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Subject: Re: New Beginnings

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 01:53:49 GMT

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Thursday, January 3, 2069, 3:40 p.m., Tracy Island

The family was back in the theater, munching snacks, and making comments on the floats, bands, and horse riders who went by.

"Aren't they playing 'Dangerous Game'?" Gordon asked, frowning.

"I think so," Virgil replied. "Sure sounds different when a marching band is playing it."

"And when it's outside in the bright sun." Gordon slurped noisily on his straw. "You kinda expect it to be sung in some dark little bistro by a sexy woman..."

"That's enough, Gordon," Emily said sharply.

"Yes, Grandma."

"Oh, that one's gorgeous," Cherie said, her tone one of awe.

"This float, 'The Dream Lives On', is the Animation Trophy winner this year," Steve informed the audience.

The float was white, with a wall made of five interlocking rings colored blue, yellow, black, green, and red, running down the middle. An animatronic figure stood...or rather, ran in place...on a separate upper section, dressed in white track shorts and shirt, holding a "torch". The flame of the torch was alive with dancing, fire-colored petals. Several real, live people stood on the lower platform, each wearing a different uniform, and hanging from ribbons around their necks, Olympic gold medals, usually more than one. The people, whose ages ran from fresh-faced young teens to silver-haired elders, waved at the crowds as they passed.

"How do they keep the flowers on that animatronic character?" Dianne asked.

"And where did they find the materials to get that skin tone down so well?" Virgil shook his head.

"With paint, yeah. With flowers and other natural materials... I couldn't do it."

Alex tapped Gordon on the shoulder. "Do you know anyone who is on the float, Gordon?"

Gordon peered at the figures as the camera panned across. "Yeah! See that old guy there? The one with all the medals? That's Michael Phelps. He's in his 80s now, I think. It was his world record in the butterfly that I broke at the Olympics."

"Whoa," Alex said, his eyes big.

The float moved on, and another band came into view. By this time Tyler was getting bored. He flopped down on the floor with a dramatic huff of breath. "This is getting boring."

Suddenly, the volume of the crowd grew and the announcers got very excited.

"And here it comes!" Mia exclaimed. "The float that everyone has been talking about!"

"It was set apart from the other floats, and kept under tight guard while being covered with flowers," Blake explained. "And the judges who saw it were asked to keep from describing it until the parade day. Even under those circumstances, it was awarded the Judges' Special Trophy for outstanding showmanship and dramatic impact. Created and built by the city of Wichita, Kansas, 'Our Heroes Forever'."

The float slid into view, and Dianne cried, "Oh my God!"

"Wow!" Tyler's eyes were big as saucers; his boredom forgotten.

Alex's mouth dropped open. "I can't believe it!"

"It's amazing!" Cherie said, her eyes widened in delight. "The colors! How'd they do that!"

"Hey!" Virgil said with a laugh. "This is better than that balloon at Thanksgiving!"

"Nope," said Gordon, shaking his head. "This is a one-time thing, Virge. That balloon of Two will show up year after year."

Emily chuckled. "Dianne, I think this is what Lena was really talking about when she said you should watch."

Dianne took a deep breath, then swallowed. Blake and Mia were still describing the float, a near life-sized version of Thunderbird Seven, sitting, slightly raised, over a blanket of soft green grass that was being blown to all sides by something underneath the Thunderbird replica. Sitting or standing all around the float were people, little kids in wheelchairs or with crutches by their sides. Boys and men in Scout uniforms. And at the front, Michael Hart, Carol and Peter Valerian, Lynne Feller, and Mayor Tom Riverton were sitting or standing and waving. As the camera panned across each one, Blake announced their names, adding, "All of the float riders were involved in a Special Olympics Challenge day when a tornado hit the high school that was sponsoring the event. From the smallest participant to their parents, from the Boy Scouts to the mayor of Murray Gill, they...along with the city of Wichita...wanted to thank their heroes, International Rescue. And they chose this way to do it."

The camera returned from panning down the float, and rested for a moment on Peter Valerian. His mother nudged him and pointed. He turned toward the camera and said, very clearly, "Hope you like the float, International Rescue!"