

Wednesday, March 14, 2068, 7:30 a.m., Tracy Villa

Jeff looked at Dianne with concern. She had barely touched her breakfast and had snapped at Alex when he asked for a third helping of Farmer's Scramble. Her apology to the boy was immediate and heartfelt, but Jeff could tell she wasn't acting like herself.

"So, what time did they get in this morning?" he asked, conversationally.

Dianne huffed. "Around 3:15," she said sharply. "Scott was so sloshed his brothers practically had to carry him upstairs. He'll be feelin' mighty sick this mornin'. An' it serves him right! Ah have no ideah what condition the new recruits were in, but Ah'm sure we'll find out."

Jeff listened to her, noting the blatant drawl. "Did you get any sleep at all?"

"Not much," she admitted. "And it wasn't all b'cause of the expedition t'Christchurch."

"Then what else was there?" Jeff asked, frowning.

Dianne sighed heavily. "Ah... got a lettah. From the committee handlin' this yeah's memorial service." She paused to take a sip of her coffee. "They... they want me to speak."

"Well, that's a big change of pace," Jeff commented. "Most years they'd rather have you stay home than attend the service. What do you think changed their minds?"

"Ah dunno." Dianne pushed her hash browns around on her plate. "Mebbe they want to look good in the eyes of the media. Ah wish Ah knew what their motive is, and where the catch is in it for me."

"Maybe there is none. Are you going to do it?" he asked.

"Ah haven't made up mah mind yet. An' I don't have much time to think about it either," she groused. She glanced around the table, letting her eyes wander but seeing nothing. "Ah dunno... with everythin' that's happened recently...."

"Oh, no, you don't," Jeff said sternly, taking her chin in his hand and pulling her face around so their eyes met. "You are not using my accident as an excuse to get out of going to this service. You go or not go because you want to, or perhaps because you don't want to. You speak because you want to or not. But do consider the young ones in your decision. You know this means a lot to them. And know that whatever you decide, I'm behind you."

Dianne's gaze dropped and she smiled slightly. "Thank you, love. Your support means a lot t'me."

"Now, I'm going to ask Lisa if she'll oversee the schooling today so you can get some sleep. You put a call in to the committee chair when the time zones are favorable, and ask for more details."

Then make your decision."

Dianne smiled widely at him, and he returned the smile. "You're gettin' back to your clear-headed self, Jeff Tracy. Takin' charge again like you always do. Pretty soon, you'll be back behind your desk supervisin' rescues."

"It can't be too soon for me, dear heart. I feel so helpless and useless the way I am now," Jeff said with a sigh.

"You won't be this way forever, Jeff. I promise you that," Dianne replied, putting her hand up to his cheek. He took the hand and kissed the palm, holding it tight for a moment.

"Now, go. No more coffee," he reached out with his good hand to whisk the cup away. "Go back to bed," he said in a mock-stern tone, feeling a sense of déjà vu as he did so.

"Yes sir," she said with a wink, getting up from the table. She gazed down its length. "Please excuse me, everyone, but I've been ordered back to bed."

There were murmurs of "sleep well" and "you're excused" from the other diners. Dianne leaned over and kissed Jeff on the lips, then left the room, yawning and stretching as she went.

Lisa came in with a fresh pot of coffee and watched her daughter go. "What was that all about?" she asked, refilling Jeff's cup.

"She had a rough night last night. Would you be able to oversee the schooling today for her, Lisa?" Jeff asked.

Lisa nodded. "Sure, Jeff. Just as soon as we clear the table."

"Thank you, for being willing to do it. And for the coffee," Jeff said with a smile. He sipped some more, and looked thoughtful. I hope you do this, Dianne. The public needs to see that you're beyond the pain that the bombing, and its aftermath, caused you for so long.

Post by Tikatu on 07/10/2004
