

3-05-2068

As Thunderbird Two sped towards the North Sea, Brandon sat quietly. He felt the familiar rush of adrenalin, the one he got when he was preparing for one of his extreme sports. Looking down at his hands, he noticed that they were shaking.

Man, McCain, get a grip. It's not like this is your first rescue.

"Are you okay, Brandon?" a soft voice asked him. Brandon looked up, connecting with Nikki's brown eyes and noticing her concern.

"Yeah Nikki, I'm okay" he said, a small smile playing at the corners of his mouth, "just a little nervous is all."

"I know you are, Brandon, we all are. But, like Dom told me, stay focused and you'll do fine." Nikki put a reassuring hand on his shoulder.

"Thanks for the vote of confidence," Brandon replied. He started to say something else, but Thunderbird Two began shaking as it entered the storm.

"Is everyone okay?" Virgil asked, keeping his eyes focused on the controls. When they all answered, Virgil told them to stay seated until they reached the danger zone.

"What's our ETA, Virgil?" Dominic asked, looking at Nikki then over at Brandon.

"ETA's one hour, fifteen minutes," Virgil answered quickly, still keeping his eyes on the instruments. Dom nodded his thanks and grew quiet as he thought about what they would be getting into.

Across from him, Brandon too was deep in thought, trying to think ahead to what the rescue would bring and recalling what his former WASP commander, John Shore, said to him and a group of graduates as they readied themselves for their new duties.

"Remember, you are responsible for whatever decisions you make in the field. Good or bad, see it through. Always see it through 'til the end."

I will, sir, I will do you proud.

As they flew along, Gordon became impatient. He needed to be active but that was difficult to do at the moment. Finally he gave Brandon a nudge in the side, startling him out of a light doze.

"For cryin' out loud, Gordon," Brandon said grouchily, "Why'd you wake me up?"

Gordon's killer smile spread across his handsome face. "I thought you'd like to help me prep

Thunderbird Four. We need her in top shape for the rescue."

Brandon's eyes lit up at this. "Why didn't you say so?" Brandon stood up, following Gordon down to the hold.

The two men began looking over Thunderbird Four. Gordon started the pre-check, showing Brandon what needed to be done and, occasionally, letting him get some hands on experience with the mini-sub. As they checked the craft out, readying it for the mission ahead, Brandon brought up a legitimate question.

"What kind of gear does IR have for cold water diving? I have some gear of my own, but it's not designed for diving in the North Sea."

Gordon smiled back at him. "International Rescue has come prepared. We're equipped with state of the art dry suits and breathing gear that won't freeze up in the cold water." Gordon went to locker, pulling out one of the suits, showing it to Brandon.

"Whoa. I guess I won't have to worry about turning into an ice cube," he said as he fingered the material." He looked around the bay some more and his eyes fell on a set of rails. They reminded Brandon of railroad tracks without the ties in the middle.

"Hey Gordon, what are the rails for?" Brandon asked, getting more curious all the time. There was so much he had to learn.

"They're used to launch Thunderbird Four. Under normal circumstances, the pod is dropped to the ocean's surface. The pod door opens, the rails extend, and I use the engines to propel TB4 into the water.

"Man, Gordon, these aren't exactly 'normal circumstances'. How are you going to get Four into the water?"

The senior aquanaut ran his hand through his hair. "I have no idea. I hope Alan's come up with something."

"Excuse me Gordon, Brandon." A feminine voice spoke, causing both men to turn to the source.

"Hi Tin-Tin. What's up?"

"Virgil wants you both topside. We're twenty minutes from the danger zone.

"F-A-B. We're on our way up." Gordon gestured with his head for Brandon to follow and together they made their way back to their seats.

With help from Tikatu

Post by MagicMaster8 on 12/08/2004