
Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:58:47 GMT
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In the midst of all this, Dianne walked in. She looked around, puzzled, and noticed Jeff's still pale face. But she smiled as she asked, "What's all this?"

Jeff smiled at her, and beckoned her closer. He introduced Charmaine and Delmar, then handed her the photos of the cottage. She handed him a package from Kyrano, and helped him open it up, then she thumbed through the pictures, smiling as she did.

"What a lovely cottage!" she exclaimed. "Whose is it?"

Jeff reached out to take her hand in his good one. "It's... yours."

Dianne gasped, her eyes widening in disbelief. "Jeff! You bought this... for me?"

"Yes, Dianne, I did," Jeff said softly, his face now very serious. "It was supposed to be a... late... Valentine's gift."

Delmar and Charmaine exchanged glances, and stopped what they were doing. Delmar nodded and he and Charmaine left the room, their equipment awaiting their return. They realized that this was a very private moment between husband and wife.

Dianne put a hand over her mouth as she realized the implications of what Jeff had just told her. Tears sprang to her eyes. "This... this is why you went to New Hampshire? To buy this? Everything you've gone through, everything we've gone through, all because of a... vacation cottage?"

Jeff pulled her hand up to his lips, drawing her closer to him. He let go of her hand and put his in her hair. "Oh, Dianne! I hoped you would like the place, that you would make it your home. It would be a retreat for just the two of us. I didn't let you know where I was going because it was supposed to be a surprise. There was no way on earth that I could have anticipated what would happen, dearest. No way that Elise could have either."

"But... but now I feel like I'm to blame for this whole... mess!" Dianne cried, the tears beginning to fall. "If we...."

"Stop right there, Dianne Tracy," Jeff said sternly. "You are the best thing that has happened to me in twenty years. As horrible as this accident was for me and for our family, I wouldn't go back and erase it, not if it meant you weren't in my life. Don't you ever blame yourself for what happened. It was an accident, plain and simple. It could have happened anywhere at any time and for any reason." His voice softened as he pulled her even closer so that their foreheads touched and they were eye-to-eye. "If anyone is to blame, it's me. I was the one who got out of my seat even though Elise warned me not to...."

"Wait!" Dianne said suddenly, confused. "You sound as if you... remember."

Jeff sighed. "Yes, love, I remember now; at least enough to piece together what happened. The pictures of the cottage brought it rushing back to me." He kissed her nose. "I don't have any memory of what you and the boys did when you rescued us. I probably never will. But now I know how I got into this condition," he raised his casted arm, "and that bit of my life has been given back to me." He kissed her lips, and she closed her eyes. "Now, despite everything that happened, I am going through with this purchase. If anything, it will remind us, every time we go there, just what we have together and how precious it is. My question is: can you, will you, accept this gift? Accept it as a token, a very small token, of all the love I have for you?"

Dianne opened her eyes and saw the questioning, hopeful look in his gaze. Her self-recrimination ceased and her heart melted as she considered the full meaning of his gift. She draped her arms around his neck and brought her lips to his. "Oh, Jeff! I love you so much! Yes... yes, I accept this gift. It's a lovely cottage, and I thank you for thinking of me like this. And every time we go there, I will just be thankful that I still have you beside me."

Jeff smiled, and they kissed again, and then parted. "Please ask Ms. Sellars and Mr. Freeman to come back in, dear heart. I think I have some more forms to sign."

Post by Tikatu on 25/08/2004
