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Subject: Re: Growing as a Team  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:07:37 GMT  
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Tracy Island; Wednesday, March 14, 2068; 2PM

Lena was checking the diagnostic results on the computer at Jeff's desk, when she heard a humming sound. She looked up to see him enter the room in an electric wheelchair. His arm was still in a cast, and he looked tired and discouraged, but determined.

"Oh!" he said, startled to see Lena sitting behind his desk. "I'm sorry, Lena. I didn't know anyone was in the lounge." He stopped to watch what she was doing. "Looks like you're busy there. I can get what I need later."

"You don't need to leave, sir. I'm nearly finished wit de diagnostics on dis computer. Den it's all yours." She looked at him keenly. "Are you feeling okay? You look - how did dey used to say it? - down in de mout."

"You're very observant, Lena. The euphoria of actually coming home has worn off and now I'm faced with the day-to-day limitations that this," he lifted his casted arm, "and that," he indicated his elevated and casted foot, "impose on me."

Lena stood up and walked around to the other side of the desk. She leaned against it. "Den don't tink of dose tings as being limitations."

"What do you mean? They certainly limit me as to where I can go, what I can do," Jeff responded.

"But you know dat's only temporary," she replied. "One day, you'll be back on your feet, wit no casts on, probably even piloting your own plane, again. Dere's a lot of people out dere who don't have dat luxury. You should be tinkin of dis as an opportunity, instead of a limitation."

"An opportunity? How so? What do you suggest?" Jeff asked, his curiosity piqued.

Lena frowned, thinking about how to word the ideas she had. "Well, for one ting, you have an opportunity to better understand how de permanently disabled feel. Den you might tink about whetter or not you have de facilities to rescue dem. I'm a little surprised you haven't had to before now. Are your machines equipped to extract someone in a wheelchair? Can you rescue a paraplegic, or a quadraplegic? What about someone who depends on der device for der very life?"

Jeff sat quietly, mulling over her words for a bit. Then he looked at her very seriously. "You know, I'll have to look in the logs and see if we have ever had to rescue someone in that situation before. I have no memory of it happening, but then it doesn't mean it hasn't."

He rubbed his chin with one hand. "And you do bring up a valid point. We should be prepared to rescue anyone in any kind of physical situation. That is part of the reason I added the medical component to our operations. But all of our operatives should be aware of the need."

"And your machines dat carry de people away from de danger should be able to accommodate dem, no matter what. Even in dis day and age, some of de machines people are forced to use are still bulky. Could dey fit in de doorways of de rescue vehicles? Would dere be places for dem inside? And would your - operatives - know how to care for dem until dey could get dose people to more specialized care? Sooner or later, you'll probably have to rescue someone like dat. You have a unique perspective on dis type of problem right now." There was a chime from the computer. "Ah, de diagnostics is finished."

"I'll take what you say under consideration, Lena," Jeff told her. He moved closer to the desk. "What kind of diagnostics did you run?"

A look of mischief came into her eyes as she walked around the desk once again and looked at the report. Well, Brains. It looks like I get to tell him after all. "We wanted to double-check dis terminal in view of what happened to bring me here."

"And what did you find?"

"De problem isn't wit de terminal." She looked up and, seeing the confused look on his face, continued. "De reason for de glitch is due to de fact dat de block on accessing non IR mailboxes and sites from computers when dey are accessing de IR servers had a treshhold number of hits it could take. It was a very high number, but it was exceeded. Dat caused a deterioration in de program, resulting in de glitch. It seems dat tirty percent of de hits came from dis computer, Mr. Tracy." She assumed an innocent look. "Now, I wonder who could have been trying to use dis terminal dat way."

"Well, Lena, it IS my computer. I'm not the only one who uses it, but I'm probably primarily responsible," Jeff admitted. "When was the threshold exceeded?"

Lena looked down at the desk and Jeff noticed a printout there. She turned a few pages and did some mental calculating. "If memory serves me correctly," she looked up at him with a grin, "and it usually does, it was about tree days before your - crash." She looked down at the printout again and a moment later, gave a decisive nod. "Yes, dat's right."

"Hmm. Most likely it was my wife, or my son, Scott, then. They were in charge of the place and would have been using my computer," he replied. He sighed. "It's very easy to forget to switch servers back and forth when you get caught up in your work, no matter what it is you're doing."

"True," she replied. "Having to type a code like de one Brains came up wit can be annoying, but it was de best he could do on such short notice as he had. I'm not blaming anyone, sir. I understand it hadn't been tought of until it was necessary. But de solution is two-fold. One, modify de program so an unlimited treshhold is established, and two, simplify de code. Dat is already being done. But I wanted to be sure dere was no defect in de computers dat had de most hits." She smiled. "Brains' computer had de next highest amount of hits, not much fewer dan yours, but he can be absent-minded, like all geniuses, you know."

Jeff snorted a laugh. "Looks like geniuses aren't the only ones who can be absent-minded. CEOs, doctors, and former fighter pilots can too. Thank you for your work on this problem, Lena. And for the perspective on... this," he indicated the wheelchair. "Looks like IR is going to be going through

a lot more changes than we ever anticipated."

Lena's smile faded somewhat. "I hope I haven't been out-of-line in any way. But you did ask. And if I can be of any help in facilitating dose changes, feel free to ask me. Just don't ask me," she chuckled, "to design or build anything. I'm no good at that."

"Not even designing software or hardware?" Jeff asked with a smile. "I know that Brains is swamped and that Tin-Tin's schedule isn't much better. She just informed me she has to go to Kabul about a formula she completed; seems the manufacturer is having trouble with it." He paused and gazed at her keenly.

"We could use someone like you to lift part of the burden from Brains, at least as far as our computer network and programming is concerned." He chuckled. "I brought Dianne in to lift the burden of medic from the man, in hopes that he'd have more time to work on his engineering, and have more time for himself. It seemed to be effective, but his workload has steadily increased again."

Lena looked at Jeff, stunned for several moments. "I..." She stopped, swallowed and tried again. "I can design and build hardware, of course. And software. I'd be delighted to help any way I can. But if it means leaving my home and my babies, not to mention my job at Tracy Industries, I don't know." Her eyes were pleading for understanding.

"I can understand your feelings, Lena. Uprooting yourself at this point in your life would be difficult, to say the least. We could arrange something, Lena, where you could work for us from your home, or even from the offices at Tracy Industries if necessary. IR has a network of agents around the world who work for us, helping us when we have rescues in their areas, keeping their eyes and ears open for things that would affect IR and letting us know about them. Perhaps we could go that route." He glanced over at the portrait of his wife on the desk top. "Another thought is that each operative we have here who is outside the Tracy family has a position in Tracy Industries." Jeff smiled. "You already have the position. We'd just add 'IR Operative' to your name."

Lena laughed, partly in relief, partly in genuine amusement. "Now DAT would make an interesting name plate. 'Lena Matumbo, I&M Manager and IR Operative'." She looked at Jeff and added, "If dat can be accomplished, den I accept. I do like challenges. And I may be an old woman, but I'm sure I can meet your expectations."

Jeff chuckled again. "I've found, Lena, that age has nothing to do with usefulness or ability. I should introduce you to Sir Jeremy Hodge or Jeremiah and Maudie Tuttle just for a couple of examples." He held out his good hand. "I think we can make this work, Lena. You and I and Brains can sit down and put all the details together... after dinner."

She took his hand and they shook. "Done," she said and found his grasp was firm and his attitude had improved greatly. She picked up the printout. "I'd better get back to de lab. De sooner de program is in place and running, de sooner I can notify everyone at Tracy Industries in Washington and New York, and de sooner my staff can stop worrying about a certain vice president harassing dem about it. And de sooner you all can stop worrying about whedder or not de information is going to de wrong places."

Jeff looked surprised. "You're having vice president trouble? Anything I can do to... help?" he offered.

She laughed. "Dat's okay. It's notting. It's just dat de man gets pompous sometimes. But mention Brains' alternative name, and he gets very accommodating. I told my staff dat if he called demanding status information, to tell him dat I was working with Hiram Hackenbacker to correct de program. He seems to be impressed by de name. But he's a good vice president. He just is someone who is too full of himself at times." She suddenly looked thoughtful, as an idea occurred to her. "Or maybe he is feeling unused or helpless, and dis is de way he can make himself feel more important to de company."

"Ah! I see. I'm glad that Brains's name and reputation proceed him at Tracy Industries," Jeff remarked with a smile. He straightened again. "I think I'd better retrieve that debriefing report before my wife comes looking for me and tells me to rest. I think I can maneuver this thing back behind the desk...."

"Den I'll leave you to your work, and get back to mine." She started out of the room, then paused and turned back. "I enjoyed our talk. I wish you a speedy and complete recovery. And maybe we can have more talks like dis again."

"Thank you, Lena, for your good wishes. And I hope we talk like this again soon," Jeff replied. He gave her a wave, then he fitted his wheelchair behind his desk and opened up a locked file drawer to retrieve the papers he was searching for.

Post by Tikatu and Hobbeth on 08/10/2004

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