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Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 08 Aug 2012 04:34:39 GMT

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Wednesday, April 3, 2069, 11:00 a.m., Tracy Island

Jeff glanced around at the men and women gathered in the lounge, data padds in hands. He cleared his throat, gaining everyone's attention. "So. Where do we stand?" Turning to his right, he asked, "Brains?"

Brains adjusted his glasses and gave Jeff a glance that was both sharp and bright. Indeed, there had been a visible bounce to the engineer's step as he'd entered the room, and his smile couldn't have been any wider. "The power plant is obviously back online. We replaced as much piping as possible, but we need to stabilize lines one and two with something that will eliminate any rubbing." He shook his head. "I've already put in an order for a graphite padding that should accomplish our goals, as well as some more piping in a stronger material for our future needs."

Jeff nodded. "Sounds good. Do we need another fuel run?"

The engineer glanced at his data padd, more for form than to refresh his memory. "I've moved the next scheduled run up by two weeks. We can recalibrate from there."

"Excellent." Jeff now turned to Will. "What do you have for us, Will?"

Will glanced at his padd. "Well, we'll need to replace two of the villa's storm shutters, and do some clean up of Thunderbird Three's silo hatch. One of the shutters on the Round House is stuck half-closed and I'll be workin' on that this afternoon." He shook his head. "I suggest that we come up with somethin' with a bit more power as back up in case this happens again." He rubbed his upper arm. "I'm still feelin' sore from usin' those cranks..."

Most of those in the room chuckled, except Virgil, who looked totally lost in thought.

"What about the Cliff House?"

Will shook his head. "No damage to report there. Most debris slid right off the dome and though I think it took at least one hit from a boulder, there were no dents."

"So noted." Jeff decided to bring his second eldest back to the here and now. "Virgil. You're next."

"Huh?" He looked up startled. "I'm sorry, Dad, what did you say?"

Jeff frowned; the circles under Virgil's eyes suggested he'd not slept well, if at all. He shot a look across the room, catching Scott's eye and making a slight inclination of his head in Virgil's direction. Scott shook his head minutely. Jeff clamped down on his questions and repeated himself instead.

"Your turn, Virgil."

"Oh." Virgil took in a deep breath and let it out in a sigh. He frowned at his data padd as if it were lying to him, then he shook himself. "Thunderbird Two's hangar is clear of debris. The hangar doors are working properly and are free of sand. The air strip is also clear, though we have to replace at least three palm trees, and repair four more. Two of the emergency fire suppression towers will have to be replaced, too; they're not deploying properly." He rubbed a hand across his upper lip, and seemed to be mumbling behind it.

"Is that all, Virgil?"

Virgil started again. "Is that... yes, that's all I have."

Jeff's gaze lingered on Virgil for another moment, then he turned to John. "What do you have, John?"

John, who had been watching his older brother with a worried gaze, nevertheless responded quickly. "Well, the comm mast at the southern end of the island is damaged, which means that school is out for the duration." Jeff snorted a laugh, as did Scott, while Dianne rolled her eyes. "We should be able to get it fixed today so the kids can get back to it tomorrow." He glanced down at the data padd he held. "Of course, this hasn't disrupted communications to Thunderbird Five as we're more reliant on satellites than on the comm mast at this point. Satellite phones are functioning normally, too. I took a hike out to the treatment and desalination plants to give them a once over to be sure both are undamaged."

"Good." Jeff now turned to Scott. "Your report?"

"The pool is now clear of sand and is retracting without incident. Thunderbird One's hangar and launch cradle are both clear." Scott cleared his throat noisily. "I took a dune buggy out for a run around the beaches. There's quite a bit of debris to be cleared, particularly on the southwestern corner." He sobered. "I'm told the garden took a big hit, though. Kyrano is sorting through to see what he can salvage."

"Noted." Jeff turned to Gordon. "How's the boat pen?"

Gordon grinned. "Shipshape!"

Everyone groaned, except Virgil, who seemed to be oblivious. Scott crossed behind everyone and put a hand on his brother's shoulder. Startled again, Virgil glanced up at Scott, who nodded toward their father. This made Virgil straighten and sit back, relaxing a bit.

"Seriously," Gordon continued. "The boat pen fared very well, even though the storm door didn't deploy fully. That has been tested; it's working a-okay. I took a skiff out to the eastern side of the island. The eastern beaches fared pretty well with the bulk of the island acting as windbreak, though the southeastern edges could use some clearing, too."

"How is the tunnel out from the boat pen? Any changes there?" Scott asked.

Gordon frowned a bit. "There is some sign of rock fall off the northern cliffs." He shrugged. "I guess I'll have to take Four out and do a bit of sounding... make sure there's been no major shift in

the shoals or reefs off that part of the island."

"Has anyone taken a helijet up to see if we had any landslides or washed out paths?" When the general consensus returned as "No," Jeff nodded toward his oldest son. "Then you do that today, Scott. Take Virgil with you... if he's up to it."

John quickly jumped in. "I'd rather go, Dad." Unspoken in his words were, "and give Virgil a break."

"All right, John. You're with Scott." Jeff finally turned to his wife. "Dianne? How are your patients?"

"Both have been released from the sick room to their own quarters." She put her data pad aside. "They have my orders for follow up and return to duty. For now, they are off-duty entirely."

"So noted." Jeff stood and stretched. "So, if there's nothing else..."

"Actually, Dad, there is."

Jeff sat down again at Scott's words. "Okay. What've you got on your mind, son?"

"Mateo." Scott glanced around the room. "I think we can all agree that the living quarters," here he shot a look at Dianne, "and the medical facilities are badly in need of a retrofit." He shrugged. "I know we don't spend much time there, but when we do, it would be nice to have enough beds for more than four people."

"Not to mention more comfortable ones!" Dianne sat up straighter and put a hand to her back, as if it hurt. "I thought I was sleeping on rocks!"

"You could have slept in Thunderbird Two," Brains reminded her. "And used its sick bay."

"For that matter, the biobeds on Seven would have been more comfortable!" she declared. "However, we're not always going to have Seven along. Nor are we going to have Two. We've retrofitted the sickbay on Five. It's time to turn our attention to Mateo."

"Agreed," Jeff said, amiably. "Get me some plans and some ideas. If we need to carve out more rock, so be it." He glanced around. "Anything else?"

Brains cleared his throat. "Uh... y-yes. There is."

All eyes turned to him, making him obviously nervous. He clasped his hands together to keep them from trembling.

"I've already spoken to John about this. Ahem." He cleared his throat again. "When Tin-Tin and I went to Paris to see her grandfather, Tin-Tin wasn't sure just how to introduce me. I mean, she's known me forever as, well, 'Brains'. I had to step in and provide my real name or at least, my adopted name as I've never known my birth name." Glancing around, he drew in a deep breath. "It's become important to her, and important to me, that people call me by my first name." His gaze rested on John, who grinned and winked at him. "I know that will make for some confusion,

seeing as I have the same name as your son. And 'Brains' has been a solution to that. But, as he said, we've both had the name for approximately the same length of time. 'Brains', though it's a good nickname, isn't really my name. So, please, call me John from now on."

Before anyone else could speak, John piped up. "If it will help any, you can go back to calling me Johnny. It's not my favorite nickname, but I can put up with it if necessary."

"What would your favorite nickname be, then, Johnny?" Gordon asked, one thick eyebrow raised impishly.

John smirked. "Well, you could go by my penname, J.G. -- Leroy."

"I'm beginning to think Thing One and Thing Two is a better choice," Scott said, his tone dry. He glanced at Brains's puzzled face. "Don't worry about it, Bra... I mean, John. I was only teasing."

When Brains turned his puzzled, questioning gaze to John, his friend mouthed, "Don't ask!" in his direction.

"All right. John, I'll be happy to do as you request, as long as you're willing to put up with an occasional slip and the resulting confusion." Jeff caught the eye of each family member. "We can discuss this with the rest of the family this evening at dinner. You two might want to make a special effort to tell our recruits yourselves." His gaze ranged around the room again. "Is there anything else at all?"

This time, the negative response was unanimous, and Jeff nodded firmly. "Then this meeting is adjourned."

As people began to stand, stretch, and file out, Jeff approached Virgil. "Are you all right, son? You looked... distracted."

Virgil favored him with a wan smile. "I'm just... I just have something to take care of, Dad. I'll be okay."

"Is it something I can help with?"

Virgil shook his head. "No, not really. Though I might need to fly to Auckland or Christchurch in the days ahead."

"All right. Just let me know when and I'll schedule it." Jeff clapped a hand on his son's shoulder. "Get some rest. You look all in."

Wordlessly, Virgil nodded, and Jeff went off to follow his wife.

While this was going on, Dianne caught up with Brains and put a hand on each of his shoulders, drawing him close so she could murmur in his ear. "An' heah Ah thought you had somethin' else t' tell us!"

Brains's eyes went wide behind his glasses and he slowed to a stop. Dianne gave him a raised

eyebrow and a coy, knowing smile before Jeff caught up with her and put an arm around her waist.

John clapped a hand on Brains's shoulder from behind and watched his father and mother leave. "What was that all about?" he asked.

Brains swallowed and blinked, letting out a slight sigh. "Come with me to Tin-Tin's suite. I... we have something to tell you."

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