

Tuesday, March 13th; 8ish; Tracy Island

"Well," Alan said with a grin. "This is a surprise!" He settled down in a seat next to Lena.
"Blueberry pancakes! My favorite!"

"I'm sorry we missed your birthday, Alan," Dianne said apologetically. "But with the IDL and all...."

"Hey! Having Dad home was a great gift. And I knew you wouldn't actually forget...." Alan told her between bites of pancake.

Jeff looked down the table to where Lena sat. "Brains, is this our computer expert?"

"Yes she is. Lena Matumbo, I'd like you to meet Jeff Tracy, and his wife, Dianne." He then pointed to each of the younger children. "And those three rugrats are Cherie, Tyler and Alex Tracy."

Lena smiled as she swallowed the bite of pancake she'd put in her mouth as Brains started his introductions. "It's a pleasure to meet you all," she said.

"And to meet you, as well, Mrs. Matumbo," Dianne said with a smile. "Has Brains been keeping you busy?"

Lena chuckled. "Once he got me started, I was able to keep myself quite busy. It's taken a bit longer than I thought, but I think that I'll have the problem completely solved sometime today."

"That's wonderful!" Jeff exclaimed. "It would certainly be a load off my mind to know that our email communications are secure again." He took a sip of his coffee. "Has Brains taken you around to see the place?"

Lena glanced over at Brains, who had a guilty look on his face. "We wanted the problem to be corrected as soon as possible, to minimize the risk that someone else would find out about Internatal Rescue the same way I did. So we've pretty much kept to the lab. But that's why I'm here, isn't it?" she replied.

"True," Jeff admitted. "You're here to work. Still, there should be some time for hospitality as well." Brains's cheeks flushed pink and he looked as if he wanted to slide under the table. Dianne chuckled a bit.

"Brains tends to get so wrapped up in his work that he'd forget to eat if my mother-in-law didn't pester him about it. I'm not surprised that you've kept to the lab. Perhaps after work today, one of us can show you around. Personally, I'd like to take a walk around and see what everyone's been up to while we've been gone." She finished her coffee and looked at her watch.

"Oh, my. Children, it's time for school."

The three little ones groaned, but began to pick up their plates and ask to be excused. Dianne gathered her own dishes, and kissed Jeff on the cheek.

"If you'll excuse us, Mrs. Matumbo, the teachers await," she said to Lena.

"Of course, Mrs. Tracy." She turned to Alan and said quietly, "Dere are teachers here? I haven't seen anyone like dat."

Alan drank some juice and smiled at Lena. "My brothers and sister are homeschooled using an interactive online program that beams actual teaching to the schoolroom computers via satellite. I haven't seen much of it myself, but from what I understand, the boys both have one or two teachers, just as if they were in a regular school, while Cherie has a whole battery of them, one for each course."

"Yes," Brains added. "They can ask questions of the teacher just as if she were there in the room. It's virtually real-time. I help supplement Alex's science courses; he's insatiable about the natural world."

"Dat's good," Lena replied. "I homeschooled my two, and dey continued wit deirs. Now my grandbabies plan to do it wit deir babies, when dey are old enough."

"Wow! You're a great-grandma? You don't look old enough to be one!" Alan exclaimed.

"I had my babies when I was 22, and dey found deir spouses when dey were even younger. I was not yet 40 when my first grandchild was born," Lena replied with a smile. "Tank you for de compliment, Alan."

Alan sat there trying to calculate how old his own grandmother was when she had his father, and how old she was when Scott was born. He gave it up and decided he'd just ask her when she came back into the room. Instead he asked, "How many grandkids and great-grandkids do you have?"

"Ah, don't get me started on my babies, or we'll be here all day," Lena replied with a grin. "I have five grandchildren, tree of whom are married, and tree great-grandchildren, de oldest of which is two-and-a-half." She took a drink of her juice. "But dis is your day, Alan. You don't want to spend it talking to an old woman you hardly know," she teased with a mischievous gleam in her eye. "I'm sure dere are lots of otter tings you'd ratter be doing."

Alan laughed as he finished his pancakes. "You're right, Mrs. Matumbo. But it was nice to get to know you a little while you were a captive audience, so to speak. And if you'll excuse me, I think I'll go off and find one of those other things." He stood and took his dishes with him. "Have a nice day, Mrs. Matumbo, Brains."

Lena chuckled, then took a sip of her tea. She looked at Jeff. "You have fine, strong, intelligent sons. You must be very proud of dem."

"I am," Jeff said simply. Then he smiled. "I'm a bit proud of my daughter, too, but most of her good qualities came from being raised by her mother."

Lena smiled, then glanced over at Brains. Seeing that he had finished his meal, she put her teacup down and stood up. "If you will excuse me, I have a program written by a talented but overeager young man to finish modifying." Jeff nodded, grinning, and she and Brains left the table, heading for the lab.

Post by Tikatu and Hobbeth on 23/09/2004
