

Saturday, March 10th New York Airport.

Scott sat in the cockpit doing his pre-flight check and waiting for his co-pilot and passengers to arrive. Chris whistled to himself softly as he approached the aircraft.

"Hello Scott, permission to come aboard?"

Scott laughed "Hi, Chris. Sure, c'mon in."

Chris was to be co-pilot on this the return flight, so he parked himself in the co-pilot's seat and began to help Scott with the pre-flight checks.

"So, are you feeling more at ease with the plane?" asked Scott.

"Yeah, took a little getting used to yesterday, but she felt good once I settled down and just let her fly!"

Scott smiled. He knew exactly what Chris was referring to. The noise of a car engine outside caught their attention. "Looks like our passengers have arrived," announced Scott, extracting himself from his seat and heading down the stairs to meet them.

His two youngest brothers were the first to emerge from the limo, followed by Grandma, Kyrano, Cherie, Gordon, and Dianne, who went around the other side to help with the wheelchair and Jeff.

"Here, let me do that, Mom."

"Thanks, Scott."

They both helped Jeff ease into his chair and headed towards the rear of the plane. The aft ramp had been lowered so that the wheelchair would have easier access and Jeff would not have to try and climb the stairs. Grandma and Kyrano herded the children on board and Kyrano then returned to assist Bernie with the luggage.

Scott helped his father into his seat. "All set, Dad?"

"Yes, thank you, son. Who's your co-pilot?" Jeff asked, seeing movement in the cockpit.

"Chris. He flew in with Gordon yesterday, Virgil thought he could use some flying time." Jeff nodded his approval.

At the mention of Gordon's name, Dianne called out to him.

"Gordon, now would be a good time to say goodbye to your father!" She had noticed he was keeping his distance from her, and it served him right!

Gordon boarded the plane and gave his father a hug. "Behave yourself, Dad!"

"Likewise, Gordon, likewise!" Jeff smiled, but Gordon knew he meant what he said.

"Call me if there's anything you need me for."

"Yes sir!" Gordon also hugged his siblings, yelled goodbye to everyone else and deplaned. Dianne followed him out.

"Gordon, I meant every word I said to you last night. I will be checking on you. You can't afford to let this injury go, and we can't afford it either."

"I know, Mom," was the somber reply.

"Your dad doesn't know everything that happened, and I won't tell him, but you defy me one time and he'll know."

Gordon looked at her. "Thanks."

"Gordon Tracy, you're a mess, but God help me, I do love you!" She embraced her stepson and he was actually taken by surprise! He recovered quickly and hugged her back.

"Have a safe trip, I promise I will call you tomorrow."

He smiled. The charm was back and Dianne gave him a peck on the cheek and returned to the plane.

"Well, looks like we're all set back here. Hey, squirt!" Scott turned to Tyler. "Keep that belt on, you hear me!"

Tyler giggled "Yes sir, Captain sir!" he answered giving Scott something that resembled a military salute.

Jeff laughed as Scott shook his head and returned to the cockpit. "All set up here?" Scott asked his second in command.

"F-A-B!" came the reply, along with a grin.

Scott called the tower for clearance and within minutes they were on their way. Jeff relaxed back in his seat and closed his eyes. Home. He was going home. He knew his body still had a few milestones to reach before he would be back to what he considered normal, but that didn't matter. His family had nearly lost him, and he them, but all that mattered now was going home. Dianne noticed her husband was resting and got up to gently place a blanket over him.

"I'm not asleep, you know." He opened one eye and looked at her.

"I knew that!"

She smiled down at him. He winked at her and closed his eyes again. Truth be known he was

rather tired, and he knew he'd never get a moment's peace once they were home. Cherie and Tyler played cards together, under the watchful eye of Grandma, and Alex was playing a handheld video game. With her family relaxed and quiet, Dianne allowed herself to drift off to sleep. Kyrano busied himself with fetching snacks and drinks for all on board and even he smiled as he saw the sleepy faces of the family that meant the world to him.

In the cockpit, everything had gone smoothly and Scott was impressed with Chris's ability to learn quickly. The flight progressed smoothly until they were about an hour from California. Scott had been in contact with LAX Air Traffic Control and they had advised him of a storm system out in the Pacific near Hawaii, heading east. Scott talked it over with Dianne and they decided to layover for the night, playing it safe and giving Jeff a chance to rest up. Dianne decided the kids could do with some time to unwind as well.

They landed at LAX and Dianne proceeded to make reservations at Jeff's favorite hotel. The kids were excited, and it wasn't long before the entire group was transported and settled for some R & R and a good meal. Jeff was more than thankful that his son decided to layover instead of trying to navigate through a storm. Scott was capable, there was no doubt, but Jeff didn't think himself up to it. Dianne told Scott and Chris that she would like to take the controls part of the way home and they readily agreed. She had a pilot's license and didn't get the chance very often to use it.

Early the next morning, Chris checked in with the ATC and got a weather update. The storm system had subsided and was currently heading northeast so they were given a clear flight plan. Dianne was excited and looking forward to taking the controls and soon found herself in the pilot's seat. Scott would be co-pilot, and Chris would take first shift relaxing.

"All set, Mom?" Scott asked very seriously.

Dianne grinned back at him. "F-A-B. Control Tower, this is Tracy One requesting takeoff clearance, over?"

"Tracy One acknowledged, proceed to runway one seven and await instructions."

"Roger control tower, proceeding to runway one seven."

Scott had to admire the way Dianne became an instant professional when called upon to do so. His father was very lucky, and Scott hoped one day he would be able to find someone as dedicated, loving, and as passionate about life and family as his stepmother.

Tracy One was soon airborne and winging its way southward.

Halfway over the Pacific, Dianne relinquished the controls to Scott, who took the plane almost home. He decided at the last minute to let Chris land. Practicing landing on the island would be good training for him. There was limited runway access and you had to have your wits about you to get it right.

Turning to Chris, he asked, "How about you take the landing? I'll let you call in the approach and everything!" Scott grinned at his co-pilot who returned the grin twofold!

"F-A-B!"

Moments later Chris radioed in. "Tracy Island this is Tracy One requesting permission to land?"

The radio crackled and then Virgil's voice came over loud and clear. "Tracy One, you have permission to land. Proceed as normal, and welcome home!"

Chris banked the plane with ease, and Scott advised his passengers to prepare for landing. In the lounge, however, things were frantic. Virgil may have sounded cool, calm and collected on the radio, but he was actually nearing the end of his nerves. The rest of the occupants on the island had decided to decorate and have this big affair ready for Jeff Tracy's arrival home. They were not ready and the ensuing chaos was giving Virgil a headache. Even Brains, who had enthusiastically agreed to help, had disappeared to his lab.

"Guys! They are on final approach!"

Virgil practically yelled across the lounge. Nikki, Dom and Brandon each mumbled something that Virgil swore was not in English and then scurried around the room putting up the 'Welcome Home' sign and the last of the balloons. Lisa Parkhurst burst into the Lounge and in a ragged breath announced that the food was finally ready. Joshua had begun running around the room entangled in streamers, babbling contentedly and laughing at himself! Virgil called the house intercom and asked everyone to come to lounge, whether they were ready or not. He for one would be so grateful his father was coming home. Elise came in from the kitchen, Dom gathered up his wayward son, and the rest mingled in and waited.

"Here they come!" announced Alan, seeing the plane make its final approach.

"Right, Brains, call TB5. Callie and John should be in on this too," Virgil asked.

"Sure Virgil."

Once the link was set up, they all waited quietly. Jeff would have to come up on the passenger elevator via TB2's hangar, and then up in the Villa lift from the lower floor to the upper, so it would take a while. Then they would have to come through the study into the lounge. Tin-Tin offered to be 'look-out' and positioned herself on the side of the study closest to the elevator. When she heard it rising up through the villa, she signaled to Dom who was standing at the entrance from the study to the lounge. Seconds later, Tin-tin raced back into the lounge and they all waited in silence. Dianne wheeled Jeff out of the elevator backwards and turned him towards the study. Neither one noticed the strange silence. The rest of the passengers followed behind as Jeff and Dianne made their way into the lounge. As soon as they had entered, the entire place erupted in a chorus of

"SURPRISE!! WELCOME HOME!!"

Dianne almost leapt out of her skin, Jeff merely shook his head, and as the others came in behind him, they too were caught off guard.

"Awesome!" was Alex's first reaction.

Cherie squealed in delight and Tyler thought this was the coolest surprise ever! Everyone cheered and clapped and Virgil stepped forward.

"Welcome home, Dad."

Jeff opened his arms and invited his son in for a hug. Jeff couldn't remember the last time he'd hugged Virgil and it felt good.

"Home...I like the sound of that, son!"

Laughter could be heard around the Tracy Villa for the next few hours. An enormous amount of food was consumed and Kyrano found himself complimenting Lisa on everything she had fixed. As the evening wore on, the homecoming wound down and one by one team members bid their goodnights and departed. Elise offered to help Kyrano clean up and Grandma insisted on helping too. Jeff and Dianne watched as his mother bustled off to her kitchen.

"She's been away too long!" Jeff laughed.

"So have you Jeff." Dianne walked over to him and sat down on the couch next to him.

"I thought this day would never get here." She sighed wearily. He gently stroked her hair, and replied,

"Me too." They stayed like that for a while, just comforting each other in silence, until three weary-looking children flopped onto the opposite couch.

"I ate too much," complained Tyler.

"That's because you're a piggy!" teased Alex.

"Am not!"

"Yeah you are!" The whining had officially begun.

Dianne raised her head. "I think its way past certain peoples' bedtimes, so who do you want to tuck you in?"

Cherie rolled her eyes.

"I'll do it! I haven't seen my angels in so long!" announced Lisa from the doorway.

The three of them cheered and bounced over to Jeff and Dianne, each child giving them a hug and a kiss goodnight.

"See you in the morning, kids! Love you!"

Dianne's voice echoed as the little brigade made its way out of the lounge. Suddenly, Tyler's little

voice could be heard saying,

"I want Alan to tuck me in! Where is he?"

"Don't worry, my sweet, we'll find him on our way to your room," Lisa answered him.

Dianne snuggled down with Jeff again, but all too soon it seemed that his wife had turned into nurse mode and was telling him it was time to get some rest! This time he had no reasons to complain about being told to go to bed, even if it was in the sick room for now. As Dianne wheeled him out of the lounge, he turned to look at the mess strewn all over and smiled to himself. Home, I'm finally home.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 16/09/2004

---