Tuesday, March 6th, 2068, 7:05 p.m. Tracy Island Villa

"So, is there anything else we need to cover?" Virgil asked. He looked around the lounge at his team. Lisa had provided an early supper around six o'clock, and at seven, the debriefing had started. Usually, the crew would debrief right after a rescue, sometimes around the dinner table. But with the way Brandon and Gordon looked and felt after their time in the water, Virgil had decided on a different tack. He ordered rest for everyone until supper, then they would debrief with clearer minds and full stomachs. It also allowed for Dianne to see her husband and get some food and rest before the debriefing as well.

Too bad we couldn't do this at a more convenient time for everyone, Virgil thought. It's two a.m. out there in New York!

John piped up from his portrait on the wall. "There has to be a way for us to track each individual team member without using the telecomms. I mean, the medical staff doesn't even use them during their work and there are no trackers built into the hands-free sets."

"True," Dianne added wearily. "We can't use the telecomms while we work. There's too much risk of contamination."

"And I hope to do away with the telecomms during rescues altogether," Brains said as he made notes on his PDA. "Hands-free communication will be part of the visors I'm working on. The Heads Up Displays will count on being plugged into the wireless earbud units." That's another thing on my plate, but first I need to get this glitch found and resolved!

"Hmm. Any ideas on how we could do it?" Virgil asked. Tin-Tin and Brains looked at each other, but it was Nikki who spoke up.

"In England, a lot of families are resorting to tiny computer chips so that they can track their children's whereabouts if something bad should happen. Three children that I know of have been found through the aid of the chips," she told the assembly. "Would that be a viable option for us?"

Dianne looked thoughtful. "I remember reading about those. They're an offshoot of the technology that pet owners used to identify their animals back in the early part of the century."

Tin-Tin nodded. "I read about them, too, and was thinking it would be good to add them to the new uniforms as a tracker. They are very miniaturized now and totally safe, from what I've read."

"But putting them in the uniforms gives us the same problem as the telecomms," Brandon argued. "If we lose whatever piece of clothing holds the tracker, then we're 'lost' to Thunderbird Five's scanners."

"Or, the clothing isn't, but the person is," Callie added. She frowned. "The only way I see we can make full use of these... locator chips... is to implant them." She shuddered. "I don't know if I like

that idea. Too much chance for an allergic reaction, I'd think."

"Brains, can you look into them in tandem with Nikki, since she brought them up?" Virgil asked. "I need some more data to be able to present the idea to Father."

Brains sighed inaudibly, but nodded, and added the item to his growing list of tasks.

Virgil surveyed the room again. "Anything else?"

"Code names," John said again.

"Oh, yes!" Christopher agreed. "I don't mind being called CJ once in a while, but I'd rather not be called that all the time. It was a childhood nickname and doesn't always conjure up fond memories, if you understand."

"Right. With two people whose name begins with C...." Virgil began.

Dianne interrupted, "Three, Virgil. Remember, we have code names for the children as well."

"Oh, yeah. Three people. And two whose names begin with D as well," Virgil continued, "we can't keep using the first initials for code names. Any suggestions for replacements?"

"Hmm," Alan hummed. He brightened. "How about something with middle names? Use the initials combined?"

"No, Alan!" John said, wincing. "Callie and I thought about that. Her initials are C-L, which sounds like 'seal'. Just think of what your initials would sound like run together."

"Ay-ess," Alan said slowly. Then he turned red as people around him chucked or grinned. "Oh, I get it." He raised his voice. "I agree with John. It's not the best idea."

"How about using the middle names or a portion of them?" Kat asked. She was sitting in on the debriefing much as Brains was, to determine what she would need to do for maintenance.

"That might work," Dominic agreed. "If we used, say, the first syllable or the first few letters." He looked bemused. "Means my code name would be 'Aid' for Aidan."

"And mine would be 'Ash' for Ashley," Nikki pointed out.

Gordon began to laugh. "Mine would be 'Coo' or 'Coop', depending on how many letters we used." He looked over at Virgil. "Yours would probably be 'Gri' or more likely 'Gris'! And Scott? 'Car' or 'Carp'!" He began to guffaw. "And Alan's? Try 'Shep'! Here boy!"

The rest of the room joined in the laughter, as they began to try out different names.

"Mine would be 'Lou' or even 'Louie'," Callie said. "Hmm. I kinda like 'Louie'."

"Mom, what would yours be?" Gordon asked, wiping his eyes. "I don't remember your middle

name."

Dianne glared at him. "Doc," she said succinctly.

"Oh, come on, Mom!" Alan coaxed, grinning. "Tell us!"

"What would you call your father?" she asked in return. That brought Alan up short, but Gordon howled some more and fell on the floor.

"Obviously, this isn't going to work," Virgil said drily. "Let's come up with something else."

"Well perhaps each person should come up with their own," Dominic suggested. "I'd use Dak; it's a nickname my family uses with me."

"And I'd be 'Big Mac'," Brandon said. "Some of my old WASP buddies gave me that years ago."

"I like Louie," Callie added. "I think I'll use that."

"We should still use the names Thunderbird One, Two and so forth when speaking to the pilots of the craft," Christopher said. "It's far more military and precise."

"What would you choose as a personal code name?" Nikki asked.

"I think I'd use... Asterix," Christopher said. "Speaking of which, has anybody seen him? I lost track of the little bugger a day or more ago."

"Oh!" Dominic replied. "Lisa told me she found him sleeping with Joshua! She put him back in your apartment."

Christopher smiled with relief. "I'm so glad! I missed that furball."

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves here," Virgil reminded them. "All of this will have to be okayed by Dad, you know." He paused. "Let's come up with a list of code names and I'll submit it to him for approval. Now, is there anything else?" He looked at Dianne's picture. She was noticeably wilting. "We have someone here who should be in bed."

"I think we're through, Virgil," Brains said. "Besides, I need to get ready for the arrival of Mrs. Matumbo."

"Right. I think we're done, too," Virgil agreed. "This debriefing is over." The others nodded, and began to get up.

Virgil turned to Dianne again. "Goodnight, Mom. Get some sleep. Give our love to Dad."

Dianne nodded. "Goodnight, Virgil." Her picture winked out. Virgil stretched and yawned. It was time for him to sleep, too.

Dianne rubbed her eyes and went to her bed. She laid down, but sleep took its time coming. The

scene from the hospital earlier that day played through her mind again and again. She put her fingers up to her lips where Jeff had kissed her, and her memories of other kisses, and the pleasure that followed, made the lack of Jeff's presence in their bed hurt with an almost physical pain. She hugged his pillow, tears coming to her eyes again.

He's got to come home soon!

Post by Tikatu on 28/08/2004