

Tracy Island; Thursday, March 15th, 2068; 4:30PM

Lena opened the French doors to the balcony and walked over to a chaise. The record-a-line program had been perfected and installed, and she had shown Brains, Jeff, Dianne, Scott, Alan and Virgil how to use it. It had been a long day, and she hadn't gotten that much sleep the previous night. She was tired - too tired to do any more of her needlework. Besides, she was running out of thread. She had a photo album in her hand that she wanted to look at for a while.

She sat down and opened the album. It contained pictures of her family, and as she looked at each picture, she thought, I miss my babies. My work here is done, so it's time for me to go home. I was only supposed to be here for a few days and it's been over a week. I must talk to Mr. Tracy about dat tomorrow. But I...

A knock on the door interrupted her thoughts. She got up and went over, opening it. Lisa was outside, holding a tray with two cups of tea and some cookies. "Jeff reminded me that we haven't been very sociable, and I thought you'd like some tea and company before dinner."

"Tank you, Lisa. Dat's very thoughtful. But I don't know what kind of company I'd be right now. I'm ratter tired and..." She paused.

"Homesick?" Lisa nodded at the album in Lena's hand. "I imagine that contains pictures of your family."

"How did you know?"

"If I took a picture album with me when I went away from home, that's what would be in it."

Lena smiled. "Okay. Please come in. Let's go onto de balcony. It's pleasant out dere and I feel de need for some fresh air." She turned and led the way. Lisa went over to a small table between two chairs and put the tray on it. The ladies sat down and began to sip their tea.

Lisa indicated the album. "May I have a look?"

Lena handed it over to her. She opened it and slowly turned the pages. "You have a fine looking family. Oh, is this your husband?"

Lena leaned over to look. It was a wedding picture, and she and her husband were obviously very much in love in it. They were smiling, but not at the camera. She remembered that just after the picture was taken, he kissed her. In fact, he made a habit of kissing her after every picture that was taken, not just on that day, but during their entire marriage. She imparted that tidbit to Lisa, who smiled and sighed, "How romantic."

Lena chuckled. "Sometimes de kisses weren't very romantic. He would get in dese silly moods and just as he moved in for de kiss, he would cross his eyes."

Lisa laughed. "Love and humor. An excellent combination in a marriage."

"Yes, exactly."

Lisa continued to turn the pages. She stopped at a single large picture of a young Lena holding a baby. It appeared to be slightly scorched around the edges. The child didn't look like any of the ones in the other pictures she'd seen. "Who is this, Lena?" She turned it to the other woman.

Lena looked up and her face saddened. "Dat was my first-born son."

The other woman looked startled. "I thought you only had one son."

"I do. Dis one was killed when de house we lived in caught fire."

"Oh no. How horrible. How old was he?"

"Ten monts and tirteen days." Lena looked off into the distance, as memories flooded her mind. "My husband and I had gone out to celebrate our anniversary. We had a sixteen year old daughter of a friend as a sitter for my Daniel. When we returned tree hours later, de firemen were dere and de house was engulfed. De sitter was getting oxygen at an ambulance, but when I asked where my baby was, she just looked blankly at me. I pulled de mask off her face and grabbed her by de shoulders, lifting her to her feet. I screamed at her, "Where is my baby?!?", and she started crying and pointed to de house.

Lisa stood up and put the album on the seat. She went over to Lena and knelt beside her, putting her arms around her. "Oh, Lena, I'm so sorry."

Lena returned the hug. "It was over forty years ago. I don't know what I would have done witout my husband. He was so supportive. I was pregnant again wit twins and Mark reminded me dat I had two more to tink of and said our son would not want me to neglect dem, because he was gone. And he held me and grieved wit me at night, which drew us closer to each otter."

"Did they ever find out what caused the fire?"

"Yes. It was a frayed lamp cord. It had shorted, which caused de curtains to catch fire. De sitter had fallen asleep, even dough it wasn't late. She'd inhaled a lot of smoke and was unconscious when de fire department got dere. Dey had been called by neighbors. She'd just regained consciousness a few moments before we arrived."

"How terrible for you, Lena. I can't even begin to imagine how I would have reacted if that had happened to one of my children when they were that young."

"Well, dey told me afterward dat he never felt any pain, since he actually died of smoke inhalation, which was some comfort. Then my twins were born five and a half monts later, and during dat time we had to find a new place to live, buy new close, new furniture, everyting. But dat picture is de only ting of my son's dat survived de fire."

"I'm sorry if talking about it has caused you any pain, Lena." Lisa stood up.

Lena looked up at her and smiled. "No, not much. It is good to remember. Daniel Abayomi brought us much joy and love while he was wit us. I don't ever want to forget him.

"That's a good attitude to have." Lisa looked at her watch. "Goodness, the time flew. How are you in the kitchen?"

Lena laughed, a sound that pleased both of them. "I don't burn anyting, if dat's what you mean."

"Then you've just volunteered to help Kyrano and me. Shall we?"

Lena nodded and, after she put her album on the nightstand, opened the door for Lisa, who had the tray in her hands once again. The two women left the Round House and headed to the Villa's kitchen.

Post by Hobbeth on 11/11/2004

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