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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:06:42 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/29/2006 7:46 PM

Monday, July 30, 2068, 10:30 a.m., Tracy Island

Dianne sighed as she put the latest update on Elise into her patient file. I've got two gals suffering from PTSS right now. Dom's been showing some signs of stress, too, as belated as they are. She ran a hand through her hair. I don't know how well I'm doing with this psychological treatment. I'm not a psychiatrist; this is just not my forte. She shook her head, and went back to her patient notes. Maybe I should go back to school, pick up another specialty. Or, maybe I should get someone to help me. She sighed. I'll talk to Jeff about it, see what he has to suggest.

She was so engrossed in her work that she didn't hear them enter. Only when Cherie cleared her throat with a noisy and deliberate, "Ahem," did she look up.

"Hey, guys," Dianne said, minimizing the patient record. "What brings you three here?"

"We're here to talk to you about our upcoming trips," Cherie said in a businesslike manner.

Dianne's eyes flicked from one child to another. "Trips?" she asked, frowning. "What trips?"

"The trips you promised us," Alex said, folding his arms. "You said that we could visit the new place in New Hampshire during the school break."

"And you said we could go back to the ranch, too," Cherie added with a nod. "Since there's just a month left to the school break, we thought we'd better remind you."

There was a pause, then Dianne asked, "Did I promise to take you anywhere, Ty?"

Tyler shook his head. "But I want to go where they're going."

Dianne chuckled. "Okay, okay. Consider me reminded. I'll see what I can do. But it'll have to be after Virgil's birthday party, okay?"

"Are we going to Virgil's birthday party?" Alex asked, his eyes wide.

"Yes, you're all going," Dianne said, smiling. "Can't leave you home this time."

"Where are we going? What will we be doing?" Cherie asked excitedly.

Dianne raised a sly eyebrow. "Wouldn't you like to know?"

"Mommmm!" Tyler protested. "Why won't you tell us?"

"You'll find out soon enough," his mother replied smugly. "There may even be an announcement

at dinner tonight."

"I hope it's someplace good!" Alex said. "Like maybe Australia or Africa! Places where there's plenty of weird critters."

Cherie rolled her eyes. "The reason that all you think about are weird critters is because you're weird."

Alex stuck his tongue out at his sister, then turned back to his mother. "Mom? When we go to the ranch, can we bring some of our friends?"

"Yeah, can we? Stephanie, too?" Cherie asked. Her voice lowered as she said, "Since I won't be going to school in Greenville, and Uncle Doug is moving away from there... and with all this... stuff happening with Grandp... I mean, your dad...well, there's no reason for Grandma to stay. I might not get to see Steph or my friends again."

Dianne reached out to put a hand on her daughter's arm. "I understand, honey. I'll do what I can to get some of your friends to come. Same for Alex and Tyler. But you have to remember that school starts earlier over there than it does for you. Some of your friends might be away on vacation, and Uncle Doug may be moving so that Stephanie starts the school year at the right time. I'll ask about the twins, too. It's not fair that Steph gets to go to the ranch and they don't... though it might be easier to take them to New Hampshire."

"Do you think Grandma will go back to Greenville?" Alex asked.

"I don't know," Dianne said, shaking her head. "She might decide it's still her home."

They were quiet for a few minutes, then Cherie turned to go. "C'mon, guys," she said. "We've got things to do."

"Yeah," Alex said. He stopped to kiss his mother and give her a hug. "Thanks, Mom."

"You're welcome, son," she replied, smiling. Cherie dropped a kiss on Dianne's cheek, and Tyler gave her a hug from the side, pinning her arms and squeezing as tightly as he could.

"We'll see you at lunch, Mom," Alex said as they left. Dianne turned back to her work, half listening to her children's conversation.

"Hey, Cherry!" Alex cried, his voice diminishing in volume as he got further away. "D'you think we could go hunting for spiders? I saw a neat tarantula the other day... it was crawling on Mr. Dom... you should have heard him scream!"

Dianne looked up, startled, as she heard the infirmary door swish shut. "A spider? On Dom? Scream?" She quickly found and opened his medical file. Damn. The man's an arachnophobe... no wonder why he's been looking stressed. She glanced toward the door, then got up and went in pursuit of her progeny. I'd better warn Alex: no spider hunting!

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