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Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:20:08 GMT

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Monday, September 24, 2068, 10 a.m., local time, outside of Wichita, Kansas (3 a.m., Tuesday, September 25, Tracy Island)

"Wow." Alex stood just outside the picket fence, gazing at the piles of debris that marked where the Tracy farmhouse had once stood. He glanced up at his father, who had taken in a sharp, deep breath.

"'Wow' is right, son," Jeff said, putting a hand on the boy's denim-clad shoulder. He scanned the lot, nodding slightly. "Good thing we got some people out here quickly. I'd hate to see what this would look like if we hadn't."

Actually, he had a good idea what it would have looked like; they'd passed two or three lots where the houses had been smashed, and the owners didn't have the resources to clean up and rebuild. Overgrown with weeds, homes half standing, debris scattered all over... at least on his property they didn't have to slog through knee-high grass to get to the cordoned off spot where the basement still stood.

Marion came up beside him. "Ken and his crew did a good job. Everything from the basement, and anything that could be salvaged is in a storage unit a few miles from here. The major equipment was pulled out and they tore down the barn just last week."

He turned to her. "Have you been out to the graveyard?"

She nodded solemnly. "Yesterday. There are a couple of trees down, part of the fence is missing, and it needs a good mowing. I'm not sure what else you want to do there." She hesitated, and sighed. "I don't know why Ken hasn't sent someone out there before now. I guess he thought you wanted the house and barn dealt with first."

"I did." Jeff said simply. "We'll take care of the graveyard ourselves today. Just need to get hold of some tools, that's all."

He raised his eyes again, and called to his family. "Everyone gather around!" They all approached from where they'd been wandering, looking at the leveled lot and discussing matters amongst themselves. When they came close, Jeff began to make plans. "Okay, folks. Marion tells me that the graveyard needs work. Trees are down, fencing is missing, the grass needs mowing. So, we'll head out there and see what needs to be done. Scott, Gordon, you're to head back into town with the pickup. I'll phone you and let you know what tools we need to buy, and what we need to rent, then you can stop by the hardware store and fill the order. Make sure you get all the safety equipment: goggles, gloves, rope... whatever we need."

"Yes, sir." Scott took the keys from his jeans pocket. He, Virgil, and John had brought the family's pickup truck from the airport hangar to the hotel where they were staying, while Jeff brought along the seven-passenger van, and Alan, with Gordon, had brought the sports car. All three vehicles were at the farm right now, being necessary to carry all the family comfortably to the site.

Jeff turned to his wife. "Sweetheart, could you and Mother see to it we get some food and plenty of water out here?" He gazed up, pulling up his canvas outback hat to see the cloudless sky better. "The day'll be warm before we're finished."

"Do you want to drive out to the graveyard first? Or walk?" Dianne asked. "Em and I will probably need the van, and you won't be able to fit the rest of the crew into the sports car."

"I think we'll walk," Jeff told her. "I know I could use the exercise. It'll give us a better idea of what else might need fixing around here, and you know Alex will love looking for wildlife on the way."

"All right, then. We'll take Marion back to town with us." Dianne stretched up to give her husband a kiss. "You might want to camouflage the sports car somehow; it advertises that we're here, and the last thing we need is the media."

"Good idea. Alan? Please pull the car back behind that pile of wood over there, then catch up with us. The rest of you, come with me."

Scott and Gordon were already gone, and Dianne and Emily wasted no time in following them towards town. Tyler put his hand in Jeff's as they headed for the corner of the farm designated as the Tracy burial ground.

"How come we bury people out here?" Tyler asked as they walked. "Why not in one of the big cemeteries in the city?"

"Why not on the island itself?" Cherie asked, her art bag slung over one shoulder. She paced her father on the other side.

"Well," Jeff began. "This farm has been in our family for nigh on 200 years now. It was purchased way back in the late 1800s when the west was first opened to homesteaders. A pair of brothers, Patrick and Seamus Tracy, sons of Irish immigrants, claimed two adjoining homesteads, each 160 acres. They built sod houses, and had been farming on the land for two years before sending for their wives and children." He paused, smiling a little. "Back then, there weren't many churches out here on the plains, and Catholic ones were few and very far between. Most good Catholics wanted to be buried in consecrated soil, and you could only find that near a church. So, when a priest who was on his way to California stopped in the vicinity, the brothers asked him to consecrate a corner where their properties met as a graveyard for them and their descendants."

"So the priest did?" Tyler asked, his brow furrowed.

"He did."

"Then how come you're not... we're not Catholics?"

Jeff laughed. "A good question. As I recall, one of Seamus's sons married a Lutheran gal, who refused to convert to the Catholic church. Instead, she got her husband to convert to Lutheranism. She was a smart girl though; she waited until after Seamus had died and his son, Lincoln, had inherited the family farm. My grandmother was responsible for making the family Methodist...

which is the denomination we claim if asked." He glanced down at Tyler. "That's not to say that your mother is Methodist..."

"So, what happened to Patrick?" Alex had come up and wanted to bring the topic back to the point.

Jeff sighed. "He died from one of the diseases that often afflicted people out in the plains. He had five daughters at that point; his will specified that his firstborn or surviving son was to inherit. I guess he still had hopes. If he didn't have one when he died, Seamus would get his farm, with stipulations that he took care of Patrick's wife and children. Both Patrick and his wife died from their illness, as did two of their daughters. Seamus took the other three girls and raised them as his own. He also inherited his brother's land. My forebears purchased more land over the years until we had one of the largest farms in the county."

Cherie frowned. "How do you know all this stuff?"

"Journals, mostly, though some other family records go back that far." Virgil had dropped back to pace his father, while John went on ahead with Alan. "Our family has always been one for keeping journals. There are a couple of surviving ones from Seamus's day under glass at headquarters. Grandma has copies of the contents on data chip if you want to see them."

"Hm." Cherie looked thoughtful. "That might be a good project for my history class this year. I think I'll ask her about it when we get home."

"Oh my," Jeff breathed as he stopped in his tracks. Alan and John were already examining the old oak that had fallen across the entrance to the graveyard. "That was at least a century old," he murmured, closing his eyes for a few seconds.

"Damn. Marion has a gift for understatement, doesn't she? We're going to have a rough time cutting that up before tomorrow," Virgil said. "The smashed fence will probably have to be special ordered, and I'll bet that some of the gravestones are broken, too."

"You're very likely right, Virgil." Jeff took in a deep breath. "Boys, let's find another way in," he said, as the executive and commander came to the fore. "We'll need a good idea of what tools Scott should purchase before I call him."

"Chainsaws at the very least, Dad," Alan called. "And likely a chipping machine."

"Unless some of this can be converted into wood for the new house," John suggested.

Jeff raised an eyebrow. "Hm. Not a bad idea at that, John. Let's get in there, and start making our list."

Remembrance, part two by Tikatu on September 12, 2007

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