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Subject: Re: New Beginnings

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 03:33:47 GMT

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3 p.m. Thursday January 12, 2069 in Bozeman, Montana  
(11am Friday January 13, 2069 on Tracy Island).

The knock on the door roused Luke from the couch. His mother was out grocery shopping, leaving him alone in the house with just Rommel for company. "Well Rom, if it's someone for Mom they'll have to come back," he said as he stood up and stretched. He walked to the door, Rom at his heels.

He opened the door to one of the last people he expected to see. "Anna! What are you doing here?" Rommel barked a 'welcome' bark.

"Visiting you, of course. And bringing Rommel a treat. Can I come in? It's a bit cold out here." Anna stood on the porch wearing a coat that would be fine for Seattle or Christchurch but wasn't quite up to a Montana winter.

Luke stepped back. "Sure come on in. I don't want you to freeze out there."

Anna came in and took off her hat and gloves. Then she took off her coat to reveal a heavy sweat shirt. She unzipped that to reveal a sweater. "Actually, I'm fine. I learned about layering a long time ago. I figured this would be colder than we were used to so I made sure we all had extra sweaters to wear under our coats."

"We? Who all is here? And can I get you something to drink? Coffee, tea, hot chocolate? A soda?" Luke led Anna over to a chair in front of the fireplace.

"If you have a diet soda that would be wonderful. I think I over layered and got overheated." Anna sat down on the bench by the door and took off her boots. She wiggled her toes then decided to take off the top pair of socks. She had over dressed, forgetting she wouldn't actually be outside for that long. Her feet were sweating. She stuffed the socks into a coat pocket.

Luke grinned and headed for the kitchen. He put ice in two glasses and grabbed a diet cola for Anna and a regular one for himself. He then raided his mom's cookie jar.

"Here you go. One diet cola and to balance it out, a plate of home baked chocolate chip cookies. We also have oatmeal-raisin but I thought I knew what you preferred." Luke set the tray down on the table between the couch and a stuffed chair Anna had sunk down into. He sat back down on the couch and poured the sodas. Rommel sat on the floor next to him and looked pitiful. "Yes Rom, I brought you a treat too." He tossed Rommel a rawhide treat and the dog promptly lay down to chew in it. Luke turned to Anna. "So what are you doing here?"

Anna put down her cola and bit into a cookie. "I mentioned to Alex and Tyler once that I had always wanted to see Yellowstone in the winter. So guess what Mr. Tracy gave me for Christmas? A week-long stay at Yellowstone lodge for me and my family and a week in Seattle to visit my mom and the rest of my relatives there."

Luke grinned. "I'm not surprised. Did he ask you to check on me?"

"No. Actually, I'm hiding from my family." Luke raised an eyebrow at her. Anna sighed. "I get along fine with my family -- when they're several thousand miles away. But we have nothing in common, really. After three days I felt I needed to run away from home. It's amazing how someone can make you feel like a 13 year old who nobody expects anything important from." Luke winced at that comment. "My daughter Mary is thinking of spending a year at the University of Washington so we toured the campus. Then I told everyone we needed to be in Bozeman early. We're spending the day here and will go on to Yellowstone tomorrow. Since we were in town, I figured I'd drop in to see you. And Rommel, of course." Rommel, having finished his treat came over to Anna. She grinned down at him and scratched his ears.

"Where are the rest of your family?"

"Back at the hotel. Probably in the swimming pool," Anna answered. "Where's yours?"

"Dad's working at the store. Mom's at the store too -- the grocery store, that is. We're out of Rom's favorite treats."

"Oh, horrors!! Emergency shopping trip needed, of course! Maybe these will help." Anna reached into her shoulder bag and brought out some gourmet dog treats. She tossed Rommel one. He immediately gobbled it up. "And if no one else is here I can give you this. I saw it at the airport and couldn't resist." She handed him a paperback.

"'International Rescue: The Authoritative History' by Steve Gunner." Luke chuckled. "I wonder how much he got wrong."

"A lot. I finally had to stop reading it on the plane. I couldn't hold back my laughter any more and I couldn't explain what was so funny. Do you realize you belong to an organization of several hundred people with a secret underground base in the Australian outback?"

"Well, that's better than some of the theories I've heard. My favorite is the Antarctic base where we're all required to sit in the tanning beds so we're all tan. This is meant to throw people off about the real location."

"This one wouldn't be so bad if he hadn't gotten everything so wrong. And if he wasn't so petty. Among other things, Ned Cook faked his accident to get a story."

"He arranged to have a building fall on him. Right," Luke chuckled. "Well it should be an interesting read, at least. I'm sure it will cheer me up."

"Getting bored?"

"I feel so useless," Luke grumbled. "I can't do anything. I feel like I'm stuck here all the time, except for therapy."

"Why can't you get out to do anything else?" Anna reached for another cookie. She deliberately

kept her 'professional' voice off. "Do you need to stay home for some reason?"

"I can drive all right but we only have two cars here. I take Dad to work sometimes so I can get out but all the places I want to go are places where I'd be doing something -- something I probably can't do right now. I guess I'm just bored. I know I'm doing better at my twice-a-week therapy sessions but," Luke raised his head and grinned wryly at Anna, "I just hate feeling helpless!"

"Where have I heard that before? Maybe from every cop and firefighter I ever worked with? So when are you coming back to the Island?" Anna looked at the last cookie on the plate and reminded herself that she didn't need it. She'd already gained weight on this vacation and was looking forward to a fancy dinner tonight with just her husband. Visions of crème brûlée went through her head. She told herself she couldn't have both the cookie and the dessert. When she realized the silence had gone on too long she looked up at Luke and raised an eyebrow.

Luke hesitated. "Do you think they'll want me back soon? I may not be recovered completely for a while."

"Horse puckies." Anna's voice had not gotten louder but the intensity had changed. "I know you know how bad Gordon was after his accident. They didn't let him down and they didn't let him hide. They're not going to do it to you."

"You swore. I didn't know counselors were allowed to swear," Luke said, smiling slightly.

"Ok. Change my comment to excrement of a male bovine. Now that we have that out of the way, why don't you tell me what you're really worried about?"

Luke hesitated. He wasn't sure what was wrong but something was. Anna was right, he was worried. But about what?

Anna watched him for a minute. When he didn't answer she went on. "Tyler really needs you to come back even if it's just for a visit. He took your accident pretty hard. He's had too many close calls this year and needs some reassurance that you're ok."

Luke continued to look down at his hands without speaking. He was saved by the bell. Or to be more exact, by the sound of his mom turning the door handle. "Luke? Whose car is that in the driveway? Do you have company?" His mom was carrying three grocery bags while pushing open the garage door.

Luke went over to take one of the bags but his mom refused to give it up. "The doctor said no heavy lifting."

"Three boxes of Kleenex is not heavy lifting, Mom," Luke grumbled. "Mom I'd like you to meet Anna Hansen, a friend from work. You were gone for a while; how much shopping did you do?"

"More than I expected. I need to fatten you up still. Pleased to meet you Ms. Hansen. Nice of you to stop by. How long are you in town? And would you like to stay for dinner?"

"I'm just in town for tonight. My family and I have reservations at Yellowstone lodge for the next

week. I may stop back in on my way home next week though. And thank you for the invite but my husband is supposed to be taking me out for a romantic dinner in," she looked at her watch, "about an hour and a half. Here, let me help you bring the rest of the bags in. Luke can put the things away. As long as you didn't buy a fifty pound bag of rice, that's not heavy lifting, is it? And can I get your chocolate chip cookie recipe?" Anna chatted away while bringing in several bags from the garage. "Can you recommend a good restaurant? Someone at the hotel recommended Vince's. Is it romantic? Or should we try a steak place?" Anna kept busy for a couple more minutes, then excused herself. "I have to go try and make myself look beautiful. I have a big date with a cute guy in an hour."

"You'll stop by again when you come back through, won't you? It's been so nice that so many of Luke's friends from work came all the way up here from California to visit him. Bring your family and come for dinner." Mrs. Morel liked this friendly woman and was reassured that someone would be looking after Luke while he was so far away.

"I don't know. We were talking about renting a car and driving through Jackson to see the Grand Tetons. Maybe get in some skiing. It might depend on the weather." Anna realized that if her family met the Morels the fact that Luke didn't live in California would be bound to come out. She'd have to think of a cover story if she came back.

"Let me walk you to the door. Although I don't think you could get lost between the kitchen and the front door," Luke laughed.

"I wouldn't bet on it. I have a friend known as 'Anna the Lost'. She once managed to get lost in her own kitchen." Anna sat down to put her boots back on. "Even if I don't get back next week, I will keep in touch. If for no other reason than to get your Mom's cookie recipe."

Luke watched her drive away. Her visit had left him unsettled and he didn't know why. He wanted to go back to work for International Rescue. So what was bothering him?