

An extract from 'Russia' for you to read

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I awoke to the smells of grilling bacon. The super nose could smell bacon cooking at more than a mile. Luckily I didn't mind the smell of bacon. Also luckily I could 'filter out' smells that were unpleasant, as well as reducing the sensitivity of smells that were acceptable. This last was important. Consider a girl wearing perfume. You would be able to smell it as you walked past her, sometimes quite strongly. Now think of that multiplied by umpteen times. You'd be drowning in pong. As I say, lucky.

Anyway, the bacon cooking smell meant that Rob was up and about – and therefore the same should apply to Saskia and me. I climbed out of bed and stood next to it. I didn't stretch myself or work muscles that had been relaxed all night, I had no need of stuff like that. As far as my body was concerned I'd never been in bed.

Standing there I thought about what I'd like to wear to work today. With the image of the blouse top and pants – and other essential and necessary stuff - in the front of my mind I changed myself to be wearing what I was thinking of. It was a little more complicated than that as I also arranged myself to be clean and neat, with hair that looked like I'd spent *ages* brushing it until it shone. Complicated it might have been, but it was almost instantaneous. Rumped Saskia in jim-jams with a fright-wig for a hairstyle, to neat and tidy Saskia ready for work in an instant. I grinned to myself, neat trick.

Now ready to face the day I turned to Saskia still apparently asleep in her own bed. "C'mon, you. Up and at 'em. Day's half over already and you aren't even dressed yet."

One eye opened and inspected me. "You think so, huh?"

In one easy motion she chucked back the bedclothes and stood up, fully dressed and as neat as me.

"That's cheating," I said.

She shrugged. "You did the same thing. I just did it while I was horizontal instead of waiting until I was vertical."

"Whatever. I hear breakfast calling."

"Me too. After you, dear Saskia."

Downstairs, we found Rob in the kitchen sat at the kitchen table scoffing bacon and eggs. "Good morning, you two. Sleep well?"

"Always do, Dad," said Saskia. She approached Rob from the side, bent down, held her hair out of the way and kissed his cheek.

I followed her and did exactly the same, with exactly the same reaction from Rob. By the time I'd done that, Saskia was in the fridge assembling the components of our own breakfast.

Breakfast over and the devastation cleared away, we made our way out to the garage to extract the mini and persuade it to take us to the Robinson plant. Rob was long gone off to the garage so Saskia had plenty of room to manoeuvre the car. I stood and kept watch to make sure she didn't hit anything. There was no way she *would* hit anything but old habits die hard.

Standing on the drive I was aware of many sounds around me, traffic, footsteps, people talking, to each other or into mobile phones. All this was normal and I ignored the sounds, also as normal. There was one sound, however, that wasn't normal. I was aware of the sound of a small aeroplane, not so unusual in itself, but the engine noise was changing oddly. I engaged my telescopic super vision and searched the sky for this noisy little plane.

It took just a moment to find it and the reason for the changing engine noise was immediately apparent, the little plane was practising aerobatics, doing rolls and loops and dives. I watched idly as the plane came out of a dive and climbed what seemed to be almost vertically, engine labouring under the load.

Saskia called from the car, "You coming or not?"

Something was bothering me about the little plane. "Er, yeah. One minute. Look at that plane. It should have rolled over again by now."

Saskia got out of the mini and together we watched as the plane climbed higher and higher. That there was a problem of some sort was obvious.

With a sharp 'crack' and a bang easily audible to our enhanced super hearing, the plane suddenly seemed to just - break apart. That was bad enough, but there was worse to come. The breakup of the machine had thrown the pilot clear. He was falling free – and he didn't seem to be wearing a parachute – either that or it didn't work!

"Saskia! Back garden – now!"

I ran down the side of the house to the back garden where nobody could see us change. This time the change was to Kyra and Katya, the SuperTwins, in our little super costumes. I launched myself into the air with Saskia more or less alongside me.

"You get the pilot, Twin," she called across, "I'll try and see to the plane."

I didn't bother to reply, I just concentrated on aiming for the falling pilot. Although I can fly and gravity doesn't bother me much, I still have to accelerate and decelerate. Without this last bit I'd have zipped past the falling pilot at several hundred miles an hour. All this took time. The plane hadn't been all that high when it broke apart and the pilot had been falling for almost a minute. He was getting quite near the ground.

I can stand many gravities of acceleration and deceleration but the poor pilot couldn't, he could only stand five or six times the normal force of gravity while my tolerance for the same thing was well into three figures or even more. I could have grabbed him on the way past and continued upwards but that would have probably squashed him flat with far too many 'G's of acceleration. Instead I turned and fell with him, flying downwards in my case, but the effect was the same. He was falling horizontally face down, arms and legs spread out like a skydiver. I came up under him, turned myself to be facing him and hauled him down on top of me.

“Tuck in!” I shouted. He obliged by pulling his arms in and moving his legs together.

By now we were almost at treetop height. I couldn't let us hit the ground, even with me underneath he'd probably be killed. For the same reason I couldn't simply stop us dead in mid-air. What I *could* do was try to convert our vertical motion into horizontal motion. We made a sharp curve in the air as I frantically shed speed. It wasn't going to be enough. I pulled his head down onto my chest and held it steady, then tucked my own chin as far down to my chest as I could. We hit the ground.

Travelling almost horizontally by this time meant the back of my head hit the ground first. By great good fortune we landed in a field rather than a road, or worse, a building or something. The back of my head scraped a trench in the ground that my body made much bigger and deeper as it followed my head. The contact with the ground slowed me down *no* problem, in fact I had to actually *add* a little forward motion to avoid slowing down too quickly.

Eventually we came to rest, more or less at the bottom of a great groove in the ground. I let go of the man's head. As he lifted it to look at me I smiled at him. “Hello. I don't think we've been introduced. I'm Kyra.”

The poor man began to shake and laugh hysterically. That I could deal with. “Be calm, it's no problem. You *can* do this.”

The little mantra did its thing and the man calmed down immediately.

A voice called out, “You two going to stay down there all day? You aren't here to enjoy yourselves you know.”

I looked past the man's head to see Saskia standing on the lip of the trench we'd made and looking down at us.

I said to the man still lying on top of me, “Don't move, we're going up.” I lifted us smoothly up out of the trench, slid sideways a little then turned us vertical. I set the man on his feet – just in time for Saskia to catch him as his knees gave way and he was about to fall in a heap.

“He's ok, just reaction.” Then she added to me only, “*He's ok, nothing broken. I looked as you lifted him out.*”

She'd obviously given him the once over with her x-ray vision as I flew up with him.

While Saskia fussed over the pilot I looked around me. The groove I'd made was over a hundred metres long and at its deepest part, where we'd come to rest, was almost five or six metres deep.

I grinned at the pilot, now sitting up on the grass, “Any landing you walk away from is a good landing, yes?” I did at least get a weak grin in return. He'd be ok after a nice cup of tea – or maybe something a little stronger?

There was no need to make a mobile phone appear and call the emergency services, others had already done that for us, my super hearing was easily picking up the sound of assorted sirens getting louder as they headed for us.

I knelt down and sat on my feet. “What happened?” I asked the pilot as he lay where Saskia had deposited him on the grass.

“I really don’t know, one minute I was chucking the thing all over the sky, next minute the controls wouldn’t respond, the nose wouldn’t come back down. The minute after that is a blur as the plane broke in two.”

“Couldn’t you have throttled back, let the plane stall out?” I asked.

He looked at me as if I shouldn’t know about such things. “The whole stick control was jammed solid. If I’d tried that I’d probably have gone into a tail-down spin. I’d not have recovered from that in time. Anyway, it became academic rather quickly. Where did the bits go? They didn’t hit anything important did they?”

“Only me,” laughed Saskia. “I grabbed the two biggest bits and managed to get ‘em on the ground without making *too* big a crater,” she looked at the groove I’d made in the field, “Not as big as the one you two made anyway.”

By now we were surrounded by several different kinds of emergency service. The only ones really needed were the police – mainly to keep people away from the wreckage. The ambulance people pounced on the poor pilot who was dragged off to be checked over despite many protestations that he felt fine, thank you very much.

Now I surveyed the large hole I’d made. I turned to the local farmer who’s field this probably was. “I made it, I’ll fill it in again. Have you got a scraper or a lift bucket attachment for a tractor?”

“Can you drive a tractor?”

In point of fact I *could* drive a tractor but the whole point was I didn’t need one.

“Don’t need the tractor,” I grinned, “Just the attachment.” I could have just used my hands but a mechanical aid would be so much quicker.

A sort of bulldozer blade was pointed out in the farm yard, an old and rather rusty implement, but it would do. The farmer looked on in amazement as I lifted it, then lifted myself into the air to fly with it to the excavation site.

I used the large blade to simply push the earth back into the hole. Took just three or four minutes.

“Why is there more stuff than was here originally?” asked Saskia, as I tried to whack the mound of earth flat again.

“Same amount of stuff, just not as compact. It’ll flatten out eventually.” With the bulldozer blade returned to the farmyard and the time of day passed with the police left on guard duty, Saskia and I took to the air to fly back home, change again, and set off for the plant. Late for work. *Again!*