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Subject: Re: New Beginnings

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 22:12:18 GMT

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Saturday, January 19, 2069, 1 p.m., Black Mountain, NH (Sunday, January 20, 7 a.m., Tracy Island)

The helijet's rotors stirred up a wild dusting of light, stinging snow, making Jeff squint as it hit his face. He raised a hand in a gesture of farewell as the transport rose into the sky, then he ducked into the SUV that sat idling by the helijet pad.

"Everyone set back there?" The dark-skinned man at the wheel asked. His name was Tighe, and he was a local who specialized in keeping track of vacation homes while the owners were away.

"We're set," Jeff said. He had opted to ride in back with Dianne instead of up front with the driver. Taking her hand, he squeezed it, then drew it to his lips for a kiss. She favored him with a chuckle and a fond look.

"Then we're off," Tighe said, putting the heavy-duty SUV into gear. As they rolled slowly along, he told his passengers, "My partner and I were up here early with the SnoCat to clear the way to the landing pad. Travis is back at the house, taking care of a few last minute details. We weren't able to get out here yesterday; the state police told everyone but essential personnel to stay home." His tone was apologetic. "We're not exactly essential personnel."

"How much snow did that storm drop on you?" Jeff asked, leaning forward a bit.

"Three quarters to a full meter, depending on where you were." Tighe shrugged. "It's good to see it, though; up until now, we've had a pretty dry winter. The skiing should be prime." He paused, then asked, "What slopes are you folks interested in?"

"I'm not sure," Jeff said. "My wife made all the arrangements." This wasn't exactly true; Dianne and he had planned the itinerary together. Dianne had called their stateside representatives with their plans and set them the task of making the actual reservations, etc.

"We're probably going to go to Bretton Woods at some point," Dianne said, being intentionally vague. "I understand they have very good skiing here."

"Some of the best," Tighe said, smiling. "I know you'll enjoy yourselves there."

The light, powdery snow, driven by the wind, scurried across the freshly plowed road. Holding his wife's hand, Jeff peered out to see that other residents along the way were digging out their own homes. A small plow rumbled past, forcing the SUV far to one side. Dianne grimaced as the doors scraped against the piled edges.

"Will the outlets be open?" she asked. "I do want to get in some shopping."

"Travis will be able to tell you," Tighe assured her. "He'll have all the local lowdown."

The vehicle swung onto the long drive leading up to the house. As it came into sight, Dianne drew in a sharp, delighted breath. "It looks so... so..." Jeff opened his mouth to make a suggestion, but she finally came out with what she'd been trying to say. "...perfect."

Jeff grinned. "That's what I'd hoped you'd say when I bought the place last year."

The snow covered the roof in a thick blanket, with icicles hanging down as the day's bright sun melted some of the layer. Bushy young pine and spruce wore epaulets of white on their boughs, which bent down under the weight of their new finery. One or two lost the battle with gravity, spilling their decorations to the ground and springing back up with vigor. A lazy curl of smoke rose from the chimney.

Tighe honked the horn, then pulled the SUV in next to a no-nonsense, extended cab truck, emblazoned with the words, "Property Preservation Professionals" on the door. A heavy-duty trailer was hitched to the truck, and a small SnoCat, with caterpillar treads and plow blade, rested on it. As Jeff alighted, he saw the French door swing open and a fresh-faced young blonde step out onto the long porch. She adjusted her gloves, tugged down her heavy Nordic sweater, and hurried down the steps toward them.

"Mr. Tracy, Dr. Tracy, this is Astrid, our official go-fer," Tighe commented as the young woman approached, hand outstretched. "Astrid, our clients, the Tracys."

"Oh, wow!" she gushed, pumping Jeff's hand. "I'm, like, so excited about meeting you! It's like meeting..." She glanced away, toward the snow-covered mountains. "George Washington or something! A real historical figure!"

Dianne smothered a chuckle, and Jeff struggled to hold onto his pleasant expression. "Nice to meet you too, Astrid." He extracted his hand and gestured toward Dianne. "My wife, Dr. Tracy."

Astrid gave Dianne's outstretched hand a desultory shake. "Pleased, I'm sure."

Tighe, who had been subtly shaking his head, now spoke up. "Astrid, please get the Tracys' luggage and bring it up to the house." He then gestured to the well-cleared steps, indicating that Jeff and Dianne should ascend. "Welcome home."

"Thank you," Dianne said, nodding regally. She made her way up, Jeff close behind.

The interior of the main room was warm and inviting. A fire crackled merrily in the fireplace, and flowers added their own fragrance to the space. Dianne took a deep, appreciative breath, and smiled at Jeff.

"Welcome home, Mr. Tracy, Dr. Tracy!" A broad-shouldered man with close-cropped dark hair and a luxurious dark mustache greeted them as they divested themselves of their coats. He crossed the room to shake their hands, his thick work-boots making a muffled thump on the hardwood floors.

"This is my partner, Travis," Tighe said, subtly moving in to take the outerwear. "He's been dealing with the inside of the house while I've dealt with the outside."

"Everything should be in order," Travis told them, drawing them further into the room, while Tighe took the opportunity to hang up the coats. "There's plenty of firewood. The refrigerator is full. I've checked on the new addition to the master bedroom; the Jacuzzi is in fine shape. The installers did a fantastic job." He picked up a data pad from the dining room table, and scrolled down through its information. "The plumbing is leak-free and running freely, and the generator is primed and ready... just in case." He nodded to himself, then handed the pad to Jeff. "If you'll take a look around, then sign off, we'll get out of your way."

"Dr. Tracy would like to know if the outlet shops will be open, and if so, when," Tighe brought up.

Travis chuckled. "Stores stay closed because of a little snow? Pfft." He waved a hand. "Now, a good Nor'easter, yeah. That might close them down for a day or two, but not a gorgeous day like today. The main roads are clear, and the slopes are open." He paused, then added, "I can double check for you, of course, but..."

Dianne waved her hand. "No, that's all right. I'm just an old Southern girl who's not used to the roads being cleared so fast after such a heavy snow. Where I come from, four inches or more is enough to cause a panic. You wouldn't believe how fast the bread and milk aisles clear at just the threat of snow!"

Travis and Tighe both laughed, and Travis added, "You'll want to go to Settlers' Green, then. Loads of outlet stores there. I'll make sure the SUV has the coordinates programmed in for you."

Astrid moved to join her employers, rubbing her hands together and blowing on them. "I have everything inside, now, Mr. Tracy. Luggage is in the bedroom, that big picnic hamper is in the kitchen, and I put anything that looked perishable into the fridge. Your ski equipment is in the closet over there." She pointed to a wide coat closet. "The SUV has ski racks on top, and room for a snowboard... if you're into that."

"I may give it a try while we're here," Jeff said, smiling. "Once I drag my wife away from the pleasures of bargain hunting." He looked down at the pad he still held, then too the attached stylus, and signed his name. "Here. I think everything's in apple pie order."

Travis extended his hand once again. "Pleasure doing business with you, sir. Let us know when you want us to close up."

"We will."

They shook hands all around, and the crew left. Dianne crossed over to the wide windows and watched the truck pull carefully out of the parking area, and... turning around... roll cautiously down the long drive.

Jeff joined her, putting his arms around her from the back, and resting his chin on her shoulder. "Gorgeous view, isn't it?"

She sighed deeply, a contented sound. "Yes. It's beautiful." She turned in his grasp, causing him to straighten up. Draping an arm over his shoulder, she stroked his face. "An' we're alone."

"Hmm," he murmured. "That opens up a whole world of possibilities."

Running a finger lightly over his lips, she smiled, her eyes half-lidded. "Ah can think o' one in particulah, suh."

She drew his mouth down to hers for a long, lazy kiss. As they parted, she slowly slid her hands across the thick cable knit sweater he wore.

"Too bad theah's no buttons heah," she purred.

"Well, there are other ways of removing... impediments," he rumbled. He took her hand, and raised it to his lips, turning it slightly to kiss the inside of her wrist. "How about before the fire this time, hmm?"

She regarded him with a sultry, yet thoughtful look, then smiled. "Well, suh, it is yoah birthday..."

His startled smile grew into a sensual one, and he took her face in both hands, kissing her roughly, passionately. She responded eagerly, and as they broke their clinch, she drew him towards the fireplace, and the thick piece of carpet that lay before it.