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Subject: Re: Cold Front

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 21:09:40 GMT

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Thursday, November 8, 2068, 11:30 p.m., Tracy Island

"Need a thumbprint on this one, Mr. Tracy." Juan held out the special delivery envelope with its thumb scanner lock.

"Who is it for? I can get them down here..." Jeff flipped open his phone; he couldn't use the wristcomm in front of the mail carriers. It might get back to someone in the media, who would tie its use to that of IR.

"No need, Mr. Tracy. It's for you."

Jeff took the plastic carrier, and slipped his thumb onto the tiny scanner. There was a soft beep, the scan pad turned green, and the package unlocked. Juan removed the contents and handed them to him. "I think that's it for today, sir."

"Thank you, Juan." Jeff sounded distracted as he looked over the thick envelope. "Have a good flight."

"See you again on Saturday!" Juan responded as he climbed back into his plane.

Kyrano kept his eyes on the switchback trail up to the Villa, but Jeff spent the time immersed in the fascinating letter he'd just received. About halfway up, he huffed and shook his head. "I can't believe it."

"Something wrong, Mr. Tracy?" the retainer asked.

Jeff started, as if surprised by Kyrano's voice. "No, Kyrano. Nothing's wrong. It's just... this! I can't believe it."

They pulled the small cart up to the Villa, where Lisa waited to help carry in any large packages. Jeff got out, looked at the letter in his hand again, and went bounding up the stairs to the lounge. Passing through the study, he opened the door to the classroom. "Dianne!"

Dianne looked up from where she was helping Alex with his history lesson. "Yes, love?"

"You have to see this." He waved the letter at her.

"Keep working on that timeline," she told her son, then crossed the room to join her husband.

"What is it, dear?"

"Just look." He handed her the letter.

She skimmed it, and drew in a sharp breath. "Oh my!" She gave it another quick read, then asked, "Are you going to do it?"

"I don't know!" Jeff asked, drawing her with him to the lounge. "Do you think I should?"

"You're still fit, and have no chronic health problems -- though they might take that accident back in February into consideration. You were pretty beat up from that. It might make a difference to the flight doctors." She shook her head, and handed the letter back to him. "You won't know until you talk to them."

"I'm going to talk to John first; see how much he knows about this!" Jeff settled down behind his desk, and dialed a number from the vidphone. Ever since Anna had suggested using the vidphone to communicate with whoever was in Thunderbird Five, the phone calls had been more numerous and Alan had felt more in the loop during his last month. Now John was finding the same thing happening.

"Hello, John," Jeff said. "How are things up there?" The greeting was a bit of a code phrase; it let whoever was up there know that it was okay to pick up as he (or she) was, using the video portion without hesitation. No outsiders were around.

"Just fine, Dad," John said, grinning. "Hey, Mom!"

Dianne smiled at him. "Hello, John."

"Son, I just got a letter from the WSA..." Jeff began.

"Ah! So they finally got in touch with you!" John's grin grew wider, and more mischievous. "I was wondering when you'd hear from them."

"You knew about this?" Jeff asked, surprised. "And you didn't say anything?"

"Yes, I knew about the possibility that they might go ahead with their plans, but I didn't know for sure until I'd gotten a call from Svetlana. She asked if I thought you might be interested. I told her, 'Hell, yes!'" John leaned in a little further. "Are you going to do it? Because I wouldn't want to go to the moon without you."

Jeff shook his head. The letter was an invitation from the WSA to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first moon landing by dedicating a new moon base, and they wanted as many of the 21st century moon pioneers to be involved. The letter said that they particularly wanted Jeff, as the first man to step foot on the moon since the first moon expeditions, and also John, representing a second generation of space exploration.

"I'm just stunned that they want an old man like me," Jeff said. "I'm not even sure I'm fit enough to go. Dianne thinks that my accident might make a difference in whether or not they'll greenlight me. Besides..." He made a motion toward his desk. "I have different responsibilities now. The moon isn't as dangerous a place it was when I went, but it's still a risk..."

"It won't hurt to tell them yes, Dad," John said. "And you do have some time; you can use it to work out and bring yourself up to snuff." He smiled softly. "This would be such a great opportunity for both of us."

"What do you think, love?" Jeff asked, turning to Dianne.

"I already told you what I think, Jeff," Dianne reminded him. "You should talk to Svetlana and find out if you're fit enough to go." Svetlana Gagarin was a descendant of Yuri Gagarin, one of the earliest cosmonauts, and current head of the World Space Agency. "If you're strong enough, then you should take advantage of the opportunity." She paused, and sighed. "It's not that I don't think of the risks involved, it's just that... there are some things worth taking those risks for. This is one of them."

Jeff nodded, then took in a deep breath, and let it out slowly. "All right. I'm going to discuss this with your brothers first, John. I don't want them blindsided by this and I do want their opinions. Then I'll make my final decision."

"Good enough, Dad," John replied, nodding. He glanced at the clock on his computer. "Isn't it about time for lunch?"

"Yes, it is," Dianne said, glancing at her watch. She looked at Jeff. "Maybe we could discuss it then?"

"Sounds like a good idea. And after lunch, I'll talk with Gordon about hiring Brandon's replacement."

"Have you heard anything from him, Dad?"

"Not yet," Jeff said, shaking his head again. "He's on family leave for at least another week so he can get settled in and see to his parents. Then he should be back to work at his old job."

"I sure am going to miss him," John said. "He was a good teammate. I hope whoever we get next will be just as good."

"Me, too, son. Me too." Jeff smiled. "I'm going to let you go, John. Take care and I'll talk to you later."

"Keep me up to date on this new project, okay, Dad? And tell Tyler I'll call him later."

"Will do, John. Stay safe up there. Goodbye for now."

"Goodbye, John," Dianne echoed just before the call ended.

The couple held each other's gaze for a few moments, then Jeff stood and put his arms around his wife. "Are you really sure you're okay with this, Di? The risks are still pretty great."

"Jeff, you'd always regret that you'd missed an opportunity if you don't at least try for this," Dianne said. She laid a soft kiss on his lips. "And I'd feel the same way."

He tightened his embrace, and she responded; they held each other tightly for a few long moments. Then he eased up, and gave her a deep kiss. "I love you, Dianne."

"And I love you, Jeff Tracy." She returned the kiss with one just as deep, and just as passionate.

The sound of fake retching greeted their ears and they broke off, glancing over to the study where their youngest sons stood, at the grillwork door. Alex was doing a good impression of someone with food poisoning.

"Grandma sent us to remind you that lunch was ready," Tyler said, rolling his eyes at his older brother's performance.

"You can go tell her we're coming," Dianne said. "Just take Mr. Shigellosis along with you... before I get my hands on him."

Grinning, Alex got off the floor and fled the study, not wanting to be caught by his parents. But Tyler lingered, waiting for Jeff and Dianne.

"Wasn't that what we got when we had that bad fish?" he asked, his face puzzled.

"Yes, it was." Dianne replied as she intertwined her fingers with Jeff's and they headed, hand-in-hand for the door.

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