here. Having seen Mateo, I can see what he meant. I mean, there's not much to lose here."

Gordon and Virgil looked at each other, and Virgil sighed. "That's not quite true. It would keep us from losing what we have on Tracy Island, and all the lives there, but if there was any kind of explosive emergency, we could lose Mateo Island entirely."

"What do you mean?" asked Dom.

"Well, it's part of the reason we came here today. But we'll get to that as we go further into the complex." Scott motioned to the long flight of steps that went up and over the quarters that Virgil had indicated.

"Hey, can't we see what the temporary quarters look like?" Cassie asked.

Scott and Virgil glanced at each other, and Virgil shrugged. "Sure. Why not?"

He pulled open one of the doors under the steps, and the new recruits followed him inside. "As you can see, there's not much to see. A small dining area and kitchenette, a small half-bath, a lounge on the far end of the room, and a spiral staircase that leads to the sleeping area upstairs." Virgil glanced at Cassie, who stood at his side. "Hm. I think I'd better talk to Dad about putting some sort of portable partition here so we can separate the sleeping room into men's and women's areas. And the shower upstairs... that'll have to be shared, too."

"Are there any medical facilities?" Nikki asked as she surveyed the spartan living conditions, arms folded.

"Yeah, through here." Gordon opened a door to their left, next to the door to the half-bath, and everyone who could, followed him into another room, with Dom and Nikki in the lead. He spread his hands apologetically. "As you can see, it's nothing compared to the infirmary back home."

"Hell, that's nothing compared to the sickbay on Thunderbird Two," Luke said, shaking his head.

"Ah, yeah." Gordon had the good grace to look embarrassed. "I guess we'll put a bug in Mom's ear, too."

"So, has everyone seen what's here?" Scott asked. He glanced at his watch. "We do need to

move along."

They headed for the stairs again, and Dom peered down a short, shadowed corridor at the base. "What's back there?" he asked, giving Gordon a nudge.

"Storage, mainly. And an emergency exit. Sort of a reinforced bunker, just in case something nasty happens."

"And what kind of nasty thing might happen?"

"Well," Gordon said, rubbing his chin. "I think Scott and Virgil will explain that."

They climbed the stairs and entered a corridor. Will noticed the smell of fuel getting stronger. He also heard the familiar humming of machinery, well-oiled and running smoothly. The group took a left hand turn, and were brought out into another large chamber, not as large as the ones below, but impressive nonetheless. There was a large squarish chamber with a single metal door, and a quietly humming tank arrangement.

"Isn't that a water purification plant?" Will asked.

"Yeah, it is. The whole complex is powered by a cold fusion reactor that's shielded with a cahelium-graphite silo, and water purification and sanitation are handled by what Will's already identified." Virgil pointed to each as he warmed up to his topic. "The entire island is hooked up to a satellite system, and it's functions are monitored in Thunderbird Five."

"Yeah! That's right!" Callie exclaimed. "Don't know why I didn't put the two together before now!" She shook her head and laughed. "I kept wondering what was so special about the Mateo board. Now I know!"

"So, what else is here?" Will asked as they headed back down to the original corridor. "I keep smelling fuel."

"Ah, yes." Scott said as he led them all into another large room. "This is why we're here today."

"What is it?" Luke asked, frowning at the sleek red aircraft sitting in the lift cradle. "It's marked for Tracy Aerospace."

"It's a fuel tanker," Elise explained. When the others looked at her, she added, "I used to see them in the military."

"Elise is right." Scott nodded, and smiled slightly. "This one carries fuel from here to Tracy Island for our use. One of us will be flying it back to the island today."

"How does it get out?" Cassie asked, curious.

"There are camouflaged hangar doors above us that open outward, and the cradle is lifted up by hydraulics," Virgil said. "The tanker is VTOL equipped, so it doesn't need runway."

"I see," Will said, nodding. "But I bet it doesn't store all the fuel that the complex needs. Where's the rest?"

"Down here!" Gordon called, as he headed down another long stairway.

--Mateo Island, part 2

Posted by Tikatu on October 24, 2007

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