

Kat and Christopher were the only ones left on the flight deck. They glanced at each other, then Christopher asked the question that was on both of their minds.

"What do you need us to do, mate?"

Virgil didn't turn around. He was flying slowly over the Danger Zone, trying to decide what to do about the bus and the other smashed cars and trucks that littered the road beneath them.

"Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird One," Scott's voice came over the radio. "Have you had enough of a look, Vee? Things are getting hairy down here. The bus is still shifting, even though everyone is sitting in the back."

"I've been looking things over to see how best to use the manpower I still have, Ess," Virgil replied, trying not to get annoyed at Scott's slightly sarcastic tone. "I think I've got it. We'll be with you in a few minutes."

He spoke to the two sitting behind him. "CJ, I want you to winch down in a harness and give me a report on the bus. See if you can get inside and assess any injuries. Kay, you'll have to winch him down."

"A little reconnoiter? I can do that," Christopher said. He stood and motioned to Kat. "Let's get going, Kat. There's no time to lose."

The two hurried to the lift that took them to the lower level. Christopher remembered where the harnesses were kept from when he did maintenance on Thunderbird Two and went unerringly to the small closet where they were hanging up. He chose one that looked like it was his size and began to put it on.

"How do I attach this to you?" Kat asked, looking dubiously at the harness and then at the winch.

"Here. You thread the clips through the loops on the harness and the loop of the cable," Christopher demonstrated. He double-checked all of his fastenings to make sure they were tight.

"Why can't you just take the rescue capsule down?" she asked as she began to fasten him to the cable as he had shown her.

"I think Vee wants to put me on the roof of the coach for a moment or two so I can look at things from that angle," he replied as he prepared to step out. "Then I'll get on the ground and unfasten myself and have a look-see." He smiled at her. "Are you ready?"

"I suppose so," Kat said quietly.

"Then start the winch and open the doors!" Christopher cried.

The doors opened beneath his feet and Kat slowly played the cable out, watching as Christopher grew smaller until he reached the top of the bus. She winced at every gust of wind that seemed to throw him off target, but at last he made it to his goal.

"Vee? I'm on top of the coach. It's pretty precarious here. Even my weight made it shift a bit. The end is too high in the air for anyone to climb into without help, and the only opening I see is too small for me to climb through." He gave Scott a jaunty wave as he walked gingerly towards the nose of the bus.

"It's caught by a wooden guard rail, but that could give way at any moment," he explained to Virgil.

"Okay, CJ. I get the picture. Could someone smaller get into that opening? Say... Kay?" Virgil asked.

"I think she could," Christopher agreed.

"Then that's what we'll do," Virgil explained. "Kay, finish lowering CJ to the ground so he can take a look at the rest of the mess down there. Then bring the cable back up. You're going down to get on the bus."

"I am?" Kat squeaked, even as she fed out more cable to bring Christopher to the asphalt.

"You are," Virgil confirmed. "I'm putting Two on auto-pilot and I'll be down there in a few minutes."

"F-A-B," Kat responded.

Meanwhile, Christopher disengaged himself from the cable and took off at a run. He peered inside cars, swallowing sometimes at the carnage that he saw.

"Thunderbird Seven from CJ," he called into his communicator. "I've got an idea of who needs help first."

"F-A-B, CJ. We're having a bit of trouble with this bridge," came Dianne's voice. "Try it again, Dee. Just a straight shot and close to the road so that the wind doesn't buffet us. CJ, we'll be with you in a few moments."

"F-A-B, Doc," Christopher replied. "Vee, I'll wait for Kay over by the coach." He began to move over towards the bus.

"F-A-B, CJ," Virgil answered. "I'll lower the big grabs once she's on the ground. You'll have to be the one to position them onto the front of the bus so make sure you secure yourself to the main cable by your harness. We don't need you falling into the ravine."

"No, indeed!" Christopher replied. "Message received." He stood by the bus and looked up at the green cargo carrier, waiting for Kat to be winched down to his position.

Post by Tikatu on 18/10/2004

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