

Tracy Island, Wednesday, 7th March, 8.30 am

Virgil came down to breakfast wearing grubby clothes, looking like he was ready to work. He was introduced to Mrs. Matumbo, or Lena, as she insisted on being called, and then sat down to eat the pancakes that Lisa had prepared. He looked across at Kat, who was already finishing up her meal.

"Kat, a winch on Thunderbird Two failed during the rescue."

"I know. I heard all about it." Her eyes widened. "Do... do you want me to replace it for you?"

Virgil nodded. "I certainly could use your help. I suggest we get started right after breakfast."

"Okay Virgil, just let me go and put my overalls on," Kat said. "Shall I meet you in TB2's hangar? Or do you want me to return here, in case you want to fill me in on what is required?"

"I'll meet you in Thunderbird Two's cockpit, Kat. You can come back up here and use my entrance if you like," Virgil said with a twinkle in his eye. "Or you can take the passenger elevator next to the monorail lift. Whichever you prefer."

Kat smiled at him. "Ooh! I want to use your entrance please."

"Okay, Kat," Virgil replied. "But let's eat breakfast first, shall we?"

Kat scarfed down her breakfast, hardly tasting the delicious pancakes. Then she hurried back to her apartment. She felt totally excited at the prospect of working on the Thunderbirds themselves. She changed into her overalls, all fingers and thumbs in her excitement. Slow down, she told herself. More haste, less speed.

In the meanwhile, Virgil had finished his coffee and sauntered upstairs, using his special entrance to make it down to Thunderbird Two before Kat did. He looked around and frowned. Have to find some way to get in and out of here on the ground level without having to move the chassis up and down over the pod all the time.

Virgil toggled a switch, and watched the pods move to their farthest extent into the bay, leaving nothing below the chassis but air. There. Once Kat gets here, we can go in and out through the lower entrance.

Hurrying back to the lounge Kat stood in front of the picture and was instantly tipped back and began the descent into Thunderbird 2's cockpit.

Kat was experiencing the thrill of her life lying on the flat surface of the conveyor as she descended to Thunderbird 2's cockpit. Finally she arrived, sliding into Virgil's chair. "Boy, that was some entrance!" she said breathlessly.

Virgil looked at her. "Yes, it sure is a good way to get here."

Kat looked around her; the controls seemed very complicated. She knew that she would never be able to fly this machine, not that she would ever be asked to. "Right. What now, Virgil?" she asked.

"Right now, I'm going to lower the chassis to the floor so we can get in and out of her easily for parts and tools," Virgil said, flipping the switch that did just that. Kat swayed a bit but kept her footing as Thunderbird Two descended smoothly to the floor.

"Then we'll go down to the lower level and I'll show you where the winch motor is. We'll probably have to look into stores to see if we have a replacement," he continued. "C'mon. I'll show you the way and give you a little tour while we're at it."

Kat followed Virgil out through the back of the cockpit and listened intently as he pointed out the various cabins and doors to her. "This is crews' quarters over here on the left, and this is the lab on the right. We used to store hoverbikes here, but we moved the lab into this space to make room for a small sickbay."

"That's the doorway to the inspection catwalk in each pod," he said, indicating a wide door at the back wall of the chassis. "And in here we have the lift that goes down to the lower level. You can see why we wanted sickbay downstairs; the lift barely holds two, never mind two and a stretcher."

He pointed out something she wouldn't have noticed. "This lift turns so that you can exit either inside or outside. The outside door usually connects with the pod itself, but today we'll just use it to get out to the hangar. On the inside, it opens up on this triage room." He guided her down a short passage.

"On the right we store our extra clothes and equipment like radiation suits and such." They took a right hand turn and he opened a door to the left. This brought them into the winch room. "The passenger elevator comes directly down here, too," Virgil told her.

Kat was amazed at everything Virgil pointed out to her. She was trying to memorise the way they had come and everything that he had shown her. She looked around the winch room. "I hope there is a spare engine, Virgil," she said. "Otherwise, it's going to be an enormous job to repair the motor. The damage looks bad. It looks as though someone has given it a mighty thump."

Virgil chuckled. "Christopher did say he'd thumped it. Let's see about getting the serial numbers off of this baby and we'll have Scott use the computer to track down the part for us."

Kat looked on as Virgil got under the engine to take a note of the serial numbers. "So I suppose that was how Christopher managed to make it work?" Kat asked. "Do you want me to contact Scott with the number?"

"Yes, please," Virgil replied.

Kat spoke into her telecomm. "Hi, Scott. This is Kat. Virgil and I are in the winch room. These are

the serial numbers; can you check on the computer to track down the right parts for us? The Spool should be replaced and possibly the cable as well."

"Okay, Kat, will let you know," Scott answered.

Within a few moments, Scott's face and voice came back in Kat's telecomm. "We're in luck. The parts you need are in storage bin 552, 553, and 568, respectively. Virgil knows where that is."

Kat relayed this information back to Virgil.

"Right, then, Kat, follow me." He led her out of the Thunderbird into the hangar itself. "These are the storage bins," he told her, pointing to several large bins, each one numbered. "Every piece of equipment we use is stored here, from the largest motor parts down to the smallest nails and screws. Now I think that 552 and 553 are over in that corner and 568 are on the other side. Could you go and look into 568 and find the cable and bring it back to the winch room."

"FAB," grinned Kat as she hurried over to the bin he was pointing to. She managed to bring out the heavy cable and staggered back to the winch room with it. Virgil joined her with the other articles of equipment needed. "Now we start to work on the engine," he said. "We'll need a ladder for each of us because of where the motor is situated. Wait here and I'll get what we need."

Between the two of them, they took down the old winch motor and spool, filled with the cable. It was heavy, and Virgil was afraid that Kat couldn't handle it, though he said nothing. As a result, he was amazed at the young mechanic's ability to move around the heavy pieces of equipment. They worked in companionable silence for a while, and then Virgil asked, "What would you choose for a code name?"

Kat wiped a stray strand of hair away from her eyes, and thus deposited a streak of grease across her cheek. "Well, I believe that mechanics are called 'grease monkeys'. As I am so small, I thought I could be known as 'mini grease monkey', and because that is such a mouthful to say, I would abbreviate it to the initials 'MGM'. What would you use as a code name?"

"I don't know. Maybe something to do with one of my hobbies, like Piano Man or some artist or something," Virgil said as he tightened a bolt with a grunt. He glanced over at her. "Any suggestions?"

"Oh, there are so many artists!" she said. "I don't even know what kind of art it is that you do."

"Painting, mostly, in lots of different styles and media." He shrugged. "I'll keep thinking about it."

Kat nodded, and continued her work.

"Could you just lift that wire for me?" Virgil asked, "I think that we are almost able to refit the engine." Kat did as she was told.

"To be honest, Virgil," she said, "using those initials as code names really made me laugh. It was so funny calling Gordon, 'Gee', and Alan, 'Aye'. There could be some really funny combinations when you are all working together."

"Yes, I know," replied Virgil, "and I don't think the middle names were much better. Here, we've almost got it." The two of them put as much pressure into pushing the motor to the ceiling as they could and then tightened down the bolts. Virgil handed her a power tool. "Here, we can get the bolts even tighter with this."

Kat took it from him and began to use it. Virgil watched out of the corner of his eye and was pleased to see her familiarity with the tool and its uses. He lifted up the spool.

"You know," Virgil said, "from watching you, I can see what a good mechanic you are."

Kat smiled at him. "Thanks for the compliment. Now just how high does this spool have to fit?"

"Here, we'll attach the spool to the motor," Virgil said, showing her where the two fitted together. With the power tool Kat had on her, the installation only took a minute or two.

"Now, we'll wire the motor into the controls and test it," Virgil explained. Together they began wiring in the motor.

"Do you want me to stay here while you return to the cockpit, Virgil, and test the motor to check whether everything is okay now?" Kat asked.

"Why don't you try the controls down here first, while I scoot up to the cockpit? Then after we've tested both sets of controls, we can hook up the cable and see how it does and if the spool is on right," Virgil suggested.

"Okay, Virgil," Kat replied. She looked at the controls; they didn't seem very complicated. Tentatively she switched on and with a whirring sound the motor began move. "Virgil?" she said into her telecomm.

"Yes?"

"It's working perfectly here."

"Okay. I'll try my controls now." Kat stood back and watched as the motor came on as if by magic.

"Looks good, Virgil!"

"Great! I'm coming back down."

Before Virgil returned, Kat thought that they had worked together very well, and she was pleased that Lady Penelope had insisted on all the extra tuition. Finally, Virgil rejoined her in the winch room.

"Now for the real test. Can you help me hook up the cable?"

Kat dragged the cable and between them they managed to hook it over the spool. Once the cable was fastened around the spool, Virgil started the engine. Slowly, slowly, the spool began to wind,

winding the cable up onto the winch.

"Looks like success!" Virgil exclaimed.

Kat agreed. "A definite success, Virgil," she said.

Virgil glanced over at Kat, and grinned. "You sure do get into your work, don't you, MGM?" He indicated the smears of oil on her face and the grease on her overalls.

Kat laughed. "I simply can't seem to keep clean when I am working, no matter how hard I try," and she added, "Van Gogh. Anyway, you are not so clean yourself."

Virgil looked at her. "Seriously though, thank you for helping. It was a job worth doing and you were a great assistant."

Kat coloured slightly. "Thanks, Virgil."

Virgil glanced at his watch. "Hmm. Looks like we've nearly worked the morning away. Lunch will be served soon. Why don't you go ahead and get changed and head topside? I've got some more work to do in getting Thunderbird Two ready for the next rescue."

Kat wiped her hands on some rags lying around and said goodbye to Virgil, who was already heading for the cockpit. She headed out of the hangar and made for her apartment. She thought about what she had just done. It was so reassuring to know that although she was not taking part in rescues, she would be needed when the Thunderbird crafts came home. And who knew? Maybe she would be doing more to help Virgil and the others, given time.

She had a long leisurely shower and headed for the dining room and joined her friends for lunch. They all wanted to know how the work had gone. "I will tell you later," Kat told them.

Post by Tawnyangel22 and Tikatu on 30/08/2004

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