

Thursday, March 1, 2068, 9 p.m. Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC.

"Surgery in the morning again," Jeff said morosely. "Will it ever end?"

"Tomorrow should be the last, love," Dianne assured him. "And tomorrow you should be moved to a regular room, where the younger ones can come visit. They arrived back in town today."

"It will be nice to see them. Are you going back to the penthouse tonight?" he asked.

"Yes. Em twisted my arm. Said I looked a wreck and needed the sleep."

"I wouldn't say you looked a wreck...."

"You'd never say I looked a wreck. Covered in three inch layers of muck and slime from some rescue and you'd still tell me I was beautiful."

"Well, you still would be." Jeff said softly. Then he smiled a bit. "I might tell you that you smelled bad...."

Dianne laughed. "It's nice to see you getting your sense of humor back."

"Hmm. I guess. Wish I could actually laugh without pain," Jeff grouched. He looked up at her, his eyes imploring. "Will you be here in the morning?"

"Wild taxi drivers couldn't keep me away."

"Taxis? Why don't you take the limo?"

"Too slow and too showy. Don't need to let Ned Cook know of my comings and goings. He's still hangs around from time to time, looking for that exclusive interview."

"Hmm. I'm sure you can give him the slip."

Dianne looked at Jeff keenly. "What is wrong, love? You seem down tonight."

He reached up with his good hand to take hers. "I'm tired of all this medical rigamarole, of being prodded and pricked and opened up to have my insides repaired. I miss... everything. The island, the kids, Kyrano's cooking, Gordon's practical jokes, even the pressure of rescues. But most of all, I miss... you. I know you're here beside me but I can't touch you, as I would like to. And you can't touch me because you might hurt me. I want you so badly, Dianne. And I want this all to be over."

"It will be over, Jeff. Not today, and not tomorrow, and maybe not even next week. But it will end, and, one day, when you're not even looking for it, you'll realize that you're whole again. But it will go faster if you maintain a good attitude and keep your eyes on the prize," Dianne explained. She

stroked his cheek with the back of her free hand.

"You are my prize," he said, as he suddenly turned the hand he held and kissed her palm. She lowered her eyes and smiled gently.

"Since Kyrano came along with the boys, I can see about getting you some of his cooking," she offered.

"I'd like that very much." They were quiet for a few moments, and then Dianne sighed.

"Well, I'd better go before Em sends the troops out after me." she said.

"The troops being...?"

"Scott, John, Gordon, and Alan."

"Oh." He gazed up at her. "Before you go, would you... sing for me? I think I remember you singing to me before...."

"You remember?" Dianne gasped, sitting down.

"Yes, I don't remember the words or the specific tune, but I do remember your voice singing. Please sing to me. I want to dream with your voice in my ears."

"All right." Dianne swallowed to get past the lump in her throat, thought a moment, smiled slightly, and began to sing softly.

Stars shining right above you
Night-breezes seem to whisper: I love you
Birds singing in the sycamore-trees
Dream a little dream of me.

Say night-y-night and kiss me
Just hold me tight and tell me you'll miss me
While I'm alone as blue as can be
Dream a little dream of me.

Stars fading but I linger on dear
Still craving your kiss
I'm longing to linger till dawn dear
Just saying this

Sweet dreams till sunbeams find you
Sweet dreams that leave all worries behind you
But in your dreams whatever they be
Dream a little dream of me.

By the time Dianne had reprised the last two verses, Jeff was asleep. She kissed his cheek, then

picked up her warm coat and left the room, turning out the light as she went. She smiled at the nurses, who called out, "Goodnight, Dr. Tracy." "See you in the morning, Dr. Tracy."

She made her way down to the lobby, shrugging on her fur in the elevator.

"A taxi, Dr. Tracy?" Gerry, the doorman asked.

"Yes, please, Gerry."

He whistled, and a bright yellow hover cab came to the front. Gerry opened the back door for her, and she got in gracefully. She gave the driver a smile.

"Hello, Bernie. Nice to see you again."

"Hey, Dr. Tracy. Tracy Towers?"

"Yes, Bernie. Tracy Towers."

Bernie knew his way around Manhattan and within a few minutes had deposited Dianne at the entrance to the impressive glass and steel structure. She paid for her ride, added a generous tip, and Bernie stayed at the curb until he saw her disappear into the entrance, met by a security guard.

Dianne rode up in the penthouse elevator, leaning with her back against the wall and her arms wrapped around herself. She left the elevator and, with the swipe of her security card, entered the penthouse apartments. Aline, the maid, came and took her coat with a murmured, "Good evening, Dr. Tracy."

"Good evening, Aline."

Dianne made her way to the kitchen, where Kyrano was already working to prepare things for the next day's meal.

"Greetings, Dr. Tracy. It is good to see you again. Is there anything I can get for you?"

"It's good to have you here, Kyrano. And, yes, a glass of red wine, please."

The Asian pulled a wine glass down from the rack and filled it from the chilled bottles available in the wine cooler. She took the glass from him with a murmured thanks, and slowly walked towards the floor-to-ceiling windows that looked out on the lights of New York. Pensive, she sipped her wine as she stared out, seeing nothing. Not even Emily's reflection as she came up behind her. Dianne jumped, nearly spilling her drink as the older woman touched her arm.

"How is he?"

"He was sleepin' when Ah left. What about th' kids?"

"They're in bed. The boys are enjoying a night on the town together." Emily frowned at the drawl.

"What's upset you, Dianne?"

Dianne took in a deep breath and let it out in a rush. "He's scared. Ah'm scared. Ah'm scared he's gonna give up."

"What makes you say that?"

"Jes' th' way he was talkin' tonight." Dianne wiped a tear away, trying to head off a Niagara of weeping. She turned to her mother-in-law. "Em, Ah'm tryin' to be there for him, Ah really am. But...."

Emily cut her off, putting her hands on Dianne's shoulders. "But you've been there almost non-stop since he was brought in, not to mention what happened out there at the rescue site. You've given and given and now you're almost given out. You need some sleep and some time away from the hospital to rest. Finish that wine up now and I'll draw you a hot bath. Then to bed with you. The little ones will need to see your smiling face for reassurance in the morning."

"Ah promised Ah'd be there for th' surgery...."

"You can go. But when he comes out of surgery, you will come back here to get some more rest. I'll stay at the hospital with him and take the children to visit for a while. The boys will want to be there to say goodbye, too. Now, listen to your old mother-in-law and do as I say. No excuses."

"Yes, ma'am," Dianne whispered, tears streaming down her face now. Emily took one look and guided them both to a sofa, taking the glass away and sitting so she could take her heart daughter in her arms. She rocked back and forth, letting the younger woman sob out her fear and pain until at last, exhausted, Dianne fell asleep in Grandma Tracy's supporting arms.

Post by Tikatu on 23/07/2004