
Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:19:19 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/30/2006 8:59 PM

Monday, July 30, 2068, 11:40 a.m., Tracy Island

"Did I startle you?" Dianne asked, smiling.

"I'll admit I was surprised," Jeff replied.

"So was I when the kids did the same thing to me," Dianne said with a chuckle. She hitched her behind up on a corner of his desk. "So, what are you up to, Mr. Tracy?"

"Thinking over some more security procedures," he told her, angling his screen in her direction. "Seems that Brains has a guardian angel or two, and one of them is named Penelope."

Dianne scanned the email, then shook her head. "Martini? He's getting adventurous, isn't he?"

"Either that, or there are still a few things about our Brains that we don't know," Jeff replied.

"Seems so. And I think she's wise not to tell Lena until Brains is on his way home. That lady is too sharp... and very protective to boot. I'd hate to see how she'd retaliate."

"I'm glad she's on our side," Jeff replied. He leaned back in his chair. "So, why did the kids sneak up on you?"

"To 'remind' me that I told them we'd take them to the ranch, and to the place in New Hampshire during the school break."

Jeff frowned. "Did you tell them this? Because I don't remember doing it."

Dianne rolled her eyes. "Yes, I told them. I told Cherie that we'd try to get back to the ranch this summer, and Alex that we'd try to take him to the New Hampshire cottage."

"The key word being 'try'." Jeff sounded irritated.

"Yes," Dianne replied, matching his tone. "But it's not a bad idea, Jeff. Especially with the situation in Greenville." She sighed. "I mean, my brother is moving; my mother does not want to move with him. With Garrett hanging around, there's a very good chance that she'll stay here with Kyrano. If she does, then what happens to the kids' friendships? They won't have that base to go to in Greenville. It will fall to us to keep the kids in touch." She folded her arms. "And it's natural that they'd want to see the new place."

Jeff blew out a frustrated breath. "With Virgil's birthday coming up, and the logistical problems that are likely to arise from that... I don't know if I can deal with another couple weeks away."

"We're only going away overnight for Virgil's birthday, love," Dianne said. "And I've already told the kids that we can't schedule any trips until after that." She unfolded her arms and reached out to put her hand on the desk top. "We can do another vacation, can't we? The ones we've had this summer have had ulterior motives, y'know. It'd be nice to just have a vacation with the little guys. Make some memories."

Jeff sighed, sat up, and reached to cover her hand with his. "All right. I'll start making arrangements."

She shook her head. "No. I'll handle it, or pass it on to Jeanette. You keep your mind focused on the family business... both of them."

He smiled. "Okay. I'll leave it with you."

She stood, and folded her arms again, moving to a chair nearby. "I didn't come up here just for that."

"Oh?"

"Yes. I came up to ask your opinion on something."

He leaned back again. "I'm listening."

She paused to gather her thoughts. "Well, you know that I've been doing quite a bit of psychiatric treatment and counseling lately. Tyler, Elise, Callie... and those are just the most recent ones."

He nodded, and she went on. "I have to admit, this isn't my specialty, Jeff. And I'm wondering how effective it's been. If there's something I don't want to do, it's make a poor decision on treatment and end up either doing nothing to help or exacerbate the problem."

"So, what do you propose to do?"

She shifted in her chair. "I'm not sure. I seem to have two options. One is to go back to school and pick up some more coursework in psychiatry; get licensed in it officially."

"The other?"

"To bring in someone more experienced to help." She cocked her head, looking at him with a questioning expression. "What do you think?"

"Hmm." Jeff tapped his stylus against his chin. "The second option is a bit chancy, I'd think. Security issues and all."

Dianne shook her head. "If we bring in someone from the outside, they'll be bound by confidentiality rules, just like I am. And don't we have someone among our agents who would fill the bill?"

He shook his head. "No, we don't. I've been hearing from a lot of our agents lately with the search

for new recruits and no one has those qualifications." He grinned. "Why do you think I had to go looking outside for a doctor in the first place?"

She sat back, and folded her arms again, giving him a teasing, raised eyebrow. "Really."

"Yes, really. Only a couple of doctors on the team, and those were researchers of Brains's acquaintance. They're doing some very ground-breaking work, and are much more interested in that than switching to a mere 'family practice'. Plus, they'd have had to go back and pick up the general practitioner's license, from what I understood. I wanted someone who already had the qualifications."

"Yes, they'd probably have had to do that, depending on their coursework and what they'd done their residency in." She sighed again. "So, you think I should go back and take some more courses?"

Jeff regarded her as he thought for a long moment, then shook his head. "I think you have too much on your plate to do that." He got up and moved to one of the couches, and she rose to join him. "How would you approach this? Get recommendations? Advertise within Tracy Industries? Outside of Tracy Industries?"

"Well," she began, "I don't see the need for a full-timer, someone to live on the island. There wouldn't be enough for them to do. Maybe someone close by that we could schedule appointments with. Someone in New Zealand, Sydney... maybe as far away as Singapore. Perhaps they could come out to the island for small periods of time. I'd want someone qualified in counseling with people who work in rescue situations; that's important. A master's degree or higher. Someone who would work with me as far as prescribing medicines is concerned." She smiled and gave him a little poke in the arm. "As for where to start looking, I'll start where you did: with Uncle Drew. Since he knows the situation now, he'd be able to really pinpoint the best people."

Jeff chuckled, and poked her back. "Sounds like you've got this worked out. When do you want to start?"

"I'll call Drew as soon as the timezones align and I know he's at home," she said. Her voice dropped as she added, "What do you want to do about revealing the true scope of our business?"

He took her hand. "I think that in order to truly help our people, whoever we choose will have to know it all," he said. "As you've said, they'll be legally and morally bound to keep our secret."

"Would you make them an agent?"

Jeff sounded thoughtful. "I don't know. I'll have to think about that."

"Good enough." She snuggled closer, and he let go of her hand to slide an arm around her shoulders. "Mmmm. I could stay here all day."

"So could I," Jeff murmured. They sat quietly like that for a little while, then Dianne shifted and turned her face towards him. He responded by kissing her once, and again. He stood slowly,

stretching, then offered her a hand up from the couch.

"It's almost time for lunch," he commented as he went back around his desk and clicked Penelope's email closed. "And I'm hungry."

Dianne eyed him speculatively. "Hungry for what?"

"Hungry for food, unfortunately," he said, giving her a rueful smile. "And both of us have a lot of work to do this afternoon."

She sighed wistfully. "You're right. But this evening..."

"In the Jacuzzi," he told her. "Wash away the day's cares in the very best way possible."

"You have a date." They joined hands for the walk down to the dining room. "When do you plan to announce Virgil's birthday celebration plans?" she asked. "The ladies that go will have to order finery, you know."

"I know. I'll compose the email for the recruits, and make the announcement to the family tomorrow night over dinner," he said.

"Not tonight?"

Jeff shook his head. "No, might as well wait until everyone's home." He made a face. "I hope we get enough volunteers to stay and be on call."

"If not, we'll go with plan B and send a few back in TB1 after the shindig," Dianne said. "I'm sure you'll find enough people to agree to that."

"I hope so."

At this moment, they entered the dining room and were greeted by their family, who was gathered for the noon meal.