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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:37:49 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/13/2006 5:33 PM

Tuesday, July 24, El Dorado, Kansas; 3:00 p.m. (8 a.m., Wednesday, July 25 on Tracy Island)

Tuesday afternoon, Heather stepped into her bedroom. The clock on her bureau near her quilt covered bed read 2:49 p.m. She stood in front of her vanity mirror and ran a brush through her hair. She'd heard all kinds of stories about Jeff Tracy from the mythological to the mundane. "Just remember," she told herself. "He's your boss. Plain and simple. He's probably so busy, he's only got time for a short vidphone meeting. He's looking for a simple pilot, and that's what you are."

Above the headboard of her double standard hung a picture of Jeff dressed in his astronaut's flight suit, holding his helmet in one arm, waving with the other. An excited smile crossed her face. "Well, it's now or never!" she said as she straightened her clothes and hurried back into the living room. Tapping the console on her chair, she brought up the vidphone and dialed the number the much acclaimed astronaut had sent her.

An elegant woman with dark brown hair set in a beautiful French twist, soft brown eyes, and a rather hawkish looking nose appeared on the screen. "This is Jeanette Shapiro speaking for Tracy Industries. How may I help you?"

"My name is Heather Kennedy. I'm a test pilot for Tracy Industries in Wichita, Kansas, and I would like to speak with Jeff Tracy, please. I'm inquiring about the Personal Pilot position, and he asked me to call."

"Just one moment, Miss Kennedy, and I will see if he is available."

While Heather waited for Jeff to answer her call, an elderly rattlesnake dared to poke the pits of its nose past the gates of the house. From the vibrations it felt, it sensed the presence of a field mouse skittering through the jungle of prairie grasses. Shifting its body side to side, the reptile continued its journey across the expansive lawn, looking for its chance to make a kill. Ordinarily, the rattler avoided anywhere humans existed, but its hunting ranges had become smaller and smaller and extreme hunger forced it to encroach upon a human's territory. Determined to catch the mouse, the diamondback crawled closer and closer to its target.

"This is Jeff Tracy speaking. Hello, Miss Kennedy! How are you?"

With some success, Heather controlled her urge to sigh and answered with a confident, "I'm fine, sir. And you?"

"I'm doing well in spite of all the work I have to do. How's the weather?"

"Well, it's been awfully quiet, Mr. Tracy. We haven't had any wild weather in quite awhile. It's my opinion that the longer it takes for rain to come, the bigger the boom when it arrives. We're due, and I'm actually looking forward to it. Well, I know you're a busy man, Mr. Tracy, so I've called as

per your instructions."

Jeff appreciated the fact that she wanted to get straight to business. "Okay, Miss Kennedy. I want to say first that I am impressed with your credentials. I would like to set up a time for you to come visit my home to discuss what it is I would like you to do for me, should I accept you as my personal pilot. How would the 27th be? I'll have someone pick you up, and fly you to my home. You'll stay for the weekend as my guest."

"That sounds just fine, Mr. Tracy. I can use a small vacation, but I could just fly myself there. Your family homestead is somewhere near Topeka, isn't it?"

"We're a little bit further out than that."

As he studied her image on the vidscreen, Jeff could almost hear the wheels in her head turning underneath the luxuriant auburn hair. Gordon might find himself either jealous or a comrade for life. Her green eyes seemed to have a way of capturing him in her gaze and holding him fast with her confidence. "Okay, Heather. I'm going to be sending two pilots: my eldest son, Scott, and my assistant head engineer, Tin-Tin Kyrano, to pick you up on the 27th at 9 am. Will that work for you?"

"That would be fine, sir." Heather agreed, already planning on taking her photo of Jeff Tracy to have signed. "I'll be waiting...where shall I meet the plane?"

"You'll be picked up at the testing grounds."

"I'll be there, Mr. Tracy."

"I'll see you then. Good day, Miss Kennedy."

As she talked with her employer, the rattlesnake coiled itself up, buzzing his tail in warning, disturbing a firefly from its perch in the grass. With careful aim, the rattler snapped out with venom dripping fangs. Sensing danger nearby, the field mouse leapt nimbly out of the way and onto Heather's porch. Angry at missing its dinner, the diamondback uncoiled its body and raced after the little rodent.

As soon as her connection for Jeff Tracy broke, another call came in. She tapped the keys and a picture of her brother appeared. "Hi, Feather!"

"Hi, Donny! I love you! How are you, honey?"

Donny peered into the camera and the picture of her living room. "There's a lightning bug in your living room!"

Looking around, Heather saw a bug flying across the screen and a moment later, she saw a tiny flash. A few seconds later it flashed again. "Hang on, Donny. I'll put him back outside."

"Why?"

Ignoring the question, Heather followed the bug until she caught it in her hands, and walked to the doorway to her garage. "Good thing I got done talking to Mr. Tracy, or I would have had to explain that I had a flasher in the house!" The bug continued to blink on and off. "Trouble is, you'd be wasting a lot of energy, because there aren't any lady fireflies to attract. Here..." Opening her hands in the open garage, she allowed the firefly its freedom.

As Heather turned to go back in, she heard a buzzing sound that chilled her spine. The sound caused her to look toward the porch and she spotted the western diamondback rattler. With her heart banging hard in her chest, Heather raced back into the house, and past the camera to a hall closet.

"Feather! Whatcha doin' now?"

"I've got a cotton pickin' rattler on the porch!" she yelled out towards the mike when she stepped out again with her favorite service revolver.

She could hear Donny calling for her mother. "Mother!"

Heather took a moment to look into the vidphone camera. "No, Donny! Don't tell her--!"

"Mom! Heather's getting her gun out! She's gonna shoot a rattlesnake!!"

From the video connection, Heather could hear a distant scream. Taking the safety off the her favorite service revolver, Heather groaned. "That's all I need. That trip to Mr. Tracy's can't come soon enough!"

"Mom's calling Aunt Jenny!"

With her mind only on her target, Heather raced back out through the garage and saw the rattlesnake strike out again and continue wiggling its body further up on the porch.

Meanwhile, her aunt received a phone call. Serving a pot of tea to her neighbor, Mitzi, Jenny walked over the vidphone and tapped an acceptance code. She didn't even have time to give a proper greeting when her younger sister wailed, "Jenny Lynne! You've got to call Heather and stop her!"

"Oh Martha! Calm down. What's going on now?"

Pouring a cup from the bone china tea pot, Mitzi rolled her eyes at Jenny's high society sister.

"Donny said she was about to shoot a rattlesnake!"

Hearing this, Jenny's eyes went wide with delight. "She is?! Lord have mercy! Come on, Mitzi!"

With a broad smile, Mitzi set her cup down and followed Jenny to the window. She liked Jenny's niece, Heather. The girl had all the spunk of Annie Oakley, and excitement out on the prairies was at a premium.

"Jenny! Are you listening to me?!" Martha called out fruitlessly.

Grabbing two sets of binoculars off the refrigerator, Jenny handed them to Mitzi and hurried to the kitchen window. Touching a button, the window slid open. "Here! Give me those electronic binoculars!" Mitzi obeyed and together the two women peered out the window excitedly.

"There it is, Mitzi! And there's Heather!"

"Oh my! It's huge! Big ol' rattler!" breathed Mitzi. "This is so exciting!"

The rattler was about to crawl after the field mouse when Heather came out with her gun armed. "You're not going anywhere!" Picking up a rock, she tossed it up in the air high enough to land right on the snake's tail. Startled, the rattler turned around to see a human in its territory. Coiling its body, the rattler gave a hard angry buzz with its tail. Heather bent down, sighted down the barrel and fired twice. The first bullet nailed the snake's underbelly and the second bullet tore through the head.

Once the snake fell back, Heather walked over to check out her handiwork. Kicking the carcass, she thought about what to do about dinner.

first contact by AmandaTracyandFred