

Wednesday, March 14, 2068, 4:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Scott found himself behind the desk, speaking with John as the other IR operatives quickly began to file into the lounge. Looking around briefly, he was surprised to see Virgil followed by Elise, who would not meet his gaze, and Brains followed by Lena, who looked around with curiosity. Dom brought little Joshua with him, and held on tight to the toddler. And following Dianne was Jeff, his wheelchair humming along. He could tell that his stepmom was not happy about Jeff's presence in the lounge, not one bit. The crowd parted for Jeff, and more than one of the operatives looked surprised to see him there. They were even more surprised to see him approach the desk.

"What do you have for us, John?" Jeff asked. John looked surprised as well, especially since Scott had already asked that question.

"Well, Father, as I told Scott, there's a multi-car pile up on a narrow two-lane road outside the small city of Ust'-UIs in the Ural Mountains. A truck and a car have collided with each other and the resulting explosion and fire are stopping rescuers from the city. An avalanche has blocked the road to keep rescuers from an adjacent town in the opposite direction. And there's a bus full of children perched at the edge of a ravine. Someone on the bus called the people in Ust'-UIs, who called us."

"This sounds like an 'all hands on deck' situation," Jeff said. "Scott. Off you go."

"But, Father....," Scott protested.

Jeff turned to him. "Scott, we have no time for arguments. People are relying on us. Now go."

Scott locked eyes with Dianne, who, with a sour expression, nodded her head slightly. Scott shook his head and went to the light sconces. Truth be told, he was partially glad to get out from behind the desk and into the cockpit of his rocket plane. But he wasn't too sure that his father was up to the task of directing rescues just yet.

"Virgil, take pod six with the extra-strong magnetic grabs. I think you'll need one of the recovery vehicles, and the Firefly, which can take care of the fire and probably the avalanche as well." He paused as Scott asked for launch clearance and he gave it. "I also think you'll need Thunderbird Seven... with a full medical complement."

"Jeff...." Dianne began in a warning tone.

"Dianne, you know that Dom and Nikki still aren't as familiar with Thunderbird Seven as you are. You need to go on this one," Jeff said hotly, his tone defensive. He glanced over at Virgil, who hadn't budged. "Well, what are you waiting for, Virgil? Thunderbirds are go!"

"Father," Virgil began. "I'd like Kat along with us on this one. To check the winch's performance in the field and be on hand if there are any problems with it."

"You expect problems?" Jeff asked.

"No, but I didn't expect problems with it last time either. Having her on hand will mean that any problems we might have will be nipped in the bud."

"Okay. Kat, you're going. Brandon, Christopher, Alan, go with him." Virgil now moved over to his portrait and let it flip him up and out of sight. An excited Kat followed the three men named out of the room.

Dianne looked over at Dom and Nikki. "You two go ahead. Ah'll be down presently."

"Can Mrs. Parkhurst look after Josh for me while we're gone?" Dom asked, a concerned look in his eyes.

"Sure. Ah'll call her up here." Dianne activated her telecomm. "Ma, please come to the lounge right away. Kyrano, please join us in the lounge. Cherry, Ah need you in the lounge, sweetie."

Lisa was the first to arrive, followed quickly by Kyrano. Dom handed Josh over to Lisa, then nodded at Dianne and he and Nikki left. Dianne approached the desk while Jeff maneuvered himself behind it. She beckoned to Brains and Kyrano as Cherry entered the room.

"Cherie, come over heah, sweetheart. You, too, Ma." Grandmother and granddaughter approached the desk, little Joshua on Lisa's hip.

"Now, heah's mah ordahs. If any of you see him gettin' tired, or his energy flaggin', you are undah mah ordahs t' take him t' the sick room t' rest. Brains, should that happen. you are in chahge. Y'all unnerstan'?"

"Yes, Mom." "Sure thing, darlin'." "Of course, Dr. Tracy." "I understand, Dianne."

"Now, suh." She turned her attention to Jeff. "You've heard theah orders. Here are yoahs. If you feel tired at all, if you yawn even once, you are t' GO TO BED! Doctor's orders'. You are heah by mah sufferance, Jeff. Ah think it's too soon foah you t' be directin' rescues but Ah don' see how Ah can stop you entirely othah than strappin' you down in the sick room. If you don' cooperate this time, next time Ah will strap you down an' Scott can take the desk. D'you unnerstan', Jefferson Tracy?"

Jeff looked at her stubbornly for a few long moments. What he saw in her face must have convinced him that going along was better than bucking her, for he finally sighed and said tersely, "I will cooperate."

"Good. I'm holdin' you to that." Dianne pointed at him then she turned and ran from the room. Jeff looked up at his interim caretakers. Cherry stood there gazing at him severely, her arms crossed. Kyrano and Lisa exchanged glances and Kyrano left, while Lisa sat down with Joshua beside Lena on Thunderbird Three's couch. Brains sat down at the chess table and set it up for a solo game.

The silence in the room was almost deafening. Jeff looked around.

"I said I would cooperate. And I will."

"Good, Dad. Because I'm watching you," Cherry said, a serious look on her young face.

"So I see," Jeff muttered, turning to the communications station to give Virgil the go ahead for launch. He happened to glance up to see a bemused John looking back at him.

"What are you grinning about?" Jeff asked testily.

"Doctor's orders," John returned succinctly.

"Don't you have something to do?"

"F-A-B. Thunderbird Five out," John replied as he cut communications with his father, and opened them with Scott and Virgil.

Post by Tikatu on 14/10/2004
