
Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:46:55 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/26/2007 10:30 PM

Sunday, August 19, 2068, noon p.m., Tracy Island.

"Mrs. Hanson," Jeff said, as he waved her toward a seat, "sit down, please. Ready to return home?"

"Yes. My daughter is due to return to college in a week and I do want to spend some time with here before she goes," Anna replied. "Plus, their royal highnesses, the cats, are undoubtedly waiting to show their disapproval of my leaving them. It certainly has been an interesting week, though."

"I asked you in here to talk about two related things. One is to arrange payment. The other is about becoming an IR agent."

"IR has agents? What do they do? Sell insurance policies in case Thunderbird 2 has to land and messes up someone's lawn?"

Jeff sniggered. How can she say things like that with a straight face? I wonder if she plays poker? "No, although I have considered issuing policies against Gordon's practical jokes. Mostly what they do is keep an eye open for anything that might concern IR. You remember the imposter problem a couple of years ago?" When she nodded, Jeff continued. "Lady Penelope and another agent tracked down the culprits and cleared IR."

"But what most of our agents do is much easier. They liaison with any local officials and arrange for security for our machines. They let us know about any potential problems. Generally they do whatever they can to help make the rescue easier and to hide us from prying eyes."

"You would receive a monthly stipend beyond what I would pay for your counseling work. It would be up to you to decide if you wanted to tell your husband. Some agents work with their spouse, some don't. We would also install some communication gear in your home and add a security system." Jeff leaned back. "Are you interested?"

"It sounds like I would enjoy it. Would the stipend come from Tracy industries?"

"We usually set it up that way. Or it could come from my household account."

Anna leaned forward. "So I would receive a monthly amount deposited in my account. I would have to tell my husband where it came from. My husband, the engineer. Who for the past thirty years has worked for Boeing, in the satellite division, one of Tracy Industries biggest rivals."

Jeff let out an exasperated sigh. "I hadn't even thought of that. Would your seeing my family be considered a conflict of interest?"

"Not really. As long as I'm paid by you, not Tracy Industries. But I'd rather not put him in an awkward position, so I'd rather not tell him anything. He knows I can't talk about my work except in very general terms, so if I don't say anything he won't be surprised. But I think we would both be better off if I simply bill you for hours spent working with patients. Keep it simple."

"All right. I know you haven't set up a private practice yet, so I checked into the billing rates of some of the other counselors my wife had appointments with." He passed a sheet of paper over Anna. "Is this acceptable to you?"

"Honestly? It's about twice what I had expected to charge."

"It's what the doctor my wife calls 'Oh, I would be happy to help the Tracy family' charges. He's the one that she claims had cash registers in his eyes." Jeff grinned at her.

"I think I know the one you mean. He not only has cash registers in his eyes, he has 'best selling book' in his heart. You spelled my name wrong, though."

"I did?"

"It's HanSON, S-O-N, not Hansen. It's not a problem." Anna hesitated. "There is one thing I need to ask you though."

"Go ahead."

"Did Gordon tell you about how I feel about computer security?"

Jeff nodded. "He said you were almost paranoid about it."

"With good reason. I'm sure you don't want to risk anyone breaking into my notes about your family or IR. I will need to either keep my laptop here or have a very secure place in my house to keep it and any disks. If I leave it here, I will need to come here for appointments. And I would definitely need an office."

"Hmm." Jeff looked thoughtful for a minute. "Do you have any problem coming here once a week?" Anna shook her head. "We have some guest rooms in the Round House. Why don't I just assign one to you permanently?" Jeff continued. "We are going to be doing some remodeling there soon." Jeff thought it might be better not to mention that the remodeling was being done to give Lady Penelope a permanent guest suite. "We could design one of them to have an office with an attached bedroom. We'll have a safe built in. You can leave all your records there, along with anything else you want to leave here. It will also give you a neutral place to meet with your patients. Or will the walk be a problem with your heart? I assume you would still eat with the family; there isn't a kitchen in any of the guest rooms. We could send dinner over, of course."

"Sounds wonderful. I'm supposed to walk some every day. Although, if I'm tired, it might be a problem."

"If you need to, someone can run you over to the round house with the cart. Or I could set you up with a bedroom here and an office there."

"Sounds like you're running out of bedrooms. This isn't the Biltmore. No, a suite in the Round House would be fine. That way, if I need to get away from everyone, I can. I can be a real witch, spelled with a 'b', if I let myself get too tired. If I want to troll for patients, I can hang out around here or out by the pool."

"Troll for patients?" Jeff looked at her, taken aback.

"A lot of people need to talk about something, but wouldn't dream of calling a counselor. That's for 'sick' people. If I sit in a public place, they tend to stop by and talk. Ask any pastor about it. Usually they just need to get something clear in their own head. All I need to do is listen. I helped a lot of family members of trauma victims just by being available. Calling it 'trolling for patients', well," she shrugged, "it just seemed to describe it perfectly."

"Now," she continued, "coming here once a week for appointments. Does anyone make regular trips to the mainland?"

"Not really. Kyrano has fresh food items flown in once a week. And the mail plane comes by a couple times each week."

"Could you arrange for me to fly back and forth on one of them? I hate the idea that someone has to fly and pick me up and then do it again to drop me off." Anna smiled slightly. "I suppose it's a hold over from the energy crisis, but it just seems so wasteful. And setting a certain day of the week for appointments is usually a good idea."

"That might work to get to the island. If the boys were out on 'family' business, I wouldn't need to worry about sending someone to pick you up." Jeff looked up at her again. "Would it cause a problem if you were late getting back sometimes?"

Anna shook her head. "As long as I'm back by Sunday if I'm assisting in the service. And I do volunteer work Monday afternoon and night at the women's shelter. Other than that, my time is free."

"All right. Let's set you up to get here Tuesday on the supply plane and have someone return you Wednesday. That gives you Tuesday afternoon and evening as well as Wednesday morning and afternoon if you need it."

"Great." Anna chuckled. "Tuesday is my husband's poker night. I have a feeling they will be meeting at our place from now on."

Jeff grinned and stood up. "Mrs. Hanson, it has been a pleasure meeting you. I want to thank you again for all you've done."

"Thank you for all you've done. Giving people hope in a sometimes bleak world is a treasure beyond price. We all need heroes," she paused for a second and stood up, "and something to remind us to think of more than just ourselves, to strive for something and to dream." She smiled wryly at Jeff. "For me the space program did that. That and old 'Star Trek' reruns."

Jeff chuckled and offered her his arm. "It's time for lunch. May I escort you, ma'am?"

"I never say no to cute gentlemen." Anna put her hand on his arm and they went to lunch.
