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Subject: Re: New Beginnings  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 01:46:43 GMT  
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Wednesday, January 2, 2069, 3:12 p.m., Tracy Island

"So, do you think Dad liked the gift?" Scott turned to his copilot, John.

John snorted. "I think Mom liked the idea of it more."

The huge brunch, eaten at Penelope's hours before flying out, had included a celebration of Jeff's birthday. They'd never done it that way before; usually they'd waited a day or so after returning home, allowing for jet lag to dissipate and for the space-bound brother to come back from the station to join in the party. With Callie in space this year, both John and Alan had been able to be there. The gifts sent by the recruits who were so inclined to give them hadn't taken up much space in the general luggage, and the gifts that most of the family gave took up no space at all.

"Do you think they'll be able to finish the renovations to the A-frame before Mom and Dad's trip at the end of the month?"

"They'd better," Scott growled. "We're paying top dollar for the best work. But don't worry. I've got someone lined up at each location who will inspect things before we complete payment."

The Tracy sons had put their heads together and come up with a novel gift for their father... and by extension, their stepmother. The A-frame in New Hampshire, it had been discovered, had no indoor hot tub, and neither did the Wyoming ranch. The Kansas farmhouse wouldn't have had one either, if Virgil hadn't noticed the deficiency while looking over the plans. He'd consulted with his grandmother, who had balked at the idea at first, but then relented. Virgil had then taken the time to research the matter at the other two U.S. vacation homes, and had presented his idea to his brothers as a possible gift. After some discussion, they'd opted to give the gift for Jeff's birthday. Most of them had already chosen Christmas gifts, and Virgil himself wanted to paint a portrait of the couple for their anniversary.

"Well, this is certainly a different gift!" Jeff had exclaimed as he opened a hand-drawn card. Color sketches of the Jacuzzi unit and the three properties adorned the inside. "Won't want to throw this away," he'd quipped. "The artwork is worth keeping."

Virgil had grinned. "Thanks, Dad."

"Ah, there's the island," John said. He pressed a button on the controls. "Tracy One to Tracy Island, requesting permission to land."

Brains's voice came back. "Tracy Island to Tracy One. Permission given. Welcome home, everyone."

xxxx

"Finally home!" Alex stretched as high as he could. "That feels good!"

"Yeah." Alan yawned. "The last leg of the journey is always longest."

"Come help unload the luggage," Jeff called. Both sons obediently joined their father.

"Did you remember to ask Tin-Tin to record the parade, Dianne?" Emily asked as the two women tidied up inside the cabin.

"Yes, I remembered." She gave her mother-in-law a smile. "I'm sure there won't be a repeat of the Thanksgiving parade."

Emily snorted a laugh. "Poor Virgil. Seeing his baby made into a balloon and floating down Central Park South... he was outraged!"

Dianne grinned. "I don't know if he was more outraged that they'd made the balloon, or that they'd put the wings on wrong."

"There was more wrong with it than just the wings, Mom." Virgil had come aboard to empty the jet's small refrigerator. "The color was off, the stripes in the wrong places..." He shook his head. "They should have asked permission!"

"And just how were they going to do that?" Emily challenged. "We are supposed to be a secret organization."

Dianne patted her stepson's arm. "I think it's an honor that they chose your 'Bird, Virgil. Scott was upset that they didn't choose One."

Emily chuckled, then put the blanket she'd been folding into the cart that stood outside the jet. The luggage was already on its way up, following Jeff and the youngest kids. She turned to Dianne. "Have you heard from Kyrano or your mother?"

Dianne shook her head. "Nope. And I don't expect to. They're likely having the time of their lives."

"I hope they are enjoying each other," Emily said, her tone a little wistful.

Virgil touched his grandmother on the shoulder. "Missing Gramps?"

She put a hand on his. "I always miss my Grant, Virgil. Just sometimes a little more than others." She smiled at him. "It's all right, Virgil. I'm very happy for Kyrano and Lisa." Giving him a wink, she added, "Who knows? I might still find someone..."

Virgil's eyes widened, and he shook his head. The two women exchanged knowing glances and laughed.