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Subject: Re: Winds of Change  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:24:33 GMT  
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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/23/2007 9:28 PM

Saturday, August 18, 2068, 9:30 a.m. Tracy Island

"You wanted to see us, Dad?" Alex asked as he entered the study, his younger brother in tow.

"Yes, I needed to see all three of you," Jeff told him. "Sit down please."

Alex stared pointedly at his sister, who was sitting comfortably on the love seat. She gazed back at him, a sweetly stubborn look on her face. Instead of asking her to move, the older boy plunked himself down next to her, folding his arms, and leaving Tyler as last man standing.

Dianne, recognizing the situation, sighed and said, "Theah's room enough foah all three o' you on that sofa. Cherry, Alex, move ovah. Tyler, sit down. None o' you are contagious."

There was some sotto voce grumbling, but the children obeyed. Once all of them were more or less settled, Jeff sat back. He took Dianne's hand and squeezed it lightly. "I'm afraid I don't have good news for you all. Your mother and I have decided that it's wisest if we postpone our vacation..."

"What?!" Cherie threw herself forward, consternation on her face. "We're canceling our vacation?!"

"Postponing it, Princess," Jeff said calmly. "Your mother isn't ready to travel..."

"That is so unfair!" Cherie cried, jumping from her seat. "How am Ah gonna see Stephanie befoah she moves?"

"Cherie! Sit down!" Dianne said sharply. The teenager folded her arms belligerently as she sat down sharply, making her brothers shy and lean away. She turned her face toward the door and refused to make eye contact.

"As I said before I was interrupted," Jeff began again, his voice showing his irritation. "We are postponing our trip because your mother is not up to traveling." He softened his tone. "We will make arrangements at some other time to see your cousins and bring them to the ranch or to the lodge in New Hampshire."

"When?!" Cherie demanded to know, her face red and her voice sounding both defiant and on the verge of tears.

"I don't know yet. I'll have to contact your uncles and find out when their vacations are..."

The teen shook her head vehemently, all but screaming, "No! You'll nevah find the time! We're nevah goin' on this vacation! And Ah'll nevah see Stephanie again!" And with that she lunged from

her seat and ran out through the lounge, slamming the metal door behind her in her fury.

As the clang of the door faded, Jeff closed his eyes and rubbed his forehead, sighing heavily. "That could have gone better."

Dianne laid a hand on his arm. "Ah'll have a talk with her latuh, when she's calmed down." She turned her attention to her sons. "Boys, do you have anythin' to say? Any questions to ask?"

"Ah thought you were getting better," Alex said simply. "We thought maybe you could rest on vacation."

"Ah am getting' bettah, Alex," Dianne said with a small smile. "Uncle Drew is gonna look me ovah again latuh today and maybe release me from the sick room." She shook her head. "But Ah've still got a long road ahead of me. Physical therapy to build up mah strength... an'... well, an' some othah things have gotta happen before Ah can even go back to work. Besides," here she gave her sons a wink, "d'you really think Ah wanna stay at the lodge while you and yoah cousins go out and do all the fun stuff? Ah wanna be able to go horseback ridin' too!"

"I want you boys to understand that we're not doing this because we're being mean or anything," Jeff said. "We're doing this because it's what's best for your mom, and for all of us as a family." He squeezed Dianne's hand again. "I know I wouldn't have half as much fun if I knew your mom was sitting back in the lodge and not out on the trail with us."

"Wouldn't you have fun with us?" Tyler asked, sounding slightly hurt.

Jeff smiled. "Yes, Ty, of course I'd have fun with you. Just not as much fun as I'd have if we were all together, like we should be on this vacation."

"Oh." Tyler sat back, slumping on the couch.

"Alex? Do you understand why we're doing this?"

Alex shrugged, a sort of one shoulder motion. "Yeah, I guess so."

"Tyler?" Dianne asked. "Do you understand now?"

Tyler nodded. "Will we go when you're all better?"

"I'll do what I can to make sure we do," Jeff told him. "I have to talk to your uncles today. We'll discuss it."

"Promise?" Alex suddenly asked.

"I promise." Jeff said, nodding.

There was a sudden silence, then Dianne opened her arms. "C'mere, you two. You both need a hug and so do I."

Each of the boys came to her arms in turn; Alex's hug was more dutiful, while Tyler's was heartfelt and sealed with a kiss. Tyler also turned to hug Jeff, while Alex asked, "Can we go now?"

"Yes, you can go," Jeff said, nodding. The boys left, Alex plodding behind his more animated brother, his hands in the pockets of his jeans.

Jeff let out a long breath, and slumped against the back of his chair. "That could have gone better, too."

Dianne sighed again. "Yes, it could have. But I think they understand that it's best for us all."

"I hope so." Jeff rose from his seat, groaning a little as he stood and stretched. "Well, I'd better get on the horn to your brothers. I think the time zones are fairly well aligned for it; it should be around six in the evening... yesterday."

"If you need help with Dougie, let me know." Dianne undid the brakes on the wheelchair.

"Your mother has already offered her assistance," Jeff told her. "And, remember, I have Andy as back up. You don't need to raise your blood pressure; it might put your escape from the sick room in jeopardy."

"All right, all right," she replied, waving a hand. "I'll go ask if anyone has seen where Cherry went. She and I need a little mother-to-daughter talk."

"Tell Scott what happened and send him after her," Jeff counseled. "He might be able to get through."

"You may be right. I'll also let Anna know. She might have some insight into how to deal with Cherry."

"Good idea." He leaned over to kiss her. "I'll see you at lunch."

Once outside the study, Tyler tugged on Alex's shirt. "Hey, wanna play some air hockey or some foosball? I bet I can beat you."

Alex shrugged once more. "Nah. Not right now. I think I'm going to go see if Grandma has some cookies or something. I'm kinda hungry."

Tyler shrugged. "Okay. Suit yourself."

Meanwhile, Cherie had finished her headlong run down to the airstrip and the beach beyond, and now sat on the sand, sobbing, her arms wrapped around her knees.