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

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 26 Jan 2013 23:56:20 GMT

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Thursday, April 4, 2:00 p.m., Tracy Island

"Hmph!"

Tyler folded his arms and scowled, poking a toe with some force at the uncomplaining wall. Jeff took a moment to raise an eyebrow at his youngest before pointedly going back to rolling up the sleeping bag spread out before him.

Alex, on the other hand, whistled as he brought in his back pack. "Grandma Tracy sent along some apples. Said 'boys can't exist on s'mores alone'." He set the pack down carefully. "How does she get away with calling you a 'boy'?"

Jeff's reply was tinged with amusement. "Because she's my mother, that's how." He gestured with his head toward the tightly-coiled roll. Alex crouched down to pull the velcro straps up and around, fastening the sleeping bag firmly. "Took her forever to stop calling Alan 'the baby'."

Alex chuckled. "Maybe I should call him that."

"Only if you want to take your life in your hands, son." Jeff turned to Tyler. "Ty, bring your bag over here."

Tyler did as he was told, still scowling. "How come we're going on a stupid camp out for Scott's birthday?"

"Because this is what Scott wanted to do," Jeff replied mildly. He set in to rolling up Tyler's sleeping bag.

"Yeah, but I wanted to do paintball! I didn't get to do it last year!" Tyler's scowl deepened. "Everybody said I was..." He put up scare quotes with his fingers and took on a sarcastic tone, "...'too little!'"

"With an attitude like that, young man, I might decide you're 'too little' for this camp out, too," Jeff warned. "Do you want to stay home with the womenfolk and go to bed early?"

Tyler's response was a sullen, "No."

"Then change your attitude and help me fasten up this bedroll."

The younger boy sighed, resigned. "Yes, sir."

Alex changed the subject. "Who's coming tonight, anyway? Will Luke be there?"

"Actually, I think he's the only one of the men who isn't coming." Jeff frowned, perplexed. "That's kind of odd, considering he's the one person I thought would be there."

"Rats! I hoped we'd go looking for nocturnal wildlife!" Alex's disappointment was fleeting. "But we can play flashlight tag!"

"Flashlight tag?" Tyler sounded surprised. "We haven't played that in a long, long time. Not since we lived in South Carolina and back then, I was too little to play."

"You're not too little to play that anymore, Ty." Jeff finished affixing Tyler's bedroll to his small backpack. "Been a long time since the older boys have played that, too. You'll probably beat the pants off them."

"Okay!"

Jeff helped the boys fasten their packs, Scott came in, followed closely by Gordon. Scott held his pack by a strap, but Gordon already had his on.

"Ready to go?" Scott asked.

"Not yet." Jeff grinned. "You two have flashlights?"

"Yeah," Gordon replied. "Dare I ask why?"

"We're gonna beat your butts at flashlight tag, that's why!" Tyler crowed.

"Oh really?" Scott reached out to tousle Tyler's hair. "We'll see about that. C'mon, squirt. You can follow me."

"I'll get my gear and meet you out at the foot of the trail," Jeff said, heading out and hurrying down the hall.

As Alex moved toward the door, Gordon - who had held back a bit - put out a hand. "Wait a minute, bud. I need something that only the bug master can provide."

Alex favored his older brother with a calculating, skeptical frown. "Oh? What's that?"

Gordon leaned over and whispered in Alex's ear. The younger boy folded his arms. "What do you need those for?"

"Alex, my man," Gordon said, favoring his brother with an eyebrow wiggle and a mischievous grin, "the less you know, the better you can plausibly deny responsibility."

"Somehow, I doubt Dad would look at it that way." Alex shifted his stance. "Besides, don't you have some of those yourself? I'd think that with all the pranks you pull..."

"Indeed, I do, sahib, I do. They're just not as ... shall we say ... realistic as yours." Gordon clasped his hands below his chin, widened his grin, and gave Alex what could only describe as "puppy dog eyes". "Pweeeese?"

Alex sighed and dropped his arms, resigned. "Oh, all right. But my name doesn't come up, okay?"

"I swear never to reveal my sources." Gordon held up three fingers in a Scout's salute. "Scout's honor, cross my heart, and all that jazz."

Jeff popped his head into the room. "What's the hold up here?"

"Nothing, Dad," Gordon said, smoothly. "I need a pack of cards. Alex says he has one."

"All right, then. But hurry up!" Jeff ducked back out.

"You heard the man," Gordon said.

"Gordon," Alex whispered as he pulled out what Gordon really wanted. "I don't have any cards!"

"Don't worry, sahib. It's all taken care of. Now, let's get going!"

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