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Subject: Re: Cold Front

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 21:32:44 GMT

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1:15 p.m., Cliff House

Jeff leaned on the railing of the Cliff House patio, staring off to sea as the denizens of the Cliff House made their way to the meeting. Anna and Dianne sat at one of the patio tables, talking quietly.

"Nice view," Anna said. "But quite a drop. I bet no one plays Frisbee up here."

Dianne snorted. "The kids tried. They learned pretty quickly how hard it was to fetch their toys." She looked up at the sound of a door opening. "Here they come."

Dianne smiled slightly at each as they came out of the common areas, noting how hesitant they were. Callie came from her apartment, but Elise's curtains were drawn.

"Can you check on Elise when we're through here?" Dianne asked.

Anna nodded. "I was planning on it."

When Dom made his appearance, Josh in his arms, Dianne stood and joined her husband at the railing. "They're all here," she said softly, touching him on the shoulder.

He started a bit, then gave her a nod and a grim smile before turning and walking back to the groups of patio tables. Dianne resumed her seat, sitting up straight and looking attentive.

Jeff cleared his throat. "I called you together because something tragic has happened to one of our number." He paused and swallowed. "This morning we heard from Luke's brother. Luke was the victim of a hunting accident..."

There was a concert of gasps and murmurs of "oh no!" Dom's face paled significantly, and he sat down heavily in a nearby chair. Nikki reached for him, putting a hand on his arm and squeezing it tightly, tears filling her eyes. Callie put her face in her hands and began to sob.

Jeff put up his hands. "It's not as bad as it sounds; he's not dead. When we got the call, he was in surgery." He glanced over at Dianne. "I believe it was to repair his lung..."

"That's right." Dianne's tone was both professional and compassionate. "The bullet pierced his back, punctured his right lung, and lodged near his heart. They took the bullet out right away, and now they're taking care of his lung."

It was a grim-faced Will who asked, "What exactly happened, and when?"

"From what I understand," Jeff replied, "some drunks were out firing off at random. They didn't know they'd hit anything. They're under arrest now. I'm not sure what charges will be filed, but we'll be offering the Morels the best legal team possible to see that justice is served." He paused.

"As to when, I believe it was Monday, our time. That would be Sunday in Montana."

"So he's been in the hospital since then?" Will pressed.

"Yes." Dianne answered this time. "They pulled him from the mountains via LifeFlight med-evac." She sighed. "They worked on the heart first, stabilized him, and are now working on the lung."

"Where are Cassie and Elise?" Nikki asked, looking around. "Shouldn't they know? They're very close to Luke."

"They already do, Nikki," Dianne said. "We approached them first because, as you said, they're especially close to Luke. I'm sorry if that bothers any of you."

There was an uncomfortable silence, then Dom asked suddenly, "What are his chances? Did the bullet damage his heart?"

"From the information I got, no, the heart wasn't damaged." Dianne turned to him. "His chances are excellent, but I'm sure you realize this will be a long haul to recovery."

"Will he be coming back?" Callie looked up, her face streaked with tears.

"We certainly hope so," Jeff told her. "He's been an asset to the team, and we'll miss him." He paused, looking from face to face. "Are there any questions?"

"Will there be anyone going out to be with him?" Dom asked, sounding calmer. Josh was clamoring to get down from his father's lap, and Dianne opened her arms, coaxing him to come to her.

"We're working on that," Jeff said. "We'll let you know when plans are finalized. It won't be easy to coordinate this; Luke is supposed to be working out of the Los Angeles office and his family will be expecting someone to come from there, I think."

"Will we be able to send him greetings? Cards and such?" Nikki asked.

"You should be able to order cards online and have them sent. Gifts, too, and emails, if you like. We'll get the information on what room he's in and pass it on to you all when we do," Dianne assured them. "You're all his co-workers; his family doesn't need to know where you're working from."

Jeff glanced at Anna. "We still have duties to perform, but if you're feeling particularly overwhelmed, we can be flexible. Anna, of course, is available if anyone needs to talk. Keep in mind, please, that the recommissioning of Thunderbird Seven will proceed as scheduled." He glanced around. "Are there any other questions?"

"Why did this have to happen to him?" Callie asked, her voice catching.

"I wish I knew, Callie." Jeff's tone was sad. "I wish I knew."