

Thursday, April 4, 2069, 9.00am, Tracy Island

Joshua ran along the hallway in front of his father, spraying an imaginary fire hose at the walls and ducking from side-to-side. When he reached the workout room door he stopped and concentrated his aim on the door.

"Watch out Dad, there's a fire! Woooooosh!"

Dominic chuckled and jumped back, cowering from the imaginary flames.

"Put it out, Jak! Save us all!"

"Woooooooooooooosh!"

Joshua's little arms shook with the force of his 'hose' and after a few more seconds, he reached out and touched the door.

"It's all out, Dad," he said. "We're safe!"

"Woohoo!" Dom said, scooping his son up in his arms. "We're saved, all thanks to you!"

Joshua giggled loudly as he was swung through the air, his head tossed back in pure delight. There was a click at the end of the hallway as the sick room door opened, and Dianne shook her head at the antics of father and son.

"I thought that could only have been you two," she said with a smile.

"Good morning," Dom said. He placed Joshua back on the ground and looked at him meaningfully.

Joshua got the hint and looked right up into Dianne's eyes.

"Good morning, Mrs Tracy," he said.

"Dr Tracy," Dominic corrected.

"Oh. Good morning, Mrs Dr Tracy."

Dominic chuckled and Dianne shrugged.

"Well, I am both Mrs and Dr so you aren't wrong," she said. "C'mon in and we'll get your dad seen to."

She held out her hand and Josh took it. As soon as he was in the sick room, his eyes grew wide

as plates as he took in the unusual environment. They always did.

"Now, you sit up here," Dianne said, placing him on a biobed, "and Dad can sit right next to you. Don't fall now, y'hear?"

"Yes ma'am," Josh said, and grabbed on to the edge of the bed.

"This won't take long," Dianne said as Dominic hopped up onto the bed.

The similarities between father and son were striking as they sat side-by-side, holding onto the bed and swinging their legs. While Dom had the darkest of black hair and Joshua the lightest of blond, the child definitely favoured his father in facial features not to mention the need for glasses (though Dom no longer needed his due to surgery). Joshua was watching her every move, his mouth open.

Dianne went through her checks and Dom answered her questions. Finally she stepped back and nodded.

"You can go back to full-time duty as of now," she said. "Just try not to get knocked over again."

"Well, tell Virgil to watch where he's going," Dom said. "If he falls right on top of me I'll get squashed. He's a big guy," he said, hopping down from the bed, "and I'm not."

Dianne nodded and regarded his frame with a careful eye.

"When was the last time you weighed yourself?" she asked.

"I don't know," Dom said. "I guess I haven't paid too much attention. I've been busy with work and Josh we've been potty training since his third birthday and I think he's cracked it. Right, Jak?"

"Right!" Joshua said as Dom lifted him down from the bed.

"Well, hop on over to the scales here and we'll see," Dianne said.

Dominic hesitated, but on being subject to Dianne's stern stare he did as he was bid. Dianne shook her head at the result.

"65 kilos at 180 centimetres is very low, Dom," she said. "I know you're not a big guy, but this is starting to get unhealthy. Don't want you to start fainting due to low blood sugar like a former mutual acquaintance of ours."

Dom made a face and lifted Joshua up onto the scales to his cries of, "Me next! I want to go next!"

"That's never going to happen," Dom said. "I just need to pay more attention to myself."

"Or perhaps have someone else pay attention to you?" Dianne asked.

"Huh?" Dom could not help the colour rushing into his cheeks as he tried to feign ignorance. They betrayed him.

"I think there's something going on between yourself and a certain Mr Morel," she said.

"What makes you think that?" Dom asked.

"Oh, I don't know," Dianne said, tapping her fingers on her chin as she tried to suppress a smile. "Maybe something to do with the fact that you reacted so strongly when Luke got shot, or the dinners I hear you keep having together--the Cliff House is a very small community after all--and how concerned Luke was when you smacked your head. Plus," Dianne said, "I'm not stupid. I've suspected for months but I haven't said anything. It's not really my business but as your friend, I'm happy for you both."

Dom helped Joshua hop off the scale and he shook his head.

"You're one sharp cookie," he said. "Yes, there is...something...going on. We've just been spending time together and not really much more. He's been burned and I've been burned, and we both live and work in the same place and if something went wrong it would be so difficult..."

Dom pressed his lips shut to stop anything further from tumbling out. Dianne placed a hand on his shoulder and smiled.

"Sometimes life is about taking chances," she said. "But it's up to you the both of you to decide whether they're worth it. I would hate to lose either of you. After everything we've been through, you and I make a great team, and Luke has brought so much to IR. But no one can tell you what to do. What you're doing now is probably the best course of action."

At that moment there was a crash, and the two friends turned around to see Joshua wincing amid a pile of bandage boxes that were once neatly stacked.

"Oops," he said.

Dianne clicked her tongue.

"Now I did ask you to put those away..." she said to Dom.

The Irishman shook his head and went over to start cleaning up the mess. Joshua looked at him, as if waiting for the punishment, but none came.

"It's okay, Jak. It was your old man's fault," Dom said.

"Well I'll help clean it up," Josh said.

Dianne smiled as father and son began to straighten up the boxes and move them to where they should have been in the first place.

"Dad, when I grow up I want to be a doctor," Josh said.

"I thought you wanted to be a fireman," Dom said.

"No... Mrs Dr Tracy is really nice and I want to be really nice like her."

Dianne couldn't suppress her chuckle, and she winked when the youngster turned around to grin at her.

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