
Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:38:10 GMT
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 9/14/2006 7:12 PM

(Saturday, August 4; East of Towanda; 11:30 a.m./ 4:30 a.m. August 5; Tracy Island)

While Heather was in her office pushing paper, Richard intently studied the skies. The weather for the Wichita-Hutchinson area was expected to be bad. He could smell a hint of ozone on the winds. On the horizon, he could just make out a dark layer of storm clouds marching towards the testing grounds. Pulling up his favorite digital binoculars, he looked again towards the horizon. Through the high-powered glasses, he could see a boiling, thick, yellowish mass of storm clouds spreading out along a dry line.

"This is gonna be bad!" he muttered to himself. The moment he turned to head into the facility, he heard the sound of a wailing siren. The X-star and two other test planes were already beginning to sink into their underground hangers for protection.

Sitting in her office, Heather tapped out the final paper on the X-Star she'd been testing. Of all the aircraft she'd flown, she liked the X-Star the best. The prototype came fresh from the developers, beautifully designed and with a new, near frictionless skin. Heather needed just a few flights to fine tune the engines and to adjust the weight on the struts in order to declare it fit for manufacturing. Tapping out the last sentence and double checking her spelling, Heather poked the enter key with a flourish. Leaning back in her office chair, Heather's smile became rueful. Already, she was feeling bored, wanting the adrenaline rush that came with testing newly designed aircraft. Turning around in her seat, she looked at the huge glass windows that encased the general office that she shared with the other pilots. The feeling of lethargy was already sneaking its way into her mind and fidgeted in her seat. Would joining International Rescue keep that at bay? Would it be the thing that would force me to settle down? she wondered as she saw Richard running down the hallway to her office.

As she got up out of her seat to meet Richard and ask him where the fire was, she heard sirens popping on. Grabbing her flight jacket, Heather hurried out into the hallway. "Planes locked down?!" she shouted as they headed towards the exit.

"Yes!" he shouted back. "They're all dropping underground right now! I checked the sky and there's a massive storm building up roughly 25 miles from here! We should get underground ourselves!"

Shaking her head, Heather shouted as the sirens continued. "I'm heading home!"

"Home?!"

"Yes!" Heather shouted back. "My Aunt Jenny lives alone! I want to be there! Or at least be nearby!"

"That storm has got the longest dry line I've ever seen! Will it do me any good to tell you to stay

here?!"

"No!" she insisted with a grin as she led them to the nearest exit.

The heat outside surprised her as she walked out to her Jaguar. Jumping in, Heather fired up the engine and drove out to the security station. As she waited for Ben Sanders, the security guard, to check her security pass, she could see the storm approaching. "Ms. Kennedy, you're hearing the alarms, right?" asked Ben as he gave her back her security pass. "I've just got orders to close down the security station and hit the basement. You really should follow me down."

"Get that bar in the air and I mean right now!" Heather demanded. Instantly, the security bar blocking her way popped up into the air. Ben watched the Jag roll out of the gate, turn right on the highway, and lay down a strip of hot rubber as the engine roared to life.

Heading down U.S. 35, towards home just outside El Dorado, Heather noticed the sunlight rapidly disappearing. "That's coming up quicker than I ever thought," she muttered to herself. "Wow!" As she headed northeast, a patrol car on the other side of the divided highway raced with lights flashing and sirens screaming back towards Wichita. She continued down the road until she was near Towanda, which lay to the west of the highway when the sky blackened behind her and lightning streaked across the unstable sky. In the rear view mirror, Heather saw a white pipe of a cloud dropping down from the sky. Twisting the wheel, Heather guided the black Jag over to the side of the road and climbed out into a ferocious wall of wind.

She stared into the sky amazed at what she was seeing. "I've seen them, but never this close!" she breathed, trying to get her heart to stop racing. It's so close! And the sirens haven't come on out here! Frightened for the towns around her as well as her aunt, she grabbed her cellphone and called the police.

The funnel began to twirl and twist its way down towards the ground as she watched in morbid fascination. "This is Heather Kennedy! I'm on U.S. 35, east of Towanda! I'm watching a funnel cloud dropping from a half mile wide base! The sirens are not on!"

"Where are you?" she heard an officer say.

"I said, I am on U.S. 35, east of Towanda! Fifteen minutes from El Dorado!" She spoke distinctly as possible.

"We've got several tornadoes touching down right now!"

"Oh, God, no!" Heather whispered as she stared upward. There were tornado seasons where a few tornadoes touched down, and then there were summers where there could be as many as 72 in one night. As the tip of her tornado edged closer to the ground, dirt and debris began to dance around and around. Somewhere, a siren began to blow, to be joined by more as word began to fly from one community to the next.

Nearby, other cars slowed down down and stopped, seeing either the tornado touching ground or Heather's stopped car. Doors opened and closed as excited passengers sought for the safety of the ditches by the road. One station wagon had stopped behind her car. The license plate read

from Ontario, Canada. The man had a Toronto Blue Jays hat over a head of curly brown hair, wore glasses and light summer clothing.

"What is that?!" he asked in fascination, as a young woman with short light brown hair and sunglasses ran up.

"That's a tornado! It's extremely dangerous. We have to get to safety right now!" Heather ordered. "Follow me!" The three of them crawled over the barriers and they dropped down in the depression created by the road workers. As they tucked in against the dirt wall and the tornado roared towards them, Heather wondered how Jenny was doing. I'm sorry, Aunt Jenny. I tried to make it home.
