
Subject: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 01:47:46 GMT

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Jeff Tracy has finally recruited his expanded team. With the additions of Brandon, Callie, Christopher, Dominic, Kat, and Nikki, the burden of rescues can now be shared. But before the new recruits can be of best use as International Rescue operatives, there are many details that need to be ironed out. There are decisions to be made, and instruction and training to be accomplished, all complicated by Jeff's own physical condition and removal from the scene. Their new lives have just begun, and the rookies find that they must learn the ropes of International Rescue's operations and work together to become a team.

Post by Tikatu on 05/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 01:53:48 GMT

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Wednesday, February 29, 2068, 3:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Elise Collins looked around carefully as Virgil helped her out of the jet. The sun was bright and she squinted.

"Welcome to Tracy Island, Elise," Virgil said with a grin. "Hope it's everything you imagined."

"I'll let you know," Elise said as she stepped gingerly down to the tarmac. Gordon groggily climbed out after her.

The day of her discharge, Gordon and Scott had whisked her away to the Tracy Industries building in a limousine. They walked her through the building's ground floor then out the back door and into a cab that stood waiting at the curb.

"Hey, Bernie," Scott said, giving the cabbie a grin.

"Hey, Scott, Gordon. Nice t' make yer acquaintance, Miz Collins," Bernie said in a definite Bronx accent. He took off from the curb.

"Where are we going?" Elise asked.

"Your place. You can put together a suitcase and oversee the packing of your belongings." Scott had told her. "Then we'll take you back and put you up at the penthouse overnight."

"Yeah, then off to Tracy Island you go!" Gordon said as he sat back, hands behind his head.

"My belongings? Who said anything about my moving to your blasted island? I thought I'd just be there until I recovered from my injuries!" Elise protested.

"Nobody said anything about your moving out there, Elise. But while you're gone, your household things are better off in storage, right? That way, no one would have a chance to steal them. And when you got back, we could find you something a bit different in the way of an apartment. Some place with good security," Scott reasoned. Elise missed the wink that passed between the two brothers.

Elise sighed, exasperated. "Well, okay. What you say sounds reasonable. I'll go along with it... for now."

Bernie the cabbie had already been given the address and he pulled into the side street around the corner from the building. Scott, who had already scoped the place out, brought Elise and Gordon to a little used back door, where the super was already waiting for them.

"Thanks, Mrs. Alagbadah. We appreciate your help," Scott said as he peeled off a hundred dollar bill and handed it to the super. She refused to take it.

"The reporters, they are here day and night ringing the bell. Waking the other tenants. No offense, Ms. Collins, but glad I will be to see you safe... elsewhere." The plump dark woman patted Elise on the shoulder. "You can use the back entrance to come and go as you pack things up. The moving crew showed me their identification and are already here working. God speed, Ms. Collins and I hope you feel better soonest. Oh, and Misters Tracy? I hope your father recuperates."

"Thanks, ma'am," Gordon said with a smile. "He's awake and doing better. We've even managed to tear Mom away from him for a while."

"Which is a miracle in itself," Scott muttered. "C'mon, Elise. Show us your apartment."

She lead them upstairs to her dwelling and suddenly was struck by how shabby it all must seem to them, these young men brought up to wealth and luxury. ~Just a little second story walk-up in Greenwich Village, she thought, cringing. ~They're used to penthouses and tropical islands. This is going to be so... so tacky to them. Even to Scott, who I know has seen the seedy side of life. It's been so long and... well, how well do I know him anymore?

But surprisingly, Gordon looked around the place, nodding, while Scott made himself at home on her sleeper-sofa.

"Your place is nice. Well laid out," Gordon commented. He sidestepped one of the five moving men who were busy looking around, planning out where to start.

"Ms. Collins, we'd like to start with the kitchen and work our way out, doing the living room last," their supervisor said. "We'll pack up everything for you. You won't have to lift a finger. Leave it all to us."

"O-Okay," Elise said hesitantly, looking over at Scott, who merely smiled at her. "Go ahead. I don't have a lot of choice in the matter it seems."

"If you would pack up your clothes and other personal items, we'd be obliged."

"Okay. I can do that."

Scott got up. "Where are your suitcases?"

"In the closet."

Scott made a beeline for the bedroom while Gordon went and emptied all of Elise's trashcans. She looked at him quizzically. Gordon grinned.

"I know these guys. They'll pack up a trash can full of trash if you don't empty it for them!" The way his eyebrows wagged up and down made her laugh, even though laughing was still painful.

Scott had opened up one of the suitcases on her bed when she came in. He had started to take the clothes out of her closet, hangers and all, and lay them down on the bed. She began to open drawers and put the contents into the suitcase.

"You said you managed to get your stepmom to leave the hospital, to leave your dad. Who's watching him if not her?"

Scott hauled out another double armload of skirts and blouses. "My brothers, John and Virgil, with a little backup from our grandmother. Virgil and Gordon will be taking you to the island tomorrow. I've got to hang around and hold down the fort at corporate. We're hoping to have Dad home within a week or two. Depends on how things go with the other surgeries." He rolled his eyes. "Mom will be back there within twenty-four hours, I bet. But she promised to go to the penthouse and get some decent sleep. Besides, my little brothers and sister missed her."

"Last I knew you only had the four brothers and no sister. When did the other siblings come about?" she asked as she continued to fill her suitcase.

"When Dad remarried. Mom was a widow with three kids. He adopted them after they married. Wanted to be a real father to them and not just a stepfather."

Elise smiled. "That's sweet. And from what I've seen of your dad, very much in character." She sighed and shook her head. "I'm just glad he's going to make it."

"Sure looks that way," Scott agreed. "Oh, by the way, I checked with that realtor. Dad's purchase agreement had transmitted after all. He bought the cottage."

"Ohhh! Your stepmom is going to love the place!" Elise proceeded to tell Scott all about it. Then a thought struck her. "I hope he takes her there and it's not a sad reminder of this damned crash."

Scott stopped what he was doing and turned Elise around, putting his hands on her shoulders. "He'll take her there. Not because of the place, but because he loves her. It may be a while before he's up to it, but believe me, he'll take her there."

Elise nodded and gave Scott a small smile. Then they both got back to packing.

The night at the penthouse was interesting. Dr. Tracy was nowhere to be seen until the next morning. But Elise made the acquaintance of the younger Tracys: Cherie, Alex, and Tyler. They

all treated her with great respect because, as Tyler put it, "You saved our Dad's life." After breakfast, Dianne came to see Elise and gave her a last physical check before sending her off with Gordon and Virgil to the hangar.

"You enjoy yourself when you get there and don't worry about a thing. We've made all the arrangements," Dianne assured her as they got into the elevator. Elise nodded and the doors closed.

Elise was glad to meet Scott's next-in-line brother, Virgil.

"He told me a lot about you, when we were in the Air Force together, and some of the scrapes you all got into as kids. He said Alan was the worst of the lot of you, though. Where is he, by the way? I didn't get to see him. Or John for that matter."

"He swapped places with me this morning at the hospital," Virgil explained. "Just hope Grandma doesn't throw him out on his ear, that's all. He's been whining and complaining that he's not had enough time with Father."

"Sounds like the way Scott described him," Elise said with a chuckle. Virgil and Gordon laughed right along with her.

Gordon took the controls on the flight from New York to LA, where they refueled and Elise got out to stretch her legs and take some medication. Virgil took the pilot's seat for the rest of the journey while Gordon napped. Elise napped, too; her painkillers made her slightly sleepy.

And now she was there, on the island, headed up to the house on the rise in a hovercart driven by an older Asian man named Kyrano. Some people who were on the patio of a large building jutting out of the cliff where the airstrip ended leaned over and waved at the Tracys, who waved right back.

"Our new recruits," Virgil said. Elise nodded, though she didn't understand.

A plump woman who introduced herself as Dr. Tracy's mother, Lisa, escorted her through the cool corridors of the house.

"Here you are, dear: our guest suite. Just make yourself at home and let me know if you need anything," Lisa said with a smile. Then she left Elise alone, to gaze dazedly out of the window at the sea, and sun, thinking about how alien it all was to her and would she ever feel comfortable knowing that somewhere here lay a secret that the world must never know.

Post by Tikatu on 05/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 01:58:59 GMT
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Tuesday, February 28, 5 p.m., Tracy family penthouse, New York City.

Dianne stood at the door to the games room of the penthouse. It wasn't as extensive as the room

back at the Villa; Tyler wasn't there often so there were no pinball machines or video games. The pool table dominated the center of the room and she looked at it, tears in her eyes. She walked over to it and rolled the cue ball back and forth absently as she remembered a turning point in her life. A turning point that involved a game of pool. Her eyes became unfocused as she reminisced.

Dianne focused on the white ball and its trajectory. She slid the cue between her fingers once, twice, and then hit the ball with controlled force. It traveled along the path she had envisioned, striking the five ball where she wanted it to, and sending that ball into the side pocket. She straightened up, bringing the cue to attention, and sighed. She had come down here to distract herself with the game while Jeff and Penelope went for a walk on the beach.

"What's up, Doc?" came the now familiar query. Dianne turned to see Gordon lounging in the doorway, leaning on the doorjamb, hands in his pockets. "Whatcha doing?"

"What does it look like Ah'm doin'? Ah'm improvin' mah pool game," she retorted, a slightly irritated tone to her voice.

Gordon sauntered into the room, pulling one hand from a pocket and inspecting his nails. Dianne went back to shooting pool.

"I don't think so."

"You don' think so? Then what do y'think, Mistah Gordon?"

"I think you're hiding. I think you're hiding from Penelope."

"Hidin'? Whatevah gave you that ideah?" Dianne laughed. "Why would Ah want to hide from a li'l slip of a thing like her anyway?"

"Well, you know Penelope's gone for a moonlit walk on the beach with Dad." He made it a statement and not a question.

"Yeah, so?"

"You know what she's gonna talk to him about."

"Mebbe."

"You know. I know you know."

"An' how exactly d'you know Ah know?"

"Tin-Tin told me. That, and your drawl is showing. That only happens when you're angry or upset."

Dianne stopped potting pool balls and looked over at him, then straightened up. A sly smile briefly crossed her face. "Mistah Gordon, theah are othah times that mah drawl becomes pronounced," she informed him. She leaned back over the table again. "Not that you'll evah know...."

Gordon snorted. She put the eight ball in a corner pocket. He took down the rack and began to pull the balls from their resting places at the end of the table.

"Rack 'em up," he said, pulling a cue down from the wall. "Let's see how much your game has improved."

Dianne smiled grimly and put the balls into the triangle frame.

They played for a while, quiet with each other except when calling a shot. Gordon was still the better player, but he could see that she was releasing her frustrations with every ball she sunk. Finally, he took the eight ball and the game was over.

"Rack 'em up again?" she asked. He nodded, and then as she was busy with the balls and rack, he looked over to the door. She didn't notice him hand his cue off to someone who had quietly come in, in fact, she didn't notice him leave until his replacement came up to her and asked in his deep voice:

"Mind if I play?"

Dianne stood up, startled at the sight of Jeff standing by the side of the table. She recovered her composure and motioned towards the cloth.

"Be mah guest."

Jeff broke the formation, and Dianne took the turn from him. He watched her carefully line up a shot, take it, and miss. His turn, and he took advantage of her missed opportunity.

Very casually, he said, "I took a long walk on the beach with Penelope tonight." He put another ball in the side pocket, and then moved around the table. Missing his shot, he straightened up and watched her as this time she took advantage of his flub.

"So Ah heah." The heaviness of the drawl caused him to raise an eyebrow. She made her next play and sank a ball, then studied the table.

"She asked me to marry her."

If he was hoping that there would be a huge reaction to his statement, he was disappointed. Just a soft snort of air from her nostrils, and she leaned across to try another shot, missing. He studied the balls and saw an opportunity.

"And?" was her query.

"I said no, I couldn't marry her," was his response.

This caused a reaction; he could sense it even if he couldn't see it. He lined up his shot and winced when it went wide.

"Cayah to tell me why?" Her next sally was picture perfect and she took another turn, flubbing the

ball on the second go.

"She's younger than Scott. For as old as she acts and sounds, I just can't get my head past the age difference. I feel like I'd be robbing the cradle." His shot was close, so close that it elicited a loud "Tch!" from him as it stopped right at the edge of the pocket.

"Hmmpf." Dianne took advantage of the strategically placed ball and sank it. She moved around the table to see what shots were available. Shaking her head, she attempted to put a ball in the side pocket, but it went wide and wild. Jeff, who had been leaning on his cue watching her, now moved in.

"She went on a bit of a rant after I said no, I'm afraid." He sank the ball that Dianne had tried for and went after another. "She ranted for a while about you."

Dianne watched him sink another ball. He stood up and looked over at her, their eyes meeting.

"What did she say about me?" she asked, a challenge in her voice.

The game was momentarily forgotten as they faced each other. His blue eyes met her brown ones frankly.

"She said you were in love with me." Jeff moved closer to her. They stood there silently for a bit, then he asked, "Are you?"

Dianne looked away, drawing a breath in through her nose and letting it out through her mouth in a heavy sigh.

"That, suh, is a loaded question." She looked back at him again.

"Well?"

She swallowed and licked her lips. "Ah'm very attracted to you, both physically and intellectually. Ah have great respect for you and your work. Your presence lights up a room for me and your voice sends shivahs down mah spine. Ah miss you when you're gone. The thought of you with her Ladyship made mah blood boil." She paused. "Even though Ah've tried to keep things cool and professional between us, it's been increasin'ly hard to look at you in a merely clinical way."

Dianne laid her cue across the table. "Ah guess what Ah'm tryin' to say is that if Ah'm not in love with you... Ah don't know what Ah am."

She walked over to him and reached up to his face. Cupping one cheek with her hand, she gently kissed the other, then turned and was gone, leaving Jeff holding his hand to the cheek she had kissed and staring after her, an unreadable expression on his face.

The tears fell as the memory faded, and she felt a welling up of both pain and love. Pain for the situation as it stood. And love for the man whose presence she missed so very, very much.

She looked at the balls, racked up so neatly on the table. Then, tossing the cue ball up and down once, she put it on its spot, picked up her favorite cue, and started to play.

Post by Tikatu on 05/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 02:05:40 GMT
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Tracy Island, February 29th 2068

Kat went to her apartment to change into her working clothes, and headed for the boat pen. Finding no one around, she went on to where the planes were kept. There she found Brains busily working on one of the jets. He looked up when he heard Kat arrive.

"Hi, Brains, need any help?"

"Yes, please, I am just checking the compressor. In a minute can you start up the engine?"

Kat scrambled into the cockpit of the plane and sat at the controls; they seemed very complicated. Brains guided her through the complexity of starting the plane

"Now, please, Kat." Brains called out.

The engine burst into life. Gosh, Kat thought, I would love to fly one of these.

Brains emerged slightly oily from underneath the engine. "That seems okay,"

"What else needs doing?" Kat enquired.

"Nothing more here," Brains replied. "I have to go and help Tin-Tin with the Thunderbird crafts."

"Can I come and watch, please?" Kat asked.

"Sure, follow me." And he led the way back to Thunderbird Two's hangar.

There was no sign of Tin-Tin, so while they waited for her, they started talking.

"I think that once Dr. Tracy and the rest of the family return with Mr. Tracy, you may undergo some form of official training as International Rescue personnel," Brains explained.

"Ooh, you mean that I may actually go out on a rescue?" Kat exclaimed. "Wow, that would be unreal!"

Brains laughed. "Well, the chances are slight, but there may be rare occasions when your expertise would be needed."

Kat digested this piece of startling information. It had never occurred to her that she could actually be involved in a rescue. Surely the others were more qualified than she was. But if Brains had intimated that there may be the odd occasion, who was she to turn the opportunity down?

"So, Brains, how did you become involved with International Rescue?"

Brains explained the background to him meeting Mr Tracy and being asked to become a member of International Rescue.

"Of course, I knew John from college days," he explained. "My parents are both dead, they died when a hurricane destroyed our home. I was adopted by a Professor at a University in Cambridge. One day, I was giving a lecture, and not doing very well, being very nervous. In those days I had a stutter, which didn't help. Mr. Tracy approached me and told me I was the kind of person he was looking for and he explained what he had in mind."

Kat listened intently to Brains. "So now there is the need for an extra pair of hands to help with the vehicles? Perhaps even the Thunderbird crafts, eventually?"

"Yes, I have developed all kinds of projects, not only vehicles but gases and other equipment used by International Rescue." He went on. "Perhaps, at some point in the future, I could leave some of the repair and maintenance to you, which would free me to concentrate on new ideas for both vehicles and equipment."

Kat was stunned at this. "And to think John told me I would just be helping with the routine tasks of the boats and planes. I can't wait for the training to begin."

"Well, he may be right. I'm not entirely sure of all of Mr. Tracy's plans in that direction." He smiled. "Of course, having the boats and planes off my plate is a big help." He glanced at his watch and scanned the room for Tin-Tin. "As soon as Dr Tracy returns, I think the others will all be taken around on an intensive tour."

"Yes," Kat said. "At least I know all about what happens here. I had a very good tour with John. I hope that we can all take our turn in Thunderbird 5, that would be something absolutely wonderful."

Brains raised an eyebrow, but said nothing. At that point Tin-Tin arrived and work on the Thunderbirds began.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 08/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:00:07 GMT
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Tuesday, February 28, 7:30 p.m., Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York City

Penelope sat in the VIP waiting room, thumbing through a magazine. She was waiting for Jeff to return from the imaging labs. Since he had been awake for a day or two, the surgeons were now getting ready to fuse the cracked vertebra and the scapula. Penny hoped that Dianne knew of this development; depending on what the imaging labs told the osteopathic surgeon, the surgery might be scheduled quickly.

A discreet knocking on the door caught Lady Penelope's attention. The door opened slightly, and a priest, an elderly gentleman with a sympathetic face, poked his head in.

"Are you with the McBride family?" he asked politely.

"I am sorry, but, no, Father. Perhaps one of the other waiting rooms?" Penelope answered kindly.

"Of course, Miss. Sorry to disturb you. And God Bless." The priest backed out before Penelope could thank him for the blessing.

She picked up the magazine again. It was a news magazine, and, yes, one of the news articles was about the crash and Jeff's hospitalization. There was a picture of the crash site; the helijet had been removed as quickly as was feasible. A portrait shot of Jeff had been included, as well as one of the pictures he had authorized to be circulated of him and Dianne at their wedding. Speculation on his well-being was part of the text, as was speculation about its affect on Tracy Industries and the world's stock-markets. There was a quote from an official news release and a small picture of Scott, asking if he was the "heir apparent" to the huge conglomerate.

The thought of the priest brought a small smile to her face, and she began to remember the personal aftermath of her ill-fated marriage proposal.

Penelope had gone back to Foxleyheath and waited. Waited to hear from Tracy Island. Waited for an apology from Jeff Tracy. Waited... and was miserable.

The staff, even Kat, tiptoed around the house. Penelope's mood swings were sudden and unpredictable. She would burst into tears at the slightest provocation, or get angry. No one would forget when she flung her Wedgewood tea service, one piece at a time, at poor Parker when he mentioned that Kyrano had called to let him know that her Ladyship had left behind a pair of sandals. Fortunately, Penny was more interested in hearing the crockery smash against the wall than in actually hitting her butler/chauffeur.

Finally, Parker decided it was time to do something. He carefully and quietly took a tea tray, filled with Lady Penelope's favorites, to her private sitting room and knocked on the door. He didn't wait for an answer before entering; he knew that if he did, she would just send him away. He found her sitting in the armchair by the empty fireplace.

"'Ere's yer tea, milady," he said in his most respectful tones. It hurt him to see his usually well-coiffed employer looking so sad with dark circles under her eyes and her clothes all rumped.

"Take it away, Parker. I am not hungry," was her automatic response.

"That h'Oi will not, milady," Parker said stoutly. "Yew need t' h'eat. h'An' Lil, she fixed h'all yer fa-vor-ites."

"Parker..." Lady Penelope warned, turning to him for the first time.

"Milady, 'asn't this gone h'on long h'enough? H'Ain't ye sick o' bein' so miserable?" he asked softly.

Penelope sighed. "I suppose you're right, Parker. But I don't know what to do. I don't know where to turn for advice. I don't know who to speak to about my burden."

"If ye don't mind me sayin' so, Milady, p'raps it's time t' pay a visit t' th' vicar?"

Penelope paused for a long moment, and then seemed to relax. She smiled faintly at Parker. "You know, Parker, I believe you're right. It's time I went to see the vicar." She hesitated and then reached out to pick up the teapot. "I will tell you when to bring the Rolls around. After I have my tea."

"Yus, Milady." Parker smiled and turned to leave.

"And Parker?"

He turned back. "Yus, Milady?"

Penelope smiled slightly again, this time with gratefulness. "Thank you, Parker."

"You're welcome, Milady."

Within the space of an hour, Penelope was on the road in FAB 1, Parker at the wheel. She wasn't going to the nearby village to visit the pudgy, bustling man who ministered to that tiny flock. Nor was she going to see the tall, handsome scholar who had the next largest town as his parish. No, she was going to see her vicar. In the seediest area of London, far from the comforts of Penelope's own home, lived her vicar, shepherding a tiny, ragtag congregation and doing her best to help the people of her parish in ways both spiritual and physical. Penelope's sister confessor and old school chum from her days at Rowden, Keziah Bosman. Her vicar.

Keziah was the oldest daughter of a well-to-do South African Afrikaner man and a Nguni woman. Her parents were shocked to find that their daughter rejected their wealthy lifestyle in her homeland to pursue the seemingly lowly life of an Anglican vicar in what they considered the slums of London. Her defection struck a chord with Lady Penelope, who was turning her back on her life as a pampered aristocrat to follow her heart in the exciting underworld of espionage. The two became good, if unlikely, friends, a friendship that had remained fresh through phone calls and visits. Lady Penelope came to Keziah in tears when her actions caused the death of someone she was pursuing, and Keziah could always count on Penelope to offer her sanctuary when the pressures of her parish got to be too great for her. Now Penelope was going to her old friend for advice and comfort in the wake of her rejection.

Parker opened the door for her and she stepped out of the Rolls. She knew herself to be the object of some scrutiny and interest by the denizens of the small street where the vicar's home stood, a stone's throw from the tiny church building where Keziah labored. She had timed her visit so that she would find her friend at home. She rang the bell as Parker prepared to take the Rolls away and park it elsewhere. The door opened, and Keziah's eyes opened wide.

"Penny! What a pleasant surprise! Please do come in!"

Penelope smiled and entered the small house. Once inside, the two friends embraced and kissed each other's cheeks. Then Keziah looked at her friend and asked astutely, "Penelope, what is wrong?"

She guided the aristocrat to a chair and offered her a sherry, which Penelope gratefully took; Keziah's taste in wine was excellent. Penelope took a few sips while Keziah made herself comfortable.

"Now, my friend, tell me what is wrong? Is this a personal or a professional problem?"

Penelope sighed. "Personal."

Keziah studied her keenly for a moment, and then made a guess. "Does this have something to do with that Tracy fellow?"

Penelope smiled, a painful smile. "It has everything to do with 'that Tracy fellow'." And she proceeded to open her heart to her vicar.

When she was through, Keziah was silent for a while. Penelope sipped her sherry again, feeling strangely comforted now that she had told her friend what was bothering her so much. Finally, Keziah shifted in her wing chair and spoke.

"You know, Penelope, I don't know which bothers you more. The fact that this man, though he does care for you, does not love you as you love him, or the fact that you went and blurted it out, making a fool of yourself, or what you consider to be such."

"I don't know either, Keziah. I know I shouldn't have gone and done what I did. It was very foolish of me, perhaps not to tell him how I felt, but to ask him to marry me. But, I love him so! And I didn't want to see the other woman get her claws into him. Especially if she wants him only for his money."

"Why do you think she wants him for his money? She is a physician, is she not? She is capable of making a more than comfortable living. She does not need him. Not for that."

Penelope looked thoughtful. "Yes, I suppose that is true. Though the idea of marrying so that one would not have to work might be appealing."

"Not if one loves one's work," Keziah countered. She took a sip of the sherry, and sat forward. "Penelope. There is an old saying that I think might apply in this case."

"Yes?"

"Let me see if I remember it correctly. Ah, yes! 'If you love something, set it free. If it comes back to you, then it is yours. If it does not, then it was never meant to be'." She fixed her gaze on Penelope until the aristocrat's blue eyes met her brown ones. "Do you understand?"

Penelope sighed. "Yes, I believe I do. I need to let Jeff go. If he turns towards the doctor, then... that is his choice."

"Yes. If he does not, then perhaps there is still hope for you," Keziah said gently. "And even if he does not return to you, you still have something of his."

"What is that?"

"His trust. And his friendship."

Penelope sighed. It would have to be enough.

Penelope looked up to see Dianne's worried face, as she came into the waiting room. She had spent twenty-four hours at the penthouse, as she had promised her stepsons she would, and now she was back to watch over her husband again.

"He's in the imaging labs," Penelope said, answering Dianne's unspoken question. "The surgeons will decide where to go from there."

"Thank you, Penelope," Dianne responded gratefully. "I've really appreciated your support these past few days."

Penelope smiled. "I am so glad I could be here to give it. After all, what are friends for?"

Post by Tikatu on 08/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:03:30 GMT
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Wednesday, February 29th Three P.M.

The sun shone brightly on Tracy Island, but its brightness could not penetrate the thick veil of concern that had settled over its occupants. Things were in turmoil. No one knew what to do next or what Jeff's plans had been for the new recruits; not even Virgil.

"I wonder what Dad would have done first?" he wondered. "Some sort of basic training? Evaluate each recruit to tailor training to their needs?" He sat back, looking at the portraits on the wall. "Maybe I'd better ask Scott." He speed-dialed the penthouse in New York. The phone rang for a

bit, then Scott answered, looking sleepy.

"Do you know what time it is here?" he asked.

"Yes, it's 11:00," Virgil said with a small smile. "I wanted to ask you: do you know what Dad wanted to do first with our new recruits?"

"As a matter of fact, yes, I do. He wanted to take them on a tour of the facilities."

"Hey, that's a great idea. Gordon, Brains, Tin-Tin and I can do that today. We don't necessarily need Dad for it."

"Right. You go ahead. I'll call you later and we can discuss the next step. But right now, I need my sleep. Day starts early at corporate."

"I know. Any news on Dad?"

"They'll be fusing the vertebra and scapula first thing in the morning. Mom's back at the hospital." Scott made a face. "I'll try to pry her away again later, after the surgery."

"Okay, Scott. Thanks for the update. Talk to you soon." He broke the connection, and then set about making the arrangements for the tour.

Elsewhere, the others were going about their activities. Brains and Tin-Tin had been working on the Thunderbirds, showing Kat the ropes, but now Tin-Tin and Callie were in the lab, working on the formula for the new fabric, Cherry had taken the boys swimming and Brandon was releasing some of his energy and anger in the work-out room.

"Who does that jerk Christopher think he is?" Brandon swung at a punching bag hanging in one corner of the room. "He knows that stupid cat doesn't like me." He swung again and smiled with satisfaction as his fist connected with the bag, producing a solid 'thwack'.

Callie came into the workout room wearing a sleeveless tank top, shorts, and walking shoes. She had a towel around her neck and her hair pulled back. Hi, Brandon," she said politely as she made her way to a treadmill. "How are you today?"

"Hi Callie," Brandon grunted as he kept swinging at the bag. "Doin' okay. And you?"

"I'm fine. Just needed to escape the lab. Tin-Tin is about to tear out her hair over this new fabric she's trying to develop. It was getting tense in there." She started up the treadmill and began to walk. "I need to walk off some steam anyway. It's hard to watch the Tracys trying to deal with Mr. Tracy being so far away and in such poor condition."

"It's tough not knowing. I really feel for them." Brandon had gone over to the free weights. Picking out a set of hand weights, he began to do bicep curls.

"Can you imagine being halfway around the world from someone you love that needs you? Or even worse, being in orbit?" Callie said as she bumped the treadmill up to a jog.

"No Callie, I can't. Growing up, my family and I were always tight. Even when I moved out and joined WASP, I always kept in touch. Living here on the island is one of the hardest things I've ever had to do.

"Same here. My family and I are very close. I moved around a lot, but my roots were still in Alabama." Callie sighed. "I think John will be back in a day or so. Then I'll be going up to Thunderbird Five with him to start my training."

"Good for you Callie. I have no idea when my training will begin."

Callie bumped the treadmill up another notch so she was actually running. Sweat glistened on her skin. "I'm sure it will start soon. Once Mr. Tracy is out of danger and his surgeries are done, I'm sure most of the family will be coming back. Then things will really get hectic." She gave Brandon a curious look. "What did you wear on the rescue, anyway?"

"I snagged one of Scott's uniforms. It fit okay but the sleeves and legs were a little long on me," Brandon replied with a small chuckle.

"I understand from Tin-Tin that what Dr. Tracy wore was a prototype of a new uniform. I think I like it better than the current one," Callie puffed out.

"I wasn't too keen on wearing the current uniform, but I didn't have much choice. I'm glad they're changing the design."

Callie slowed back down to a jog. "I hope they have some kind of artificial gravity on Thunderbird Five. Though I must admit, I didn't see Alan floating around in the station." She chuckled. "I can hardly wait to get up there. Wherever it is, they've hidden it well. I've been in space dozens of times and never saw a hint of it."

"Hey if you could see Thunderbird Five, it wouldn't be a secret any more, would it?" Brandon made the weight circuit and went back over to the punching bag.

"No, I suppose it wouldn't." Callie moved her speed down to a cooling walk. She patted her face with her towel.

They both looked up to hear Virgil's voice come over the household intercom. "Will all new recruits please assemble in the lounge."

Callie turned off the treadmill and stepped off. "Wonder what this is all about?"

Brandon, hearing the message, came up beside her. "I have no idea, Callie. You don't think..."

"Think what? More bad news? I hope not," Callie remarked as they headed for the lounge.

As Brandon and Callie headed to the lounge, they encountered some of the others, who were wondering aloud what was going on and all were hoping that the news wasn't bad.

Virgil looked up from the desk as the newcomers assembled before him, looks of puzzlement and apprehension on their faces. He smiled, and some of them relaxed.

"At ease, everyone," he said, "Nothing to worry about. It's just that it's come to my attention that none of you, with the exception of Kat, have had a proper tour of our facilities. Thought that this would be a good time for it."

He turned to Kat. "I know you've seen most of the plant, but this will be even more comprehensive than what John took you on since we'll be getting down on the floor of the pod bay and introducing you to all of the pod vehicles. So I think you should come along, too." Kat nodded, surprised.

Virgil listened to the excited voices for a few seconds before calling for their attention. "All right," said Virgil, "everybody hold it down, please."

After the voices calmed down, he added, "Considering the number of recruits we've added recently, I think it's best if we split into two groups. Brains and I will lead one group of three while Gordon and Tin-Tin accompany the other group."

Virgil looked at the eager faces before him. "If there are no questions, we'll meet at the monorail terminal."

Callie said, "How about Kat, Christopher and myself in one group, while Brandon, Dominic, and Nikki go in another?"

Brandon liked the idea, especially since he DIDN'T have to go with Christopher. I'm definitely for that, he silently said, Thank you, Callie.

Post by MagicMaster8, Tikatu and TracyFan4Ever on 11/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:12:56 GMT
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(Warning--Jeff and Dianne steam and spice alert!)

Wednesday, February 29, 2068, 8 a.m. Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC

"Dianne?" Jeff's voice was sandpapery and quiet, but caught his wife's attention right away.

"Yes, love?"

"Am I going to be able to walk again?"

Dianne smiled. "Yes."

Jeff closed his eyes. "You're sure?"

"Absolutely. It will take a while. Your long bones have got to heal and your foot especially will take some therapy. But you'll walk again. Even dance."

"I-I'm worried about this vertebra that they're going to fuse. I'm worried I'll be... paralyzed."

Dianne stroked his hair away from his face. He opened his eyes again to see her concerned look. Then she glanced around to see if anyone was listening and got close to his face.

"Jeff. Everything I saw in my scans on Thunderbird Seven, and all the imaging they've let me see here in the hospital, show me that the fractures are not deep ones. They don't affect your spinal cord at all and they won't, either. The only reason they're doing this surgically is to ensure that the breaks don't get worse. Once that is done, the rest of the surgeries will be easier to deal with. Please don't worry about it. For once, I'm not concerned. If there was trouble they would have taken you into surgery last night instead of waiting until this morning." She reached over and pinched his right knee.

"Ouch!" he said, frowning.

"Hey! You felt that!" she said, a facetious tone to her voice. "And you're going to continue to feel it. I know it."

"Okay. I'll take your word for it. It's just that the thought of being paralyzed, of not being able to be a proper husband to you, well... it scares me."

"You, not be a proper husband to me? Will never happen. Jefferson Tracy, you know damned well that sex does not a marriage make," Dianne said seriously. "Besides," she added slyly, "there are other ways of pleasuring me that have nothing to do with the lower part of your anatomy."

"I know." Now Jeff was smiling, as much as his bruised face would allow. "Hey, what do you say to climbing in here with me and...."

Dianne laughed aloud. "Jeff Tracy, you are incorrigible!"

"Well, a sick room bed is where we first made love. Remember?"

"As if I could ever forget."

"Neither could I."

And he couldn't. He had come to her in the sick room, sore and stiff the day after an afternoon of playing football on the beach with his sons. It wasn't often that he got physical like that with his boys, and he had an ulterior motive: he was trying to reach out to Dianne's two sons by teaching them the game. He was disappointed that they didn't seem to be interested, but he still had a good time with Scott, Virgil, Gordon and Alan.

"You overdid, Mr. Tracy, that's all. You're all tensed up and those tensed muscles are hurting," Dianne said, bustling around in the infirmary. "I think that easing up those muscles is called for."

Jeff made a small moan as he tried to put his shirt back on. "I suppose I'll go soak in my Jacuzzi for a while."

Dianne came around in front of him and looked him in the eye. "No, I don't think the Jacuzzi will be enough. Maybe after I treat you, the Jacuzzi will help. What you need right now is a therapeutic massage."

Jeff's eyebrows rose. "A... massage?"

"Yes. A deep tissue massage. I'm very skilled at it," she said, her manner brisk as she got out a couple of tubes. Jeff looked at them askance.

"What are those?" he asked.

"Creams for lubricating my hands. The massage doesn't feel good without them." She rolled her eyes. "Don't worry. I haven't picked out anything with a frou-frou fragrance. Just a nice spicy smell." She opened the tube and waved it under his nose. "See?"

"Okay. If you think this will help...."

"Believe me, Mr. Tracy. You'll feel so much better when I'm through with the massage. Now, I'll just go back here so you can strip down to your skivvies and lay face down on the diagnostic bed."

"Strip?"

"Yes, of course, strip. Down to whatever you wear to cover your privates. Your leg muscles are just as sore, aren't they?"

"All right," he said reluctantly as she went behind the portable divider that shielded him from her gaze and from anyone peering in from the hallway. Not that it was a real problem; the door to the infirmary was closed.

"Let me know when you're ready."

Jeff took off his clothing, all but his boxers, feeling rather uncomfortable with the whole proceedings. Here he was, nearly naked, alone with a beautiful woman who was going to give him a massage. A beautiful woman who said she was in love with him. He hoped he could control himself, because ever since they had spoken in the games room, it had been increasingly difficult to look at her as just a doctor. He had begun to realize that she **was** a beautiful woman. And more importantly, that she mattered to him, that she had mattered to him from the beginning. Her anger following her discovery that the Tracy family was International Rescue had bothered him, had hurt him. Her admission of attraction to him made him feel good, very good. She meant something to him. She was special.

Why? Why does she mean so much to me? It's not like I'm in love with her... am I?

Jeff took a deep breath, and followed her instructions.

"I'm ready, Doctor."

"Okay. I'm coming."

He could hear the rustling of the divider as she stepped behind it. Jeff could hear her rubbing the cream all over her hands and could smell the spicy scent, not at all feminine, but very soothing and invigorating at the same time.

"Put your head on your right arm while I do your left."

Jeff did as he was told. With his head turned towards the left, he watched as she started with his upper arms near the shoulder and massaged and kneaded his arm all the way down to the wrist. Her warm hands were strong and her thumbs reduced particularly tense muscles to relaxed ones. She massaged his hands and rubbed his fingers, one by one. When she was done, his arm felt heavy, but pain-free.

"Now for the right arm."

Dianne swapped sides and did the same to his right arm. It took longer, as he was right-handed and his hand was particularly tense. But she finally finished. His arms felt so good.

"Now, your head on both arms and I'll do your neck."

The bed was lowered, and he could feel her body brush up against him as she kneaded his neck. His head drooped, and his eyelids, too, as the tension and pain ebbed away under her ministrations.

"You still with me, Mr. Tracy?"

"Mm-hmmm."

"Good. I'm going to do your shoulders next."

This time it wasn't the strong fingers as much as it was the palms and heels of her hands that created the deep relaxing of the muscles in his shoulders. She brushed up against him again and again as she worked, then swapped sides to do the same to his right shoulder. He was nearly asleep when she announced, "Now for your ribs."

Jeff could feel her get a knee up on the bed so she could reach both sides at once. He began to feel a warmth in his loins, one that he had felt infrequently during his 20 or more years of celibacy, a warmth that usually meant an exertion of will over his body or perhaps an embarrassing trip to his private bathroom to deal with the consequences. He tried to stay relaxed, tried to relax that member of his body that was beginning to tense and stiffen.

Her hands moved down his body from under his arms towards his buttocks and stopped just at his

hips. The strong movements relaxed his sides even as he felt stimulated elsewhere. Then, without warning this time, Dianne began to massage his mid and lower back. The palms and heels came into play again, and she pulled his boxers down a fraction to finish the job, pulling the waistband back up when she was done. Part of him wanted her to continue pulling them down, but the rational part of him was glad she had stopped.

"Now for your legs and feet. Please turn over."

Turn over? She wants me to turn over? Ohmigod, she's going to see just how... stimulated I am!

So? She's probably seen it countless times. Turn over already!

Jeff gulped as he turned over. He could plainly see what was happening to his boxer shorts in front and he began to think frantically about how he could stop it. She brought him a pillow while he turned and he hoped she didn't notice what was so unnerving to him. Dianne said nothing as she made her way down to his feet and began to rub and knead them as she had his hands. She did each foot, then moved up to the ankles and then to the calves, her back turned to him as she massaged each one. Jeff squeezed his eyes shut trying to ignore the fact that his leg lay on her thigh as she worked, trying to control his one unruly and stubborn organ. But he knew he was in a losing battle. Especially the first moment that her hand brushed his thigh.

Can I control this? Can I get into a cold shower directly from here? God, she is so close! Just a little further and I won't be able....

He sat up suddenly and grabbed her wrist.

"Do you know what you're doing to me?" he croaked hoarsely.

She moved closer, lifted her brown eyes to his intense blue ones, and said, "Yes. Ah know."

He swallowed convulsively. Then he reached for her shirt and undid the top button.

Jeff never did remember how he divested himself of his underwear. But later he would remember the scent of her skin, and the smoothness of it as he kissed it roughly. He would remember the texture of her hair as he ran his hands through it, and the touch of her lips on his and on his face and on his neck. He would remember her arms around him, exploring him, the cries of pleasure that issued from a throat other than his. He would remember the taste of her sweat as she clung to him, willing him, coaxing him to go faster, deeper, harder. But right then and there all he could think of was himself and his need and his own ecstatic, explosive, release!

When he came to his senses, he was lying on his side on the diagnostic bed, sweaty, limp, exhausted, and tangled up in the sheets. He turned to roll onto his back and was stopped by something behind him. His eyes widened as he realized that this was not a something but a someone, and that this someone was as sweaty and unclothed as he was himself. Then the memories of what had just happened flooded into his brain and he groaned.

Tracy, what have you done? You have assaulted your own doctor!

The instinct to flee kicked in and he tried to release the bars on his side of the bed, bars that hadn't been up before.

"How do you open these things?" he muttered to himself.

"With great difficulty," came a voice from behind him. "Theyah made that way to keep th' patients from wanderin'."

He felt her shift, sitting up, moving down towards the end of the bed. He turned back and watched her come around to him, her body bare, her neck and shoulders bruised by his kisses, her hair mussed by his hands. She released the bars with practiced ease and he sat up.

"Doctor, I-I don't know what to say. I am terribly sorry for what has happened here. I-I..."

She cut him off.

"Sorry? What for?"

He blinked. And blinked. He knew his jaw had dropped.

"But... but... I couldn't control myself. I've hurt you and basically... taken advantage of you. To put it mildly."

She put two fingers to his lips to hush him.

"Ah'm th' one who should be apologizin', Mistah Tracy," she said, dropping her gaze. "Ah went into this massage to do exactly what Ah said Ah would: relax your sore muscles. Ah did not foresee the effect it would have on you... or on me. Ah should have, and Ah'm sorry."

He put a finger under her chin and raised her eyes to his. "You mean, you were feeling...?"

"Yes, Mistah Tracy. Ah got out of control mahself there." She moved beside him and scooted up to sit on the bed. "Ah don't blame you if you don't believe me. You know how Ah feel about you. But Ah assure you, Ah had no intention of seducin' you." She looked at him, a small smile playing around her lips. "It's been a long time since Ah had a man like that."

He met her gaze. "It's been even longer since I had a woman... like that," he admitted.

She cocked her head. "Really? Ah would think that a man like you, so virile and handsome, would have had any number of women since your wife died."

"You forgot the 'rich' part," he said wryly.

"'Rich' didn't even cross mah mind," she replied.

"You're the first, then. Any other woman, with the possible exception of Penelope, has seen the dollar signs first," Jeff said, raising a finger to caress her cheek. "You're also the first to really get

under my skin since Lucille died. Ever since you came here, what you've said to me has mattered, what you've thought of me has mattered. My life was hell all the time you were angry with me about IR. And, somehow, when you told me how you felt about me, I felt... good. Confused, but... pleased that you were in love with me. Now I know for sure that I have feelings for you as well."

"Th' same feelin's Ah have for you?" Dianne challenged.

Jeff gazed at her steadily, turning over his feelings in his mind and heart. Then he sighed.

"I don't know. I don't know how strong they are. Not yet." He put a hand on one of her cheeks. "It's hard. I've spent half a lifetime mourning the one woman I thought had captured my heart and soul. Ending the mourning and opening my heart to another isn't going to be easy for me. But if you're willing to be patient with me, I'm willing to try. To see if I can love again the way you say you love me. But know this much: I do care for you and care about you."

"That's a start," Dianne said softly, taking his hand and planting a kiss in the palm of it. "Ah don't expect to replace your Lucille. Theah's no way that Ah could. But Ah fully intend to carve out mah own niche in your heart, if you'll let me. Ah'm glad that you're willing to try and love again. And Ah'm honored that you've chosen me."

Jeff stood and took her hand, pulling her gently from the bed. He enveloped her in a strong, warm embrace, and then planted a tender kiss on her lips. He could feel her respond, her arms around him, hands rubbing over his back as she returned the salute, her lips brushing across his, light as a butterfly's touch. He then pulled back and held her gently by her upper arms.

"Before this goes any further and we end up back there again," he indicated the diagnostic bed with a nod of his head, "we'd better get dressed."

She raised an eyebrow and gave him a coquettish look. "Are you sure you don't want to end up back theah again?"

Jeff smiled and kissed her forehead. "I would love to end up back there again. But this isn't the most private place and unfortunately, duty does call. For both of us."

She rolled her eyes and pursed her lips and sighed. "Okay, Mistah Tracy. You win." As she stepped away to find her discarded clothing, he reached out and grabbed her by the wrist again. She gave him an inscrutable look as he kissed it on the inside.

"I think, Doc-- Dianne, that after what we just shared, and in light of what we're about to embark upon, that we should be on a first-name basis, don't you?"

Dianne laughed, a pleasant throaty laugh, and then raised her captured hand to his face. "Ah think you're right... Jeff." He grinned, and let go of her to search for his own garments.

Jeff's reminiscence was broken by the arrival of the osteopathic surgeon and two nurses. The doctor smiled at him.

"Ready, Mr. Tracy?"

Jeff looked to Dianne, who leaned over to kiss him on the lips. "I'll be here when you get back." He was heartened by the lack of drawl in her voice. Then she nodded and stood back.

He looked toward the doctor. "As ready as I'll ever be."

The nurses released the brakes on the bed and began to roll it out. Jeff kept his eyes on Dianne until he couldn't stretch back that far any more. Behind him, Dianne sighed, and went in search of some breakfast.

Post by Tikatu on 11/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:17:28 GMT
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Wednesday 29th February 2068 4.12pm Tracy Island

Strangely enough cats don't really have need for knowing what date it is, or what time it is, or really where they are but Asterix did wonder that for a moment before recognising his Master's distinctive scent in the room he was in.

He mewed softly in his 'Master are you there?' voice, but not getting any response, he meowed loudly in his 'Master I'm hungry and I'm scared!' voice.

Asterix sat there for a moment, waiting for his Master to appear, fussing over him as he usually did. But he didn't.

After much thought, and some cleaning of his fur, he decided to take a walk.

Leaping off the bed, Asterix padded out of his Master's apartment, and into a long corridor. Looking around, he sniffed the air. He caught the scent of that horrible man who tried to stroke him, in the room opposite.

He walked forward cautiously, just in case he was there waiting for him. The door opened much like the door of his new home.

Asterix wandered inside and looked around. He hated the smell the assaulted his nostrils. So he flexed his paws, and decided to sharpen his claws on the bedside cabinet.

Then his eyes saw the curtains.

Eventually Asterix emerged from Brandon's apartment, with what could be construed the cat equivalent of a smug grin on his face.

Licking his paws, he decided to move on. Eventually, he came to some more doors that also opened of their own accord. Asterix looked inside, the lights were brighter and the space bigger.

He entered the strange object and leapt up onto something that looked like a comfy seat.

After a while of not much happening, he decided to have another wash. And his stomach was rumbling, which for a cat is not a good thing.

Then the strange thing he was in began to move. Asterix looked around as the thing moved rather quickly towards a stop.

The doors opened and he leapt out, meowing what he thought was a gesture of thanks, which wasn't answered.

Suddenly, his nostrils twitched. Chicken!

He broke into a trot, following the smell until he ended up in what his Master called the kitchen.

He looked around for the source of the tantalising smell, "Mrrroowww?"

"And what would you like young cat?" a kindly old face looked down at him, before picking Asterix up and stroking his head.

Asterix cocked his head sideways. He liked this one straightaway, he had a wonderful trusting face for a human.

"Are you hungry?" The old man looked at him. "I have some chicken that you might like."

"Mrroow," Asterix said in what could be an attempt as "Yes Please".

"Well if you would like to wait I will get you some," The man smiled. "My name is Kyrano by the way and I understand from your Master that you are Asterix".

Kyrano disappeared for a moment, then came back with a plate of chopped up chicken breast and placed it on the floor, stroking Asterix's head.

"Enjoy your chicken Master Asterix." Kyrano smiled as the cat started eating. "You are welcomed to our family."

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 11/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:19:13 GMT
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Wednesday, February 29, 2068; 3:57 p.m.; Tracy Island (en route to the monorail)

On the way to the monorail, Kat started a conversation with Callie. "Oh, this is so exciting! Even though I have already had a tour, this is going to be so much better. I will be able to see the Thunderbirds that I may eventually be working on."

"I'm thrilled about this chance, too," Callie agreed. "I'm so happy you're part of the team. Sorry I couldn't tell you about my considering joining International Rescue when we first met a few weeks ago."

"That's okay. At first I was rather hurt that I hadn't been told at my interview. I felt that as I had been working for Lady Penelope and had met the Tracy family that I would have been more trustworthy, but that is history now, and I am a member of the most famous rescue team in the world."

"Lady Penelope? I'm afraid I don't know who she is. I was so busy at WSA I didn't have time to read a newspaper."

"Lady Penelope is International Rescue's London agent, and a great friend of Mr. Tracy. She had known him for years. I was her mechanic for four years, and she recommended me for the position of mechanic to the family fleet. Little did I know that that could mean working on these fabulous Thunderbirds."

"Wait a minute...is her last name Creighton-Ward? I did hear that mentioned around the International Space Station."

"Yes, that's the lady. Very well known in social circles."

"I've never been that fortunate to meet her. I'm so into the books that I never think about a social life sometimes."

"Well, I didn't know much about her until I started working for her. She is a very good and considerate employer. I didn't guess until I was being shown round by John what part she actually played in International Rescue. In hindsight she seemed to know instinctively what was needed by me as regards furnishings for the apartment, et cetera."

"Perhaps I will get a chance to meet her soon...and maybe have a social life. I sometimes work so hard I feel like I'm ready to just burn out. I guess the world won't end if I take a break once in a while."

"No, you should meet her. She is the nicest, kindest, most considerate employer I have ever had."

"It's sure nice to know wealthy people who are that nice, kind, and considerate. I've known quite a few who aren't, only caring about the bottom line, not the people who do the work."

"She is so not like that. Her manservant, Parker, is an ex-prisoner, and there is nothing he wouldn't do for her. I only hope that working here is a nice as working with her was."

Callie smiled; knowing she and Kat both had so much to look forward to as part of International Rescue. Their jobs may not have been exactly the same, but their excitement was equal.

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:24:15 GMT
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Wednesday, February 19, 2068, 11:30 a.m., on the FireFlash enroute to London

Penelope sat back and put down the fashion magazine that was failing to hold her interest. Her beautiful face was pensive as she remembered saying goodbye to Jeff and Dianne just a little while ago. Jeff was still groggy from the surgery anesthesia, so she just planted a kiss on his cheek and gave him an encouraging smile. Dianne walked down to the hospital entrance with her.

"I really appreciate you coming and being such a support to the family right now, Penelope," she said. "We've needed it sorely."

"As I have said before, Dianne, I was glad to give it. I would stay on longer, but Parker tells me that there's work to be done at home. So I must go." Penelope embraced the older woman. "Please, do let me know if there are any changes for the worse. And keep me up-to-date on his condition as he gets better." She wagged her finger at Dianne. "I want to be there for his homecoming party!"

Dianne laughed. "I wouldn't have it any other way." Now it was her turn to embrace the aristocrat. "You take care of yourself, too, Penny. Let us know that you got home safe and sound."

"I will."

Penelope slipped gracefully into the back of the limousine parked at the curb and within moments it had whisked her away to the airport where her flight waited.

Now she thought about Jeff, and Dianne, and the true turning point in her relationship with both: the day she truly let Jeff go.

Penelope was once again on Tracy Island, unexpected and unannounced, but this time she was walking the beach with her rival. Jeff was in New York and Penelope had timed her arrival so the two women could discuss the object of their affections without said object becoming involved. Dianne's children ran ahead of them, flying kites in the breeze coming from the sea. Penelope smiled to see such innocence. She turned to Dianne.

"I wanted to talk to you about Jeff."

Dianne smiled wryly. "I figured."

"I'll be blunt, Doctor. Are you in love with him?"

"I can be equally blunt, milady. Yes, I am."

"Does Jeff know?"

"Yes, he does."

So, there it was, out in the open. Penelope sighed. She could see that letting go was going to be her undoing.

Dianne stopped walking and turned to confront the aristocrat. "Look, no matter what Mrs. Tracy tells you, I didn't come here looking for a rich husband. I'm no gold-digger."

"Then why did you come here?"

Dianne was silent for a moment. She looked down at the sand, and when she lifted her head to meet Penny's gaze, the Brit was surprised to see tears in her eyes.

Dianne sighed. "I came... I came here to escape my ghosts."

"What do you mean?"

Dianne turned to start walking again, and Penelope did the same. "I don't know how much you know about me, but I am a widow. My husband died over five years ago in a terrorist bombing. And even though I'd been through grief counseling, even though I thought I'd finished with grieving for him, I was still holding on. The grief was still there, just buried. I wasn't moving on with my life, with my children's lives. I was shackled by the memories. Life was dull and gray and I still felt like I was going through the motions of living. So when this job was offered to me, I took it."

She slowly moved her eyes over the sea, the beach, and the palm trees. "He's not here. My Rick is not here. Not like he was back in the States, in our little house. I feel... free now. Of course, I still miss him. But not the way I did. I feel alive again."

She shot a slightly embarrassed look over at Penelope. "As crazy as it sounds, that's why I came here. For a fresh start. Romance was the farthest thing from my mind." Her voice lowered. "But now..."

Penelope felt that something of import was behind Dianne's last statement.

"But now?"

Dianne sighed again. "Jeff and I have had an...encounter. A...physical encounter. Neither of us meant for it to happen, and neither of us were prepared for the... intensity of it either. But when it was all said and done, Jeff admitted that he had feelings for me. And that he wanted to pursue a relationship."

Penelope gasped, an unexpected breath that she turned into a sigh. "What kind of feelings does he have for you? If I may be so bold as to ask?"

"He's... uncertain about the depths of his feelings right now. He said he cares for me and about me and that I... got under his skin. That what I said and thought mattered to him. He asked me to be patient with him so he could learn to love again."

Tears sprang to Penelope's eyes: this had been what she had hoped for from Jeff for herself. And now, here he was, choosing another. If I let him go, he will not return to me. But, then, what choice do I have?

She swallowed and brought herself under control, then stopped and took her rival by the forearm, locking gazes with her.

"Dianne, I want you to know that I... I will not stand in your way with Jeff. I love him, have loved him for over two years now and because I love him, I want him to be happy. Please, make him happy."

Dianne closed her eyes and tears spilled down her cheeks. She took a deep breath and then opened her eyes again.

"Ah will. To the best of mah ability."

Suddenly, Penelope found herself in Dianne's strong embrace, and her rival was whispering, "Thank you" in her ear. She could control herself no more. There on the beach, in the arms of a woman she wanted to hate, Penelope vented her grief to the person who best understood her feelings for the man, Jeff Tracy.

They were rivals no more.

Penelope's eyes were moist when she came back to the here and now. It had been the right thing to do, letting Jeff go. He was happy: happy with Dianne, happy with his expanded family, happier in ways that Penelope could never have foreseen and could never have given him. And Dianne? She had become a friend, a good friend. She had never thrown Penelope's sacrifice back in her face; in fact, she had made it a point to show how much she appreciated it.

Penelope smiled. She was glad to have been there to support them both. Keziah had been right. Jeff had come back to her, not as she had envisioned, as a lover, but as an even stronger friend. And he had not come back alone, but had brought Dianne with him.

Post by Tikatu on 13/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:25:51 GMT
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Brandon stood at the monorail station with the others. They had split into two groups to take the

grand tour of the facilities. While on the tour, they'd see the equipment they would be using. He was talking to Nikki and Dom when Virgil's voice called out loudly.

"Gordon, you take Dom, Brandon and Nikki and get going." Gordon acknowledged his brother and ushered the three trainees into the first monorail car. As it left the station, Brandon looked out the window with subdued excitement, wondering what surprises lay around the corner. He and his companions didn't have long to wait as they stopped above Thunderbird Two's hangar.

"Whoa, Gordon, this is fantastic!" Brandon said in awe as he looked down.

"Glad you like the view, but it looks better from the floor." Gordon indicated for them to follow him as they took the elevator to the hangar floor. If he was impressed by what he saw before from above, Brandon was even more so seeing the craft up close. While Nikki and Dom were asking questions of Gordon and Tin-Tin, Brandon walked around the craft, taking in its size, imagining himself in the pilot's seat. He was about to take off in TB2 when he was startled out of his daydream by Nikki, who was calling his name.

"Brandon, come on. Gordon and Tin-Tin are going to take us inside Thunderbird Two."

"Coming, Nikki," he replied, walking quickly to the group.

Once inside, Brandon had a lot of questions and directed them the tour guides. Both Tin-Tin and Gordon fielded his queries, giving him the answers he sought. After the Q & A session, Brandon sat back, his brain trying to absorb all the information. One thing wasn't mentioned and kept coming to the forefront in Brandon's mind.

"Thanks for all the info, you two. I have one more question before we continue the tour. What do you do for security when you're on a rescue? You can't call the local authorities for help. What's to prevent someone from walkin' into the ships and taking pictures?"

Gordon smiled. "Dad thought of that when he decided to create International Rescue. All of the ships have automatic camera detectors. If anyone comes close to the ship with a camera, we know about it and can take steps to prevent a more serious security breach. And, as far as the local authorities are concerned, we do call on them if need be and they have the manpower to spare."

Brandon let out a low whistle. "After what I've seen and heard, you guys are prepared for just about anything, aren't you?"

"Yes we are, Brandon. Now all we have to do is make sure that the six of you are just as ready as we are." Gordon looked at his watch. "We'd better get moving. There's more to see and I'd like for us to get the tour done today." Brandon followed the others, giving TB2 one final look.

Post by MagicMaster8 on 16/07/2004

The monorail glided along on the tracks, and Dominic ooh-ed and ah-ed as they passed through each of the hangars and silos. He had still been impressed at Thunderbirds One and Two, as they stood, proud and stoic in their hangars, even though he had seen them both in action already. The monorail car made its way through from the boat pen - the Tracys had an extensive fleet, it seemed - and as they entered the next silo, what Dominic saw more than took his breath away.

A gleaming red rocket rose upwards through the silo, standing on three pronged jet engines. It was a huge cylindrical ship with dark fan-like objects adorning the middle, and it tapered into a blunted point at the top. Dominic was amazed at the sheer size of the thing; he had never seen any ship as big in his life. The monorail car did a circuit of the silo, and Gordon chuckled at Dominic's blatant open-mouthed amazement.

"It's very impressive, isn't it?" He said.

Dominic could do nothing more than gape and nod dumbly. Brandon whistled through his teeth and stared up to the top of the rocket. Nikki didn't seem to be able to believe what she was seeing, either.

"Thunderbird Three is Alan and John's baby, International Rescue's rocket." Tin-Tin said as Gordon stopped the car so they could look for a little longer. "It's nearly 300 feet high and 80 feet wide down near the rockets. Vertical launch, with a launch thrust of 4.5 million pounds. It has an acceleration of 1-6Gs. We use it on space rescues and also as a link to Thunderbird Five, our space station."

Dominic's face twisted into a confused frown as he tried to digest the strange information. He pushed his black bangs from his face and adjusted his glasses.

"I have no idea what you just said, but it sounded impressive. And this rocket sure looks it! It's amazing! But, that's one thing," he said. "You will never find me in space."

Brandon quirked an eyebrow; Gordon cocked his head to the side inquisitively.

"Really?" he asked.

Dominic pointed a finger at him and shook his head again. "Not on your life, sonny-Jim. Much as I like thrills, an explosive death in space does not appeal to me."

Gordon chuckled, and Tin-Tin smiled, but Dominic suddenly realized everyone in the monorail car was staring at him. He was hit by a wave of shyness and laughed nervously. "Well, at least, that's what I think, anyway." He gave them a wobbly smile.

Tin-Tin tried to look encouraging; she knew that nervous feeling. Gordon started the monorail car once more, and they picked up speed quickly.

"Next stop, the pod bay."

Post by ArtisticRainey on 16/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:36:08 GMT
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Virgil and Brains led Callie, Kat, and Christopher in the other monorail following the first group.

Brains noticed the curious looks on their faces. "We're coming to the Thunderbird Two bay. I think you'll like it."

Callie reacted almost immediately when the craft came into view. "Oh, wow! That's Thunderbird Two? I've never seen anything like it!"

"Just wait, Callie," said Virgil. "You're going to see what it looks like on the inside."

The professor felt like an excited child.

The monorail came to a stop in the hangar, where all five people stepped into an elevator, which went down to the floor.

Noticing the size of the craft, Callie wasted no time asking questions. "How do you get into Thunderbird Two in the first place? How big is that thing, really? How does it take off? How--"

"Whoa, slow down, Callie," Brains said. "We'll get your questions answered soon enough. Take it easy."

She blushed. "Sorry, I'm just excited."

Christopher smiled. "You definitely have that scientific curiosity."

"When I see something for the first time, I'll start asking questions in a hurry." She looked at the tour guides. "How do you get in there? It doesn't look like there's any door."

Virgil nodded. "That's right, Callie. I get to Thunderbird Two by flipping over on the rocket painting. From there, I slide into the seat of the craft. When others are needed, they take the passenger lift into the craft near the back of the cockpit."

"Next question: How big is Thunderbird Two?"

"It's 250 feet long and 60 feet high with a 180-foot wingspan," Brains answered.

Christopher whistled in disbelief. "That's bigger than any plane I've flown in my lifetime!"

"Repairing Thunderbird Two will be a real challenge!" Kat exclaimed.

After a good laugh amongst the group, Callie asked her next question. "How does it take off and fly?"

Virgil answered, "Before it can take off, the appropriate pod is needed. The conveyor belt moves under Thunderbird Two until the proper pod is in position. Then I lower the cockpit and engines down around the pod, and it locks into place."

"What's next?"

"The cliff face swings out and opens downward, which allows Thunderbird Two to roll down the runway. Near the end of the airstrip, the runway is tilted up at a 45-degree angle to make it easier for the craft to blast off."

"But what about all that--"

"Exhaust?" Brains said. "A blast shield comes up behind the engines to give the force something to push against, channeling the exhaust away through ducts beneath the runway."

Callie smiled. "Then it blasts off into the sky, on its way to another rescue."

Brains and Virgil nodded.

"Any other questions?" Virgil asked.

"Just one. Some missions will require me to be here, right?"

"Right. There's a mobile laboratory near the back of every pod, and we will need scientific knowledge ever so often."

"I understand now. That's all the questions I have."

"In that case, let's move on to the lab, shall we?"

The group went back to the elevator and returned to the monorail to resume the tour.

Thanks to Tikatu for helping with technical aspects.

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 17/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:39:05 GMT
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Nikki stood outside of Thunderbird 7. She had seen it before when she first visited the Island with Dominic, but it didn't cease to amaze her.

Tin-Tin opened the doors to the ambulance and led the tour group inside. She pointed out every piece of equipment and explained its use.

"In Thunderbird 7, as you can see, we have twelve fold down biobeds which monitor and records patients conditions, like heart rate, blood pressure, temperature and much more." Tin-Tin pulled out an anti-gravity stretcher. "Here is one of our anti-gravity stretchers. You might hear us sometimes call it an AG stretcher for short. All together we have six of these on board."

Tin-Tin laid the stretcher on the ground and asked for a volunteer. Brandon walked forward. Tin-Tin instructed him to lie down on the stretcher and she strapped him in securely. She began to show them how to activate it. The stretcher began to float to the amazement of the group.

"Whoa." Brandon said as he felt the stretcher lift from the ground.

Nikki smiled as she watched Brandon on the stretcher. "We could have used these at the hospital. It would of made life much easier. I'm definitely looking forward to working with all this equipment."

Gordon walked forward towards the floating stretcher. "I like the AG stretchers the most. I wanted to race on them when we were first introduced to it. But Mom wouldn't allow it."

The group laughed at Gordon's joke. Tin-Tin shook her head as she smiled and lowered the stretcher Brandon was on. She had a feeling that Gordon was being serious about that.

Nikki looked around and walked towards an object. She picked one up. "Are these doctor's charts?"

Tin-Tin turned to look at what Nikki was looking at. "These are our data pads which acts like a doctor's chart. It records scanner readings and information that our biobeds record. We can also add verbal notes to it. The pads are passed onto the medical facility with the patient and then returned to us."

Nikki put the pad back down in its rightful place. Dominic began to ask his own questions. Tin-Tin answered them all with ease.

"Ok, let's continue with the tour of Thunderbird 7." Tin-Tin led them towards the next piece of equipment.

Post by Nikki-Browneyes on 19/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:45:21 GMT
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Tracy Island Wednesday, February 29, 2028

Kat followed Callie and Christopher as they hurried along after Virgil and Brains. She was very excited. Although she had had a basic tour with John, this was going to be a more in depth tour.

They headed for the pod bay.

Virgil explained the various pods and what each pod contained. Stopping at pod 5, he looked at Kat. "I think that you will be interested to see the auxiliary vehicles."

"Oh, yes, please!" Kat said in an awestruck voice.

"Here we have the Mole."

Kat walked around the vehicle.

"It travels on its own trolley, and on arrival at danger zones, tips upward to near vertical position. A rocket fires at the rear to activate the mole, which begins to turn its massive screw and burrow underground."

"How does it reappear from underground?" Kat asked.

"The heavy duty caterpillar tracks enable it to grip the sides of the tunnel it is boring and to return to the surface safely," Virgil replied

"How is it powered?" Kat asked.

"It's powered by a nuclear fusion reactor," Brains explained.

"I suppose the nose is made from a special metal?" Kat asked again.

"Yes, it is made from cahelium, a super-strong metal that Brains invented," replied Virgil. "The nose is made of Formula C 30/1, a cahelium-derived alloy." He grinned at Kat, "Any more questions?"

"Yes, just one more," Kat said.

Callie groaned. "Come on, Kat, there is still a lot for us to see."

"It looks pretty big; how heavy is it?"

"It weighs about 30 tonnes." Virgil replied. "Now shall we proceed to the other pods?"

Kat blushed. "Sorry, Virgil, but I find it so interesting."

Next they came to the pod that contained Firefly. Again, Kat looked round it with ever-deepening interest.

"This is International Rescue's principal fire-extinguisher," Virgil started to say. "Ahem, Kat, can you stay with us?"

Kat had wandered off to the other side of the Firefly. "Sorry," she called, "I was just looking at

something."

Virgil went on. "The Firefly's main skill is to enter the very heat of the blaze and let loose nitro-glycerine shells which cause a blow-out. The plough blade is made of that Formula C30/1 that I mentioned. It can stand the most blistering temperatures. The blade can be raised to position the cannon bore to a more flexible angle. It can work like a giant bulldozer." He smiled at Kat. "What, no questions?"

"No, not at the moment, and anyway there is still a lot to see, isn't there?"

"Yes," Virgil replied. "Shall we continue with the tour?"

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 19/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:52:36 GMT
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Tracy Island Wednesday February 29th 2068

Christopher smiled to himself as he saw how enthusiastic Kat was, but now it was time to continue the tour.

He walked past an alcove and saw something that made him gasp. The rest of the group, who were in front, stopped and turned to look at him.

"Is that what I think it is?" Christopher pointed, a huge smile on his face,

"That," Virgil said as he brought the others over, "is Thunderbird 6"

"Even better than that!" Christopher exclaimed. "It's a vintage Tiger Moth!"

Brains turned to the other recruits. "We use it for rescues where the other craft can't go, and it can be landed on larger craft in flight, like the Skyship One"

Kat and Callie started asking questions. Virgil watched as Christopher walked around the plane, tentatively touching a bit of fuselage or a flap.

"My Great-Grandfather flew one of these," Christopher said. Everyone looked at him. "He used to train pilots in the Second World War to fly Spitfires and Hurricanes."

"A De Havilland DH82 Tiger Moth." Christopher smiled. "Twenty three feet long, wingspan of over twenty nine feet, maximum speed of 160 miles per hour."

He looked at everyone there. "Perfect aircraft."

"Noble sentiments Christopher," Brains said. "Shall we go?"

"Just one thing though," Christopher said as he rejoined the group, "When can I fly her?"

Virgil looked at Christopher then at Thunderbird 6. "We'll let you know".

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 22/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 03:58:06 GMT

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Tracy Island, Wednesday Feb 29th 2068

Since being deposited in the guest room of the Villa, Elise had managed to unpack some of her things, albeit slowly, and was now sitting down in a comfy chair looking out of the vast expanse of ocean. She didn't like the ocean anymore; not since the day it took her parents away and left her stranded and clinging to a capsized boat. She had been nine years old. She pushed the memories away and started to wonder how long she was going to be here. Can't be more than three weeks, I would think She shuffled around to get comfortable and had just found her spot when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," she called. The door opened slowly and a young woman entered carrying a tray of food and what appeared to be some medical items.

"Hello," she said, smiling warmly at Elise. She closed the door behind her and set the tray down, her brown ponytail swinging around as she did so. Elise figured her to be around 25 or so and realised she must be one of the new recruits that had waved at Virgil and Gordon when they'd arrived earlier.

"Hi," Elise replied. The woman walked over to her and, extending her hand, introduced herself.

"I'm Nicole, Nikki for short. I'm one of the nurses here on the island." Nikki wasn't sure how much Elise knew about International Rescue so didn't offer any more information.

Elise shook her hand and smiled. "Nice to meet you, Nikki."

"I've brought you something to eat and wanted to just check on how you were feeling. Dianne, our chief doctor, is still in New York with Mr. Tracy, so she had asked me to take a look at you and let her know how you are." Elise merely nodded. She was still feeling apprehensive and Nikki picked up on that right away. "Do you have questions? You look a little unsure of something."

Elise smiled and answered, "Well, I suppose I'm a little overwhelmed with everything that's happened, and then being whisked away to here!" She waved her hands, indicating the room.

"I can imagine, I've only been here a short while myself, so I have an idea of what you must be feeling."

Elise detected her British accent and asked, "How did you end up here?"

Now it was Nikki's turn to feel awkward. "Err, I was approached by Dr. Tracy while I was still working at a hospital in London. She thought I'd be qualified for this job."

Elise looked at the young woman and knew she wasn't telling her everything. "You're part of International Rescue, aren't you?"

The question shocked Nikki and she took a moment before she answered. Elise had been very forthright and obviously knew more than Nikki thought she did. "Well... yes... actually I am."

Elise sensed Nikki's unease and quickly added, "It's okay. I know about IR. I, err, stumbled across them recently! My old Air Force buddy Scott is part of them it seems!"

Nikki had to laugh at Elise's humorous take on it and immediately the tension in the room lessened. "Well, let's get your check-up done then, shall we?" Nikki took all the routine vitals information, making careful notes as she did so. "How's the numbness on your cheek?" Nikki was closely examining the bruised, swollen area with gentle fingers.

"Not too bad. The pain has eased up, but I still can't feel anything."

"It may just need time. Your ribs seem to be healing nicely and I don't think there'll be any problems, but I'll let Dr. Tracy be the judge on that."

They smiled at each other and then Nikki left so Elise could eat and rest. It wasn't 10 minutes later that another knock was heard. Thinking it was Nikki coming back again, Elise called out "Come in, Nikki." Only it wasn't Nikki, but Lisa Parkhurst, Dr. Tracy's mother, who had settled Elise in earlier.

"Hi there! Hope you don't mind me dropping in, dear, I wanted to see how you were and if there's anything you needed?" Elise liked this woman, she was genuinely kind, and had a way of looking over her glasses that reminded Elise of her aunt.

"I'm fine, thank you."

"Are you sure?" came the direct reply.

Elise noticed that this lady wasn't one to miss a beat and obviously wouldn't be satisfied until she heard what she wanted. "It's okay, honey, you can tell me whatever's on your mind. I won't tell a soul." Lisa sat down and waited.

Elise sat down across from her and asked, "Maybe you can tell me what's really going on around here? I mean, this looks like a hotel/spa luxury hideaway, and yet isn't this the base for International Rescue?"

Lisa answered immediately, "Well, it is, but we operate undercover. My son-in-law, Jeff, runs this operation very seriously and keeps it close at hand. We can't afford mistakes when saving lives. But, we are still a family above all that. It's imperative that IR remains a closely guarded secret. I understand your confusion, but right now all you need to worry about is getting better. You did a

fine job, Elise, saving Jeff's life. We are all eternally grateful."

"Thank you, but I just did what I'd been trained to do. I'm sorry that the accident happened."

"From what I understand, it could have been much worse for both of you."

Elise asked after Jeff, and Lisa told her what she knew. After reassuring Lisa again that she was fine, Elise sat back down to rest, taking her dose of painkillers and closing her eyes. Her last thoughts before drifting off were about returning home to New York and back to her job. Three weeks, I'll be home in three weeks.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 23/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 04:04:11 GMT
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Thursday, March 1, 2068, 9 p.m. Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC.

"Surgery in the morning again," Jeff said morosely. "Will it ever end?"

"Tomorrow should be the last, love," Dianne assured him. "And tomorrow you should be moved to a regular room, where the younger ones can come visit. They arrived back in town today."

"It will be nice to see them. Are you going back to the penthouse tonight?" he asked.

"Yes. Em twisted my arm. Said I looked a wreck and needed the sleep."

"I wouldn't say you looked a wreck...."

"You'd never say I looked a wreck. Covered in three inch layers of muck and slime from some rescue and you'd still tell me I was beautiful."

"Well, you still would be." Jeff said softly. Then he smiled a bit. "I might tell you that you smelled bad...."

Dianne laughed. "It's nice to see you getting your sense of humor back."

"Hmm. I guess. Wish I could actually laugh without pain," Jeff grouched. He looked up at her, his eyes imploring. "Will you be here in the morning?"

"Wild taxi drivers couldn't keep me away."

"Taxis? Why don't you take the limo?"

"Too slow and too showy. Don't need to let Ned Cook know of my comings and goings. He's still

hangs around from time to time, looking for that exclusive interview."

"Hmm. I'm sure you can give him the slip."

Dianne looked at Jeff keenly. "What is wrong, love? You seem down tonight."

He reached up with his good hand to take hers. "I'm tired of all this medical rigamarole, of being prodded and pricked and opened up to have my insides repaired. I miss... everything. The island, the kids, Kyrano's cooking, Gordon's practical jokes, even the pressure of rescues. But most of all, I miss... you. I know you're here beside me but I can't touch you, as I would like to. And you can't touch me because you might hurt me. I want you so badly, Dianne. And I want this all to be over."

"It will be over, Jeff. Not today, and not tomorrow, and maybe not even next week. But it will end, and, one day, when you're not even looking for it, you'll realize that you're whole again. But it will go faster if you maintain a good attitude and keep your eyes on the prize," Dianne explained. She stroked his cheek with the back of her free hand.

"You are my prize," he said, as he suddenly turned the hand he held and kissed her palm. She lowered her eyes and smiled gently.

"Since Kyrano came along with the boys, I can see about getting you some of his cooking," she offered.

"I'd like that very much." They were quiet for a few moments, and then Dianne sighed.

"Well, I'd better go before Em sends the troops out after me." she said.

"The troops being...?"

"Scott, John, Gordon, and Alan."

"Oh." He gazed up at her. "Before you go, would you... sing for me? I think I remember you singing to me before...."

"You remember?" Dianne gasped, sitting down.

"Yes, I don't remember the words or the specific tune, but I do remember your voice singing. Please sing to me. I want to dream with your voice in my ears."

"All right." Dianne swallowed to get past the lump in her throat, thought a moment, smiled slightly, and began to sing softly.

Stars shining right above you
Night-breezes seem to whisper: I love you
Birds singing in the sycamore-trees
Dream a little dream of me.

Say night-y-night and kiss me

Just hold me tight and tell me you'll miss me
While I'm alone as blue as can be
Dream a little dream of me.

Stars fading but I linger on dear
Still craving your kiss
I'm longing to linger till dawn dear
Just saying this

Sweet dreams till sunbeams find you
Sweet dreams that leave all worries behind you
But in your dreams whatever they be
Dream a little dream of me.

By the time Dianne had reprised the last two verses, Jeff was asleep. She kissed his cheek, then picked up her warm coat and left the room, turning out the light as she went. She smiled at the nurses, who called out, "Goodnight, Dr. Tracy." "See you in the morning, Dr. Tracy."

She made her way down to the lobby, shrugging on her fur in the elevator.

"A taxi, Dr. Tracy?" Gerry, the doorman asked.

"Yes, please, Gerry."

He whistled, and a bright yellow hover cab came to the front. Gerry opened the back door for her, and she got in gracefully. She gave the driver a smile.

"Hello, Bernie. Nice to see you again."

"Hey, Dr. Tracy. Tracy Towers?"

"Yes, Bernie. Tracy Towers."

Bernie knew his way around Manhattan and within a few minutes had deposited Dianne at the entrance to the impressive glass and steel structure. She paid for her ride, added a generous tip, and Bernie stayed at the curb until he saw her disappear into the entrance, met by a security guard.

Dianne rode up in the penthouse elevator, leaning with her back against the wall and her arms wrapped around herself. She left the elevator and, with the swipe of her security card, entered the penthouse apartments. Aline, the maid, came and took her coat with a murmured, "Good evening, Dr. Tracy."

"Good evening, Aline."

Dianne made her way to the kitchen, where Kyrano was already working to prepare things for the next day's meal.

"Greetings, Dr. Tracy. It is good to see you again. Is there anything I can get for you?"

"It's good to have you here, Kyrano. And, yes, a glass of red wine, please."

The Asian pulled a wine glass down from the rack and filled it from the chilled bottles available in the wine cooler. She took the glass from him with a murmured thanks, and slowly walked towards the floor-to-ceiling windows that looked out on the lights of New York. Pensive, she sipped her wine as she stared out, seeing nothing. Not even Emily's reflection as she came up behind her. Dianne jumped, nearly spilling her drink as the older woman touched her arm.

"How is he?"

"He was sleepin' when Ah left. What about th' kids?"

"They're in bed. The boys are enjoying a night on the town together." Emily frowned at the drawl. "What's upset you, Dianne?"

Dianne took in a deep breath and let it out in a rush. "He's scared. Ah'm scared. Ah'm scared he's gonna give up."

"What makes you say that?"

"Jes' th' way he was talkin' tonight." Dianne wiped a tear away, trying to head off a Niagara of weeping. She turned to her mother-in-law. "Em, Ah'm tryin' to be there for him, Ah really am. But...."

Emily cut her off, putting her hands on Dianne's shoulders. "But you've been there almost non-stop since he was brought in, not to mention what happened out there at the rescue site. You've given and given and now you're almost given out. You need some sleep and some time away from the hospital to rest. Finish that wine up now and I'll draw you a hot bath. Then to bed with you. The little ones will need to see your smiling face for reassurance in the morning."

"Ah promised Ah'd be there for th' surgery...."

"You can go. But when he comes out of surgery, you will come back here to get some more rest. I'll stay at the hospital with him and take the children to visit for a while. The boys will want to be there to say goodbye, too. Now, listen to your old mother-in-law and do as I say. No excuses."

"Yes, ma'am," Dianne whispered, tears streaming down her face now. Emily took one look and guided them both to a sofa, taking the glass away and sitting so she could take her heart daughter in her arms. She rocked back and forth, letting the younger woman sob out her fear and pain until at last, exhausted, Dianne fell asleep in Grandma Tracy's supporting arms.

Post by Tikatu on 23/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 04:07:17 GMT
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Thursday, March 1, 2068, 11:45 p.m. Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC

Jeff stood in a large room, paneled in knotty pine with hardwood floors and a huge fieldstone fireplace. There was a fire on the hearth and it made the paneling glow with a golden warmth. There was no furniture in the huge room and the ceiling stretched far above Jeff's head. He turned slowly around the room, gazing at it carefully. It felt familiar, yet was not.

As he turned, he found himself staring at floor-to-ceiling windows that stretched up in an A-frame shape. Outside, the stars twinkled in the night sky.

Stars shining right above you
Night-breezes seem to whisper: I love you.

He could hear Dianne's voice singing sweetly.

"Dianne? Where are you?" he called. He glimpsed a shape outside on the deck and opened the doors to approach the person who was standing there, leaning on the rails.

"Elise? Elise Collins?" he asked. She turned to him and smiled.

"Your wife will adore this place!" she said enthusiastically. "It's gorgeous!"

The night breezes seemed to blow a little harder, feel a little colder to Jeff. The stars began to be obscured by clouds, and flakes of snow began to fall. Jeff shivered.

Stars fading but I linger on dear
Still craving your kiss

"Dianne? Where are you? I hear you singing!" Jeff kept looking around for his wife. The snow began to get thicker, swirling around him and Elise. The winds began to howl.

Without warning, they were in a helijet. Elise, white-faced and tight-lipped, was struggling with the controls.

"I've never seen a storm like this before Mr. Tracy; I'm doing the best... Ohmigod!"

As if in slow motion, Jeff got up from his seat, trying to reach the co-pilot's chair that remained so tantalizing out of reach. I've got to get to the controls! he thought as he thrust his body forward. But instead of reaching his goal, he felt himself falling into an ever-swirling darkness, his body going cold, colder. Yet even in the fading light, he could hear the sweet, soft voice of his wife singing to him.

Sweet dreams till sunbeams find you
Sweet dreams that leave all worries behind you
But in your dreams whatever they be

Dream a little dream of me.

"Dianne!" Jeff cried as he woke, drenched with sweat. An alarm went off as his heart rate increased, and a nurse came hurrying in.

"Mr. Tracy! What's wrong!" she called, turning on the light.

Jeff blinked several times, his eyes finally focusing on the face of the nurse who hovered over him. Another nurse came in and the first one said, "Get the doctor."

"N-No. No. It was just a dream. A nightmare. I'll be fine. Doctor's not necessary," he gasped. The nurse made notes on the heart rate's increase and watched as it began to slow back down into a more normal pattern.

"Let's let the doctor be the judge of that, Mr. Tracy," the nurse said firmly. The doctor came hurrying in, his med scanner at the ready. He consulted briefly with the nurses, and then approached Jeff.

"So, I hear you've had a nightmare. Must have been a doozy to cause such a physical reaction. Why don't you tell me about it?" he asked, all the while checking Jeff's vitals and making sure his dressings and splints were still in place.

Haltingly, Jeff began to relate his dream to the doctor. Somehow, he thought it was important to do so. When he was finished, the doctor smiled.

"That wasn't a nightmare, Mr. Tracy, though it might have felt like one."

"Then what was it, Doctor?" Jeff asked peevishly.

"It was... a memory."

Post by Tikatu on 23/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 04:09:08 GMT

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Friday, March 2, 2068, 9:55 a.m., Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC

The entire family, sans Virgil, stood around in the VIP lounge waiting for Jeff to be returned to the ICU from the foot surgery. They had been told it would take two hours, and Alan was constantly checking his watch, tapping his foot.

"They should be done any minute," he kept muttering.

"Alan!" Emily's sharp voice cut through the air.

"Yes, Grandma?"

"Stop fidgeting and looking at your watch. They'll be done when they're done."

Gordon, on watch in the hall, came back to the lounge. "He's coming back!"

The family members who were sitting now rose. Dianne hurried into the hall and down to Jeff's room, beating the hospital bed by mere seconds. The nurses smiled at her as they settled Jeff back into his monitors. "He won't be here much longer, Dr. Tracy," one of them said. "Just until they have that private room ready."

Dianne smiled, a wide, genuine smile. The surgeon came in, his data pad in hand. He came around to see both Jeff and Dianne. "Let me tell you what we did, Mr. Tracy. We fused several bones in your foot and had to do some reconstruction near the ankle. We also set the long bones in your leg and injected them with growth stimulator, as we have done with all of your bones. As soon as the security floor is ready for you, we'll move you to a regular room where your family can visit for as long as you can stand it."

"Thank you for the update, Doctor," Jeff said wearily. "Dianne, can you tell the family?"

"Of course, dearest," Dianne replied. "I'll send the older boys back two at a time. They have to leave and would like to say goodbye."

"That will be fine. Mr. Tracy, I'll be back when it's time to move you to a new room." The doctor walked out with Dianne. "Something you should know, Dr. Tracy. The doctor on call last night said that your husband had a nightmare that included elements of the helijet accident. He may be on the verge of remembering the incident."

"That's wonderful!" Dianne said excitedly. "May I ask him about it?"

"Yes. The more he recounts the dream, the more it might unlock the memories of the incident." He smiled. "Your husband has come a long way from when he came in last weekend. He's a real fighter."

"Yes, he is," she said softly as she reached the door to the lounge, where the rest of the family waited eagerly for her news.

Post by Tikatu on 23/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 04:12:16 GMT
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Friday, March 2, 2068, 12:45 p.m., Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC

"Now, you three stay here while we get you something to eat," Emily warned. "Cherry, you keep an eye on your brothers." She and Scott headed off in the direction of the cafeteria lines.

"It would have gone faster if we had gone to help. Grandma doesn't always know what we like," Tyler grouched.

"She just wants us where she can find us again," Alex said, matter-of-factly. He sat up suddenly. "Hey, isn't that the TV host, Ned Cook?"

Cherry groaned. "You're right, Alex. And he's coming this way!" The three of them put their head together briefly. "You remember what Mom said to him? Good. Let that be our motto."

Ned Cook had been haunting the hospital for the past week, looking to interview someone, anyone, about Jeff Tracy's accident, even though the story was barely news any more. The involvement of International Rescue had given him a fever of sorts and he was determined to get that exclusive. So it was with a lifted heart that he saw an elderly woman who had been identified to him as Jeff's mother, Emily Tracy, escorting three children down to the cafeteria.

Those must be his adopted kids! It would be a real coup to get their perspective on this whole thing. No one, and I mean no one, has been able to get to them since their adoption. I'd better brush up on their names. He consulted his very handy PDA. Since the accident, he'd dug and dug and dug some more and had a whole folder on the Tracy family.

Lessee. The girl is Cherie, the two boys are Alex and Tyler, with Alex being the older. He must be the blond. Okay, now to wait for an opportunity.

He watched as the foursome met up with a dark-haired man that Ned identified as Scott, the oldest of Jeff's now eight children. There was some discussion, then the three children sat down at a table, and the adults went off.

Now's my chance. Ned walked nonchalantly over to the table, coming to a stop before the three children. The youngest looked up at him with curiosity, the middle with indifference, and the oldest, the girl, gazed at him with an expression uncannily like that of her mother. Ned put that aside, and smiled his most ingratiating smile.

"Say, aren't you Jeff Tracy's kids? Here visiting your dad, are you?"

The three kept looking at him, saying nothing. Undeterred, Ned pulled up a chair, turned it around, and straddled the seat, resting his arms on the backrest.

"Well, are you? You're being awfully quiet and I think that's rude."

The middle one rolled his blue-green eyes, then said, "If we were, do you think we'd tell you? Besides, you're the one being rude; you haven't introduced yourself."

"Yeah," the youngest piped up, "we've been taught not to speak to strangers."

Ned's face twitched, and his smile became a wry one. "Point taken. Well, lady and gents, I'm Ned Cook, host of The Ned Cook Show. I was wondering...."

The girl interrupted with a soft Southern drawl that made her sound very much like her mother. "We know who you are, Mistah Cook. Just as Ah'm sure you know who we are. You wouldn't be talkin' with us if you didn't." She leaned forward, eyebrow raised haughtily. "Now, Mistah Cook. You aren't really going t' take advantage of three children whose fathah has been seriously injured, are you?"

Ned sat up, blindsided by Cherry's comment, sputtering, "Well, no, not exactly. I was just wondering if I could ask you how your father was?"

Before he could recover his composure, Cherry smiled, a lazy smile like a cat's. "Well, in that case, Mistah Cook, you should ask the public relations department at Tracy Industries. They've been issuin' updates on Fathah's condition every day."

"Ah!" Ned found himself back on solid footing. "I have been and they've been very informative. But I was hoping for your opinions on how he's doing. Are you hopeful he'll recover? Does this whole situation scare you? How does it feel to be a Tracy kid, anyway?" He smiled winningly. "My listeners are very interested in you three."

"Ah'm sure they are," Alex said, his face angry, his own drawl showing for the first time.

"You're jes' a nosy busybody, Mistah!" Tyler shouted.

Cherry put a hand on each of her brothers' arms. "Now, now, boys. No need t' go gettin' all hot about it." She turned her attention back to Ned. "You'd like a few words from us?"

Ned smiled and nodded. "Yes, I would."

Cherry exchanged glances with her brothers. "Well, then Mistah Cook, we'll give you the words that our mothah gave you."

And in unison, the three said, "Mind your own business."

Ned began to protest, but stopped at the sound of a cleared throat. He looked up to see an angry Emily Tracy, her hands on her hips, and behind her, a glowering Scott, his hands holding a tray full of food.

"Now, Mr. Cook, don't try to tell me you're taking advantage of my littlest grandchildren!"

"Uh, no, Mrs. Tracy. I was just... conversing with them." Ned got up. "I can see that this conversation is over. Good day, Mrs. Tracy, Mr. Tracy, children." He beat a hasty retreat.

"Nicely done, kids," Scott said as he put the tray down. "I caught the tail end of all that."

The three kids grinned. "Well, Mom told us what to say to any reporter," Tyler replied, reaching out for the drink that Grandma had indicated was his.

"And I'm glad you remembered," Grandma said. "Now, eat up and we'll go upstairs to see your father. He should be in his new room by the time we're through."

"Okay!" Alex said as he bit into his burger and joined the rest of the little group in fortifying himself for the rest of the day.

Post by Tikatu on 23/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 04:17:27 GMT
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Saturday, March 3, 2068, 1:30 a.m., Tracy Island

"I'll see you, and raise you twenty," Virgil said to John as he examined his cards. A chorus of "ooooh" ran around the table. He dropped his chips into the growing pile in the center. "Brains?"

Brains studied his cards. His hand reached for some chips. "I'll see you, Virgil, and raise you another, uh, twenty." This time there were groans around the table.

"I'm out. It's too rich for me," said Alan, who sat next to Brains.

Gordon shook his head and put down his cards. "I fold." Which brought the game back to John.

He gazed across the table at Brains, giving him a speculative eye. The scientist gazed back, his mild expression never wavering. He looked down at his cards. He had four of a kind, all jacks, not a bad hand at all. He again contemplated the man across from him, and then reached for his chips.

"I'll see you." He added the required amount. Then he reached for them again. "And I'll raise you... twenty-five."

There were groans again. Virgil shook his head. "I'm out." He put down his cards. "You two had better have the hands for this."

Brains now contemplated John, who put up an eyebrow in challenge. He glanced at his cards, and then reached for his chips.

"I'll see you," Brains said, "and raise you... fifteen."

Gordon got up and pulled out a beer from the mini-fridge and offered Alan one. Virgil indicated with a motion that he wanted one, too, and then tipped his chair back onto its back legs as he watched the last two players battle it out.

"I'll call," John said quickly, adding his chips. The opponents looked at each other across the table.

"I'll call," Brains said, then lowered his cards. "Straight flush."

"Damn!" John shouted as he put down his cards. "I was sure you were bluffing."

Brains smiled and pulled the chips towards him.

"Well, this is déjà vu all over again," Alan commented. "I seem to remember another poker game when Brains won the pot."

"When was that?" John asked, curious.

"A couple of years ago," Alan said. "You were upstairs. Scott was playing."

"Oh yeah!" Gordon said, a smile lighting up his face. "And Brains took our little side bet, too."

"Side bet? Did I miss something?" John asked.

"Uh, yeah, you did," Virgil admitted. "We were betting on... uh...."

"We were betting on your father and, uh, Dianne's trip to Paris," Brains said as he shuffled the cards.

"Oh?" John exclaimed.

"Yeah, I remember it really well," Alan said as he got up to stretch. "We had started out by playing poker...."

"The game is hold 'em," Scott said as he dealt the cards to the young men at the table. "Starting bet is five, with a limit of thirty."

There was a bit of silence as the men looked at their hands and tried to decide what to do with them.

"So, Brains," Gordon said conversationally. "You ready in case of a medical emergency? With the Doc here, you've had it easy in the sick room."

"I'm ready," Brains said simply.

"What do you all think of this... relationship of Dad's?" Alan asked skeptically.

"Is it a relationship?" Virgil asked. "I mean, all they seem to do is walk on the beach."

It got quiet for a few moments and he looked up to see his brothers gazing at him with amusement. "What? Did I miss something?"

"Lots of things, it seems, Virgil," Scott said amiably.

"Such as?"

"Such as the night they went for a walk on the beach and didn't come back until morning," Gordon said, looking at his cards.

"Or the time they took the cabin cruiser, just the two of them," Alan added.

"Or the times when they've been in the sick room and the doors have been locked, but neither of them has been, uh, sick," Brains pointed out. This last statement caused all of the brothers to look at him.

"The sick room? They've been making out in the sick room?" Alan asked. Brains nodded.

"Whoa," Gordon said softly, blinking. There was silence after that for a few minutes.

"Now he's taken her to Paris," Scott stated.

"To look at medical equipment," Virgil reminded him.

"Yeah, right." "Sure, Virge, sure." "Do you believe that?"

"Well, why else would they have gone?" he challenged.

"There are a couple of possibilities," Gordon said. "Maybe they're just getting away from us for a bit. Dad might want to show her the sights of romantic Paris. I call and raise you fifteen."

Scott disagreed. "I think there's more to it than that. I think Dad's going to ask her to marry him." He threw some chips into the kitty. "I call, and raise you five."

Alan chuckled. "Wouldn't it be funny if they went to Paris to elope?" The resulting silence made him look up from his cards. "What? Do you think they'd really do that?"

"It is a possibility," Brains admitted, tossing his chips into the pile.

"No. There's no way. Dad would never do that to us," Alan said, shaking his head vehemently. "I call, and raise you ten."

"He's not getting any younger," Virgil said. "He's been through one wedding. He might not want to mess with another one."

"I bet they come back engaged," Scott said.

The five men looked at each other and each began to smile.

"Okay, we'll start a betting pool," Gordon said. "Four possibilities. One, they went to see the medical equipment. Two, they went to spend some romantic time together."

"Three, they come back engaged," Alan added.

"And four, they come back, uh, married," Brains finished.

"Or any combination of the above?" Virgil asked.

"Yes, though the engagement and marriage are exclusive, one or the other," Scott said. He got up and pulled out a score pad. "Betting starts at fifty bucks, winner takes the kitty. We'll ask Kyrano to hold the money and the bets."

"Should we call John about this?" Alan asked.

"Nah. He's at a disadvantage. He hasn't seen a lot of the stuff we have lately," Scott said as he handed out paper and pencils. "Write down what you think is happening, and your bet."

"Okay."

Alan looked around the table and squarely at John. "So we did. And Dad and Mom had a romantic week away from us and came back engaged. They never even looked at the medical equipment. Brains took the pool."

"Wonder if they know you were betting on that," John said wryly, accepting the beer that Gordon handed over.

"Uh, I don't think so. You aren't going to tell them, are you, Johnny?" Gordon asked worriedly.

"If you remember to include me in the next betting pool you have, I'll keep quiet." John stretched and yawned. "I need to get some sleep and so do you, Alan. Got the Thunderbird Five run later today and we've got a passenger that we need to impress."

"Right," Alan got up from his seat and stretched. "Goodnight, guys. See you in the sunshine."

"Goodnight, Alan, John." "See you later." "G'night, guys."

Virgil looked at the other two men. "Pool game, anyone?"

"Sounds good to me," Brains said, getting up.

"Remind me to tell you about a pool game that Mom and I had before she and Dad started seeing each other," Gordon said as he gathered up the cards to put them away.

Post by Tikatu on 23/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 04:18:59 GMT
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9am 3-03-2068

"Okay, this is the LAST straw." Brandon said half-aloud as he marched down the hall in search of Christopher. He was so single-minded in his quest that he failed to notice Callie. He ran into her, nearly knocking her down.

"Hey, Brandon," said Callie jokingly, "you need to be careful." Then she noticed his face. "Are you all right?"

"No, I-am-not-all-right! That damn cat of Christopher's got INTO my apartment, clawed my nightstand, and shredded the curtains! When I find his owner...."

"Calm down, Brandon," Callie said, putting a hand on his shoulder. "It's not going to help anybody if you lash out at him."

"Maybe not, but I'll sure feel better. That cat has had it in for me since we got to the island!"

Callie stood in front of her friend. "Brandon, I hate to be the one to break this to you, but what's going to happen if--no, WHEN--you and Christopher have to work together on a mission? There's always going to be a little friction between new people meeting and all, but if you two keep this up, it could compromise the lives in danger."

Brandon nodded. "You've got a point, Callie. I need to keep things professional. I didn't come here to win a popularity contest. I was hired to do a job. And maybe the cat doesn't have it in for me; maybe he's just as nervous as I am about being here. "But how can I deal with Christopher? Every time we encounter each other, it turns into a confrontation." Brandon sighed.

"Hmm. There's got to be something that can alleviate the situation. If I can only figure out what," Callie said thoughtfully. Looking over at Brandon and the serious look on his face, she said teasingly, "The two of you DO have one thing in common."

"Oh? What's that, Callie?"

"You're both hot-heads."

That remark earned her a sour look. "I would hope that we'd have something a little more in common than that," Brandon replied.

"You're both sports fans, right?"

"Yeah, we are, just different kinds of sports." Brandon looked at Callie intently, wondering what she had in mind.

"There must be one sport you both like."

"I don't know what it would be, Callie. I'm into extreme sports and Christopher's more into the organized sports."

"There must be a way to resolve this before Mr. Tracy returns," she said with concern. "We can't have him coming home to two members fighting with each other."

"Maybe there is a way. I'll let you know if it works."

Callie stepped in front of him again. "If it's what I think you're going to do, don't even go there. I know Scott or Virgil would just LOVE to hear about all this. And I can tell on both you AND Chris."

"What ARE you talking about Callie?" Brandon noticed the seriousness in her green eyes and he laughed nervously. "Don't worry. I'm not going to start a fight with Christopher if that's what you're worried about."

"That's the one thing I was worried about. Maybe I can get the two of you to face each other, to air out your differences peacefully, with me as a mediator."

Brandon balked at the idea of Callie mediating what, to him, was a personal matter. "Come on. Don't you trust me to control my temper?"

She decided to be straight with him. "Right now, no, I don't."

Brandon tried to argue with Callie but she would have none of it. So it was that the two of them went off to find Christopher.

Post by MagicMaster8 and TracyFan4Ever on 23/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 04:22:04 GMT
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Tracy Island, 10.00 am. Saturday March 3rd 2068

Kat was leaning over the outboard motor of the small boat. Brains had left her to try and get the revs right. So far things were not going very well. She struggled to keep her balance as she reached far inside the engine. Brushing her hair back from her face, she passed some of the oil from her hand to her face.

She was so immersed in her work that she didn't hear the light footsteps come into the boat pen.

"Brains said you would be here." John's amused voice rang out in the silence.

Kat nearly knocked herself out as she jumped at the sudden voice. She turned to face him.

"Gosh, you made me jump! I have been left with a slight problem which is difficult to assess at the moment." She flicked more hair from her face and transferred more oil to her cheek.

"Sorry for startling you. How about having a break for a moment?" John said, pulling up and turning over a wooden box and sitting on it.

Kat wiped her oily hands on an equally oily rag and sat on a box beside him.

"How's Mr Tracy?" she asked.

"Slightly better. In fact, he's finished with surgery and is now in a regular room"

"Oh, that's good news," Kat replied. "It will be so nice once he is back here on Tracy Island."

John smiled. "It will, but there is still a lot to do. We have to make sure that all the new recruits are trained fully in all aspect of Thunderbirds and rescues."

"Really? I shall be trained to go on rescues?"

"Possibly. Even if you are not actually involved in a rescue, we may need to ask your advice at times. Better you be trained to deal with whatever comes, I suppose, just like Brains and Tin-Tin. In any case, you will be an invaluable member here back on Tracy Island. Now," said John, "for the real purpose of my visit to you. I am due to leave for Thunderbird 5 shortly along with Callie to give her some training for a month. When I come back, I intend to honour my promise and take you on the roof to show you the stars and constellations, if you still want to."

"Oh, John, yes please, I would love to learn all about the stars and constellations."

"I hear you are settling in very well. In fact, from what Brains tells me, you even corrected him when he was wrong."

Kat blushed, "Well, I wasn't quite sure whether to agree with him or not, but I just couldn't let him go on thinking he was right. As it turned out, he was just testing me. I shall have to get my own back on him."

Kat remembered that Brains had said that he and John were friends from college days. "I suppose you and Brains talk a lot. I shall have to be careful what I say."

"How else do you think I know what's going on when I am up in Thunderbird 5?" John laughed. "I like to know how everyone is down here, while I am up in space." He got up off his box, "Well, I must be off. I have to get ready to leave, and make sure that Callie is ready as well. I just wanted to let you know that I'll be away from now for a month, but when I come back we will visit the roof."

"Thanks, John. See you when you return."

"Yes. Oh, and if ever you want to talk to me it's allowed, you know."

"Thanks. I'll remember that, if I ever get the time."

And with that he left her sitting on the box, thinking what a good friend he would be.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 23/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 18:22:47 GMT

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John whistled softly as he made his way through the Villa and towards his room. He still had some packing to do before Callie and he headed up to TB5. He was looking forward to showing off his 'baby' and was looking forward to showing Kat the stars upon his return. He didn't see Gordon heading towards him until he'd bumped into him.

"Hey! Don't you ever look where you're going?" asked Gordon, rubbing his arm.

John looked up and smiled "Apparently not. Sorry, Squirt, bad habit I got, I guess!"

This earned him a playful thump on his own arm. Gordon laughed as John mockingly claimed an injury.

"Owww!"

"Aren't you supposed to be heading upstairs soon?" queried Gordon.

"Yeah, I'm taking Callie, get her started on her training."

Gordon nodded his approval. "I guess that's what Dad's got planned for the recruits next."

The two brothers looked solemnly at each other, their thoughts with their father. "Yes, and I need to finish packing."

They continued to chitchat for a few minutes outside John's room and the guest room.

Elise had been watching a movie when she heard muffled voices coming from outside her door. Slowly getting up, wincing as she did so, she shuffled over to the door and opened it. Two sets of eyes simultaneously turned in her direction.

"Hello." She smiled.

"Hi yourself," came Gordon's grinning answer.

"Hi, Elise," John said.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt. I heard voices and couldn't resist being nosy," Elise offered.

"That's okay, no problem. I was just on my way back to the lounge anyway," said Gordon, and then turning to John, he added, "Have a good trip up to 5. See ya when you get back, bro!"

"Thanks," replied John as Gordon walked away. He turned his attention back to Elise.

"How are you feeling?"

"Better every day!" she replied, then added, "Do you have a minute or two? I'd really like to thank

you for keeping me sane during the helijet accident."

She stood away from her door and motioned for him to enter.

"Sure, I have some time, and you don't have to thank me, honestly," he replied sincerely as he entered the room.

The two sat down and Elise told him how his voice had kept her focused throughout the whole ordeal.

"Having had plenty of survival training, I knew what you were trying to do John, but I still wanted to say 'Thank-you' in person. It was so hard to focus on much of anything and hearing your voice kept me going. If it hadn't of been for you, I don't think either one of us would have made it."

John could tell that talking about the crash and the aftermath was upsetting for Elise, and he spoke gently to her as he squeezed her hand reassuringly.

"Elise, all I did was keep you awake; you helped save my father's life. Believe me, I know how tough that was, and we all thank God that you both made it. I know it wasn't easy finding out about Scott being with International Rescue, and what with all that happened at the hospital, I'm surprised you're still talking to any of us!"

They both laughed softly. "Yeah, I feel like I've been caught up in this big whirlwind, but I'm grateful that your family agreed to have me stay here to recuperate before I head back home."

John didn't say anything to that last comment.

"You know, most of the family and our new personnel will probably get together later in the lounge. Why don't you join them? Get to know them some more?"

Elise smiled and agreed to the idea.

"You just have to turn right out of here, and go through the wooden double doors at the end of the hall on the left-can't miss it!"

"Okay! I'll do that and thanks, John... for everything."

He smiled and stood up. "Well, I have some packing to finish. If you need anything, just knock on the wall, I'm right next door!"

Elise laughed as John returned to his room.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 25/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Saturday March 3rd. 12.25pm. Tracy Island.

A skilled pair of hands deftly smoothed down the newly changed, crisp sheets on the sickroom beds. Dominic placed his hands on his hips as he surveyed the room and his work of the morning. He had wanted to become as familiar as possible with his new workplace in a short space of time. Although he had specialized in surgical nursing, Dominic had spent his first few years on the general wards, and he welcomed the chance at doing the more 'traditional' nursing once more in addition to assisting in surgery.

He had gotten up and, after spending a few hours with his cheerful little son, had gratefully deposited Joshua in the care of Lisa Parkhurst, and had set to work. The sickroom was spotless and organised; Dom had expected this, considering it was under the jurisdiction of Dr Tracy, who seemed like a more than competent doctor. Nevertheless, he had donned one of the round-collar, blue and white tunics provided and scrubbed every surface. Then, he had checked the inventory of supplies - and found nothing missing, as he had expected - and then had changed the bed linen. It never hurts, he thought.

He glanced at his watch: lunch time. Dominic cast one last glance over the pristine sickroom before going out to find Lisa and to sort out some lunch for his young charge.

In the kitchen, Alan was snooping in the cupboards looking for something to eat for lunch. Both Grandma and Kyrano were gone, leaving the Tracy sons to sort out their own food. He smiled as the tall, slim, dark-haired new recruit Dominic came in, his young son toddling along at his side.

"Good afternoon, Alan," the man said in his soft, oddly accented voice.

"Hey there," Alan said, closing over the cupboard door. "Looking for some lunch?"

"Yeah, we've no food yet in our apartment. I was hoping I could sort the little guy out here."

Joshua walked around the kitchen table and hung onto one of the legs, staring up at Alan with wide, curious eyes.

"Of course. What would he like?" Alan grinned down at the small child, who attempted to hide behind the table leg, but kept his eyes on this new man.

"Uh, he likes tuna sandwiches. But he doesn't like any spread on the bread." Dominic shook his head fondly at the child. "Typical picky eater."

"We do have some tuna," Alan said, taking a tin from one of the cupboards he had previously raided.

"Good stuff. I'll let you get back to what you were doing, there. I'm a deft hand at making tuna sandwiches these days, 'cause of Josh."

Alan nodded, and as he was turning back to the cupboards he caught a glimpse of Dominic sticking his tongue out at the child, who reciprocated and then walked over to his father and tried to peak up to see what he was doing. Dominic hoisted the child up onto his hip as soon as he had finished, and the child took up one quarter of the sandwich and began to eat. Dominic was chatting away to the young boy, who seemed content to eat and listen to his father talk. Alan shook his head. He knew he wouldn't even dream of becoming a father as young as Dominic, especially a single father.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 25/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 18:30:40 GMT
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Saturday, March 3, 12:30 p.m. Tracy Island

Tin-Tin blinked. And blinked again. She ran the numbers through the computer again. They came out the same as before. She smiled, hesitantly, barely daring to breathe.

"Brains?"

"Yes, Tin-Tin?"

"Would you come here for a moment, please?"

"Sure." Brains walked over to Tin-Tin's computer station. He looked at the complex equation on her plasma screen, reading it through once, then again. He shot a hopeful look at Tin-Tin. "Did you run the equation again?"

Tin-Tin nodded vigorously. "Yes. I'll run it a third time. Watch."

The complex chemical equation reloaded. Every figure fell into place as before and it all balanced out when the calculations were complete.

Brains beamed at his assistant. "By George, I think you've got it!"

Tin-Tin began to laugh. "I think I do! It's taken forever, but I think I've finally found the way to mix Penelon and Kevlar and come up with a usable fabric. Now to see if one of our distributors can actually manufacture the fabric."

"Do you think it will take dyes?"

"Yes, I think so. We'll have to test it to see what dyes it will and won't take."

"How about cutting? If it's going to be bullet-resistant, then scissors won't go through it. Will lasers?"

Tin-Tin sighed. "Yes, lasers will be able to cut through it, but with difficulty. I was wondering if a pair of cahelium scissors might do the trick."

"An interesting idea! I'll construct a pair in my copious free time," Brains quipped. "So, the next step is to get some of this miracle cloth manufactured. Will you give me a hand with Thunderbird Eight while that's going on?"

"Of course, Brains." She stretched and yawned, then sat up with a start and said, "Computer, save file!" She looked at Brains sheepishly. "I almost forgot to save it!"

"I think you should take the rest of the day off, Tin-Tin," Brains said seriously. "Mail this off to our fabric provider in the morning, but rest your mind and body until then." Then he grinned. "Oh, and don't forget to call Scott and tell him about your accomplishment."

"I think I will. I've worked hard on this thing!" Tin-Tin grinned back. "In fact, that's the first thing I will do! It's still Friday in the States. Let's see: he's probably at dinner. Where's the penthouse phone number?" She found it on her computer, and called from the lab vidphone.

In New York, Scott, Emily, and the children were sitting down for one of Kyrano's good meals. Dianne had taken a portion of it to the hospital to share with Jeff. The vidphone rang.

"Who's calling us during dinner?" Scott grouched as he got up from the table.

"I bet it's Ned Cook again," Alex said around a mouthful of mashed potatoes.

"Alex, dear, don't talk with your mouth full," Emily chided. "And if it is Mr. Cook, tell him to talk to our lawyers, Scott. This is becoming harassment."

"Yes, ma'am," Scott said as he left the room. He activated the insistent machine, trying to wipe the sour look off of his face.

"Hello, Scott!" Tin-Tin cried.

"Tin-Tin! What a surprise! Is there something wrong?" Scott asked.

"No, Scott. Something is very, very right! I've finished the formula!"

Scott broke into a wide smile. "Wow! That's wonderful, Tin-Tin, congratulations! I'll pass the news on to Dad. I'm sure he'll be thrilled."

"I'll be sending off the formula tomorrow to our fabric manufacturer in Kabul and see what they can do with it. But I just had to tell you!"

"Thanks, Tin-Tin! Hopefully we can get those new uniforms made up soon. Hey, Tin-Tin. Can you make sure everyone's measurements get taken? Especially before the TB5 crew goes up? Then maybe get the new prototype made up quickly in the same fabrics we used for that?"

Tin-Tin blinked. "I suppose so, Scott. I'll do Callie and John before they leave and catch... Alan when he returns. We'll have to decide on the new colors for the recruits."

"Ah, yes. I'd forgotten about that. You can poll them and ask them what colors they'd like. Just remember; we Tracys are no longer having pastels," Scott said with a wink.

Tin-Tin laughed. "I'll remember, Scott. I still can't believe that Grandma took John seriously when he made that joke about wanting lavender."

"Served him right and taught him not to joke with Grandma like that. She's always been able to give as good as she gets," Scott said with a grin. "I'd better let you go. My dessert awaits."

"Ooh. Wish I were there. Though I think that Lisa made some brownies to eat with lunch. Hopefully Gordon hasn't scarfed them all down. Give my love to everyone and especially your father. Tell him I want him to get well and come home soon."

"F-A-B, Tin-Tin. Talk to you later. You want to talk with your dad?"

"Please."

"Okay. I'll call him." Scott lifted his telecomm only to hear a throat being cleared behind him. He turned to see Kyrano standing there.

"Ah, here he is. Bye, Tin-Tin and congratulations!" Scott turned and let Kyrano take over the screen.

"Hello, Father!"

"Hello, my daughter. I understand that you have accomplished your objective? Congratulations!"

Post by Tikatu on 25/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 18:40:12 GMT
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Saturday March 3rd 1:30 pm

"Asterix!" Christopher knelt down to look around the base of the potted plant, "Come on, mate!" He sighed and looked around. Where could he be? he thought.

Callie and Brandon searched through the corridor of the first floor, both hoping to find Christopher. ""He's got to be here somewhere. We've got to find him," Callie said. "If we don't start settling things soon, I'm going to miss my space flight."

Christopher stood up and looked around, Asterix had never gone missing like this before, and now he was getting very worried. He started looking again. His mind was so focused on finding Asterix

he failed to realize he walked fast--fast enough to bump into Callie.

"Ow," she said, holding her arm.

"Sorry," Christopher said, rather absent-mindedly. "Have you seen Asterix about?"

Callie shook her head. "Sorry, Chris, I haven't seen him."

"He's still a bit nervous about his new surroundings." He looked at them. "I'm worried about him."

"Why don't you try my apartment?" Brandon replied, just loud enough for Christopher to hear.

"Sorry, Brandon?" Christopher smiled. "No, I've checked in there, and he sharpened his claws by the looks of it." He paused. "Look," he said exasperatedly, "do you want something? Because I have a nervous cat wandering about and I'm worried about him."

"Yes," said Callie sternly. "I know you're worried about Asterix, but we have another pressing concern...the attitude between you and Brandon here."

"It's not me who has the attitude." Christopher looked at Brandon. "I'm not the one being supremely arrogant!"

Brandon's face flushed an angry red as he lunged toward Christopher. "First the cat and then you!"

Callie quickly stepped between the two men before any harm could befall Christopher.

"Stop it, both of you! What's going to happen when there are lives to save and you two act like a pair of immature babies?"

"I shall be my usual professional self on the job." Christopher looked at Brandon warily, then turned to Callie.

"Can you do that when you and Brandon have to work together?" she asked. "Because believe me, you WILL have to work together eventually. Your flying skills and his skills on the water working together can mean the difference between life and death. But it won't look good for anyone if you two keep fighting, and I'm sure Mr. Tracy wouldn't be happy about this."

"Yes, I can do it when we have to work together. Off duty though, all bets are off," Brandon growled.

Callie thought carefully. "Wait, I have an idea. How about you two do something neither of you know about? Something like tennis?"

"Never played that before." Christopher chewed his bottom lip. "Although I did go out with a ball girl from Wimbledon for a while."

"Tennis? Man, Callie, can't you think of something else? I mean, the game's so boring,"

complained Brandon.

"Come on, Brandon," Christopher chuckle. "Afraid to pull on a pair of tight shorts and leap about with a tennis racquet?"

"Brandon, have you ever played tennis, or have you watched it on TV?" Callie asked.

This isn't going to be easy. But, if I don't do it, Christopher will never leave me alone. "No I'm not afraid. You just decide when and I'll be there." Answering Callie, he replied, "I watched it on television a little bit between the power boat races."

"Why not try a three-set match? Even if you lose, it's good exercise to relieve stress," Callie suggested.

"Excellent!" Christopher rubbed his hands. "When shall this game be played?"

"How about right now? Asterix is somewhere in the area. After all, this is an island," Callie responded eagerly.

"Okay." Christopher smiled. "Might take my mind off things. See you in half an hour?"

John's voice was heard on the intercom system. "Will Callie Spencer please report to the lounge area? Thunderbird 3 launches in 20 minutes."

"Oh dear," Christopher said. "Looks like it'll have to wait."

"Callie, is there any way you can postpone the flight for, say an hour?" Brandon asked, a note of desperation in his voice.

"No, Brandon. As an astronaut myself, I know how much trouble a delay can cause. If John says 20 minutes, then 20 minutes it is."

Christopher smiled to himself as he went back to searching for his errant feline companion.

Callie pressed a button on the intercom. "John, I'll be done packing in 10."

"Okay, Callie, but this sofa won't wait," John replied.

"Can you two at least try to play while I'm gone? At least one match? I'm sure that one of the Tracys knows how to play tennis. Ask around. Please?" Callie asked.

"I promise Callie," Brandon told her. At least I'll try to play.

"Good. Now I've got to run," Callie said, suiting action to words and mentally cursing at herself for having to break up their fighting, and at them for having such rotten attitudes toward each other.

Post by MagicMaster8, TheWrongTrousers and TracyFan4Ever on 27/07/2004

Tracy Island. Saturday. March 3rd, 2068

Kat tapped gently on the door of Elise's room.

"Come in, it's open," called Elise

Kat opened the door and went in. "I hope you don't mind, but I thought you might like some company." She went over to where Elise was sitting. "I'm Katie-Jane Williamson, Kat for short," she said, holding out her hand.

Elise took the proffered hand. "Hi, Elise Collins," Elise replied, shaking Kat's hand.

"How are you feeling?" Kat asked. "We have all heard how you saved Mr Tracy's life."

"I am still pretty bruised and sore, but I am beginning to feel better now, thank you." Elise said. She gave Kat a shrewd look. "So, Kat, how did you get to be on this island? I am assuming that you are one of the new recruits?"

Kat looked at Elise and frowned. Elise smiled and rolled her eyes.

"It's okay. I know all about International Rescue, although I have to say it came as quite a shock to find out."

"Tell me about it," Kat replied. "Well, I have been recruited as mechanic for the Tracy family boats, planes, and maybe even the Thunderbird crafts themselves eventually. I am working with Brains and Tin-Tin. Oh, but of course, you will not know everyone here yet will you? You must come down to the lounge and meet everyone."

"Oh, yes, John and Gordon both invited me to join everyone."

"I am afraid I haven't seen much of Gordon," Kat said, "but John brought me down from England for my interview and flew me back again." She went on, "He has promised to take me on to the roof and show me the stars when he returns from Thunderbird 5. I am so looking forward to that."

"Tell me, how has such a petite young girl got a job as a mechanic?" Elise asked.

Kat groaned. "How long have you got?"

Elise smiled. "Do I sense an 'oh, no, not again' question?"

Kat laughed. "Maybe I should write a placard and place it around my neck, so that I don't keep on having to tell people." She paused, looking at her watch. "If you like, we can go to the lounge now. I am sure that everyone will want to meet you and thank you themselves for saving Mr Tracy."

"Okay, Kat, I'll come. Lead on, but go slowly, please. I am not exactly skipping around just yet."

Laughing, the two women headed for the lounge.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 27/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 18:46:28 GMT

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Another squeal of delight sounded, and Gordon deftly caught the blond two-year old in his arms once more, before tossing him up again. Dominic rested his chin on his hand and grinned as he watched his son having so much fun. Virgil looked at him, and then at the child Gordon was swinging around, and shook his head. He had deliberately taken up a seat near Dominic, one of the shyer newbies, in order to, hopefully, draw him into the beginnings of a friendship. He seemed like an affable young man, who was the same age as John and a little similar in temperament. He saw Dom brush some of his long black hair from his eyes and smiled.

"I don't know how kids don't fly apart when they're tossed around like that," he said, gesturing at Joshua and Gordon.

Dominic started, but smiled shyly back. "Ack, once you're a father yourself you'll realize that kids are virtually indestructible, but only when they're having fun." Dominic said. "You wouldn't see him that brave facing the point of a needle, I'm tellin' you."

From their positions on a pair of chairs near the portraits, the two men watched as Gordon brought the child to the ground and then started to tickle his sides, causing Joshua to squeal again. Virgil chuckled at his brother's boisterous play with the young boy

"So where are you from, exactly?" Virgil said, returning his attention to Dominic. "I detect a strong twang from the Emerald Isle in your voice."

Dominic grinned as his homeland was mentioned, and turned right around to face Virgil, his shyness abating somewhat in favour of talking about home.

"Yes! I'm from Dublin, originally. Hence the strong brogue." He grinned. "But I've lived in Cork and Kerry in the South, Clare in the West, Wicklow in the East and also Tipperary, Sligo and Laois. But I went to uni up in the North, in Belfast."

"You're some traveller." Virgil said.

"Well, I had to follow me mam wherever she got jobs. She was a teacher - a wild good one, too - but she got restless easy. Hence the jumpin' around."

Just then, Kat and Elise entered the lounge. Virgil gave them a friendly wave, and they headed over to the small arc of chairs where the two men were sitting.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 27/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 18:53:29 GMT
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Elise started to lower herself onto a green sofa, when Virgil got up quickly and escorted her to his chair.

"Sorry about that, Elise," he said with a wry smile. "That sofa's not the best place to sit right now."

"Why?" Elise asked, puzzled, settling herself in his seat with a tiny groan.

"Stick around and you'll see," he replied, grinning now.

"You should have seen this place the day of Mr. Tracy's rescue!" Kat exclaimed. "Everyone scrambled for their vehicles! Scott and Dr. Tracy disappeared through a revolving wall. Now I know that it leads to Thunderbird One's hangar. And Virgil here stood by that picture of the rocket and the wall tilted up and he slid into the dark." Kat cocked her head at Dominic. "Where did you, Brandon, and Gordon go, Dominic?"

"Downstairs to a passenger lift that took us directly to Thunderbird Two's cockpit. It was quite a ride!" Dom replied.

"Those of us left behind were very tense, listening to the rescue through the portraits on the wall behind you. It was a big relief when Scott told us that you'd been taken to the hospital and they were all heading back," Kat finished.

"It must get like that a lot around here," Elise commented, looking around the room, not really believing what she had been told.

"Yeah, it has been like that lately," Gordon said, coming over with Joshua on his shoulders. "This is probably the longest stretch of quiet time we've had for a while."

"Yeah," Virgil agreed. "I keep waiting for the other shoe to drop, and we're deluged by rescues again."

Everyone looked up as John entered the room, dressed in his uniform and sash, with his hat on his head. He grinned and put his overnight bag down on the green sofa. He was joined by Alan, dressed in his off-white sash.

"If I am lucky, this will be the last time I'll have to wear lavender!" John declared. "Tin-Tin just took my measurements for the new uniform!"

"Oooh!" Virgil quipped. "No more pastels!"

"Yes, I can hardly wait. I've been assured that my new uniform will be accented in a nice, deep purple," John said with a contented sigh. "Tin-Tin will be around to measure the rest of you soon. Then you can choose your colors. I think she's doing Callie right now."

"I'm sticking with off-white," Alan said. "Tin-Tin can measure me when I get back."

"We get to choose our colors? How exciting!" Kat said eagerly. "Then she frowned. "What will Callie wear?"

"Civvies for now, I think," Virgil said, moving over to the desk. "No use in making her a uniform when she's going to get a new one on her return.

"Yeah, no one will be seeing her but us IR folk anyway," John agreed. He looked at his watch. "I hope she gets here soon; we blast off in less than 10 minutes."

Post by Tikatu on 28/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 18:59:37 GMT
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Saturday, March 3, 2068; 1:45 p.m.; Tracy Villa Lounge

John started to grow concerned. "Callie's going to put this a little too close for comfort."

She ran into the lounge with her suitcase full of clothes. "Sorry, John. Tin-Tin wanted to take my measurements for the new uniform. I decided on the neon aqua look for the shirt. Anyway, I'm here, and I'm rarin' to go!"

"Good to hear it. I'm glad to see how eager you are about going up to Thunderbird 5. You'll love it."

"It'll be amazing to see, since I never saw it at all while working at the International Space Station."

Virgil smiled. "Well, it's nearly time. It'll be nice to have a Tracy back at the space station again. This time, though, you get to train someone about the controls, functions, and the like."

"And something tells me," said John, "that Callie will be just fine once she gets all the controls mastered."

Callie blushed slightly. "I don't know if I can do it in just a month, but I can certainly try." She looked at Elise and said, "Miss Collins, I want to get to know you better, but today's just not the day for me."

"I understand," Elise said with a smile. "Now be careful going up there."

Alan looked at the clock. "It's time to go."

"Right," said Virgil as he nodded. "Have a nice trip, you three, and Callie, just relax and enjoy the ride."

"Yes, sir."

Virgil pressed a button behind the desk, allowing the sofa to go down on a hydraulic lift.

Callie turned around and noticed another sofa going up. "What's that for?"

"That sofa takes the place of the one we're sitting on now," said Alan. "Some people would get suspicious if they saw an open floor and no sofa."

The sofa came to a rest on an open railroad car, which traveled down a long corridor to the Thunderbird 3 hangar. When the car came to a stop underneath the space rocket, the sofa was lifted into the lounge level of the ship by the same hydraulic lift used to lower it.

John stood up and said, "Take up launch positions."

"F.A.B.," Alan said.

Callie was a little confused. "What does this 'F.A.B.' mean?"

"It's just our code for 'Roger' or 'Will do.'"

"I may have a hard time getting used to saying that." She took one of the seats and fastened the belt around her waist. "Tell me, Alan, how long does it take on average for Thunderbird 3 to get to the space station?"

"It takes about 3.5 hours in standard acceleration." Alan raised an eyebrow. "Oh, by the way, one of the reasons you've never seen Thunderbird Five is that the ISS is in geosynchronous low Earth orbit. Five is in geostationary high orbit. There's no way you could have seen it."

John took an elevator up to the main control room of Thunderbird 3 and sat down at the controls. "Thunderbird 3 to base. Ready for blast-off."

Virgil spoke into the microphone. "You're clear to go, John. Good luck."

"Stand by for blast off." He pressed a button, and the engines quickly fired up. "Lift-off." He pressed another button, causing the space rocket to lift into the sky through the hole in the center of the Round House.

Inside, Callie felt a slight increase in pressure. "Must admit, it's not half as bad as some of the lift-offs I've been a part of."

"Once you get used to it, it'll become second nature."

John spoke to them over the intercom. "We'll be leaving Earth's atmosphere in 10 seconds. Callie, join Alan in coming up to the control room. We're going to show you how to work the controls."

"Yes--I mean, F.A.B."

Alan laughed lightly. "You're getting used to it already."

The pair took the elevator to the control room to join John.

John went over all the controls carefully. "You never know when you might need to go to 10 G in an emergency situation."

"Like you had to do with the first Sun Probe mission," Callie said.

"Right," said Alan. "Even at that speed, it took us nearly three days to reach it."

Callie looked at every button to make sure she was ready to fly it soon. "So, when it's time for one of us to switch with the other, the third person will pilot Thunderbird 3?"

"Not quite yet," said John. "We'll have to get you on the simulator when we get back to Earth. And in normal switch-overs, Scott's usually piloting our way up. It puts a little less pressure on us."

Alan smiled. "Don't worry, Callie. Once you've got the training covered, we can fly each other and take a little pressure off Scott."

John sent out a call to the space station. "Thunderbird 3 to Thunderbird 5. Approaching space station."

Braman responded, "Docking. Permission. Granted."

"Thanks, Braman."

"Uh, who?" asked Callie.

"Braman, Brains's robot. Since Alan came to Earth to visit Dad, Braman's had to keep tabs on all transmissions around the world."

"I guess Braman will go home as well?"

Alan nodded. "I'll be taking him back to the base. He's earned a vacation."

"Okay, you two," said John. "Take the seats here and buckle up. We're about ready to dock."

"F.A.B.," Alan and Callie said in unison, causing a giggle between them.

John moved the rocket around to where its nosecone fit into the airlock hole of the space station. It only took a couple of minutes for Thunderbird 3 to complete its docking procedure. "Well, we're here." He talked into the microphone again. "Braman, we're here. Open airlock please."

"Open. Airlock."

When the airlock opened, Callie's eyes widened in disbelief. "Wow..."

John said, "Callie, welcome to Thunderbird 5."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 29/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:02:24 GMT
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Tracy Island, Saturday, March 3, 2068

Elise watched as Callie sat on the sofa next to John and Alan. John looked at Kat and smiled. "See you in a month's time, Kat."

"Okay, bye for now and have a good trip. Bye, Callie." Kat replied.

The sofa began its descent, to be quickly replaced by an identical one.

Elise gasped. Virgil smiled. "See what I mean."

Virgil came over to talk to Elise and Dominic. Kat went down on her knees to Joshua. "Hi, little one. Shall we go and watch Thunderbird 3 take off?"

"Anyone else coming?" she called.

Although Virgil and Gordon had seen Thunderbird 3 take off many times, they agreed to join Kat, Elise, Dominic and Joshua.

Just as they were about to leave, Tin-Tin came in.

"Ah, Kat, just the person I was looking for. I want to take your measurements."

Virgil laughed. "Just put 'tiny'."

Kat gave him a look, but just before she could speak, Virgil put his hands in the air. "Sorry, just teasing."

Kat gave Tin-Tin a wry smile. "Guess I am getting used to all this teasing. Tin-Tin, could you possibly measure me after Thunderbird 3 has taken off? I really would like to see the launch."

Tin-Tin smiled, "Why yes, of course. It is certainly a sight worth seeing. Come back to my room afterwards."

They all stood and watched at the mighty rocket appear from the centre of the Round House. Joshua wasn't too sure about this and buried his face in his father's shoulder.

Elise and Kat looked on in wonderment. Virgil smiled at them. "It does seem amazing for the first time, doesn't it?" They both agreed.

"Well," Kat said, "I must go and be measured. See you guys later." And she left Virgil and Gordon to escort Elise, Dominic and Joshua back to the lounge.

Tin-Tin looked at Kat's measurements. "Well, I won't need much material for your uniform. What colour trim would you like?"

"Green, please. Either Emerald Green or perhaps a darker green, say Forest Green."

Emerald Green was decided upon and Kat left Tin-Tin to try and find out where the rest had gone. She found the lounge empty for the moment. She wasn't too sure what to do next. She thought that maybe she should find Brains. Even if he didn't actually need her, maybe she could watch him work.

She first looked in at the boat pen; there was no sign of him. She wandered down to the planes, but he wasn't there either. Okay, Brains, she thought to herself, then you must be in the laboratory.

Not thinking about knocking first, Kat opened the door.

"Hey, Brains," she said excitedly, "I've just said goodbye to John and Callie and watched Thunder..." She stopped and looked embarrassed as she saw that Brains had visitors. Gordon and Virgil were talking to him.

"Hello," said Virgil smiling. "Come and join us, we were just looking at the plans for Brains latest invention."

"I just wondered if you wanted any help, Brains," Kat asked, "but I can come back later."

"Kat, don't go on our account," Gordon said. "I am sure you would want to see Brains's latest Thunderbird?"

Kat stood between Virgil and Gordon and leaned over the plans.

"It's a hydrofoil, Kat," Brains said. "It will be carried in the pod with Thunderbird 4."

"Gosh, what a brilliant idea! I can't wait until I can work on it."

"Work on it?" Brains said, "I think that maybe you could help me build it."

Virgil laughed. "This I must see, you working alongside Brains, little and large."

Kat glared at him. "Just because I am small, doesn't mean that I can't do the job," she replied angrily.

Gordon smiled. "Say, Virgil, I think you may have upset the lady."

Kat looked at Virgil. "You still can't get over the fact that I can work as hard as Brains, can you?"

"I'm sorry, Kat, I didn't mean to. I was only teasing." Virgil said.

Kat turned away and continued talking to Brains.

"Gosh, Brains, it would be wonderful to actually help build it. I can't wait to start."

"Well, I think that now John and Callie have left, maybe we can start work, but it will have to fit around your training."

Virgil walked over to Kat, "Kat, I apologise. I must have sounded rude, and that is the last thing I want to appear to be. No hard feelings?" he asked.

"I accept your apology, Virgil, and no hard feelings," Kat replied, "but also please no more remarks about my size. I can get very irritated, and I can give some very caustic replies, as no doubt you may remember from Lady Penelope's New Year's Eve party. I just can't stand people who are forever talking about my size."

Virgil smiled at her. "Okay, the subject of tiny mechanics is closed. I will say no more about it." But he added, "I guess I have never seen so petite a young woman doing a man's job."

Kat glared at him. "Okay, okay, I am sorry!" Virgil laughed, raising his hands in the air in mock terror.

"Virgil, I think we had better go," Gordon said, "before you get yourself into more trouble."

With that the two young men left Brains and Kat to continue discussing the new Thunderbird.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 29/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:25:30 GMT
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Monday, March 5th, 2068, 7AM EST; Tracy Industries Washington D.C offices

Mrs. Lena Matumbo always enjoyed arriving in her office an hour early. The quiet allowed her to get into the rhythm of the workday. She first checked her voice mail for messages. There were only two this morning, a reminder of a meeting of department heads and a call from one of her employees, letting her know he would not be in, due to a family emergency. She then turned on her computer and went to her email.

The program she had developed that automatically scanned the messages for viruses (and set them aside for tracing) quickly checked her inbox, then chirped at her, letting her know the scan was complete and as usual, no viruses were found. Once the program was in place and the viruses already detected were traced to the source, no one has dared try to infect the Tracy computers, she thought with great satisfaction. She opened the oldest message and began reading, taking notes and sending replies.

Thirty minutes later, she sat up in surprise. In her mailbox was an email addressed to Jeff Tracy. Quickly she scanned the rest of the messages and found another one, also addressed to the CEO. She set them aside in a private 'For Eyes Only' type file, and continued to check the rest of her messages. Near the end of them, she found a third, addressed to one of the VPs. She shook her head and added it to the file, then finished checking her own messages.

When her staff arrived at eight, she called them into her office for a quick meeting. When they settled down, she said, "I found some emails in my box not addressed to me. I want each of you to check your boxes as soon as you get to your desks and de scans are complete, and see if you find any of de same. If you do, don't open dem. Just forward dem to me, den delete dem."

One of her staff spoke up. "I found one yesterday, while you were out. I saved it, and forgot to tell you when you returned."

"Okay, Michelle. Forward it to me and any others you may have gotten since den. Has anyone else gotten any such emails so far?" Everyone shook their heads. "Den your first order of business is to check your boxes. Once you have done dat and forwarded any misdirected messages you find to me, start your normal day." A few chuckles greeted her last statement, and she grinned at them. "I know, I know, normal isn't an applicable word to dis job, but since unusual is normal for us, it works for me. Now, get to your desks and make de rest of de departments happy; and do me proud, like you 'normally' do."

Once her team had gone to their desks, she turned to her computer and wrote a priority email to everyone in the building, asking them to do the same thing she told her staff. An hour later, she had twenty more emails, some addressed to Jeff Tracy, some to his immediate subordinates and the rest to various members of the Tracy family. She opened them only to see to whom they were sent. She frowned as she found different addresses on them, but only one on each email.

Why would dis be happening? It makes no sense. She started by arranging them in order from the oldest to the newest, and noticed the first email was sent two days after the crash that put Jeff Tracy in the hospital. The first emails were sent to the Tracy's personal email addresses, then to their business ones and finally to other people at Tracy Industries. Hmm. Someting happened wit de Tracy personal mailboxes, linking dem to de mailboxes at de business locations? Dis is strange. Well, I won't solve dis just sitting here.

She got to work, writing a program that would trace each email to find the source of the diversion to other locations. She also called some of the VPs to see if they had gotten their emails.

Each one she was able to contact had replied in the affirmative. She told them she was tracking down the source of the problem and would let them know when the trouble was located and corrected. Then it was time for the department head meeting.

When she returned from the meeting two hours later, she decided to quickly check on the progress of the trace, before heading to lunch. She found five more emails that had gone to five separate locations as well as - probably - to their intended destinations. She opened them to check the addresses, and some words in the messages leaped out at her. She gasped, her appetite gone, as she read the emails and realized the truth.

Jeff Tracy is de head of International Rescue!

Post by Hobbeth on 29/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:27:46 GMT

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Monday, March 5th, 2068, 1:00PM; Tracy Industries Washington D.C. offices

The phone rang, bringing Lena out of her contemplations. She answered, bringing her thoughts quickly back to the here and now. One of the other supervisors whom she had contacted wanted to know if she had made any progress, and she told him what little she could. After she hung up, a rumble from her stomach told her to get something to eat. Might as well. Dere's notting much I can do until de trace is complete. She locked the program from prying eyes, got her purse out of a drawer, grabbed her jacket, and left.

When she returned an hour later, she had phone messages to take care of. She did so, quickly and efficiently, and then turned to her computer. Four more emails had been transferred to her that went to people in error and she added them to the others. She then checked the program and found that the trace was closing in on the source of the problem. So she left her office to check on her staff and see how they were doing.

Few problems had been called in and all had been dealt with very efficiently. She was proud of her staff. They were well trained and creative enough to find solutions to odd problems. They all had a laugh when one of the staff told of a call from someone who couldn't get a particular website to come up. It turned out that the person was misspelling one part of the url, and was getting a children's website with some of the goofiest sounds they'd ever heard. "Imagine, two websites so diametrically different, yet so similar in urls," the employee said, still chuckling.

"It's a mind boggler, all right," Lena answered, smiling. "Well, good ting it was simple to figure out. I'm glad it's been a quiet day for you all. If you need me for anything, I'll be in my office." She turned and headed in that direction, feeling refreshed by the fifteen-minute interlude.

When she got inside her office, her computer was chiming, signalling that it had tracked down the source. She opened the program and read the codes easily. "Well, isn't dat someting? De problem originated at de Tracy home. Now, tink, Lena. Who do I contact about dis who would be dere to take care of dis?" She sat back in her chair, pondering.

Hmm. I remember someone . . . Hiram somebody. It took her several minutes and rejections of several variations of the last name before she had it. Hackenbacker! She immediately went into the address file and looked up his name. When she found it, she started working on a priority email to him, taking her time to word it carefully.

"Mr. Hackenbacker, I am Lena Matumbo, head of the computer I&M department at Tracy Industries in Washington D.C.," she wrote. "A glitch has developed in the system that has caused

several emails to also go to mailboxes other than the ones they were addressed to. I notified all employees here and had them forward any they received. I have received about two dozen, so far.

The program I created to trace the cause has in fact located it in a server at the Tracy home. Since some of the emails contain what appears to be highly sensitive information, I feel that this should be checked out ASAP. Please respond as soon as you get this.

Lena Matumbo"

Post by Hobbeth on 29/07/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:29:57 GMT
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Tracy Island, Tuesday, March 6th 2068 12:15 a.m.

With the excitement of Thunderbird 3's launch over, quiet had once again returned to the island. But Virgil was worried and he needed to talk to Scott. Elise had now seen TB3 launch and Kat had happily given her all kinds of information, not intentionally, of course, but it was enough to make him feel uneasy. Elise wasn't part of International Rescue and he wasn't sure what his father had planned. He liked Elise, but at the present, she was a security risk.

Making his way to the lounge, he sat behind his father's desk and activated the call button for Scott's comm-link. It was 8:15 a.m. the previous day in New York. Scott was looking out over the city from the penthouse lounge window. He was about to take a drink from the cup of coffee he'd poured when his comm-link sounded.

"Hey Virgil, what's up?"

"Hi, Scott, glad you're awake. I've got a few things I need to run by you, but first, how's Dad?"

Scott gave his brother the latest update concerning their father, and was happy to see Virgil smile. "Yeah, apparently Kyrano's cooking seems to be the miracle cure for Dad at the moment! Grandma is making sure he eats every bite!"

Both the boys laughed together and then Virgil got serious. "Scott, have you any idea what's going on with Elise? She's doing great out here, seems to be healing well, but I'm not so sure she should be seeing all that goes on concerning IR."

Scott mulled this over in his mind for a few seconds. He'd been meaning to talk to his father about the possibility of bringing Elise on board as another pilot. He just hadn't found the right moment.

Virgil continued talking. "I mean, Scott, she's seen TB3 launch and heard all kinds of information. I know she's overwhelmed with it, but she's also convinced she's returning to New York and her job in 3 weeks! She's a security risk with what she knows, and I know those newshounds will start to

bug her again."

Scott took a deep breath and replied, "I know, Virg, I know."

He remained silent for a few seconds, and then added, "I've been meaning to talk to Dad. After what she's been through, I don't think it's wise for her to return to New York."

"What are you thinking Scott?" asked Virgil.

"I think Dad should bring her on board as an IR pilot."

It was now Virgil's turn to be silent for a few minutes. "Well?" Scott pushed. "What do you think?"

"If it's okay with Dad, then I guess it's okay with me. It's Elise you may have the problem with! She was quite adamant about NOT moving here if you remember?"

Scott chuckled a little. "Yeah, I remember, but she'll come around, I know she will. Listen, I'll talk to Dad as soon as possible and get back with you."

"Sure Scott. No problem. Tell Dad I love him, and give a hug to Grandma and Dianne and the kids, tell them I love them too."

"I will, little bro, I will. Goodnight."

Scott signed off. He'd have to talk to his father today; it couldn't be put off any longer. As Scott prepared for the office, Virgil sat thoughtfully in his father's chair. Things were certainly changing around here.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 02/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:33:49 GMT
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Monday March 5th. 11.45pm. Cliff House, Tracy Island.

Brandon stood on the top floor balcony of the cliff house, at the front of his apartment with his arms crossed and his feet spread shoulder-wide. His gaze was fixed on the horizon, and he watched as a few wispy clouds drifted across the bright moon.

I'm really beginning to settle in here, he thought, and I want to start training as soon as possible. It will be a great challenge, and it'll be great being able to help people like this. One corner of his mouth quirked up in a half smile, and a light gust of wind ruffled his short hair and blew at his clothes.

His gaze shifted to his left as one of the doors of the apartment to the left of his opened, and Christopher stepped out onto the balcony. The two men shared a curt nod - be polite; you

promised Callie, Brandon thought - and they stood in silence, both watching to sky above, neither mentioning the pending tennis match they were to play.

Suddenly, Brandon heard the unmistakable tones of Dominic saying, "To Callie!" This was followed by three female voices repeating the same. The he heard Nikki - it was definitely her - saying, "To the Tracy family!" which was again repeated, and was then followed up by the another female voice - no doubt Kat - saying, "To International Rescue!" and was once more repeated by her companions. He shared a sideways glance with Christopher before both men walked to the balcony rail and looked down.

Kat, Nikki, Elise and Dom stood holding tumblers filled with a clear, fizzy liquid. Beside Nikki sat a bottle - soda; ingenious, Brandon thought - and the four were laughing and chatting as if they were old friends. It's good to see the group gelling together. When he moved one of his feet, he kicked a stray pebble, which bounced down to the balcony below. Nikki looked up and smiled, and Kat waved. Elise toasted them with her glass.

"Come on down, youse two," Dominic said, "join in the celebrations."

"All right then," he called down.

He headed to the stairs, followed by Christopher. Dominic appeared from his apartment after going in to get more glasses and handed both of them one. Once they were topped up with soda, Nikki set the plastic bottle back down.

"What shall we toast now?" she asked.

Christopher raised his glass.

"To old friends."

The group chorused his words, and clinked their glasses together before taking a drink. Then Brandon lifted his.

"To new friends."

"To new friends!"

They drank again, and Brandon surveyed the group around them. Each face looked determined and eager; even Elise, who would be leaving the island sooner or later. To new friends, indeed.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 02/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:36:22 GMT
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Monday, March 5, 2068, 10:28 a.m., somewhere in the North Sea

The skipper of the fishing trawler Saucy Lady looked out to sea. The gathering storm clouds made it look darker than it would have been at this time of day. The iron-grey waters of the North Sea seemed to merge with the low menacing clouds, giving the impression that they were cocooned in a large bowl of darkness. The wind was biting cold and he knew that the water would be freezing as well. Large waves were crashing over the bows of the ship as it pitched and tossed helplessly.

They had been fishing for more than a week, and the catches were not good. In fact, they seemed to be the worst for a very long time, hence the reason for staying out as long as possible. The weather forecast that morning had been for heavy weather and the skipper knew the problems of storms in the North Sea; he had been a fisherman all his life, it was the only life he had ever known. His crew gathered on the dangerously wet and slippery deck. They were all seasoned fishermen, all family men, and this was their very livelihood.

"We can always head back early, if the storm begins to break," he told them.

The storm hit earlier than had been forecast. It broke with such ferocity that it alarmed the skipper. He had seen many storms in his lifetime, but none as bad as this appeared to be. Miles from land, they had no option but to try and weather it out. Whilst cranking the heavy chain to wind in their catch, they were all horrified to see that tangled in the nets was a moored mine, a relic of World War Two. Just the slightest touch from any of the spikes would blow them sky high. To make matters worse, somehow the chain of the mine had fouled the propeller and the Saucy Lady was drifting along helplessly, lashed by both heavy rain and seas.

"Skipper!" one of the trawler men called out, but his breath was taken by the howling gale and his words disappeared as if he had never spoken.

Slipping and sliding on the dangerously wet deck, the trawler men tried to free the bomb free by cutting the chain, but the more they tried the more hopeless it became. The Saucy Lady was beginning to roll and pitch in a frightening and dangerous way, and with no propeller they were absolutely helpless.

The skipper waved his arms indicating that they were to leave it where it was. His philosophy was that left where it was, the mine would not come any closer, but just be dragged along behind them. He hoped and prayed that this would prove to be the case.

Now as the skipper surveyed the storm, and the mine pulling along behind them, he felt suddenly so very helpless. He had a crew of men, all of them with families to take care of. He wasn't sure if the Navy or indeed the Life Boat crew would be able to help them.

He went down below deck and ordered the young man on the radio to contact the Navy.

"Mayday, Mayday!" the young man almost shouted into the radio.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 04/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:39:30 GMT
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Monday, March 5, 11:13 a.m., World Navy Naval base, Lossiemouth, Scotland

"We've picked up a mayday from the fishing trawler, Saucy Lady, Commander," the communications specialist informed his superior. "They're in heavy seas and seemed to have pick up a... mine? It's wrapped around their propellers and they can't get it loose. Engines stopped dead."

"A mine, ye say? Mus' be one o' those ol' Werld Wair Tue moored ordnances. They were nae all accounted far after th' wair. E'en now they kin be a real danger," Commander Charles McDivitt explained. "Bettair have th' Excelsior set owt wi' thair explosives specialists abard. Usually wit' those mines, whair thair's one, thair's mair t' be found."

"Aye-aye, sir," the radioman said as he passed on the orders to the Excelsior.

Monday, March 5, 11:20 p.m., Thunderbird Five

"John?" Callie called to her teacher as she listened to the myriad messages that murmured over the airwaves and ended up coming out of the speakers in Thunderbird Five's control room.

"Yes, Callie?" John moved towards the speaker system, his ears already trying to catch what had piqued his student's attention.

"There was a mayday out of the North Sea, giving coordinates. It was a fishing trawler that picked up a... a... mine." Callie looked at John with a puzzled expression. "Mine? Are those the explosive devices that were laid in the sea to disable ships?"

"Yes. Let me hear what you've got."

Callie played the mayday over again and found that this time, an acknowledgment of the mayday had been sent from the naval station at Lossiemouth. John frowned.

"Their ships are fast, but experience with mines has shown that where there's one, there are usually more. Especially with the kind they're dealing with."

"Those things are over a century old! How dangerous could they be?"

"Very dangerous. Most of them are still live and they're hard to spot in that particular piece of ocean."

"The Navy has dispatched a ship from Lossiemouth to aid the trawler," Callie told him. "They should be able to deal with it."

"Just the same, put a priority flag on that one and continue to monitor it. I'd like to be prepared if

we're needed on that one."

"F-A-B," Callie said and turned back to do as she had been instructed.

Post by Tikatu on 04/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:41:19 GMT
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Monday, March 5, 2068; Thunderbird 5; 11:50 p.m.

Callie continued listening to the transmissions and started to grow concerned. "John, should we contact base to let them know what's going on?"

John thought for a moment, and then nodded. "It wouldn't hurt to give Virgil a heads up. The situation sounds like something we just might get called in on."

"So, who's going to make the call? You or me?"

"You should, Callie. This will be good practice for you in understanding Thunderbird 5's main function."

Callie pressed the button to contact Tracy Island. "Thunderbird 5 to base. Thunderbird 5 to base, come in, please."

*****Same time at Tracy Island, Tracy Villa Lounge*****

Virgil noticed the clock on his father's desk. The sooner Dad's back here, the better, he thought uncomfortably. He saw John's eyes flashing on the portrait. "Uh-oh, I hope it's not the time for a rescue, not with all the new recruits." He pressed the button on the desk to activate the radio. "Go ahead, John." To his surprise, it was Callie's face and not John's. "Oh, sorry, Callie. I thought it was John."

"It's okay, Virgil. John's letting me practice this part of the job. Speaking of which, we wanted to let you know of a possible situation in the North Sea."

"Really? Okay, Callie, give me as much detail as you can."

"Apparently a fishing ship in the North Sea has caught a live World War II land mine. It's sent out a distress call to the Navy, and we're keeping track of the transmissions."

"F-A-B. Keep an ear out and let me know if things start to escalate. I'll have Gordon prep Thunderbird 4, just in case, and have Alan get the cold weather gear ready, too."

"F-A-B, Virgil." Callie's image was replaced with John's portrait.

Virgil contacted Gordon and Alan via their telecomms. "Alan, Gordon, come to the lounge immediately."

The two younger brothers arrived fast. "What's going on, Virg?" asked Alan.

"We've got a possible situation developing. John and Callie are listening to constant transmissions between a fishing vessel in the North Sea and the Navy. Gordon, have Thunderbird 4 in its pod and underneath Thunderbird 2, ready for launch if we get the call."

"Sure, Virg," Gordon said.

"Alan," said Virgil, "get as much of the cold weather gear ready. We may need all the new recruits on this one."

"Do you think they're ready, Virg?" asked Alan.

"We can't wait for them to be 'ready.' They'll have to use the skills they already possess." Virgil smiled ruefully. "If this situation turns into a rescue, they'll be getting some on-the-job training."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 06/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:44:04 GMT

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Monday, March 5, 2068, 12:35 p.m. the bridge of the WNS Excelsior, in the North Sea

"Any sign of them on radar?" Captain Ellen Stewart asked her radar operator.

"Nae, sair. No' yet," came the answer. The bridge remained quiet for a few moments. All the Navy personnel were toggled out for the cold, stormy swells that they were experiencing right now. The storm was fierce, and visibility was low.

"Sair!" the radar operator called. Captain Stewart hurried over to him. "I hae' a contact! Aye, 'tis th' Saucy Lady."

"We have audio contact again, Captain," the communications officer said. "They're pretty far off course."

"We're getting close to the gas rigs, aren't we, Morton?" the Captain asked her executive officer.

"Yes, sir, we are," he returned. "I hope we can get to them before...."

"Sir!" the sonar officer called, her face pale. Both the captain and the exec strode over to see what the sonar officer had to show them. A line of white blobs, six or seven of them, were standing between the Excelsior and the Saucy Lady.

"They're close to the surface, Cap'n, but I'd lay wager that those are more of the mines," the sonar operator said.

"Radar? Do you have a reading on this?" Captain Stewart called.

"Wait... aye, sair," he said. "Six, nae, se'en o' th' bloody things, jus' b'low th' surface. An' betwixt us an' th' Saucy Lady."

"Damn!" the captain swore softly. She and the exec drew over to the plotting table. "Transfer readings to the plotter. Both sonar and radar." Seven distinct white blobs appeared on the dark surface, along with two larger blobs, one blue representing the Excelsior and one red for the Saucy Lady. The blue approached the white ones at a considerable speed, while the red one moved slowly with the waves. And then off in the corner... another larger something appeared.

"Tha' new readin' is a gas drillin' platform, sair," the radar officer informed them.

"And both the Saucy Lady, with its mine, and those seven others, are heading right for it," Morton said. The exec and the captain exchanged a look.

"Communications! Update Saucy Lady on the new mines. We can't get to them until we disarm this group. Tell them about the gas rig, and then... put out a call for International Rescue. They're the only ones who can save those fishermen now."

Post by Tikatu on 06/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:48:40 GMT
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Tuesday, March 6, 2068; 1 a.m.; Thunderbird 5

Callie continued monitoring the transmissions between the fishing vessel and the WNS Excelsior when she finally heard the call she had waited for. "World Navy Ship Excelsior calling International Rescue. Do you copy, International Rescue? This is an emergency."

She yelled, "John, this is it!"

John rushed to the control console. "Are they calling us?"

"The Navy ship Excelsior is. You want to take this?"

"You take it for now. If it's too much, I'll jump in, okay?" He smiled at her encouragingly.

"F-A-B, John." Callie spoke into the microphone. "This is International Rescue, Excelsior. Go ahead."

The communications officer spoke gravely. "The fishing vessel Saucy Lady has accidentally

caught a live mine in its net. There are seven other loose mines between us and the trawler. A bad storm in the area is pushing both the ship and the mines toward a gas-drilling platform. We are trying to deal with the mines, but we can't reach the trawler in time. Can you assist?"

Callie said, "Okay, Excelsior, we'll send help as quickly as possible."

"Thank you, International Rescue. Excelsior out." When the transmission stopped, the communications officer looked at Captain Stewart. "Help is on the way, sir."

"Good. I just hope the Thunderbirds can get to that ship before it's too late."

Back in Thunderbird Five, Callie noticed that John had been scribbling down notes as she was talking with the Excelsior. He motioned her away from the microphone. "I'll take it from here, Callie. First, I'm going to let Virgil know we got the call. That way he can put things in motion." John moved over to the mike with an easy, confident stride. "Then I'll hail the trawler and find out some more details."

He glanced at her. "Listen, Callie. Listen and learn." He flicked a switch. "Thunderbird Five to base. Come in, base."

*****Same date, 10 minutes later; Tracy Villa Lounge*****

Virgil saw John's portrait eyes flash. Pressing a button to activate the radio, he said, "Come in, Thunderbird 5."

"Vee, we just got a call from the WNS Excelsior. They were sent out to help that trawler that got tangled up with the mine. Seems that a number of mines came up with that one and Excelsior can't reach the trawler, which is headed for one of the gas rigs out there."

"Okay, Jay. Can you get us more details?" Virgil asked, pressing the button to send out the emergency signal.

"Just about to do that, base. Thunderbird Five out."

John turned to Callie momentarily as he began looking for a frequency to reach the Saucy Lady. "Did you notice that I used 'Vee' when I was speaking to him? No names. Right now we're using first initials as code name. You would be Cee, which may be a problem."

"Because of Christopher," she realized. "Hmm... What if I used my middle name, Louise?"

"Call you EI? or Cee EI? Oh, my. That's rather funny. Seal. I can see we're going to have to come up with a different system. I'll bring it up to Scott when this rescue is over." He turned back to the microphone. "International Rescue calling Saucy Lady. Come in, Saucy Lady, over."

*****Monday, March 5, 2068; 1:15 p.m.; aboard the Saucy Lady*****

The crew of the Saucy Lady were all below as the trawler itself weathered the storm.

The young man at the radio heard a message he didn't expect. "I can't believe it!"

"What is it?" asked the captain.

"It's International Rescue! They're asking us to respond!"

"I'll take the call." He took the speaker and said, "International Rescue, this is Captain James Bowers of the Saucy Lady. How did you know we needed help?"

"Greetings, Captain Bowers. The Excelsior radioed us with your situation and asked us to assist. What is your current status?" John said crisply.

"The mine we picked up in our nets is now bobbing off our stern. Its chain got wrapped around our propeller and stopped us dead in the water," Bowers told him. "Not that we're not moving. This storm is pushing us along. The swells are very high and I have all my men below decks."

"Are there any injuries?"

"Nothing major so far. Mostly frostbite and some hypothermia."

"What's your ship's complement?"

"Our complement stands at 12." Bowers was heartened by the professional-sounding voice coming out of the speakers.

"Has any attempt been made to cut the mine free?"

"Yes, we tried. But between the storm and the thickness of the chain, we were unable to cut it loose. I wasn't going to risk losing a man overboard in this gale."

John nodded, unseen by Bowers. "Good thinking, Captain. Give me your current position. We will launch within the next fifteen minutes."

"Can you give us a ETA? We're getting close to the gas rigs."

John consulted a computer screen. "Our first craft should be there within the hour. Our main rescue craft, however, takes a little longer. Hang in there, Captain. There's hope yet."

Bowers sighed with relief. "Thank you. International Rescue. We'll be looking for you."

"We'll be there, Captain. International Rescue out."

*****Tuesday, March 6, 1:25 a.m.; Thunderbird 5*****

Callie asked, "John, do you think we can help them in time?"

John took in a deep breath and expelled it through his nose. "As long as they stay below, they should be safe enough from the storm. It's the rigs that worry me." He looked Callie in the eye. "It

will be a near thing, I'll tell you that." He turned back to the microphone. "Now to update brother Virgil on the particulars."

Callie turned away and whispered, "I hope they can be saved in time." She looked at John and said, "Is there anything I can do at this point?"

"Not really, just continue to listen and learn. We'll keep monitoring the frequency and I may have to put out a hail to the closest gas rigs as well. Let them know what's going on," John told her. "We may need one as a staging platform." He tuned in the frequency that put him in touch with base while Callie stood in the background listening and learning about this most important of jobs within International Rescue.

Post by Tikatu and TracyFan4Ever on 07/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:51:40 GMT
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Tuesday, March 6, 2068, 1:25 a.m. Tracy Villa lounge.

The emergency signal had sounded through the Villa and the Cliff House, waking the denizens and summoning them to the lounge. Once they were all gathered, Virgil looked over their faces, some sleepy, some eager, some concerned. Dominic and Lisa put their heads together quietly; Lisa nodding at some question that Dominic asked.

"Okay, everyone, listen up. We've gotten a call from a World Navy vessel in the North Sea, off the northeastern coast of Scotland. They were dispatched to aid a fishing trawler that pulled a live mine up in its nets. The mine's chain is wrapped around the trawler's propellers and it's dead in the water. However, pulling up one seems to have loosened some others and the Navy ship can't reach the trawler as there are several more mines blocking their way. On top of all this, there's foul weather and the fishing boat is headed for the gas drilling rigs out there."

He took a breath. "We'll need Thunderbird Four with Gordon and Brandon. You, too, Tin-Tin; the seas are such that we'll need two divers and a hand on Thunderbird Four's helm. I haven't gotten a count of how many men are on the fishing trawler, but I think that hypothermia will be a problem and Thunderbird Two's sickbay holds six at the most. So, Gordon, put Seven into pod four as well. Dom and Nikki, you'll go as medics. Alan, you're to take Thunderbird One to the Danger Zone; set up Mobile Control on one of the rigs."

"F-A-B," Gordon said as he tapped Tin-Tin and Brandon on the shoulder and they left to move the equipment around.

Alan groaned good-naturedly. "Not another drilling rig!"

"Yes. And see to it you don't lose Thunderbird One like you nearly did last time!" Virgil responded with a smile. "Any questions?"

"Uh, excuse me, Virgil," Nikki said hesitantly. "I haven't had any experience using the equipment in Thunderbird Seven yet."

"And I've barely scratched the surface there, so to speak," Dominic added, nodding his head. "Plus, I can't fly the thing if that's needed. I can fly, but I've not been trained on Seven."

Virgil thought for a moment, and then looked at Alan. "Okay. Alan, use a flight plan that will take you over the States instead of over Asia and stop in New York to pick up Mom. We'll make sure she's waiting for you at JFK."

"What about Scott?" Alan asked, poised to enter Thunderbird One's hangar.

"What about him? He's got work to do at corporate and someone should stay close by in case something comes up with Dad. He stays in New York. Now, get going!"

"F-A-B!" Alan called as he pressed the buttons that would take him to his older brother's Thunderbird. "I'd like to be a fly on the wall when you try to convince him to stay put, Virge," he muttered as he crossed the telescoping catwalk to Thunderbird One's cockpit.

"Okay. Does everyone have their orders?" There were nods all around, but Christopher put up a hand.

"You haven't said who is flying Thunderbird Two."

"I am, and you might as well come along to see how it's done," Virgil replied. "Plus we could probably use an extra pair of hands on the winch." He looked over at the engineer. "Brains, you have the desk. Get the information we will need from John when he comes back on and relay it to us en route."

"F-A-B, Virgil. But you're the one who will have to deal with notifying Scott and Dianne. I'm not taking the heat for that!" Brains answered. Virgil grinned.

"Don't worry. I'll be the bad guy there. Okay, people! Thunderbirds are go!"

The lounge quickly emptied of all but Kyrano, Lisa, and Kat.

"Do you mind if I stay and listen?" Kat asked. "I know I'm not much help right now...."

"I don't mind at all, Kat. In fact, I'm glad for the company," Brains replied, sitting down behind Jeff's desk. Funny how I still think of it as his, even though he's not here, he mused.

"I will brew some coffee and tea," Kyrano said as he swept out of the room.

"Oh! And I'd better head over to Dominic's apartment to keep an eye on Joshua!" Lisa said suddenly, hurrying from the lounge.

Just then, John's portrait began to beep for attention.

"Thunderbird Five to base."

"This is base. Go ahead, Thunderbird Five."

"Hi, R&D. Vee gone with the crew?" John asked.

"Yes, Jay. He's in Two and Ay's in One. Gee is taking Four, and Ay will pick up Doc on the way to the Danger Zone to man Seven. Bee, Cee, Dee, Tee, and En are along for the ride. Can I have the details?"

John relayed the details from Captain Bowers and then added, "We're going to have to do something about the Cee in Two because we also have a Cee in Five."

"And a Cee here at base most of the time as well. I will think about it," Brains said.

"F-A-B. I'm signing off with you and will contact Ay and Vee on tricircuit. Good luck, base."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Five, and thanks." John's portrait cut off.

"Now, what do we do?" Kat asked.

"Now? Now we wait."

Post by Tikatu on 07/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:54:07 GMT
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Monday 5th March 2068, 2:00 p.m. In the North Sea

The crew of the Saucy Lady huddled miserably below decks. They were unbearably cold; even with their oilskins and thermal undergarments the cold seemed to seep into their very bones.

They had managed, very precariously, to get to the galley to make some hot drinks. Now they had gathered, aware that International Rescue was on its way. Some of the men began muttering prayers under their breath. Others just sat silent, immersed in their own private thoughts. One younger man began to sing part of a hymn.

Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who biddest the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee,
For those in peril on the sea!

He finished the first verse and would have continued, but looking around at his companions, hastily coughed, and was silent. Suddenly the youngest of the men stood up, rocking slightly with the rolling of the boat.

"We are all going to die!" he almost screamed to the rest of the men. "I must do something! I can't wait here for it to happen!"

"Don't be a fool!" Captain Bowers shouted. "Sit back down here! We are safer here than on deck."

But the young man turned and lunged for the stairs leading to the deck. Several of the men tried to grab him, but it was difficult just trying to stand let alone moving quickly to try and stop him.

He began scrambling up the steps towards the deck. None of the rest of the crew was entirely sure what happened next, but a large wave crashed over the deck and swirled around the top of the stairs. The young man was flung backwards down the stairs to fall in a crumpled heap at the bottom.

"What do we do, Skipper?" one of the men asked. "We really shouldn't move him, but we can't leave him lying here."

Very, very gently they placed a board underneath him. Staggering backwards and forwards, they managed to carefully move him away from the stairwell and into the drier part below decks where they had been seated.

"Looks pretty serious," one of them remarked. They piled rugs and blankets on him to try and keep him as warm as possible.

"Well, I hope that International Rescue has medics aboard, because this fellow is going to need some treatment and fast," observed Captain Bowers.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 08/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:55:18 GMT
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Nikki felt butterflies in her stomach as Thunderbird 2 rose off of its platform. This would be her first mission and she didn't want to screw it up. She looked at the new friends who would be accompanying her on the rescue. Some of them looked nervous, whilst with some of the others; she couldn't tell how they were feeling.

Dominic looked beside him and saw the nervousness on Nikki's face. He smiled reassuringly to her. "Hey Nik. I'm sure that you'll do well on this mission."

"I hope you're right. I'm too used to being stuck in the hospital. This is all new to me. Going out on

major rescues."

"You'll get used to being out there. And after you get through the training, you'll be as good as..."

"The Tracys?" Nikki finished. Some of her nervousness had dissipated during the conversation. She continued, "You're quite lucky. You've been on a rescue already."

"Yeah, but even so, I'm still a bit nervous." Dominic put his hand on Nikki's shoulder. "Don't worry. Dianne will be there with us every step of the way. Plus once you get to work, your mind will be solely on the job. You'll have no time to feel nervous."

Nikki smiled. "I've heard that line before. A group of us were told that by a senior nurse on our first day. I've also used that comforting line on new nurses."

"And it worked, right?"

"Yes, it worked and it's working now," Nikki answered.

"Glad to hear it." Dominic smiled before he turned to face towards the front.

"Thanks, Dominic."

"No problem," Dominic replied.

Post by Nikki-Browneyes11 on 08/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:58:42 GMT

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Monday, March 5th, 2068, 9:23 a.m. JFK Heliport VIP waiting area, New York City

Dianne stood before the tall windows that looked out on the tarmac, looking but not seeing. Her mind was going over the rushed half-hour or so that had just passed.

"Vee! I've got to go!" Scott had shouted angrily into his telecomm as he came into the dining room. Dianne had just sat down with the children for breakfast and the denizens of the table were startled to hear him arguing with his brother. He looked up at her sharply.

"Where's your telecomm?" he asked angrily.

"In my room. I've just showered and hadn't...." she replied but before she could finish her sentence he had whipped his off and thrust it at her.

"Here! Virgil wants to talk to you!"

She took the telecomm with a look of concern then glanced down at the screen where Virgil, his

face also red with anger, looked back at her.

"Doc, there's a rescue going down in the North Sea and we need you there. Ay is on his way to pick you up at JFK heliport. He'll be there within a half hour."

"What!" she cried. "That barely gives me time to get dressed, never mind make it to JFK in time! And what about... the boss?"

"You can make it if you try, Doc. Ay will wait for you for ten minutes but no more. And Ess will be on call there." Virgil returned. "I'm already launched myself and I have Dee, En, and Seven with me. You know that En knows nothing about Seven and Dee barely knows anything. We need you, Doc."

Dianne sighed resignedly. "Okay, Vee. I'm on my way. Tell Ay I'll be there."

Virgil finally smiled a little. "F-A-B, Doc. I'll see you in the North Sea. Thunderbird Two out."

Dianne got up from the table. "Kyrano? Please fix me something that I can take along with me on the way to JFK. Kids, behave and obey Grandma. Scott, I'll need Bernie." She headed for her bedroom when Scott's voice stopped her.

"I'm going, too. Alan can stay here."

She rounded on him. "Scott, while your father's out of commission, and you're here in New York, Virgil is in charge. Now, Ah know you don't like the idea of Alan handling One, but for now, it's got to be." She stepped over to him. "Ah'd rathah not be goin' at all. But Ah have to; live are dependin' on me. Ah need someone here with yoah fathah that Ah can depend on. An' he needs someone at corporate that HE can depend on. So, please, stay here an' look aftah things. Ah'll be back aftah the rescue."

Scott glared at her all the time she spoke until she spoke of Jeff's need for someone he could depend upon. Then he sighed and looked down.

"Okay. I'll get Bernie. Are you going out in uniform?"

"Yes. My uniform is new enough not to cause comment... yet. And we both know that Bernie is trustworthy; your father wouldn't have made him an agent if he weren't."

Scott snorted a laugh. "You're right about that." He looked at his watch. "You'd better move along. Time's a' wasting."

Dianne smiled and disappeared into her room.

The ride out to the airport with Bernie was wild and crazy but he was given clearance to drop her off right in front of the VIP lounge, out on tarmac. She was very happy that Kyrano had put her coffee in a spill-proof container. The VIP lounge had been cleared, much to the grumbling of several executives who were waiting for their flights. They grumbled, that is, until they learned that a Thunderbird was on the way. Now she stood, wearing her full, new uniform, visor and hat in

place, her medical duffel over her shoulder, sipping her coffee and munching on a bagel filled with egg and cheese. She looked up as she heard the muted sounds of Thunderbird One descending to the tarmac.

"Looks like your ride is here, ma'am," said the heliport manager.

"Yes, it is. Thank you very much for your cooperation," she returned, smiling, as he held open the door for her. She scurried across the asphalt, and, handing up her duffel first, hauled herself up into Thunderbird One's cockpit.

"Good morning, Mom," Alan said cheerfully as she settled herself into the small passenger seat and buckled in.

"Good morning, son," she replied, pulling out the rest of her bagel and coffee as he lifted off.

"That smells good!" Alan said. "Got any for me?"

"As a matter of fact, yes, I do. Kyrano packed a bagel and coffee for you, too." She pulled out the travel mug and the foil-wrapped package and handed them up. "Now, what's the deal with this rescue?"

Alan sipped his coffee, and around a bite of bagel, began to brief her on the unfolding drama in the North Sea.

Post by Tikatu on 09/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 20:11:42 GMT
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North Sea, Highland Natural Gas Rig 3 (NGrig3), Operations Room.

Offshore Installation Manager Bryan Campbell looked out at the storm as it proceeded to build in strength and ferocity. Turning to his Radio Operator he voiced his concerns

"I don't like it, Stan; this is going to be rough one. I want all crew on Emergency standby. This rig has got to be secure if those waves are going to reach the height and strength that I think they will."

"Aye, sair, I've already alerted the crew and the drilling rig has been secured, I dinna see what else kin be done at..." He was suddenly interrupted by the outside radio signal.

"NG Rig 3, G' ahead"

"Highland Rig 3, this is International Rescue calling. We have been alerted by the World Navy ship Excelsior that the trawler Saucy Lady has pulled up a mine and has been rendered inoperable. She is currently drifting towards your position. The mine is tangled in her propeller and

the Navy are unable to reach her. More mines have been freed and are floating between the Excelsior and the trawler. We are sending help and will need the cooperation of the rigs in the area, but particularly yours."

Stan and Bryan immediately knew what this meant. "International Rescue, we read you loud n' clear. All emergency procedures are in place. You have access t' whatever ya' need."

"Thank you rig 3. We'll be in contact again shortly."

Stan sat back and looked at his boss. "Well, what d' ya make o' that then? International Rescue!"

Bryan was more concerned about the mines. "If that damn trawler hits this rig, we could all be blown to bits. Those mines are over 100 years old: there's no telling what damage they could cause."

Stan merely looked at him. Bryan may have a Scot's name, but his English accent was unmistakable and so was his tendency to be overwrought!

"Now, Bryan, listen t' me. That wee boat may no' even hit. The Navy and International Rescue will do everything t' prevent it. We just have t' work wi' them."

Bryan took a deep breath and sighed. "We will, Stan, that you can count on."

Up in TB5, John turned to Callie "Well, now that the closest rig has been notified, they'll contact the ones nearest to them. We're going to need landing pads and with that sea being so rough I doubt if Vee can drop Pod 4 in the water. I sure hope those mines don't blow."

Callie returned his worried look. Their unspoken words echoed the thoughts of disaster if those mines blew.

Below deck, Saucy Lady.

The crew continued to huddle together, as Mother Nature unleashed her worst above decks. The howling winds and treacherous waves pounded the fishing vessel over and over, tossing her every way possible. The men below were all scared; they all knew the risk of dying out on these waters, but it didn't make it any easier to accept.

Captain Bowers walked over to First Mate Ian Drummond. "The temperature outside is dropping. We're going to have to try to prevent 'icing up'. If we dinna try, we're going t' g' down fur sure."

Ian swallowed hard and nodded. He knew that if the steady build up of ice on the superstructures was an all too present danger out on the North Sea and it would mean capsizing was inevitable.

Although improved de-icing components had been installed on all fishing trawlers, the fact that their boat was now inoperable meant that the Dunlop De-icer had probably quit working too.

"Aye, sair, I'll make m' way t' the engine room. If the heating elements on the Dunlop pads are broke, we're gonna t' ave t' break ice off manually."

"I know, lad, I know."

Ian gave his skipper one last lingering look before turning and making his way to the engine room. The Saucy Lady continued to roll and pitch, the sound of the relentless ocean pounding on the vessel. Captain Bowers turned to his men. "Right, crew, Ian has gone t' check the Dunlop heating system. We all know what kin happen if it's no' working. I want you all t' know, that no' matter what, we are no' gonna die out here! I refuse t' let any man think that! We're a crew and we're gonna make it! D' ye all understand!"

His voice was so authoritative that every man on board had no choice but to say "Aye!" even if they thought otherwise. They all knew their Captain was doing what he needed to do.

Ian made it to the engine room, and his worst fears were confirmed. The heating elements were not working. The ice had started to build up above decks. "Damn!" he muttered angrily, as he made his way back to the Captain. Passing a window, he caught a glimpse of a gas rig, very close to them, as the boat pitched forward. He hurried back to where James Bowers was standing.

"Heating elements are no' working, and there's worse..." James shot him a look of disbelief.

"Worse?"

"Aye, we're veering towards a gas rig. If that mine we're towing makes contact..." Ian didn't need to finish his sentence. James Bowers knew what it meant for him and his crew.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 09/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 20:17:48 GMT
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Monday, March 5, 2068, 2:45 p.m. local time, Highland NGRig3, The North Sea.

Alan whistled.

The flight from New York to the gas rigs of the North Sea took a total of fifteen minutes, just long enough for him to finish his coffee and bagel and to update Dianne on the situation. Now he was flying over the rig in question, trying to figure out what to do when the rest of the equipment showed up.

"There's the Saucy Lady! And I think I see the Excelsior as well!" he exclaimed as they passed overhead. Dianne looked at his monitor; all she saw from this height was a vaguely boat shaped white blob bouncing up and down.

"Man, these swells are something else!" he exclaimed again. "There's no way that Virgil's gonna be able to put the pod down on the surface. It's just too rough."

"Where else is he going to put it?" Dianne asked, peering over his shoulder again. "It doesn't look like that rig is going to be big enough for Thunderbird One, never mind adding Thunderbird Two!"

"I know. Let me talk to the guys here at Rig 3 and see what we can do," Alan said. He turned on his wireless connection. "Highland Rig 3, this is International Rescue Thunderbird One calling. Come in, NGRig3."

A Scot's accented voice replied, "NGRig3 here, g'ahead Thunderbird One. My, but ye lads're fast!"

Alan chuckled. "I'm afraid I'm only the advance party. The rest of the heavy equipment is a good hour behind me. I'm trying to get a feel for the situation. Now, I plan on landing on your rig to set up my equipment, but our other vessel, which is a whole lot bigger, will need a place to land, too. Are any of the other rigs in the vicinity bigger than yours?"

"None 'r big enow fer a runway, if tha's wha' yer askin'," the voice told Alan.

"Not a problem. We just need helipad space, not runway," Alan replied.

"Then ye'll fin' Rig5'll hae th' space ye need, lad."

"Many thanks. Can you contact Rig5 for me? I need to drop off a colleague who'll be needed on our other vessel."

"Aye, that'll be nae problem." There was silence for a few minutes then the voice returned. "Rig 5 reports they're ready fer yer colleague. I'll gi' ye th' coordinates." The upload took but a few seconds and Alan, after running it through the GPS, entered the coordinates in his directional computer.

"Thanks again, Rig 3. I'll return momentarily. Thunderbird One out."

Dianne shrugged on her jacket again and zipped it up, resettling her hat and visor on her head and face.

"Seems I've been doing a lot of this lately," she commented. "Jumping in and out of Thunderbird One...."

Alan laughed. "Well, at least this time I can land before you have to jump. Not like I understand things were in New Hampshire."

"Right," Dianne replied, her mood suddenly somber. Then she reached up and kissed Alan on the cheek. "Love you, kiddo. See you again soon."

"F-A-B, Mom," he said, smiling softly. "Highland Gas Rig 5, this is International Rescue Thunderbird One, requesting permission to land. One passenger disembarking."

"This is NGRig5, Thunderbird One. Permission granted and welcome. We'll take good care of your colleague."

Alan touched down lightly cutting back on the VTOLs, and Dianne climbed out using the rope ladder, and then ran for the lowest door in the superstructure, slipping a bit on the icy tarmac. Alan watched her go and then lifted off again, heading for Rig 3 to wait for Thunderbird Two's arrival.

Post by Tikatu on 10/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 20:22:38 GMT
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Monday, March 5th, Mt. Sinai Hospital, NY 11:00 a.m.

Scott Tracy was not in a good mood. All the way from the penthouse, he had been replaying over and over the conversation he'd had earlier with Virgil. Conversation, hell! he thought to himself. Part of him understood why Virgil made the decisions he'd made, but the other part knew HE should be out there as Field Commander, not Alan! The conversation had turned into a full-scale argument, one that he had lost. Damn! Now I have to explain this to Dad.

He made his way through the never-ending hospital corridors to his father's room. He peered through the window before entering and saw his three younger siblings, all sitting on Jeff's bed, all talking at once, and Grandma smiling, seated in a nearby chair. Jeff was smiling, too, and taking all the commotion in stride. Scott actually allowed himself a smile and pushed open the door.

"Well, is this a private party, or can anyone be invited?"

"Oh, Scott! That is such a lame line!" Cherie replied as she hopped off the bed and came around to give her big brother a hug.

"Well, I was beginning to wonder where you'd gotten to," Emily said as she too gave her eldest grandson a warm welcome. Scott looked over at his father as he hugged his grandmother.

Jeff's eyes smiled as he simply said, "Son."

"Hey, Dad, how you holding up with these monkeys jumping all over you?" The two remaining 'monkeys' giggled and also hopped off the bed.

"They keep me busy, that's for sure!" laughed Jeff. One look into his son's eyes told Jeff that Scott had something on his mind and needed to talk to him.

"Mother, why don't you take these poor hungry children and find them some lunch?"

Emily took the hint immediately and ushered her charges out of the room. "Bye Dad! See ya later!" the chorus echoed as they departed.

"Now, son, spit it out. What is it?" Jeff wasted no time getting to the point. He was still be weak in body, but his mind was very much tuned in to everything around him.

Scott took a deep breath. "Dad, the boys are out on a rescue. John got a call from the World Navy..."

Scott proceeded to give all the details to his father, including the fact that Dianne had been picked up and was also on the rescue. It became very apparent to Jeff that Scott was not happy about Virgil's decisions.

"...And I can't believe he told me 'NO'! He's never once told me 'NO' where a rescue was concerned!" Scott was now pacing back and forth across the room. Jeff watched. "I told him Alan should stay here, and I should be out there with Mobile Control... but no, HE had to have things HIS way..."

Scott's voice was becoming louder and Jeff finally had to interrupt. "SCOTT! Son, I know you're upset, but Virgil made the call. He's in command back at base, and from what I can see, he did what he had to, and you know he was right. Alan will do fine, and so will the others." He smiled sympathetically at Scott, and softly added, "Dianne was right, too, son. I need someone here I can depend on...I need YOU."

Scott looked defeated. "I know you do, Dad, but I just hate not being there." Scott resigned himself to the fact that he had no choice, no matter how much he complained, and finally sat down in a chair.

Jeff sighed, and moved uncomfortably to a better position. Scott realized his father was still in a lot of pain. "You need me to get anything, Dad?"

"No, thank you, son." Jeff winced as he settled back down onto the pillow. "I know I'm healing if I can feel the pain. I'd just rather be feeling it back at the island, is all."

"Do you know when they'll be letting you come home?"

"No, not yet. Though if your mother has anything to do with it, it'll be sooner rather than later!" That remark actually made Scott chuckle. "So, how are the new recruits settling in? I want all the details Scott... everything." Scott sat back and filled his father in on the entire goings on back home. After hearing all about the recruits, Jeff became silent and withdrawn.

Scott started to worry. "Dad? What is it?"

Hearing about the new pilots and medics suddenly triggered a memory of his pilot, Elise. He couldn't remember if he'd asked about her, or if anyone had told him if she'd survived the accident. He was certain Dianne would have said something, yet he couldn't remember.

"Scott, what happened to Elise? My pilot? I don't remember...no one said..."

"Dad, calm down, it's okay. Elise survived; she had a few broken bones, but she got out of the crash in better shape than you! So don't worry." The relief on his father's face was very visible, and Scott took this opportunity to bring up the subject of Elise joining IR. "Dad?"

"Yes, Scott?"

"We thought it best to bring Elise out to the island while she recovered. Ned Cook had got to her while she was here, and we were all concerned about other reporters sticking their noses in. Mom suggested it, and well, we went along with it."

Jeff sensed something more was coming and prompted Scott. "Go on, son."

"The thing is, since she's been back at base, Virgil is worried she's become a security risk. She's already seen TB3 launch and is aware that we're IR. Dad, Elise thinks she's going home in a couple of weeks, and if the likes of Ned Cook get wind of where she's been, they'll never leave her alone."

"Scott, it can't be helped that Elise has seen and heard more than we would like her to, but I trust her to keep silent."

Scott fidgeted slightly. "Well, sir, I was hoping you would consider taking her on board with IR as a pilot. She's a damned good one, and we sure could use another one. As it is, Virgil's had to go out on this rescue and leave Brains at your desk."

Jeff smiled at the vision he had of Brains seated at his desk. "You really think highly of her, don't you, Scott?"

"Yes, sir, I trained her. I've seen what she's capable of, and frankly, I know she'll accept."

Once she calms down enough to stop shouting at me, he thought. Elise may be a great pilot, but Scott had never forgotten the fiery temper she could bring forth at a moment's notice!

Jeff remained silent, looking at his eldest thoughtfully. He absolutely trusted his son's judgment and normally wouldn't question it, but this time he wasn't sure. He didn't know Elise well enough to just take her in and let her fly IR aircraft.

"Scott, I don't...."

Scott cut him off before he was finished. "Dad, I know, but she's already back at base, knows who we are, and we need another pilot. You've said it yourself many times that we needed at least two more. Well, we have C.J., so why not Elise?"

Jeff conceded. "All right, when I get back home, you and I will talk to her, and I will offer her the position. But Scott, she has to be 100 percent sure, or we're going to have a difficult situation on our hands."

"Yes, sir, I understand."

"Now, get me John on the comm-link. I want to know how this rescue is going and where my wife is!" Scott smiled and called his brother.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 10/08/2004

3-05-2068

As Thunderbird Two sped towards the North Sea, Brandon sat quietly. He felt the familiar rush of adrenalin, the one he got when he was preparing for one of his extreme sports. Looking down at his hands, he noticed that they were shaking.

Man, McCain, get a grip. It's not like this is your first rescue.

"Are you okay, Brandon?" a soft voice asked him. Brandon looked up, connecting with Nikki's brown eyes and noticing her concern.

"Yeah Nikki, I'm okay" he said, a small smile playing at the corners of his mouth, "just a little nervous is all."

"I know you are, Brandon, we all are. But, like Dom told me, stay focused and you'll do fine." Nikki put a reassuring hand on his shoulder.

"Thanks for the vote of confidence," Brandon replied. He started to say something else, but Thunderbird Two began shaking as it entered the storm.

"Is everyone okay?" Virgil asked, keeping his eyes focused on the controls. When they all answered, Virgil told them to stay seated until they reached the danger zone.

"What's our ETA, Virgil?" Dominic asked, looking at Nikki then over at Brandon.

"ETA's one hour, fifteen minutes," Virgil answered quickly, still keeping his eyes on the instruments. Dom nodded his thanks and grew quiet as he thought about what they would be getting into.

Across from him, Brandon too was deep in thought, trying to think ahead to what the rescue would bring and recalling what his former WASP commander, John Shore, said to him and a group of graduates as they readied themselves for their new duties.

"Remember, you are responsible for whatever decisions you make in the field. Good or bad, see it through. Always see it through 'til the end."

I will, sir, I will do you proud.

As they flew along, Gordon became impatient. He needed to be active but that was difficult to do at the moment. Finally he gave Brandon a nudge in the side, startling him out of a light doze.

"For cryin' out loud, Gordon," Brandon said grouchily, "Why'd you wake me up?"

Gordon's killer smile spread across his handsome face. "I thought you'd like to help me prep Thunderbird Four. We need her in top shape for the rescue."

Brandon's eyes lit up at this. "Why didn't you say so?" Brandon stood up, following Gordon down to the hold.

The two men began looking over Thunderbird Four. Gordon started the pre-check, showing Brandon what needed to be done and, occasionally, letting him get some hands on experience with the mini-sub. As they checked the craft out, readying it for the mission ahead, Brandon brought up a legitimate question.

"What kind of gear does IR have for cold water diving? I have some gear of my own, but it's not designed for diving in the North Sea."

Gordon smiled back at him. "International Rescue has come prepared. We're equipped with state of the art dry suits and breathing gear that won't freeze up in the cold water." Gordon went to locker, pulling out one of the suits, showing it to Brandon.

"Whoa. I guess I won't have to worry about turning into an ice cube," he said as he fingered the material." He looked around the bay some more and his eyes fell on a set of rails. They reminded Brandon of railroad tracks without the ties in the middle.

"Hey Gordon, what are the rails for?" Brandon asked, getting more curious all the time. There was so much he had to learn.

"They're used to launch Thunderbird Four. Under normal circumstances, the pod is dropped to the ocean's surface. The pod door opens, the rails extend, and I use the engines to propel TB4 into the water.

"Man, Gordon, these aren't exactly 'normal circumstances'. How are you going to get Four into the water?"

The senior aquanaut ran his hand through his hair. "I have no idea. I hope Alan's come up with something."

"Excuse me Gordon, Brandon." A feminine voice spoke, causing both men to turn to the source.

"Hi Tin-Tin. What's up?"

"Virgil wants you both topside. We're twenty minutes from the danger zone.

"F-A-B. We're on our way up." Gordon gestured with his head for Brandon to follow and together they made their way back to their seats.

With help from Tikatu

Post by MagicMaster8 on 12/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 20:39:49 GMT
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Christopher was absorbed as Tin-Tin was explaining the various winch and line systems available to them.

"We also have the rescue capsule which holds four people," Tin-Tin looked at him and smiled.

"Thank you for that little crash-course." Christopher smiled back, he liked Tin-Tin's smile.

But deep down he was nervous. This was his first rescue and he wanted to get things right.

"But," he admitted to himself, "the lifting off of Thunderbird 2 was an event in itself."

He had sat with Tin-Tin in the cockpit for a little while and observed Virgil, who was in full control of the huge craft.

He had flown a Hercules Firestorm transport plane whilst in the RAF, a humanitarian flight, and he had found it a difficult task in itself. He would need many hours flying the Thunderbird 2 simulator if he would even start to understand and fly the craft within Virgil's strict expectations.

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 14/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 20:40:55 GMT
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3:15 p.m., Monday 5th March, 2068, The Saucy Lady

Tommy Brennan regained consciousness and groaned. Every time the Saucy Lady pitched and tossed, waves of pain and nausea swept through his body. What a fool he had been! What had he hoped to achieve? He thought about his wife, Mary, and their young baby daughter, Charlotte. Would he ever see them again?

Life over the recent months had been hard as catches were down in the North Sea and they had been forced to go out for longer and fish further away to get a good catch to pay all the crew. He thought of the day they had left, and Mary, as usual, stood with the other wives to bid them farewell and a safe return. All the wives knew of the dangers, and he also knew that Mary hated him going. Theirs was a close-knit community, and a loss of a boat would hit them all hard.

He groaned as another wave of pain shot through his body. Suddenly he was aware that Captain Bowers and Jock Ferguson, who had first aid experience and acted as medic for crew, were talking, as he drifted back into unconsciousness

"I dinna like the look of him, Jock," Captain Bowers said.

"Aye, he has a broken leg and possibly a broken hip, but it is the internal injuries that concern me most," Jock replied. "He has a lot of bruising around his ribs and stomach, but no obvious bleeding."

Tommy regained consciousness. "Am I going to die, Captain?" he asked.

"Not if I have my way, laddie," Captain Bowers replied.

"Has International Rescue replied to our call?" Tommy asked, and gritted his teeth as another wave of nausea and pain swept through his body. He was not a man to cry, indeed they were all tough, even him, the youngest, and he didn't want to appear weak in front of his Captain, but suddenly he felt so totally helpless. He groaned as the pain became intense, made worse by the tossing and pitching of the boat.

"Can't you give him something for the pain, Jock?" Captain Bowers asked.

"I can give him a sedative, which may hopefully send him to sleep, but he wants medical attention and fast, if we aren't to lose him. All we can do is keep him as still as possible and warm, which considering the heating elements are not working, is going to be tough." Jock replied, and reached for his medikit.

Ian Drummond came in. "How's he doing, Cap'n?"

"Nay so good, but dinna let the rest of the crew know just how seriously injured he is. It wouldna do their morale any good to know we could be in danger of losing him."

"Captain!" Jim rushed in, "I've just been informed by the Navy that International Rescue has reached NG rig 3!"

Captain Bowers glanced at the eager face of the radio operator.

"Thank God!" Ian Drummond said.

"Amen to that," Captain Bowers replied.

Jock came and joined them. "Tommy is sleeping at the moment, but for how long, I dinna know. The pain may break through the sedative and wake him."

"Well, according to the Navy, International Rescue is on the scene."

Suddenly, the trawler slammed up against the stanchion of the gas rig, sending the fishermen flying!

"Wha' th' hell was that?" shouted Captain Bowers as he picked himself up off the deck. Ian took the steps to the upper deck two at a time. When he returned, his face was pale.

"We're bein' slammed up against the supports o' one o' th' gas rigs, Cap'n! The waves keep pushin' us agin her hard!"

"My God! I hope that International Rescue comes through, for at this rate, there'll be nae left o' us t' rescue! Especially if that mine detonates!"

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 16/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 20:45:42 GMT
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Monday, March 5, 2068, 3:40 p.m., Highland Gas Rig5

Alan was getting very antsy. He tapped his foot and rapped his fingernails on Mobile Control, then looked at his watch for the umpteenth time. The oil rig workers kept at their business, though once in a while one or two would stop to glance at him and speak in soft tones together. It had been thirty minutes since they had felt the first vibrations of the Saucy Lady being slammed against a joist by the savage waves. Two men had been sent out to keep an eye on the ship and reported in every five minutes. To Alan, it was a miracle that the ship had as of yet neither capsized due to ice on the superstructure nor had gone down from the battering it was taking.

Just a little more miracle, just a little more, Alan prayed silently. He didn't dare contact Virgil again; he knew that his brother was getting as much speed out of his Thunderbird as he could and that the stress of Alan's repeated messages was getting to him. Getting to him? He nearly bit my head off last time!

But Alan himself was feeling stressed. John kept passing along messages, not from base, but from "remote base" which meant Scott and... his father. He knew that his Dad needed to know how things were going and in particular, how Dianne was doing. Well, Dad, Mom is fine. She's warm and dry and probably going just as crazy as I am over there on Rig 5.

At last, the message he was waiting for came.

"Thunderbird Two to Mobile Control. Come in, Ay."

Alan jumped to it. "Mobile Control to Thunderbird Two. Go ahead."

"We are approaching your position with an ETA of seven minutes. Where do you want us and what do you want us to do? This sea is too rough to drop the pod."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Two. You are to proceed to NGRig5. I am uploading coordinates. They have enough helipad to support you and Doc is waiting there. As far as the pod is concerned," here Alan took a deep breath, "this is what I want you to do. I want you to land so that the hydraulic lifts in front are as close as possible to the edge of the pad. Then lift up, and open the pod. Doc will be able to join you at that point. Telescope the rails out to their farthest extent and launch Four from there."

There was silence on the other end, and then Gordon's incredulous voice cut in. "Are you crazy, Ay? Do you know what kind of drop that will be, even with the rails full extended?"

"I do, Gee. Not much worse than the pod itself takes when it's dropped from Two. And I've already checked with R & D. He says that Four can take it without damage," Alan explained. There was a pause. "Do you have any better ideas?"

Silence again, then Gordon's voice came back. "No," he barked. "But if Four gets so much as a scratch on her...."

"Right, Gee, right," Alan cut in.

Virgil's voice now sounded off. "Placing Two like that is going to take some pretty pinpoint accurate flying, Ay."

"I know, Vee. But you can do it, can't you?" Alan said in exasperation. "Or perhaps if you can't, Tee can. Or maybe CJ?"

There had been some discussion over what initials to use for the two "C" named operatives, and Christopher had suggested that he use CJ, an old nickname of his.

"I can do it," Virgil growled. "ETA Rig5 now five minutes. I am over your position. After Four launches, what then?"

"Then you pick up the pod again and head over here to use the rescue cage to take up the men from the boat. They've got one very badly injured man, so Doc and one of the medics need to go down with the cage to triage and treat. The people in Four can look out for anyone washed overboard and can work on getting the mine cut clear. Captain Bowers tells me that they are taking on water, so you'd better step on it."

"F-A-B. I'm at Rig 5 now. Setting down in two minutes."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Two. Let me know when Four is away."

"F-A-B, Mobile Control. Here comes Doc now. I'll let you know when Four is launched."

A beeping in his ear signalled that John wanted to speak with him. "Thunderbird Two, I'll get back to you. Thunderbird Five, this is Mobile Control. What is it, Jay?"

"Another update requested by remote base, Ay," John said tiredly. Dad must be really on his case, Alan thought.

"Good news, Thunderbird Five. Two has arrived at Rig5 and picked up Doc. Four is getting ready to launch."

"F-A-B, I'll pass the word along, Ay, and thanks."

Alan took his earbud out momentarily and dug around in his ear with a pinky. Then he looked at

the rig men who had gathered around. He smiled. "Thunderbird Two will be here momentarily to start pulling the men off of the Saucy Lady. Speaking of which," he put the earbud back in and flicked a switch, "I'd better tell them the good news. International Rescue to Saucy Lady. Prepare to be boarded."

Post by Tikatu on 16/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 20:50:39 GMT
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Dianne skittered across Rig 5's icy decking towards the wet green bulk that was Thunderbird Two. She ducked under the tail part of the fuselage, feeling the blast of heat from the engines so recently in use. She slipped and slid around the pod to the small access door beside the main pod door, which was slowly lowering. Putting a bare palm up to the pad next to the entry, she let it scan then punched in a code. The door slid open, and she entered the relative warmth and dryness of the pod, and removed her rain-speckled visor. Need to tell Brains that if we're going to use these things, they'll need a good coating of Turtle Wax!

Standing still for a moment, she watched as Thunderbird Four's launch rails slid out as far as they could go, far over the edge of the rig and the heaving ocean waters. A wave from within the cockpit of the small sub caught her attention, and she returned Gordon's wave and Tin-Tin's smile. With Gordon, Brandon, and Tin-Tin in there, it's going to be a crowded trip. I hope they don't have to pick up too many casualties.

Four's engines fired up and roared for a good full minute before the yellow craft began to move towards the swells. It picked up speed as it slid along but all too soon it was flying through the air and then it cut into a huge wave with a tremendous splash and disappeared. The rails began to retract, and Dianne sighed, turning her attention to Thunderbird Seven, at the far end of the pod. She began to stride, then run, as the pod door closed up and she heard the familiar sound of Thunderbird Two settling down around the pod again. By the time the electromagnets made their familiar loud "thunk," she was climbing up into Seven's control cab.

She shrugged out of her jacket and pulled off her cap and gloves, then slid open the door between the control cab and the treatment cabin. She smiled to see both Nikki and Dom, dressed in their IR scrubs, look up at her.

"Welcome home, Dr. Tracy!" Nikki said with a smile.

"Thank you! I suppose this does qualify as 'home' from time to time." Dianne replied.

"Dom's been giving me a run-down on how to use some of the equipment."

"Not that I know too terribly much about it," Dom admitted. "But I do remember what we used and how we used it during that last...." His voice trailed off as he saw Dianne's face become somber.

"That last rescue. Yes. We won't forget that one for a long time, will we?" Dianne said, and then

she smiled slightly. Looking around, she nodded approvingly. "Looks like we're ready for this. You've done a good prep job."

"Thank you!" Dom and Nikki said in near unison. Dianne moved towards the back of the cabin.

"I'll change to scrubs quickly and while I do, I can tell you how we'll handle this." She pulled off her uniform waistcoat, and slid a scrub top on over her mock turtleneck. "There's one badly injured man on the trawler; the medic there suspects a broken leg and hip and internal bleeding. He's coming up first. Nikki, I'll want you with me since you're good with triage. I expect plenty of frostbite and frost nip and some hypothermia as well." She slipped out of her boots and trousers and into scrub pants and then put her boots back on. "We'll go down in the rescue cage and get that one man first and do a quickie triage, then up for treatment. I'll need you in the surgery here, Dom. Nikki, you'll be in charge of the cabin until we are through with the first man." Hanging up her garments and locating her clogs to wear later, she came out of the surgery area. "Help the men get back to Seven while the rescue cage is going up and down. I understand that there are twelve all told, so there should only be four trips."

"Understood, Doctor." "Yes, Doctor."

"What do you have for cold weather gear?"

Dominic pulled out a quilted blue coat and a furry hat with earflaps. Dianne groaned and then chuckled. "I hate being between uniforms," she stated, shaking her head with a rueful smile. She stepped back into the stores area and pulled out a small box. "I see you have your wrist telecomms. That's good, but back here, we use hands-free." She gave each of them an earbud with a microphone attached, and then she dug into a pocket of her waistcoat and took out her own. The three tested the earbuds, and then heard Virgil calling from the cockpit.

"We're over the Saucy Lady, Doc. Are you ready?"

"F-A-B. Be there in a tick."

Nikki pulled on her coat and hat, and Dianne did the same with her jacket and cap. Dom handed her the medikit, and Nikki took an antigravity stretcher.

"Let's go."

Post by Tikatu on 16/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 20:52:49 GMT
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Brandon, Gordon, and Tin-Tin crammed themselves into TB4's cockpit and prepared for the rough departure from TB2. "I can't believe this is the only way!" Gordon complained.

"There really isn't much of a choice, Gordon. We'll just have to do it," answered Tin-Tin. She

wasn't exactly thrilled herself when she'd heard how they were too launch.

Brandon didn't say anything. He just hoped they'd make it off the rig and into the waves in one piece.

As the pod door opened and the rails slid out in front of them, Gordon spotted Dianne. "Hey, look! It's Mom!" and he started to wave. Tin-Tin looked up and smiled widely. "TB2 from TB4, starting engines now." Gordon radioed in.

"F-A-B. Good luck TB4," Virgil's steady voice echoed back. Gordon powered the four mighty engines to a full roar and waited a full minute before releasing the brakes.

"Okay, Brandon, Tin-Tin, buckle in and hang on! TB2 from TB4 releasing brake and starting descent now!"

Tin-Tin glanced at Brandon. "Don't worry so much, you'll be fine!" she whispered over to him.

Brandon nodded his thanks. "Just this drop thing, I guess. Not exactly the smoothest of launches I've experienced."

Tin-Tin understood. She'd launched with Gordon many times but she had to admit to herself this was going to be nerve-wracking. She hoped Gordon would fare okay, and thought about his back causing him trouble.

"Gordon, are you...?" she started to ask him when he cut her off.

"I'm fine, Tin-Tin. Relax, will ya!" he half-joked, Brandon chuckled but Tin-Tin knew Gordon better than that. He was worried too.

"Here we go!"

The yellow TB craft picked up speed as it hurtled down the rails and suddenly became airborne. TB4 flew through the air and cut into a huge wave at great speed! There was an almighty splash and then the craft submerged.

"Whoa! What a rush!" Brandon managed to say between sucking in a deep breath.

The mini-sub hit the water with more force than Gordon would have liked, but it couldn't be helped. The swells around them were not forgiving and diving down against the force of the waves was proving difficult.

"Everyone okay back there?" Gordon asked.

"Yes, Gordon, we're fine, although I don't think I'd like to do that again anytime soon," replied Tin-Tin.

"Yeah, me either," Gordon replied.

Tin-Tin noticed how Gordon tweaked his back before calling Mobile Control. She made a mental note to herself to watch him as closely as she could.

"Mobile Control from TB4, we are submerged, need co-ordinates for direct course to Saucy Lady."

"Mobile Control to TB4, glad you're all okay."

"Yeah, thanks, now...the co-ordinates please?"

Alan heard the contempt in Gordon's voice. He was still angry with him for suggesting the way TB4 was to launch. Too bad, but it was the only way, Alan thought to himself as he gave Gordon the requested information. TB4 bounced and weaved with the waves and current, which seemed to change direction constantly.

"Brandon, let's get the equipment you'll need ready," suggested Tin-Tin. They unfastened the safety belts and got to work.

"Will you be going out with me?" Brandon asked, suddenly confused. Tin-Tin smiled.

"No, you and Gordon will go and I will take over command here and will be in constant contact with everyone." Brandon felt more reassured and actually started to feel his adrenaline start to bubble.

"Tin-Tin, we're as close as we can get. I can see the mine and the trawler. This is where you take over!"

"F-A-B," she replied as she got up to take over from Gordon. She fidgeted in her seat and then called Alan.

"Mobile Control from TB4, 2 divers ready to leave and board the trawler."

"F-A-B, TB4, will radio trawler and rig now," came Alan's reply.

Tin-Tin gave a fleeting thought to Alan and then was all business again. "Air lock door open, be careful."

Both men nodded as they entered the lock. The door whooshed shut and Tin-Tin opened the outer air lock door and 2 rescuers and their equipment began the struggle to get to the surface. Tin-Tin watched and fought the controls against the surges that rocked the sides of TB4.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 16/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:00:00 GMT
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The wind whipped rain into the rescue cage as it lowered Nikki and Dianne to the pitching deck of

the Saucy Lady. "This is going to be tricky, isn't it?" Nikki asked.

"Oh my, yes," Dianne replied. "Very tricky. I hope you don't get motion sickness."

"Not to my knowledge," Nikki said, watching the deck come closer and closer. "But this is no place to find out, is it?"

Landing on the wet, slippery, and rolling deck, they were met by Captain Bowers and Jock Fergusson.

"Are we pleased to see you!" Captain Bowers said. "We are trying to keep Tommy as still and warm as possible below decks. Jock here thinks that his leg and hip is broken, and from the amount of bruising, some internal bleeding as well."

Dianne smiled as the two women were escorted below decks. "Well, we'll scan him and see what there is to see and if he needs immediate treatment, we're prepared." She looked around. "What other injuries do you have? My colleague here will triage and set up an order of people to go up to our ship."

"Apart from young Tommy, who is the most seriously injured, one man has a badly cut arm. Although we have managed to staunch the bleeding, it may be needing a stitch or two. There are two of my older crew with cuts and bruises, one of whom is a diabetic and has a badly injured foot, and should be attended to as soon as possible."

"Sounds like the diabetic first after Tommy here," Nikki said. "I'll take a look at him."

"F-A-B, En." They came to the place where Tommy was, wrapped up warmly against the cold. Dianne smiled at the young man. "You can call me 'Doc'. I'm here to take a look at you and then get you out of here." She peeled back the blankets and took out her scanner.

"Hmm. A definitely broken fibula, but I think that the thigh is slightly dislocated where it meets the hip and the hip's not broken. My surgical scanner will give me a better view. The bruising is a cause of concern. You may be losing your spleen today. And a couple of fingers are fractured, too." Dianne gave Tommy an encouraging look. "Your spleen should be the only thing you lose today." She covered him back up. "I'll splint the leg, then pull you out of here."

Tommy tried to smile at the reassuring Doc, but the thought of being moved made him afraid. He didn't want to be moved, but he knew that there was no other option. If only the pain and nausea would go away. He thought longingly of Mary and Charlotte. He was certain that this would be the subject of news, news that he didn't want Mary to know about. She'll be frantic with worry. The Doc began to splint his leg and he began to be prepared to be lifted off the boat.

Dianne pulled an inflatable splint from the medikit and fastened it around Tommy's leg, then inflated it. Then she took out a hypospray. "This is a systemic analgesic. It will help with the pain. You may feel drowsy; don't fight it." She pressed it against his neck and Tommy winced at the hissing sound.

Nikki returned. "The diabetic is in a bad way, too, Doc. Do you think he could come up in the first

trip?"

Dianne shook her head. "There won't be room with the stretcher."

"Then why don't I stay here and send him up. I'll come up with the other two injuries. Do... I mean, Dee, can meet you at the rescue cage...."

"Sounds like a plan, En. Dee?"

Dominic was startled up in Thunderbird Seven to hear his code name called. "Yes, Doc?"

"Meet me at the rescue cage in 10 minutes. En is going to stay here and bring up our next injured."

"F-A-B, Doc."

Slowly, Tommy was placed on the stretcher. He was drowsy from the analgesic, but for the first time in what seemed like hours, pain free. The Doc explained that the stretcher would be placed in a cage and be winched up. Groggily he nodded. Captain Bowers helped the diabetic into the rescue cage, too, and watched as it was winched slowly up and away from the deck. The young female nurse turned to Captain Bowers.

"We are going to get the other injured crew members off next."

Dominic stood beside CJ just inside the bay doors. He helped Dianne take Tommy back to the treatment area. Christopher took a few moments to help the diabetic, and Dom settled the man on a bed as CJ went back to the winch. The surgical scanner passed slowly under Tommy's body and Dianne hissed.

"That spleen is going to have to come out now. Dee? Let's get him prepped."

"Yes, Doc," Dominic said firmly, entering the surgical area and taking out the scissors to remove Tommy's clothing. Dianne stood by Tommy's head. "Tommy, we're going to have to take that spleen out now. It can't wait. Do you understand?"

Tommy nodded. There were so many questions he wanted answered. Was the operation dangerous? Would he be able to continue working as a fisherman? He couldn't imagine any other way of life. He tried to speak but somehow in his groggy state he didn't appear to be able to speak. Suddenly he looked at the Doc and in almost a whisper asked, "Will I die?"

Dianne smiled and smoothed back Tommy's dark hair. "No. You won't die. Not on my watch." She pulled out a hypospray and put an ampoule into it. "This is some anesthesia. By the time you wake up, you'll be in the hospital and everything will be just fine." She pressed it against his neck and it hissed and Tommy's world slowly went dark.

She turned to Dom. "Let me know when he's prepped. I'll take a look at our diabetic out here and work on his foot in the meantime."

"Yes, Doctor." Dom smiled. This was the kind of work he loved and he was doing it for the very best organization in the world!

In the meantime, Captain Bowers was ready to grab the rescue capsule as it came down for the second time. He looked at it dubiously. How can these people do this all the time? Throw themselves into these situations without thinking about their own safety? He was suddenly shocked to see a frogman come over the side of the trawler, carried by a wave. The frogman saw him, gave him a small salute, and headed for the stern of the boat, an equipment bag over one shoulder.

"He's one of ours," Nikki said as she came up behind him, supporting the diabetic patient. "He and another frogman are going to try to cut the mine free."

"I hope t' God they kin do it," the Captain said. He reached out for the rescue cage and held it in place. "Will ye be comin' back down for th' next trip?"

"No, sir. But each man has been numbered and they know what order they're to come up in. Now don't you be getting any ideas of going down with the ship, Cap'n," Nikki warned him, shaking a finger at him. "I know you'll be last up though."

Captain Bowers watched as slowly the rescue cage was filled with the injured, and it was winched up from the deck of the Saucy Lady. He saw the bright light of a laser being used at the stern of his ship and a pang went through him as he realized that he was about to lose something that was almost as valuable to him as his own soul; he was about to lose his Saucy Lady.

Post by Tawnyangel22 and Tikatu on 16/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:02:38 GMT
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Tracy Island; Tuesday, March 6th 2068; 4:10AM

Brains was getting antsy. He wanted to know what was going on, but knew that John was already fielding constant demands for updates from Jeff. He got up from the desk and started pacing.

"I wish there was some way I could find out what is going on without calling John. He's got enough on his hands, with Mr. Tracy calling him every few minutes," he said to no one in particular.

"Would the news services be covering this somehow?" Kat asked.

"You're right! Why didn't I think of this before? They wouldn't be out at the rescue site or on the naval vessel, but they'd be at the base." He practically leaped at the desk and punched the button that turned on the TV in the lounge.

It came on as one news story was just ending. The announcer then said, "Now an update on a breaking story. A fishing trawler out of Peterhead, the Saucy Lady, found itself in trouble when the

crew accidentally snagged an old World War Two mine. The chain trailing from the mine got tangled around the ship's propellers, causing it to go dead in the water. Complicating things is a storm that broke about the same time and the fact that there is a drilling rig nearby. They put out a call to the Navy for help, but the only ship in the area, the Excelsior, found more of the mines in its path.

"International Rescue has been called, and we have just learned that they are now on the scene. We take you to the World Naval Base at Lossiemouth. Our reporter, Giles Baxter is out there. Giles, have you learned anything more you can tell us?"

"Arthur, I have been informed that there is at least one seriously injured man on the trawler. International Rescue personnel have managed to get him off the boat, and are taking the others off as quickly as they can. Also there are personnel attempting to detach the mine from the boat's propellers. But with this storm and the freezing temperatures, it'll be a miracle if they can all be rescued."

"Giles, do you have the name of the injured man?"

"Not at this time. We know there were twelve men on the trawler which has . . . Wait! I'm getting another update." The reporter put a hand to his ear. "We have just been informed that the trawler has been pushed into one of the stanchions of the drilling rig by the waves. There may not be much time left. I'll keep you updated as the bulletins come in. Back to you, Arthur."

The anchor shook his head as he said, "Thank you, Giles. Please break in anytime you get something. Now, in the town of Peterhead, we have Sara Troughbridge. Sara, what can you tell us?"

The picture switched to a dark haired woman standing just outside a church. "Arthur, I'm outside St. Andrew the Apostle church, where the families and friends of the men aboard the Saucy Lady have gathered to pray. None of them agreed to be interviewed on camera, but one of them told me that most of the crew are seasoned seamen, and they hope and pray they all come through this safely. They have a radio with them so they can get any news immediately.

"I do know that two of the crewmen are new fathers; one has a daughter just four months old and the other has twin boys who are ten months old. They all ask for our prayers. From Peterhead, this is Sara Troughbridge with NTSB. Back to you, Arthur."

"Thank you, Sara. Tell them we are hoping and praying for the best. Once again, the fishing trawler, the Saucy Lady is in trouble in the North Sea. A mine was snagged in the nets and its chain wrapped around the propeller. One seaman is injured seriously, and the trawler is now being smashed against a drilling rig in the area. The naval vessel that was heading out to rescue it was stopped by several more mines in its path. International Rescue has been called and is now on the scene. We will bring you more information as we get it."

Brains turned the TV off. "It sure looks like this is going to be a tough one for everyone. I hope the new recruits are up to it."

Kat walked over to him and put a hand on his shoulder. "Consider this their 'trial by fire'. And if

they can get through this, they'll be able to get through anything."

"They have to get through this. They just have to."

Post by Hobbeth on 17/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:04:18 GMT
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Captain Bowers made sure his last crewmen were in the capsule. He told Jock, "I'll be right back. I want to thank someone."

"Cap'n! No!" Jock shouted, but either the captain ignored him or didn't hear him. He slipped and slid his way back to the stern, to where the frogman was working on the mine's tangled chain.

"I wanted to say thank you." The captain leant down and put his hand out for the frogman to shake. Brandon looked up and took his hand just as WOOOOSHHH!!!! A giant wave hit the deck, pulling Captain Bowers overboard!

Christopher swore to himself as he saw the events unfold. "Get into the cage and close the doors!" he shouted over the noise of the engines and rough weather. He was glad that he had his personal communication system which could be received in the capsule. A green light blinked to tell him that the doors were closed, so he pulled the lever to start the winch engines up.

The capsule started its perilous journey back up to Thunderbird 2. More huge waves threatened to swamp the capsule, so he hurriedly pushed the winch up to top speed so he could get the rest of the passengers up to Thunderbird 2.

Suddenly a whine erupted through the winch area as the capsule ground to a halt. Loads of status lights went red.

"Vee to CJ!" Virgil's voice blasted into Christopher's ear. "What's happened to the winch?"

"It looks like it's jammed!" Christopher started hurriedly to examine the equipment "I don't know what to do!"

"The toolkit is next to you." Virgil's voice was calm, but with an underlying current of anger beneath.

Christopher opened the toolkit as Thunderbird 2 fought to keep a stable position. He tried everything he knew.

"It's not going to budge," Christopher said to Virgil.

"Keep trying, CJ," Virgil urged him. "You can do it."

Christopher ran his fingers through his hair, thinking frantically. Then he paused. Clenching his fist, he moved to the side of the winch motor and thumped it. Suddenly the red warning lights ceased to flash, and the capsule restarted its choppy journey upwards. He got the passengers out of the capsule, and sent them to Thunderbird 7 for a check-up.

"Vee!" Christopher locked the capsule down into its area. "I'm shutting the winch down!"

"F-A-B, CJ." Virgil sounded a little more relieved. "How did you get it working?"

"Don't know." Christopher shrugged. "Luck?"

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 18/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:06:01 GMT

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"How's it going on, Bee?" Gordon asked, looking down from his vantage point on the deck. He paused a moment, catching himself as his feet slipped on the icy deck. Cutting the chain on the mine was dangerous enough without the constant rolling of the deck beneath their feet.

"It's going, Gee," Brandon answered as he cut loose another section of chain. "Can't we go any faster? These lasers aren't doing too well in this cold."

"No we can't," Gordon replied. "It's too risky. If it were to break loose and detonate, it could kill us both. This way we have, at least, a little control over it." Brandon nodded in agreement, a shiver passing through his body. Gordon looked at him keenly.

"Time to switch, Bee."

"Okay. I won't argue." Brandon handed the laser cutter up to Gordon, then reached up a hand. Gordon grabbed it and pulled, hard. Brandon burst from the water, clutching at the stern and climbing over. Gordon then jumped into the frigid water, and Brandon handed him the laser. The two men continued their job in tense silence, only occasionally speaking to one another.

Brandon was concentrating on Gordon's work when he felt a hand touch his shoulder. He flinched and looked up at Captain Bowers, who had come back to thank them for saving his men. Brandon had just taken his hand to shake it when a violent wave pulled the captain from his grasp and flung him overboard!

"Captain!" Brandon shouted, attempting to make his way to the side of the boat. "Gee, we have a man over..." Brandon's words were cut off as another wave crashed on the deck, dragging him into the icy water of the sea below.

Gordon's head jerked up when he heard the urgency in Brandon's voice. "Bee, this is Gee. Do you copy? Come in, Bee!" The only thing he got in reply was the howl of the wind and the roar of the waves.

Brandon bobbed around in the storm-tossed water. He knew that he had to find the captain and quickly. Even with the protective clothing he wore, the captain would not last more than a few minutes. Already he could feel the cold through the walls of his dry suit. Looking around, he thought he could see a figure floating in the water and tossed by the waves. With strong, sure strokes, he started swimming towards the figure. As he got closer, he could see Captain Bowers and his desperate attempts at keeping awake, the signs of frostbite present on his face. Brandon swam closer, grabbing at the captain. Suddenly, a wave welled up between the two men and pushed them farther apart.

Come on, McCain, you can do it. You have to do it. With renewed effort, he reached out towards Bowers and smiled grimly as he felt Bowers grab his arm frantically, pulling himself into Brandon's strong grip.

"Th-thank y-you," Captain Bowers said through chattering teeth. "I-I th-thought th-that the s-s-sea would h-h-have her w-way w-with m-m-me."

Brandon smiled wryly. "Not on my shift, she won't." The aquanaut looked at Bower's face and noticed the telltale signs of hypothermia. I'd better let Gee know what's going on, Brandon thought, hanging on tightly to Bower's shivering body.

Post by Magicmaster8 and Tikatu on 20/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:07:31 GMT
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"Gee, this is Bee. Do you copy?"

Astern the Saucy Lady, Gordon heard Brandon's voice and nearly shouted in relief. "Bee, this is Gee. I copy. What is your current status? Did you find Captain Bowers?"

"Yes I did. But he's in a bad way. He's has frostbite on his face and is suffering from hypothermia. We need to get him to Thunderbird Seven ASAP. "

"F-A-B, Bee. I'll contact Jay and have him pinpoint your position so Tee can pick you up."

"Gee to Thunderbird Five. Come in Thunderbird Five."

"This is Thunderbird Five. Go ahead, Gee."

"I need you to locate Bee. He's in the water and has a victim with him. The victim is suffering from hypothermia and frostbite and we need to get him to Seven as soon as possible."

"F-A-B, Gee. Stand by." John activated the tracking system and looked for the signal from Brandon's wristcom. He frowned, flipping another switch.

"Thunderbird Five to Gee. The tracking system was unable to pick up his signal. The wrist telecomm may have been damaged or separated from Bee somehow."

"Damn, that's just what we don't need. Okay, Jay, I'll tell Tee to begin looking for Bee while I finish taking care of the mine." Gordon toggled a switch on his telecomm. "Gee to Thunderbird Four, come in."

Tin-Tin, who had been struggling to keep Thunderbird Four from being driven off course by the violent seas, responded. "This is Thunderbird Four, Gee. Go ahead."

"We have a situation, Tee. Thunderbird Five has lost contact with Bee. I heard from him seven minutes ago. He has a hypothermia victim with him that's in need of immediate medical treatment."

"You need me to find him? Any idea which way he went in relation to the Saucy Lady?" Tin-Tin asked, a sudden fear clutching at her. We cannot lose one of our new recruits, not now! I need to find him!

"Negative, Tee. I'll contact him and see if he can give me any kind of co-ordinates."

"F-A-B Gee. I'll be standing by."

After breaking off communications with Tin-Tin, Gordon tried to raise Brandon and after a few tense minutes, his voice could be heard.

"Hey Gee, what's keepin' Tee? She shoulda been here already. Captain Bowers is getting worse and I don't know how much longer he can last. I've been sharing my breather with him so he won't have to continuously breathe in the cold salt water; but that doesn't help the hypothermia." He paused. "An' I'm beginning to feel the cold myself."

"Bee, listen," Gordon said urgently, "do you have any idea which way you were dragged when you went overboard?"

"I-I'm not sure. I think I went over the port side and was pulled at a right angle to the boat. Man, I haven't been this cold in a loong time, Gee."

"Hang in there a little longer, okay? Tee will be there as quickly as possible."

"I'll try, Gee. Please, tell Tee to hurry. I'm really beginning to feel the cold."

Gordon quickly got in touch with Tin-Tin and relayed the information Brandon had given him.

"F-A-B, Gee. I'm on my way." Tin-Tin turned the lighting trough up to maximum intensity and brought the trim craft up to the depth of five meters. She also turned on the sonar, hoping to catch a reading on the two men.

Post by MagicMaster8 and Tikatu on 20/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:10:50 GMT

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Brandon was unsure how long he had been in the water. The intense cold had penetrated his suit and it took all of his effort to focus on the survival of the two of them. Captain Bowers looked into Brandon's eyes and noticed the effort it took for him to keep his grip tight around him.

"Y-you should h-h-have let the s-sea take m-m-me. Th-that way you would h-h-have had a b-b-better chance of surviving."

"No way, captain. In our line of work, nobody, and I mean nobody, gets left behind." Come on Tee, where are you?

In Thunderbird Four, Tin-Tin fought the shifting current as she searched for Brandon. She was about to change course to search another area when the sonar pinged, indicating something above her. Looking out the view port, she could just distinguish the outline of something dangling in the water. Bringing Thunderbird Four closer to the dangling object, she saw what it was and realized that she had found Brandon.

"Tee to Bee. Do you copy? I'm a few feet behind you. I'm going to surface as close to you as I can. I'll need you to swim to Thunderbird Four's upper airlock. I'll keep her as stable as I can."

"F-A-B, Tee. We'll be ready." Brandon readied himself and Captain Bowers for the rough swim and waited for the mini-sub to surface. A few seconds later, Tin-Tin surfaced so just the upper hatch of the sub was above the water and pulled to within three feet of the struggling men.

"Okay Bee, I'm as close as I can get to you."

"F-A-B, we're on our way." Brandon put one arm around Captain Bowers and, using the other one to propel them through the water, started the treacherous swim to Thunderbird Four. There was a tense moment when a swell threatened to separate them from their goal.

"No-Damn-Way!" Brandon said through gritted teeth. With a final surge of energy, he climbed onto the top of Thunderbird Four and, with Captain Bowers at his side, slid his way over to the airlock.

"We're in, Tee, and the airlock's secure. Let's get moving. The sooner we get the captain to Thunderbird Seven, the quicker he can get treated for the hypothermia."

"Okay, Bee," Tin-Tin activated her telecomm. "Thunderbird Four to Thunderbird Two. We have another patient for Seven. Lower the rescue cage."

"No can do, Four, the cage winch is offline," Virgil replied.

Tin-Tin swore under her breath, making Brandon's eyes widen. "Four to Mobile Control, We have a problem."

"Mobile Control here, Tee," Alan replied. "What is your situation?"

"We have rescued a man who went overboard. He's hypothermic and has frostbite. I am informed that we cannot get him into Two because the rescue capsule is offline. What are your orders?"

Alan thought for a moment, and then snapped his fingers. "Tee, I will inform the Excelsior of the situation and ask their assistance." He toggled another switch. "This is International Rescue to WNS Excelsior. We require your assistance...."

"International Rescue this is the Excelsior. How can we be of service?"

"We have a hypothermic patient in our submersible and no way to get him to our sickbay. Can you oblige with your sickbay?"

"Roger, International Rescue. We'll have our medics standing by." Alan gave his thanks to the Excelsior's commander and got back with Tin-Tin.

"Aye to Tee. Proceed to the WNS Excelsior. Their medics will be standing by to receive your patient."

"Gee to Thunderbird Four. I'm about to finish cutting through the chain. We can't let the mine get loose. I need Four over here to grab it and tow it away."

"If that mine gets away from us, the rig will be in danger," Tin-Tin murmured. She turned to Brandon. "We'll have to take care of the mine first. I'll turn up the internal heat and hope for the best."

So saying, Tin-Tin turned up the heat in the little cabin. Brandon soon found himself stripping off his drysuit. Getting Gordon's coordinates from John, she turned the little vessel and sped it beneath the waves to where the Saucy Lady lay, half submerged and ready to go down.

"Okay, Gee, I'm here. Activating the grab." The long arm with its pincers grip slid out from the nose of the submersible. Tin-Tin very carefully used it to grab the chain at one of the links nearest the end.

"Got it, Gee."

"Good, Tee. As soon as I'm aboard, we'll tow it to the Excelsior for detonation. Then we'll get your patient to their medical facilities."

Gordon took a deep breath and cut through the last link, then swam, hell bent for leather, towards his Thunderbird. He reached the airlock just as the Saucy Lady, filled with water and covered with ice, began her descent to her watery grave.

Post by MagicMaster8 and Tikatu on 20/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:12:17 GMT

Up at Thunderbird 5, John and Callie listened intently to the transmissions between their colleagues in the North Sea. When they learned Brandon had fallen overboard and communication with him had been lost, Callie was worried. "Oh, no, not Brandon! He's just starting out like the rest of us."

John did his best to calm Callie. "There's one thing you've got to understand about International Rescue. Things happen beyond our control sometimes. With the dangerous and unpredictable weather in the North Sea, anybody can get thrown off at any time."

"I guess you're right, John. Mother Nature can play some nasty tricks." She noticed the light near the microphone. "It's Mr. Tracy, calling for another update."

"Do you want to handle it, Callie?"

"Sure. I'll let him know what's been going on, but should I tell him about Brandon?"

"Dad will want to know everything, Callie. We don't really have a choice."

"F-A-B." Callie communicated with Jeff and told him all the details of the operation, including Brandon falling overboard.

"Fallen overboard?" said a worried Jeff. "Has anyone found him?"

"There hasn't been communication with him for seven minutes. I--wait, just a moment, sir."

Callie and John both listened carefully to the communication between Tin-Tin and Gordon. When they heard Tin-Tin had successfully found Brandon, both were relieved. "Good news, sir," she said with a calming sigh, "Tee has found Bee successfully. Bee is now aboard Thunderbird 4."

John smiled. Very good, Callie. You're getting the code names down very well.

Jeff was also relieved. "Thank goodness Bee's all right. What about the mine?"

Callie said, "Gee and Tee were able to free the chain from the Saucy Lady and will tow it to the Excelsior for detonation. Captain Bowers will also be taken to the Excelsior's sick bay to be treated for hypothermia."

"Anything else we need to note about this operation?" asked Jeff.

"Yes, sir. The rescue cage malfunctioned again."

"Again? It wasn't noted the first time? Why not?"

"Um, I-I don't know, sir, I--"

John calmly patted her shoulder. "I'll take it, Callie." Taking the microphone, he said, "We logged the problem from the last rescue and did check it out thoroughly. You may have to consult with R

& D for the exact problem."

"All right, Jay. Please tell C--oops, I forgot we have two Cees. Please remind me when I return that we'll have to discuss changing the code names."

"F-A-B, Father." After the transmission ended, John was relieved the "grilling" session was over. "Dad really needs to relax. The stress isn't going to help him get better."

Callie said, "Well, what do you expect, John? He is the head of International Rescue."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 21/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:19:07 GMT
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Virgil sighed with relief when he heard that the captain and Brandon had been recovered and that Thunderbird Four was on its way to the Excelsior. That reminds me, how are we going to get Four back into the pod? I'll dump that problem in Alan's lap.

"Thunderbird Two to Mobile Control. Ay, how are we going to get Four back into the pod?"

"Mobile Control to Thunderbird Two. Vee, Four will have to rendezvous with you on the shore at Peterhead. You have to go there to let Seven out anyway for the trip to the hospital."

"F-A-B, Mobile Control. Speaking of which, I'm headed for Peterhead now."

So saying, he turned his green machine towards the shore, getting the coordinates he needed from John in Thunderbird Five.

Christopher checked that everything was secure as Thunderbird Two banked slightly. He made his way up to the cockpit and sat himself down, securing the safety belt.

"What do I do now?" He looked at Virgil as the latter turned his craft toward shore.

"Do me a favor and give Doc a holler and find out their status back there? It won't take long to get to shore and I need to know if they're ready to go," Virgil asked.

"Okay." Christopher unbuckled his safety belt and made his way down to where Thunderbird Seven was sitting. He opened the door to the cab and went inside. He peered through the window of the door between the cab and the medical cabin and pressed the buzzer on the intercom.

"Hello in there!" Christopher waved to the people inside. "Our pilot would like to know your status."

Nikki responded. "I'm sorry, CJ, but Doc is still in surgery. The splenectomy is done but there were a couple of small bleeders that needed repair. What do you need?"

"Vee needs to know if you're ready to go," Christopher said. "He's heading for shore to rendezvous with Thunderbird Four, and let Seven go to the hospital."

Nikki shook her head. "No, we're not ready. Doc is the only one who can pilot this and she's just not finished." She sighed. "Tell Vee the situation."

"Will do." Christopher left the cab of Seven and made his way back up to the cockpit to tell Virgil. "Doc isn't finished yet." He looked grave. "And she is the only one who can pilot Seven."

"Damn. I suppose that means I'll have to pilot Seven myself." Virgil gave Christopher a keen look. "Hmm. Maybe you can keep an eye on things while I take Seven to the hospital."

"Me?" Christopher pointed to himself, but Virgil looked serious. "Okay, I'll hold the fort." He looked at the controls. "Just tell me what I need to know."

"Okay. This is the switch that will raise the body up off the pod, and lower it back down," Virgil indicated a white toggle. "I'll let you know when to put it up and down and Gordon can tell you when he gets here."

"Right."

He indicated a green light on a panel. "This is the camera detector. I expect some sightseers to come and try to take photos. If this starts flashing red, it means that someone's taking pictures."

"Check."

He indicated another switch. "This activates the fogger, which will erase and disrupt pictures of any kind. You can also switch this on; it's a loudspeaker and you can politely ask them to stop."

"If I may have the seat, then I can begin." Christopher smiled nervously. This was not going to be like that Hercules Firestorm. "I'm ready to go."

"Let me set her down on this beach here, and we'll get started," Virgil said with a grin. He could remember how excited he was when he started working with Thunderbird Two.

Christopher watched as Virgil set the giant craft onto the beach; he did it with finesse. Virgil unbuckled himself and left the cockpit to go down to Thunderbird Seven.

"Vee to CJ." Christopher sat himself down in the main seat. "You can raise the fuselage now." Christopher flicked the switch that started to lift the main body of Thunderbird Two upwards.

Virgil called back to Nikki. "You folks secure back there?"

"As secure as we can, be Vee. Doc is almost ready to close."

"F-A-B. Vee to CJ, lowering the pod door now." Virgil toggled a switch on Seven and the door lowered like a flap. Another switch, and Seven rose up on its whisper-soft hover jets. He activated the lights and siren and eased the medical craft out, first briefly over the waves then back over the

sand and into the town.

Christopher watched with wonder as Thunderbird Seven floated away. He kept his eyes on all the control panels, including the camera detector. "CJ to Vee," Christopher said, "should I lower the body again?"

"Yes, CJ. I've already put the door back up."

"F-A-B." Christopher smiled as he flicked the switch and felt the body lower itself again. Suddenly the warning lights of the camera detector flashed, and he caught a glimpse of a small child with a camera on a cliff nearby. He activated the fogger and the loudspeaker. "I'm sorry young lady but I can't allow you to take any pictures of us."

In the meantime, Gordon was approaching the rendezvous point. He was tired; the cold had taken a lot out of him, and his back ached. Brandon was nearly asleep in his seat.

"Thunderbird Four to Thunderbird Two. Knock, knock. Let us in," Gordon said wearily.

"Thunderbird Two receiving," Christopher said as he flicked the switch to raise the body again. "I'm sorry but Vee is not around to take your call at the moment. Would I do?"

"Hey, CJ. What are you doing there? Where'd Vee go?" Gordon asked good-humoredly.

"He had to take Thunderbird Seven to the hospital," Christopher said apologetically. "I'm holding the fort for a while till he gets back."

"Well, well. Looks like you've earned his confidence if he's left you with his big green baby," Gordon said with a wicked grin. "Thunderbird Four is stowed, CJ. You can lower away."

"F-A-B, Gee," Christopher said. "Lowering away." He paused. "I'll get some warm blankets for you," he continued, "and I'll make you a nice cup of English tea when we get back."

"Sounds good to me, CJ. I'm just looking forward to crashing in crew's quarters. Tin-Tin can move Four when Seven gets back," Gordon said, stretching and wincing. Tin-Tin noticed the wince, but wisely said nothing. She was determined, however, to put a word in the ear of one or more of the medics.

Christopher locked everything down, and went to get some blankets for the crew of Thunderbird Four. "Here we go." He handed them out to the exhausted trio. "I have the utmost respect for all of you going out in weather like that."

"You'll have your turn sometime, CJ," Gordon warned him as he steered a half-conscious Brandon to the crews' quarters. "We work in all kinds of weather."

Tin-Tin followed CJ up to the cockpit and sat down behind and to one side of him. "So, what did you think of your first rescue?"

Christopher chuckled quietly, then shot a shy look towards her. "Very exciting and very rewarding."

I was impressed at the way you handled things. I went to pieces when the winch went on the fritz; not very good really."

"What exactly happened to the winch?" Tin-Tin asked with a frown. "I know I checked it out after that last rescue. The spool was a bit off, but I fixed that. What happened this time?"

"Just jammed." Christopher shrugged. "The servomotors, I think."

"I just gave the motor a good thump and that freed it." He smiled shyly. "A bit of luck that's all."

Tin-Tin chuckled. "Just gave it a thump, huh? Wish all our maintenance problems were so easily cured." Then she became sober. "Mr. Tracy will not be happy when he finds that winch failed twice in a row. Looks like Kat will have her first big repair job in replacing it when we get back."

"She is a nice girl." Christopher grinned. "Although I can see the looks she gives John."

"Thunderbird Seven to Thunderbird Two," came Virgil's voice over the radio.

"CJ here Thunderbird Seven," Christopher said, "go ahead."

"Patients have been admitted to the hospital and now we're ready to put this baby to bed. Open says me!"

"Oh, I've got to move Four!" Tin-Tin said, hurrying out to the pod.

"And I shall obey." Christopher flicked the switch. "Welcome home."

A loud burst of engines signalled the arrival of Thunderbird One. Alan set the silver rocket plane down next to the much larger cargo transport.

"Thunderbird One to Thunderbird Two. I'm here for my passenger pick up!"

"CJ to Doc," Christopher called into his telecomm. "Your chariot awaits."

"F-A-B, CJ. Thanks for the heads up," Dianne said from Seven. She was giving last minute instructions to Nikki and Dom on clean up when they got back to base.

Alan's voice rang out over all the telecomms. "Stellar job today, people. Stand down at 20:05 hours GMT."

Virgil contacted CJ. "We're all secure down here, CJ. Bring her back down."

"F-A-B Vee." Christopher flicked the switch to lower the body of Thunderbird Two down. He looked around and let out a long held breath. "That was the most exhilarating experience I've ever had."

Virgil returned to the cockpit, followed closely by Tin-Tin, Dom, and Nikki.

"Nikki, would you take a look at our two aquanauts?" Virgil asked. "They were out in that water quite a while."

"F-A-B, Virgil," Nikki said cheerfully.

Dom sat down and put his head back. "That was one rough rescue. I'm glad we got everyone off safe, though."

"Very true, mate," Christopher said, "very true I'm proud to have worked with you."

"You can get out of my chair, now, CJ," Virgil said, giving his shoulder a small, friendly push.

"Hokey Cokey," Christopher said as he got out. "Not a scratch, as you can see."

"All the better for you!" Tin-Tin said with a grin.

"I know!" Christopher strapped himself in one of the passenger seats. He looked over at Tin-Tin. "Thanks for that chat earlier."

Tin-Tin said nothing, just gave him a bright smile. Christopher reached across to take her hand, but he thought better of it.

"There goes Alan, on his way to New York," Virgil said as he powered up the green beetle. "Let's go home, people."

Post by TheWrongTrousers and Tikatu on 21/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:20:17 GMT

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Tracy Industries Washington DC offices, Monday, March 5th, 3PM

Lena sat back after she sent the email. There was nothing more she could do until she heard back from Mr. Hackenbacker. Might as well catch up on what's been happening in de world, she thought as she brought up the CNN website. She checked the local news first, then the national and finally the world. That's when she saw the story about the North Sea rescue work being done by International Rescue. She started to read the story when her phone rang.

"Mrs. Matumbo," she heard as soon as she answered, "What is being done about the email problem? It's been several hours since you sent the message."

"Mr. Wilson," she replied evenly, although she didn't care much for this man, "de problem has been traced to a location outside of dis complex. I have sent an email to someone I believe can work on de trouble at de source and am waiting for a reply from dat person."

"Not good enough. This needs to be resolved immediately. Immediately, do you hear me?" The man's authoritative voice boomed so loudly, she had to move the receiver well away from her

head.

I hear you. Probably most of de people on dis floor can hear you. But she merely said, "Dat's not possible when de location of de server causing de trouble is not known to me. But it should be known to de person I'm contacting. I understand dat he is a high level Tracy employee."

"And who would that be?"

"Hiram Hackenbacker."

There was a long pause. "Oh. Well... I guess then that things will be corrected in a timely manner. But I'll expect to be informed the instant the problem is resolved. Do you understand?"

"Of course, sir. Everyone will be notified immediately."

"And Mrs. Matumbo, as I've told you before, the words are the, this and that."

Lena felt a spurt of anger rise, but quickly suppressed it. He was a vice president and it never helped to argue with the man, no matter how pompous he acted. She took a deep breath, and then an amusing thought occurred to her. She replied, "Tank you for de information, Mr. Wilson. I'll be sure to inform de French employees when I see dem. Excuse me, I have work to do. Good bye." And before he could say another word, she hung up and returned to the rescue story on her computer screen.

Post by Hobbeth on 21/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:22:56 GMT
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Monday, March 5, 2068, 3:10 p.m. local time, Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York City

"Dad, Aye just called 'stand-down'," John told him through Scott's telecomm. "Thunderbird Two is headed back to base. Thunderbird One is headed back to New York. Doctor's orders. He'll be landing at the airport, so you might want to mention it to Ess...."

"Casualties?" Jeff asked quietly.

"None on our part. However, I think I've figured out how we 'lost' Bee there for a bit. His telecomm developed a short while rescuing a man who went overboard."

Jeff frowned. "How did that happen? I want a report on it as soon as debriefing is done!"

"I'll pass that on to base," John promised, running his hand through his blond locks. "No fatalities on the trawler either."

"Good news then, Jay. Sounds like our new recruits did themselves, and us, proud on this first

rescue." Someone was knocking on Jeff's door. "Got to go, son. Someone's here. I'll talk to you, and to base, later."

"F-A-B," John said. "Signing off." His picture disappeared from the telecomm, and Jeff slid it under the blanket. An intern came in, frowning.

"Hey, Dad," Scott said with a jaunty wave. "Feeling better?"

"I see your heart rate has fallen back into a normal range," the intern said sternly. "I don't know what was getting you so agitated, but it had better not happen again. This could set back your recovery, Mr. Tracy."

"I'm sorry, Doctor. I'll try not to get so worked up again," Jeff said contritely.

"You see to it, Mr. Tracy," the doctor said. He shook a finger at Scott. "And you do what you can to keep him calm. Where is Doctor Tracy, anyway? She's usually here to keep this from happening."

"Really, Doctor. That's none of your business," Scott said, eyebrow raised.

"I suppose not," the young man admitted. He pointed at Jeff. "You get some rest."

Scott closed the door behind him. "What news on the rescue?" he asked as soon as he returned to Jeff's side. Jeff handed him his telecomm.

"To answer your question, Alan has called 'stand-down'. Virgil is headed back to the island, and Alan is flying here... with Dianne. He plans to land at the airport, so you might want to warn them he's coming. No casualties on either side, but Brandon was lost for a bit when he went after a man overboard and somehow lost his telecomm signal. Tin-Tin found both of them and picked them up, but we have to come up with a strategy so that this doesn't happen again."

"Right. I'll have a word with Brains about it," Scott said, putting his telecomm back on his wrist. "Right now, I'm going make arrangements at the airport for Thunderbird One and head there to wait for Alan. Make sure Mom is okay. I'll call you as soon as I see her."

"Good, son. I'll be waiting." As soon as his oldest had left, Jeff sat back against the bed, sighing mightily. His face revealed the exhaustion and the relief he felt now that he knew his family, and the new recruits, were safe and on their way home.

Post by Tikatu on 21/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:25:52 GMT
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Tracy Island; Tuesday, March 6th, 8:15AM

After he got the report from Thunderbird 5, Brains turned on the television again. Kat and Lisa, who had gone to the kitchen for a few minutes, returned just then, and they all caught the end of the news report on the rescue. "Once again," the news anchor was saying, "the rescue has been successful. The captain, who was washed overboard, along with a member of the rescue team, has been found and is being taken to the Excelsior. He will be helijetted to the naval base and transferred by ambulance to the hospital in Peterhead. All of the rescue team members are safe and accounted for. Once again, we owe our heartfelt thanks to International Rescue."

When they heard the news that the rescue team was safe and on their way back, Kat and Lisa hugged each other jubilantly. "They did it! I knew they would," Kat exclaimed. Then she felt the fatigue that had been pushed away for so long by the tension and worry. She started to sag.

"Easy, Kat," Lisa said. "I think you'd better go get some sleep. When they return, you may be needed to work on that winch. You need to be alert."

"Are you sure? I don't like to leave if you two are going to stay up."

"No, no. I'm going to try to catch some shuteye after I finish up here," Brains said. "You go on ahead. Lisa's right. I'll need you alert and ready to work this afternoon."

"And I'll go with you. I want to check on Joshua. He should be waking up about now, if he isn't already awake," Lisa added. The two women headed out of the lounge together, leaving Brains to finish his report.

When they reached Cliff House, Kat said, "If you don't mind, I'd like to take a peek at Joshua before I go to my apartment. He's so cute, but I've never seen him asleep."

"I don't mind a bit. But just a peek, then off you go to get some rest. You'll have a long day once the rescue team gets home, young lady," Lisa answered.

They went into Dominic's apartment and headed to Joshua's bedroom. Quietly Lisa opened the door and peered in. She choked slightly and turned with a humorous glint in her eyes. She whispered to Kat, "You have to see this!" and opened the door wider for the girl to look.

Joshua was awake, lying on his right side with the back of his head at the edge of his pillow. Facing him, with his head on the other side of the pillow, was Asterix. The two of them were just looking at each other. Joshua put out a hand and stroked Asterix's side. "Kitty," he said. The cat yawned and meowed at the same time.

Kat clapped her hand over her mouth to keep from laughing aloud, while Lisa walked over to the crib. "This is Asterix, Joshua. He came with Christopher, who is away right now but will be back soon and wonder where Asterix is." She looked at the cat. "We're going to have to figure out a way to keep tabs on you, if you're going to have the run of the place." The cat raised his head and looked at her for a few seconds, then yawned again. He put his head back on the pillow, and stretched, then closed his eyes and went to sleep.

Kat laughed and Joshua sat up and looked at her. "Hi, Joshua," she said, with a big smile on her face. Then she yawned. "I'd better go now, before I fall asleep where I stand. I'll see you later."

"Okay, Kat," Lisa replied. "Sleep well." As Kat left the apartment, the older woman turned back to the child and said, "Let's get you dressed. Then we'll see about getting you and Asterix some breakfast."

Post by Hobbeth on 21/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:26:07 GMT
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Tracy Island; Tuesday, March 6th, 8:20AM

As Lisa and Kat headed to Cliff House, Brains sat back and sighed in relief. It had been a difficult rescue, but the team performed well and was heading back to base, with the exception of Alan, who would drop Dianne off in New York before returning.

The new recruits did well, but we'd better get their training started right away, he thought as he rolled his head from side to side to relieve the tension in his neck. He glanced at the clock and thought about getting a few hours sleep, but decided to check his email first. He logged off of the computer at Jeff's desk, after saving the report and went to his office.

When he clicked on his mailbox, he saw the priority code on the email from LMatumbo. He opened and read it. Moments later, all thoughts of sleep disappeared when he read the words "some of the emails contain what appears to be highly sensitive information." Oh no! he thought. Could that mean what I think it does? I'd better run a diagnostic on both of the servers here immediately!

He started a diagnostic on the regular server, then went to another terminal and logged into the IR one and started a diagnostic on it. He knew it would take about half an hour for both diagnostics to complete, so he decided to go to the kitchen and get some coffee and whatever he could grab to munch on. He found that Lisa had coffee already made, and a plate of baked goods and another of fruit was ready and waiting for the team when they returned. He proceeded to make himself a tray of food and coffee, adding the necessary utensils to it.

Brains took the tray and went back to his office. He put it down on the only cleared surface in the room and pulled a stool over, after checking the progress of the diagnostics. He was munching on the bagel when the first computer signaled completion of the task. He pulled up the report and stared at the screen, stunned.

The servers have become linked! How could that happen? I wrote a program to prevent just that kind of thing. The second computer chimed and he hurried over to it. He pulled up the report and blanched at the information he saw. Then he printed out copies of both reports and sat down to compare them.

An hour later, the food and coffee gone, he sat back, distressed at what he'd found. The program he'd written, which was to block anyone using the IR server from accessing non-IR files or

mailboxes had deteriorated somehow. It was now allowing users to go into their personal mailboxes from it; apparently someone had done so. He was feeling overwhelmed, not up to working on this, too. I wonder if we could have Ms. Matumbo come here and do the repair work? I'd better check on her credentials and do a background check on her.

He went to his personal computer and called up her files through Tracy Industries. It had comprehensive information, but he knew he'd need more. So he got to work, figuring he'd better have a complete report when he called New York to get authorization to have the woman brought to Tracy Island.

Post by Hobbeth on 21/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:27:33 GMT
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Monday, March 5, 2068, 8:45 p.m., Peterhead Community Hospital, Peterhead, Scotland

Tommy Brennan opened his heavy eyelids slowly. His vision focused and he blinked. Looking down at him was his own sweet Mary, smiling through her tears.

"Oh, thank God! Thank God you're all right!" she whispered, trying hard to control her emotions as her eyes roamed his face.

He sighed, looking at his surroundings. He was in a hospital bed, hooked up to an IV. His right hand was set in a lightweight cast, as was his right leg. Surprisingly, he felt no pain. His gaze returned to Mary.

"Where?"

"You're in hospital, Tom-love."

"The crew? The skipper?"

"All safe. Captain Bowers is in hospital, too; he went overboard, but International Rescue saved him."

She brushed back his dark hair, and a fragment of memory surfaced with the familiar gesture.

"'Tis just as she said," he whispered.

Mary gave him a puzzled look. "As who said?"

"Doc. Their doctor. She brushed my hair back, like you just did, and said, that when I woke up, I'd be in hospital and everything would be all right." He smiled up at her. "I wondered if I'd ever see you and the baby again. I was afraid I was going to die. But she said it would be all right. And... it is."

Mary leaned over to kiss him, on the forehead, on the cheek, then on the lips. "Thank God she was right."

"Wish I could have thanked her; thanked all of them for what they did," Tommy said quietly, reaching up to stroke her face with his undamaged hand. He laid his hand on her cheek, and she leaned into it, putting her hand over his.

"Maybe someday you'll have a chance, Tom-love. But right now, I'm going to call the sister. The hospital doctor will want to see you."

Tom took her hand and pulled it to his face, placing a kiss in her palm and wrapping her fingers over it. She smiled back as she pressed the call button. Tom kept hold of her hand, savoring the warmth of it and the love and life it represented. He knew how close to death he had been and would never take life for granted ever again.

Post by MagicMaster8 and Tikatu on 20/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:31:06 GMT

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Thunderbird One and its two passengers were well on their way to New York. Both weary and hungry, they traveled in relative silence. There wasn't much to say that already hadn't been said. The rescue was a success, even though there were tense moments.

Everyone had pulled together as a team, and now they were heading home. "Alan?" Dianne noticed the young pilot seemed to be far away from the present.

"Hmm?" came his reply.

"I asked if you were okay. You're very quiet."

"Sure, Mom, I'm okay. Just tired, I guess, from the rescue. You know, even though I was at Mobile Control, I feel as stressed and worn out as I do when I'm actually out in the field."

"I'm sure you do. It's not easy being Field Commander. Scott makes it look that way, but I'm sure you'll appreciate him more than ever now, won't you?"

Alan looked at his stepmother who was smiling at him. "Oh yeah! He can have this gig anytime!"

Dianne chuckled and leaned back in her seat. Her eyes heavy, she finally gave in and let herself fall asleep.

Alan had already talked to base and Thunderbird 2, and hearing Gordon and Virgil sound more like his normal brothers, he felt relieved. Feeling his mind drifting again, Alan thought back on this whole rescue from the moment Virgil had told him he was to fly his eldest brother's most precious

commodity! As soon as the words had left Virgil's mouth, that he was to fly TB1, Alan had felt an knot in his stomach; not a large one, but just big enough to be annoying.

Leaving Scott behind in New York and flying off in TB1 had not been one of his finer moments as an International Rescue operative, and the thought of going on another rig rescue brought back memories that were none too pleasant. He remembered the looks from the rig crew as he set up Mobile Control, and then sat there waiting for TB2. Alan had felt uncomfortable just sitting there. He was so used to being with Virgil or Gordon and in the thick of it at the Danger Zone. Not this time though. No, this time he had to sit... and wait. He had rubbed his eyes, hoping that he wouldn't get a nasty headache, and then his stomach had growled, reminding him that the last thing he'd eaten was the bagel and coffee that Dianne had brought him when he'd picked her up in New York. To think that he'd actually enjoyed being Field Commander at that point made Alan laugh.

Man! How does Scott stand this rescue after rescue? He recalled sitting at the controls, drumming his fingers, waiting... waiting for someone to do or say something! The not knowing got to Alan more than he was prepared for. He was too antsy and wanted to just jump off the rig and go help. Once TB2 had arrived, things improved... or so Alan had thought. The pregnant silence on the other end of the radio was not expected.

He'd cleared his plan of action with Brains and thought it was great... until he passed it on to Virgil and Gordon. The sound of Gordon's voice asking him if he was crazy stung him then, and it still stung even now, when he thought about it. Gordon was his closest sibling, and it had really hurt to hear him question his own brother's sanity. Virgil's angry tone hadn't made him feel any better either. Still, being the stubborn Tracy that he was, Alan Tracy, Field Commander, was determined to see his plan through and wouldn't budge.

When Gordon had called him from TB4 for coordinates, Alan had given them and even asked if they were all okay, and Gordon had replied with contempt in his voice. Normally Alan would have called him on it, but being the fearless leader at this point, he'd kept his mouth shut. As the rescue had progressed, he'd kept contact with TB2, TB4, the Saucy Lady, and John in TB5.

He'd managed to keep all transmissions accurate and realised what a level head you have to have in order to make things run smoothly. He knew now that Scott did so much more than sit around and bark orders to everyone. Scott kept the entire show running, hopefully without glitches... and it wasn't easy.

Alan's mind came back to the present. Glancing at the controls, he was pleased to see everything was still running like clockwork. When they landed in New York, he decided that not only was he going to tell Scott he could have his job back, he was going to tell him how much he appreciated him and hadn't known how important Mobile Control was to a rescue. It was the core of the entire operation and without... without Scott, the team would fail. He might be the youngest Tracy son, but he knew deep down that he'd grown up a lot faster today than any of his brothers had done. Stirrings from behind him brought him back to the present.

"Did you enjoy your nap, Mom?"

"Mmmm... Yes I did! I'm going to enjoy myself more when I see your father again, though."

Alan smiled, "Yep, Dad is definitely going to be relieved that this one is over, and so is Scott!"

This time they both laughed. Scott was ready and waiting for them when Thunderbird One touched down. Scott was actually quite taken back with Alan's smooth landing. Dianne was the first out of the craft and she ran over to Scott, and with a quick hug, immediately asked "How's Jeff? Is he okay? Does he know how the rescue went?"

"Yes, yes, and yes!" Scott answered, smiling.

Alan walked up to the two of them. "Hey Squirt! Glad to see you brought my machine back in one piece!"

"Did you honestly think I wouldn't?" Alan smirked.

Scott shot him a look that confirmed what Alan was thinking.

"Well, let's get you to the penthouse to change and then off to see Dad!" Scott and Dianne started towards the cab.

"Scott?" Scott turned back to his brother.

"What's up, Al?"

"Thanks," was all Alan said. He smiled, then turned and headed back inside TB1.

"Thanks for what?" asked Scott, puzzled.

"I think he's trying to say he's thankful for who you are, and what you are to this organization," came Dianne's reply. Scott looked back and watched his Thunderbird take off, making a mental note to talk to Alan more when they got back home.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 22/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:32:14 GMT
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Monday, March 5th, 2068, 4:45PM; Tracy Industries Washington D.C. offices

Lena was finishing up for the day and wondering why she hadn't heard from Mr. Hackenbacker yet, when her computer indicated a priority email had just arrived. She quickly saved her work and opened the window. The email was brief and to the point:

"Mrs. Matumbo, the cause of the problem has been found. However it is essential that I speak with you immediately. Please call the number below as soon as you get this.

Hiram Hackenbacker"

She found the number and picked up the phone. She heard only one ring before the call was answered. "Mrs. Matumbo?"

"Yes. Mr. Hackenbacker?"

"That is correct. I'll get right to the point. I need you to come here. How soon can you be ready?"

"What? Tonight? I can't just . . ."

"Mrs. Matumbo, I have several priority projects on my plate already. I need help. More specifically, I need your help. I've already spoken to Mr. Tracy and gotten authorization to bring you here. Will you come?"

Lena was silent for a moment, stunned. Then she sighed and, checking her calendar, said, "I suppose so. Dere's notting scheduled for de next few days, and I don't have any personal appointments. So I suppose I can get away for a bit."

"You'll probably be here for about a week, Mrs. Matumbo. And I suggest you pack warm weather clothes. We'll have a car pick you up at your home at 7:30 and take you to the airport."

"Warm weadder? Where am I going?"

"You'll see. The Tracy home is not where most people think it is. I suggest you get started. You don't have much time. I look forward to meeting you. I've used some of the programs you've developed in my own work."

"Tank you, Mr. Hackenbacker. I look forward to meeting you, too," she replied. The call was disconnected and she sat back in her chair, still stunned. She couldn't believe the conversation she'd just had. Finally, she looked at the clock and noticed the time.

4:55PM.

She quickly got up and hurried out to where her staff was. They were finishing up, getting ready to leave. She called for their attention.

"I have just been summoned away on company business related to de glitch I found dis morning. I'm leaving tonight and I've been told I'll probably be gone a week. So, if dere's any management decisions to be made, Tom, who has seniority and de wisdom, I hope," she winked at him, "to make de right ones, is in charge. If he is away, den Louise will help. If anyone comes looking for me, tell dem what I've told you. I know you all will do your jobs just as well as if I was here, so I'm not worried. Oh, Tom, Mr. Wilson may be pestering dis department about de glitch. Just tell him I've been requested to work wit Mr. Hackenbacker on de problem. Dat should shut him up, I tink."

She grinned and everyone laughed. They wished her a safe trip and she went back to her office to finish up. Ten minutes later, she was on her way to her car to head home, pack and head out to who knew where.

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:39:09 GMT
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The car arrived promptly at 7:30 and Lena was ready. She had rushed to call her children and grandchildren and get packed, and she felt that she'd forgotten several things she'd need. As the driver put her bags in the trunk, she mentally went over her list, but couldn't think of anything. The driver opened the door and she got in. Moments later, they were off to the airport, a mere twenty minute drive away.

Scott waited in the VIP terminal, looking at his watch. His father's decision to send him in a corporate jet to pick up Lena Matumbo had caught him off-guard, and he was not happy about being a passenger and not the pilot. He could hardly wait until they got to LA, where they would refuel and where Scott would take over as pilot for the rest of the journey.

The car pulled up to the terminal, and Lena waited for the driver to get her bags, then followed him inside. She looked around and spotted a young man, who was walking toward her.

"Mrs. Matumbo?"

"Yes, I'm Lena Matumbo. And you are . . ."

"Scott Tracy," he replied, putting his hand out. She took it, and then he said, "We'll be ready to leave in just a few minutes. It will be a long trip."

"A long trip to where?"

"The South Pacific," he replied as he picked up her bags and walked toward the door to the tarmac."

"The S . . . Are you telling me dat we're going dere in dat little plane out dere?"

Scott smiled. "Yes, ma'am, we are. We'll refuel in Los Angeles and have a stretch, then I'll take over as pilot." He guided her over to the gangway and offered his hand to help her inside. "This is the way our family gets around, Mrs. Matumbo. It's quite routine for us."

She took his hand and climbed up inside. She slowly made her way into the body of the plane, looking around. "Dis is what you call routine. It's impressive."

"Thank you," he replied as he stowed her bags away. "Take a seat anywhere. I'm going up to the cockpit to sit in the co-pilot's seat."

"Now wait a minute, young man. When was de last time you slept? I know about de rescue in de Nort Sea."

"Mrs. Matumbo," Scott said very softly. "I am aware of your knowledge of our 'family business' as it were, however, our pilot is from Tracy Industries and doesn't have that knowledge. For the record, I wasn't involved in that operation; I was needed in New York." He smiled. "But I'll admit it's been a long day for me."

"You don't have to worry. I can see dat de door to de cockpit is closed and he can't hear me. But if you've had a long day, you should rest. I don't want to crash in de Pacific because de pilot fell asleep at de controls. And I don't tink you'd get any sleep dere. Do you?"

Scott chuckled. "You're probably right, Mrs. Matumbo. I'll get some rest back here. Would you like anything to eat or drink before I try to catch a few winks?"

Lena started to shake her head, then felt a quiet rumble in the area of her stomach. "Oh my goodness!" she exclaimed. "I was so rushed, calling my babies and my grandbabies dat I forgot to eat!" She smiled. "Yes, I would like someting. Whatever you have. Tank you."

Scott went back to the generous galley and came back with a thick roast beef sandwich and a soft drink, with pretzels on the side. Lena noticed that he brought out the same for himself. "I was in a rush myself this evening, Mrs. Matumbo," he said as he sat across the aisle from her in the comfortable captain's style chair.

"Dis is perfect," she said, as they tapped their drink glasses. "I knew I'd forgotten someting, but couldn't remember what it was." She chuckled. "I never tought I'd see de day when I'd forget to eat!"

She and Scott both laughed, then settled down to eat in a companionable silence.

When they had finished eating, Scott removed Lena's tray but left the glass in case she was still thirsty. He looked at his watch. "I guess I can catch a nap for an hour or maybe two at the most. Our ETA at LAX will be around seven p.m. Pacific time." He got a blanket from a bin above his head. "Do you need anything else, Mrs. Matumbo?"

She reached into the large bag she'd carried on board with her and drew out some crocheting. "No, tank you, young man. I have my needlework to relax me and a full stomach. What more could I want? You get some sleep. I can sleep when I know you have rested."

Scott smiled at her and settled back in his seat. He moved the seat into a reclining position and covered himself with the blanket. Moments later, he was sleeping soundly.

Lena looked at him, resisting the impulse to go over and stroke the hair from his forehead, as she had done to her son and grandsons hundreds of times. She smiled to herself and concentrated on her crocheting.

It seemed just a few moments before the pilot was signaling their approach to LAX. Scott woke with a start, shook his head, rubbed his eyes and stretched. He looked over at his fellow passenger. "How has the flight been, Mrs. Matumbo?"

"Very smooth, and very quick," she replied, putting her needlework away. "You have a fast jet. How do you feel?"

"Much more rested, thank you," Scott replied. "I'm not used to being a passenger, though, so I'm glad I slept through the majority of the flight. Kept me from getting antsy."

"Good," she said, smiling. "Den I feel better, too. How long will we be here in LA? I need to call my son. He was very upset to know dat I didn't know where I was going. I won't tell him our final destination, but I want to reassure him dat I'm not being abducted."

Scott chuckled. "With refueling and flight checks, we should be here for an hour at least, perhaps a little longer. Feel free to move around, climb out, and make that phone call."

The pilot announced that they were about to land and they fastened their seatbelts and waited. Soon they were on the ground, taxiing toward the terminal.

"Oh, heavens! Where is my mind?" Lena exclaimed. "Wit all dis rushing about I forgot to ask about your fadder. How is he?"

"He's much better, thank you. He'll be out of the hospital and coming home soon," Scott replied.

"Dat's good. No place like home to heal."

"Very true, ma'am, very true."

The jet came to a stop outside the Tracy Industries hangar. "We have a small waiting room inside the hangar where you can stretch and make your call while I see to the jet, Mrs. Matumbo," Scott explained as he helped her out of the plane. "It won't be too long before we're on our way again."

"Tank you. I won't be long." She headed inside and went to the first available phone and placed the call. A few minutes later, Scott walked in to see how she was doing, and heard her talking to her son.

"Don't you sass me, young man. You may be a grandfadder, but I'm still your motter and you show some respect. I'll be home when I get home and dat's all dere is to dat. You call your sister and tell her what I told you. Your children have more sense. Dey tink it's terrific dat I'm having an adventure, as your son put it. If I can get in touch wit you from where I'm going, I will. But until den, stop worrying. I'm fine."

Scott smiled. She reminded him of his own grandmother. Actually, both of his grandmothers, natural and 'step'. I'd catch it hot from Grandma P. if she ever caught me thinking of her as a 'stepgrandmother'. As far as she's concerned, there's no distinction. He called to Lena. "We're just about ready, Mrs. Matumbo."

Lena turned and nodded at him to show she'd heard. "Now, I have to go." She then said something Scott didn't understand, and hung up. She walked over to him. "You'd tink I was old and feeble, de way he was carrying on. Well, let's go. I've got a computer glitch to fix."

"You? Old and feeble? Not from what I've seen," Scott said with a grin as he handed her back up into the plane. "This time, why don't we both sit in the cockpit? You can elbow me if I start dozing off... just like my own grandmothers would do." He winked at her and preceded her into the control cabin.

She laughed, and then asked, "Would it be permissible if I brought my bag with me? If I have my crocheting wit me, I won't be asking you a lot of silly questions."

"Not at all. Feel free to do so," he replied. She retrieved her bag and sat down, placing it out of the way at her side. She looked up at him, a twinkle in her eye.

"I'm ready to go," she said.

"Then let's go." Scott asked for permission to take off, received permission (once the jet came to the front of the small line of private jets waiting for a clear runway) and within a few moments, they were once again airborne.

Post by Hobbeth and Tikatu on 24/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:53:38 GMT
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Tuesday March 6th. 1.00pm. Tracy Island.

Tiredness was completely ignored as Dominic strode through the lounge, nodding to the curious people that regarded him with cocked eyebrows. He needed to know. He speedily made his way through the villa, keeping his eyes and ears open for sounds that would lead him to his goal. He just needed to know. He already knew; but he needed to know, in person, himself. He was busy berating himself for being such a worrywart, when his ears caught a sound. It was a very familiar, very welcome sound, indeed. He sped up his pace, and walked down to the kitchen.

He knew the smile on his face was a tremulous parody, something that was a result of worry, fatigue and self-annoyance. He would trust the people of Tracy Island with his life. He would just have to learn to trust them with a certain other life, as well. You'll be no good if you can't get over this. You feckin' eejit, ye.

Two grinning faces greeted him as he walked into the bright, clean room, and he automatically held out his arms to scoop the young child out of Lisa's capable hands.

"Here you are, sweetie. Daddy's home." She handed Joshua over, and grinned as Dominic held the child in a close cuddle. "He was missing his dad especially for the last hour, especially. He was fine up until then, though."

Joshua grabbed a fistful of his father's dark hair as he was released, and began to twine the strands around his fingers. Dominic held him securely in one arm and rested his other hand on a kitchen counter.

"He's used to me not being around in the mornings," he explained. "I used to work nights and mornings, you see. Then I was around all afternoon till bedtime."

"Ah, I see."

"Did he sleep well?"

"Like an angel." Lisa chuckled. "And he's made a new friend in young Asterisk, let me tell you."

She explained the scene she and Kat had seen, and Dom grinned. Joshua started to clamour and wanted to be let down. Dominic set him down, and he climbed under the kitchen table, intent on exploring. Dom ran a hand through his hair and slumped back against the counter. He took off his glasses and gave them a futile wipe with the hem of his red t-shirt, and sighed. Lisa regarded him curiously.

"What's up?" she asked plainly.

"Hmm? Oh, it's nothing." Dominic replaced his glasses. "I'm just going to have to get used to leaving him here. Not that I don't trust you," he added hastily.

Lisa held up a calming hand.

"I know what you mean. It takes a while to get used to someone new looking after your pride and joy. But you'll soon realize that everyone here on the island is going to want to chip in and help. And you'll get used to it, I know."

"I know. Thanks, Mrs Parkhurst."

"Oh, call me Lisa." She chuckled again. "He's a real cutie."
Dominic stooped over as he son beckoned him under the table and grinned.

"I can't think of my life without him."

Post by ArtisticRainey on 24/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:55:59 GMT
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Monday, March 5th, 2068, 6:45 p.m., Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC

Jeff was getting antsy. It had been two hours; two long hours since Dianne had touched down in New York. He had seen her briefly when he called Scott about Brains's dilemma and sent him off to pick up Lena Matumbo in one of the corporate jets. She had assured him that she was fine and that she would be out to see him as soon as possible. He had been offered dinner by the staff and had declined, expecting his wife to bring him something tantalizing from Kyrano's kitchen. But

more important was the lady herself. He had missed her terribly, even with his mother and children to keep him company.

He started at a timid knocking on the door. That's not Dianne; she doesn't knock here. Just breezes in as if she owns the place. He called out, "Come in."

A pudgy blonde with a hesitant smile peeked around the door. Obviously satisfied with what she saw, she pushed the door open further and entered, followed by a dark young man carrying a briefcase. She held out her hand as she approached.

"Mr. Tracy, I'm told you might not remember me, but we've met before. I'm Charmaine Sellars, and this is Dalmar Freeman, of Burton, Bauer, Beers, and Simmons." Jeff shook her hand briefly.

The young man held out his hand, too. "Nice to meet you, Mr. Tracy." Jeff took it and was impressed by the firm grip

"I'm sorry it's taken me so long to get to you, Mr. Tracy. You would not believe the hoops I had to jump through to gain access to your floor," Charmaine told him. She began pulling papers out of her own briefcase.

"I'm sorry, but if you're reporters, I have no comments to make at all on my accident," Jeff responded, slightly confused.

Charmaine looked at him with widened eyes. "Oh, no, Mr. Tracy! We're not reporters! I'm your realtor!"

"My... realtor?"

"Well, yes! I'm the realtor who was brokering the deal between you and the Taylors for that little cottage up in New Hampshire. The one you went to visit when you had your... accident." Charmaine's voice trailed off as she saw the blank look on Jeff's face.

"I was going to buy a cottage in New Hampshire?" he asked tentatively.

"Actually, you did purchase it. I got the upload of your purchase agreement that afternoon. Mr. Freeman and I are here to complete the transaction. The Taylors are going out of the country next week and would like things all settled before they go." She pulled out some pictures of the cottage, inside and outside.

Jeff frowned as he looked at them, then recognition flitted across his face. He paled as suddenly the memories came pouring in. The ride to Black Mountain in the helijet. The drive up to the cottage with Elise. Her enthusiasm as they explored the place. The drive back down. Sitting in the back of the helijet signing the papers. The storm coming up, fast and furious. Elise's desperate attempts to keep them in the air. Her sharp shout as he got up to try and help her. The sensation of falling and his last thoughts before all became dark.

He drew in a sharp breath, and Charmaine gazed at him, alarmed. "Mr. Tracy? Are you all right?"

"We can do this some other time, Mr. Tracy, if now is inconvenient," Delmar added, concern in his voice.

Jeff swallowed and took a deep breath, shaking his head as he tried to regain his composure. He sat up straighter, and took another deep breath. His face regained some color and he said, "No, let's do this now."

"Are you sure, Mr. Tracy?" Delmar asked.

Jeff nodded. "Yes. I'm sure. It was just a bit of a shock, that's all. I'll be fine." Delmar and Charmaine looked at each other, then Delmar pulled a laptop computer out of his briefcase, while Charmaine extracted an electronic notepad from hers. Setting up the computer, Delmar began to upload various legal papers to the notepad for Jeff to sign.

Post by Tikatu on 25/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 21:58:47 GMT

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In the midst of all this, Dianne walked in. She looked around, puzzled, and noticed Jeff's still pale face. But she smiled as she asked, "What's all this?"

Jeff smiled at her, and beckoned her closer. He introduced Charmaine and Delmar, then handed her the photos of the cottage. She handed him a package from Kyrano, and helped him open it up, then she thumbed through the pictures, smiling as she did.

"What a lovely cottage!" she exclaimed. "Whose is it?"

Jeff reached out to take her hand in his good one. "It's... yours."

Dianne gasped, her eyes widening in disbelief. "Jeff! You bought this... for me?"

"Yes, Dianne, I did," Jeff said softly, his face now very serious. "It was supposed to be a... late... Valentine's gift."

Delmar and Charmaine exchanged glances, and stopped what they were doing. Delmar nodded and he and Charmaine left the room, their equipment awaiting their return. They realized that this was a very private moment between husband and wife.

Dianne put a hand over her mouth as she realized the implications of what Jeff had just told her. Tears sprang to her eyes. "This... this is why you went to New Hampshire? To buy this? Everything you've gone through, everything we've gone through, all because of a... vacation cottage?"

Jeff pulled her hand up to his lips, drawing her closer to him. He let go of her hand and put his in her hair. "Oh, Dianne! I hoped you would like the place, that you would make it your home. It

would be a retreat for just the two of us. I didn't let you know where I was going because it was supposed to be a surprise. There was no way on earth that I could have anticipated what would happen, dearest. No way that Elise could have either."

"But... but now I feel like I'm to blame for this whole... mess!" Dianne cried, the tears beginning to fall. "If we...."

"Stop right there, Dianne Tracy," Jeff said sternly. "You are the best thing that has happened to me in twenty years. As horrible as this accident was for me and for our family, I wouldn't go back and erase it, not if it meant you weren't in my life. Don't you ever blame yourself for what happened. It was an accident, plain and simple. It could have happened anywhere at any time and for any reason." His voice softened as he pulled her even closer so that their foreheads touched and they were eye-to-eye. "If anyone is to blame, it's me. I was the one who got out of my seat even though Elise warned me not to...."

"Wait!" Dianne said suddenly, confused. "You sound as if you... remember."

Jeff sighed. "Yes, love, I remember now; at least enough to piece together what happened. The pictures of the cottage brought it rushing back to me." He kissed her nose. "I don't have any memory of what you and the boys did when you rescued us. I probably never will. But now I know how I got into this condition," he raised his casted arm, "and that bit of my life has been given back to me." He kissed her lips, and she closed her eyes. "Now, despite everything that happened, I am going through with this purchase. If anything, it will remind us, every time we go there, just what we have together and how precious it is. My question is: can you, will you, accept this gift? Accept it as a token, a very small token, of all the love I have for you?"

Dianne opened her eyes and saw the questioning, hopeful look in his gaze. Her self-recrimination ceased and her heart melted as she considered the full meaning of his gift. She draped her arms around his neck and brought her lips to his. "Oh, Jeff! I love you so much! Yes... yes, I accept this gift. It's a lovely cottage, and I thank you for thinking of me like this. And every time we go there, I will just be thankful that I still have you beside me."

Jeff smiled, and they kissed again, and then parted. "Please ask Ms. Sellars and Mr. Freeman to come back in, dear heart. I think I have some more forms to sign."

Post by Tikatu on 25/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 22:10:17 GMT
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Tuesday, March 6th, 2068, 7:05 p.m. Tracy Island Villa

"So, is there anything else we need to cover?" Virgil asked. He looked around the lounge at his team. Lisa had provided an early supper around six o'clock, and at seven, the debriefing had started. Usually, the crew would debrief right after a rescue, sometimes around the dinner table. But with the way Brandon and Gordon looked and felt after their time in the water, Virgil had

decided on a different tack. He ordered rest for everyone until supper, then they would debrief with clearer minds and full stomachs. It also allowed for Dianne to see her husband and get some food and rest before the debriefing as well.

Too bad we couldn't do this at a more convenient time for everyone, Virgil thought. It's two a.m. out there in New York!

John piped up from his portrait on the wall. "There has to be a way for us to track each individual team member without using the telecomms. I mean, the medical staff doesn't even use them during their work and there are no trackers built into the hands-free sets."

"True," Dianne added wearily. "We can't use the telecomms while we work. There's too much risk of contamination."

"And I hope to do away with the telecomms during rescues altogether," Brains said as he made notes on his PDA. "Hands-free communication will be part of the visors I'm working on. The Heads Up Displays will count on being plugged into the wireless earbud units." That's another thing on my plate, but first I need to get this glitch found and resolved!

"Hmm. Any ideas on how we could do it?" Virgil asked. Tin-Tin and Brains looked at each other, but it was Nikki who spoke up.

"In England, a lot of families are resorting to tiny computer chips so that they can track their children's whereabouts if something bad should happen. Three children that I know of have been found through the aid of the chips," she told the assembly. "Would that be a viable option for us?"

Dianne looked thoughtful. "I remember reading about those. They're an offshoot of the technology that pet owners used to identify their animals back in the early part of the century."

Tin-Tin nodded. "I read about them, too, and was thinking it would be good to add them to the new uniforms as a tracker. They are very miniaturized now and totally safe, from what I've read."

"But putting them in the uniforms gives us the same problem as the telecomms," Brandon argued. "If we lose whatever piece of clothing holds the tracker, then we're 'lost' to Thunderbird Five's scanners."

"Or, the clothing isn't, but the person is," Callie added. She frowned. "The only way I see we can make full use of these... locator chips... is to implant them." She shuddered. "I don't know if I like that idea. Too much chance for an allergic reaction, I'd think."

"Brains, can you look into them in tandem with Nikki, since she brought them up?" Virgil asked. "I need some more data to be able to present the idea to Father."

Brains sighed inaudibly, but nodded, and added the item to his growing list of tasks.

Virgil surveyed the room again. "Anything else?"

"Code names," John said again.

"Oh, yes!" Christopher agreed. "I don't mind being called CJ once in a while, but I'd rather not be called that all the time. It was a childhood nickname and doesn't always conjure up fond memories, if you understand."

"Right. With two people whose name begins with C...." Virgil began.

Dianne interrupted, "Three, Virgil. Remember, we have code names for the children as well."

"Oh, yeah. Three people. And two whose names begin with D as well," Virgil continued, "we can't keep using the first initials for code names. Any suggestions for replacements?"

"Hmm," Alan hummed. He brightened. "How about something with middle names? Use the initials combined?"

"No, Alan!" John said, wincing. "Callie and I thought about that. Her initials are C-L, which sounds like 'seal'. Just think of what your initials would sound like run together."

"Ay-ess," Alan said slowly. Then he turned red as people around him chuckled or grinned. "Oh, I get it." He raised his voice. "I agree with John. It's not the best idea."

"How about using the middle names or a portion of them?" Kat asked. She was sitting in on the debriefing much as Brains was, to determine what she would need to do for maintenance.

"That might work," Dominic agreed. "If we used, say, the first syllable or the first few letters." He looked bemused. "Means my code name would be 'Aid' for Aidan."

"And mine would be 'Ash' for Ashley," Nikki pointed out.

Gordon began to laugh. "Mine would be 'Coo' or 'Coop', depending on how many letters we used." He looked over at Virgil. "Yours would probably be 'Gri' or more likely 'Gris'! And Scott? 'Car' or 'Carp'!" He began to guffaw. "And Alan's? Try 'Shep'! Here boy!"

The rest of the room joined in the laughter, as they began to try out different names.

"Mine would be 'Lou' or even 'Louie'," Callie said. "Hmm. I kinda like 'Louie'."

"Mom, what would yours be?" Gordon asked, wiping his eyes. "I don't remember your middle name."

Dianne glared at him. "Doc," she said succinctly.

"Oh, come on, Mom!" Alan coaxed, grinning. "Tell us!"

"What would you call your father?" she asked in return. That brought Alan up short, but Gordon howled some more and fell on the floor.

"Obviously, this isn't going to work," Virgil said drily. "Let's come up with something else."

"Well perhaps each person should come up with their own," Dominic suggested. "I'd use Dak; it's a nickname my family uses with me."

"And I'd be 'Big Mac'," Brandon said. "Some of my old WASP buddies gave me that years ago."

"I like Louie," Callie added. "I think I'll use that."

"We should still use the names Thunderbird One, Two and so forth when speaking to the pilots of the craft," Christopher said. "It's far more military and precise."

"What would you choose as a personal code name?" Nikki asked.

"I think I'd use... Asterix," Christopher said. "Speaking of which, has anybody seen him? I lost track of the little bugger a day or more ago."

"Oh!" Dominic replied. "Lisa told me she found him sleeping with Joshua! She put him back in your apartment."

Christopher smiled with relief. "I'm so glad! I missed that furball."

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves here," Virgil reminded them. "All of this will have to be okayed by Dad, you know." He paused. "Let's come up with a list of code names and I'll submit it to him for approval. Now, is there anything else?" He looked at Dianne's picture. She was noticeably wilting. "We have someone here who should be in bed."

"I think we're through, Virgil," Brains said. "Besides, I need to get ready for the arrival of Mrs. Matumbo."

"Right. I think we're done, too," Virgil agreed. "This debriefing is over." The others nodded, and began to get up.

Virgil turned to Dianne again. "Goodnight, Mom. Get some sleep. Give our love to Dad."

Dianne nodded. "Goodnight, Virgil." Her picture winked out. Virgil stretched and yawned. It was time for him to sleep, too.

Dianne rubbed her eyes and went to her bed. She laid down, but sleep took its time coming. The scene from the hospital earlier that day played through her mind again and again. She put her fingers up to her lips where Jeff had kissed her, and her memories of other kisses, and the pleasure that followed, made the lack of Jeff's presence in their bed hurt with an almost physical pain. She hugged his pillow, tears coming to her eyes again.

He's got to come home soon!

Post by Tikatu on 28/08/2004

Tracy Island; Tuesday, March 6th; 9PM

The plane landed and a tired Scott, carrying Lena's suitcase, helped an equally tired Lena - carrying the other bag as well as her needlework bag - out. Lisa hurried over to greet them, followed by Brains.

"Scott. Welcome home. How is your father?" She reached up to give him a hug.

"He's doing well, Grandma P. He should be coming home, soon." He let her go and turned to Lena. "Lena Matumbo, I'd like you to meet Lisa Parkhurst, or as my brothers and I call her, Grandma P."

The two women shook hands. "I am pleased to meet you, Mrs. Parkhurst."

"Please call me Lisa."

"Den you must call me Lena."

"And I'm Hiram Hackenbacker, but here, I'm called Brains."

Lena turned to the bespectacled man who had summoned her here to the island. She liked what she saw. He looked capable and intelligent. She felt they would be able to work well together.

"A real time saver. Short and to the point. I'm happy to meet you, Brains. Now, about dis glitch . . ."

"No, no work tonight. You and Scott are tired and need to rest before you start anything else," Lisa interrupted. She took both Scott and Lena by the arm and started for the house. "Unless you're hungry. Would you like something to eat?"

"Thanks, Grandma P, but Lena made us something to eat on the way over from LA. We're fine, or will be once we've had a good night's sleep."

"Of course, of course," she replied quickly as they entered the house. "You put that suitcase down, Scott. Brains wants to take Lena to her room and he'll take it as well."

Scott was very willing to do so, and he turned to Lena. "You get a good night's sleep, Mrs. Matumbo. I'll see you tomorrow. Thank you for your companionship during the flight."

She smiled. "You're welcome, Scott. You sleep well."

"I'll see you in the morning, Lena," Lisa said. "Brains, don't keep her up, talking shop." She turned to Scott. "I'm going to make sure you get to your bedroom without falling to sleep on the way."

"Yes, Mrs. Parkhurst." Brains picked up the suitcase and turned to Lena. "If you'll follow me, I'll

take you to your room. We can get started in the morning, when you've rested and had a good breakfast."

"Thank you, Brains," she replied as she followed him. "But I'd like to know now what you found, so I know what I'll be working on tomorrow."

"Are you sure you're awake enough to remember?"

"Yes. I may fall asleep as soon as my head hits the pillow, but I always remember what was said and done prior to dat."

"Well, a program I wrote for the IR server, to block people using computers on it from connecting to non-IR sites or mailboxes has deteriorated. I haven't gotten as far as figuring out why. That will be your first task, and finding out how to correct it, your next."

"Do you have de specs on de original program?"

"Yes."

"I'll need to look at dem, as well as de printouts of de diagnostics."

"I'll have them for you when you're ready to start work tomorrow." He stopped in front of a door. "Here we are," he said. He punched in a code on the panel, and then pressed another button. "Go ahead and enter your own code. She did so, and then followed him inside as he put the suitcase on a luggage rack. He turned back to her and pointed to a door. "That's your private bathroom. The closet is to the right of it. I'll leave you now, and I'll return to escort you back to the main house at 8 tomorrow morning."

"Thank you again, Brains," she said gratefully. "I'll be ready. Good night."

"Good night, Mrs. Matumbo. Sleep well." He turned and left, closing the door behind him.

Lena opened her suitcase and got out her nightwear. She went into the bathroom and performed her nighttime ablutions and got out of her clothes, folding them and putting them on top of her suitcase. I'll unpack in de morning, she thought as she put on her nightwear, then slid into bed. That was her last thought. She turned the light out and was instantly asleep.

Post by Hobbeth on 28/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 22:13:03 GMT
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Wednesday, March 7, 2068, 7:30 a.m., the Villa, Tracy Island.

Tin-Tin yawned and ran her fingers back through her thick black hair, pushing it out of her eyes. She stretched as the door between her bedroom and her sitting room opened with a swishing

sound. Her alarm usually woke her at seven, but last night she just fell into bed after the debriefing and forgot the alarm.

But something different prodded her out of bed this morning. Some small noise from her sitting room had penetrated her sleeping mind and teased her awake.

Blearily, she made her way over to her computer, which was chiming for attention. I forgot to shut it down last night, she realized. And now it's telling me I have mail.

She sat back in her ergonomically correct desk chair and scrolled idly down through the email messages that had been deposited in her email in-box. One in particular caught her eye, a priority email from a manufacturer in Kabul. Opening it, she scanned the message and groaned.

They're having trouble with the Penelon-Kevlar formula and want me to go out and work with them to try and figure out where in the manufacturing process things are going wrong. She sighed and pulled up her personal schedule. Well, if I'm not needed for a rescue, I suppose I could fly out tomorrow. I'll have to clear it through Brains and Virgil. Or maybe Scott if he's home yet. I don't know that Mr. Tracy would need to be bothered about it. Not yet. Only if we can't get the stuff manufactured properly. In the meantime, I'd better send the new specs and the new design to our usual uniform providers. They'll do everything but the logos, which we'll put on right here, Mrs. Tracy and I. Wonder if anyone else among our new recruits sews?

Tin-Tin got up and headed for her bathroom. I'd better check and see if the auxiliary clothing has been ordered yet; the thermals, the fire protective gear, the new space suits for Callie... there's so much to think about above and beyond just the uniforms! Usually Dianne takes care of that, but with Mr. Tracy in the hospital... I'll just do a quick follow-up. After all, I have the measurements.

With that settled in her head, she slipped out of her nightgown and stepped into the shower, hoping to wash the cobwebs from her mind as she washed the sweat and dirt from her body.

Post by Tikatu on 30/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 22:13:53 GMT
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Tracy Island: Wednesday, March 7th; 8AM

Lena had been up for some time when Brains arrived to take her to breakfast. She'd showered, dressed, made her bed and unpacked by then. There was a chime, signaling someone was at the door, and she went over and tapped the panel alongside it to open the door.

"Good morning, Mrs. Matumbo. I hope you slept well," he greeted her, smiling.

"Good morning, Brains. Tank you, yes. And please call me Lena, since I'm calling you Brains."

"All right - Lena. Now, shall we go have some breakfast before we get down to work?"

She grinned at him. "I tought you'd never ask. I'm famished."

He laughed and they headed to the villa. When they arrived, Lisa was fixing breakfast, and there were a few people at the table. Brains introduced Lena to them and they all greeted her with smiles, but since their mouths were full, said nothing. Lisa told her to sit down, and her breakfast would be ready in just a few moments. "I hope you like pancakes."

"I love dem," Lena replied, "and orange juice, please, if you have it."

"Of course. Coffee?"

"I prefer tea, if dat's not too inconvenient."

"Not at all." Lisa bustled about, and soon Lena was eating a very satisfying meal. She chatted with Brains and the others, telling them all to call her Lena, but did not waste time, as she wanted to get to work on the reason she came to this place. She sipped the last of her tea as Brains finished his breakfast, then they excused themselves and headed to his office.

They headed to an elevator that, to Lena's surprise, took them not to his laboratory - where he told her his office was - but to a monorail. "This will take us to my lab. It's the fastest and easiest way to get there." They got in and headed out.

"I'm impressed," Lena said. "Dis is certainly a big place. It would take a multibillionaire to create and maintain it." Then she lapsed into silence as she watched through the windows until they arrived at their destination.

When they walked in, he said, "Lena, I've set up a workspace over here for you." He handed her a card. "Here's a list of sites you might need to use, and temporary passwords to get into them. This computer is not connected to the IR server, so if you want to access your personal or work mailboxes, you may do so."

He then indicated a pile of papers. The printouts of the diagnostics are here, along with one of the original program, as you requested. Is there anything else you need?"

She walked over and sat down, putting her bag - which she had brought with her when she left her room - on the floor under the knee-hole of the desk. She replied, "I believe I have everyting I need, for now. Why don't you show me what you found when you compared dese diagnostics? Den, I'll try to figure out why it happened."

Brains pulled a chair up to her desk and took one of the printouts. He had her open the other and indicated to her the places that showed him where the computers linked. He found her to be a quick study - which he expected - and left her alone to look over the original programming specs, while he worked on another project. About an hour later, Tin-Tin walked in and went over to her workstation. They worked in companionable silence until Lena finally sat back and sighed.

"Brains, I tink I've found de reason for de deterioration."

He jumped up and went over to Lena. "Where?"

She explained, pointing out the place in the specs that she felt caused the problem. "You put a limit on de treshhold number of 'hits' on de block, and it was reached, even exceeded. Why did you do dat?" she asked quietly.

"At the time, the best program I could come up with in the time I had required a specific number. I put the highest number allowed. I didn't think it would ever be reached."

"Well, it was. So what we have to do is to alter de program to allow an unlimited number of hits. Too bad we can't alter a program on de person - or people - who kept trying de most." She had a mischievous look in her eyes, as she pointed to the code indicating where the most hits had occurred.

"Oh, no! How am I ever going to tell Mr. Tracy?"

"I'll tell him, if you like," she replied, chuckling. "I have less to lose dan you do, should he not take de news too well."

He laughed with her. "I may just take you up on that offer. So, the next step is to alter the program to allow unlimited hits on it. And then repair the glitch, to stop emails from going anywhere but to whom they are addressed."

"I tink I know how to do bote tings, but it's going to take time. And right now I need a short break. Where can I go to, um, go?"

"I can show you, Lena," Tin-Tin answered, turning to face them. "I need a break, too."

"Tank you, Tin-Tin," Lena replied, and the two women left the room.

Post by Hobbeth on 30/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 22:41:37 GMT
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Tracy Island, Wednesday, 7th March, 8.30 am

Virgil came down to breakfast wearing grubby clothes, looking like he was ready to work. He was introduced to Mrs. Matumbo, or Lena, as she insisted on being called, and then sat down to eat the pancakes that Lisa had prepared. He looked across at Kat, who was already finishing up her meal.

"Kat, a winch on Thunderbird Two failed during the rescue."

"I know. I heard all about it." Her eyes widened. "Do... do you want me to replace it for you?"

Virgil nodded. "I certainly could use your help. I suggest we get started right after breakfast."

"Okay Virgil, just let me go and put my overalls on," Kat said. "Shall I meet you in TB2's hangar? Or do you want me to return here, in case you want to fill me in on what is required?"

"I'll meet you in Thunderbird Two's cockpit, Kat. You can come back up here and use my entrance if you like," Virgil said with a twinkle in his eye. "Or you can take the passenger elevator next to the monorail lift. Whichever you prefer."

Kat smiled at him. "Ooh! I want to use your entrance please."

"Okay, Kat," Virgil replied. "But let's eat breakfast first, shall we?"

Kat scarfed down her breakfast, hardly tasting the delicious pancakes. Then she hurried back to her apartment. She felt totally excited at the prospect of working on the Thunderbirds themselves. She changed into her overalls, all fingers and thumbs in her excitement. Slow down, she told herself. More haste, less speed.

In the meanwhile, Virgil had finished his coffee and sauntered upstairs, using his special entrance to make it down to Thunderbird Two before Kat did. He looked around and frowned. Have to find some way to get in and out of here on the ground level without having to move the chassis up and down over the pod all the time.

Virgil toggled a switch, and watched the pods move to their farthest extent into the bay, leaving nothing below the chassis but air. There. Once Kat gets here, we can go in and out through the lower entrance.

Hurrying back to the lounge Kat stood in front of the picture and was instantly tipped back and began the descent into Thunderbird 2's cockpit.

Kat was experiencing the thrill of her life lying on the flat surface of the conveyor as she descended to Thunderbird 2's cockpit. Finally she arrived, sliding into Virgil's chair. "Boy, that was some entrance!" she said breathlessly.

Virgil looked at her. "Yes, it sure is a good way to get here."

Kat looked around her; the controls seemed very complicated. She knew that she would never be able to fly this machine, not that she would ever be asked to. "Right. What now, Virgil?" she asked.

"Right now, I'm going to lower the chassis to the floor so we can get in and out of her easily for parts and tools," Virgil said, flipping the switch that did just that. Kat swayed a bit but kept her footing as Thunderbird Two descended smoothly to the floor.

"Then we'll go down to the lower level and I'll show you where the winch motor is. We'll probably have to look into stores to see if we have a replacement," he continued. "C'mon. I'll show you the way and give you a little tour while we're at it."

Kat followed Virgil out through the back of the cockpit and listened intently as he pointed out the various cabins and doors to her. "This is crews' quarters over here on the left, and this is the lab on the right. We used to store hoverbikes here, but we moved the lab into this space to make room for a small sickbay."

"That's the doorway to the inspection catwalk in each pod," he said, indicating a wide door at the back wall of the chassis. "And in here we have the lift that goes down to the lower level. You can see why we wanted sickbay downstairs; the lift barely holds two, never mind two and a stretcher."

He pointed out something she wouldn't have noticed. "This lift turns so that you can exit either inside or outside. The outside door usually connects with the pod itself, but today we'll just use it to get out to the hangar. On the inside, it opens up on this triage room." He guided her down a short passage.

"On the right we store our extra clothes and equipment like radiation suits and such." They took a right hand turn and he opened a door to the left. This brought them into the winch room. "The passenger elevator comes directly down here, too," Virgil told her.

Kat was amazed at everything Virgil pointed out to her. She was trying to memorise the way they had come and everything that he had shown her. She looked around the winch room. "I hope there is a spare engine, Virgil," she said. "Otherwise, it's going to be an enormous job to repair the motor. The damage looks bad. It looks as though someone has given it a mighty thump."

Virgil chuckled. "Christopher did say he'd thumped it. Let's see about getting the serial numbers off of this baby and we'll have Scott use the computer to track down the part for us."

Kat looked on as Virgil got under the engine to take a note of the serial numbers. "So I suppose that was how Christopher managed to make it work?" Kat asked. "Do you want me to contact Scott with the number?"

"Yes, please," Virgil replied.

Kat spoke into her telecomm. "Hi, Scott. This is Kat. Virgil and I are in the winch room. These are the serial numbers; can you check on the computer to track down the right parts for us? The Spool should be replaced and possibly the cable as well."

"Okay, Kat, will let you know," Scott answered.

Within a few moments, Scott's face and voice came back in Kat's telecomm. "We're in luck. The parts you need are in storage bin 552, 553, and 568, respectively. Virgil knows where that is."

Kat relayed this information back to Virgil.

"Right, then, Kat, follow me." He led her out of the Thunderbird into the hangar itself. "These are the storage bins," he told her, pointing to several large bins, each one numbered. "Every piece of equipment we use is stored here, from the largest motor parts down to the smallest nails and screws. Now I think that 552 and 553 are over in that corner and 568 are on the other side. Could you go and look into 568 and find the cable and bring it back to the winch room."

"FAB," grinned Kat as she hurried over to the bin he was pointing to. She managed to bring out the heavy cable and staggered back to the winch room with it. Virgil joined her with the other articles of equipment needed. "Now we start to work on the engine," he said. "We'll need a ladder for each of us because of where the motor is situated. Wait here and I'll get what we need."

Between the two of them, they took down the old winch motor and spool, filled with the cable. It was heavy, and Virgil was afraid that Kat couldn't handle it, though he said nothing. As a result, he was amazed at the young mechanic's ability to move around the heavy pieces of equipment. They worked in companionable silence for a while, and then Virgil asked, "What would you choose for a code name?"

Kat wiped a stray strand of hair away from her eyes, and thus deposited a streak of grease across her cheek. "Well, I believe that mechanics are called 'grease monkeys'. As I am so small, I thought I could be known as 'mini grease monkey', and because that is such a mouthful to say, I would abbreviate it to the initials 'MGM'. What would you use as a code name?"

"I don't know. Maybe something to do with one of my hobbies, like Piano Man or some artist or something," Virgil said as he tightened a bolt with a grunt. He glanced over at her. "Any suggestions?"

"Oh, there are so many artists!" she said. "I don't even know what kind of art it is that you do."

"Painting, mostly, in lots of different styles and media." He shrugged. "I'll keep thinking about it."

Kat nodded, and continued her work.

"Could you just lift that wire for me?" Virgil asked, "I think that we are almost able to refit the engine." Kat did as she was told.

"To be honest, Virgil," she said, "using those initials as code names really made me laugh. It was so funny calling Gordon, 'Gee', and Alan, 'Aye'. There could be some really funny combinations when you are all working together."

"Yes, I know," replied Virgil, "and I don't think the middle names were much better. Here, we've almost got it." The two of them put as much pressure into pushing the motor to the ceiling as they could and then tightened down the bolts. Virgil handed her a power tool. "Here, we can get the bolts even tighter with this."

Kat took it from him and began to use it. Virgil watched out of the corner of his eye and was pleased to see her familiarity with the tool and its uses. He lifted up the spool.

"You know," Virgil said, "from watching you, I can see what a good mechanic you are."

Kat smiled at him. "Thanks for the compliment. Now just how high does this spool have to fit?"

"Here, we'll attach the spool to the motor," Virgil said, showing her where the two fitted together. With the power tool Kat had on her, the installation only took a minute or two.

"Now, we'll wire the motor into the controls and test it," Virgil explained. Together they began wiring in the motor.

"Do you want me to stay here while you return to the cockpit, Virgil, and test the motor to check whether everything is okay now?" Kat asked.

"Why don't you try the controls down here first, while I scoot up to the cockpit? Then after we've tested both sets of controls, we can hook up the cable and see how it does and if the spool is on right," Virgil suggested.

"Okay, Virgil," Kat replied. She looked at the controls; they didn't seem very complicated. Tentatively she switched on and with a whirring sound the motor began move. "Virgil?" she said into her telecomm.

"Yes?"

"It's working perfectly here."

"Okay. I'll try my controls now." Kat stood back and watched as the motor came on as if by magic.

"Looks good, Virgil!"

"Great! I'm coming back down."

Before Virgil returned, Kat thought that they had worked together very well, and she was pleased that Lady Penelope had insisted on all the extra tuition. Finally, Virgil rejoined her in the winch room.

"Now for the real test. Can you help me hook up the cable?"

Kat dragged the cable and between them they managed to hook it over the spool. Once the cable was fastened around the spool, Virgil started the engine. Slowly, slowly, the spool began to wind, winding the cable up onto the winch.

"Looks like success!" Virgil exclaimed.

Kat agreed. "A definite success, Virgil," she said.

Virgil glanced over at Kat, and grinned. "You sure do get into your work, don't you, MGM?" He indicated the smears of oil on her face and the grease on her overalls.

Kat laughed. "I simply can't seem to keep clean when I am working, no matter how hard I try," and she added, "Van Gogh. Anyway, you are not so clean yourself."

Virgil looked at her. "Seriously though, thank you for helping. It was a job worth doing and you were a great assistant."

Kat coloured slightly. "Thanks, Virgil."

Virgil glanced at his watch. "Hmm. Looks like we've nearly worked the morning away. Lunch will be served soon. Why don't you go ahead and get changed and head topside? I've got some more work to do in getting Thunderbird Two ready for the next rescue."

Kat wiped her hands on some rags lying around and said goodbye to Virgil, who was already heading for the cockpit. She headed out of the hangar and made for her apartment. She thought about what she had just done. It was so reassuring to know that although she was not taking part in rescues, she would be needed when the Thunderbird crafts came home. And who knew? Maybe she would be doing more to help Virgil and the others, given time.

She had a long leisurely shower and headed for the dining room and joined her friends for lunch. They all wanted to know how the work had gone. "I will tell you later," Kat told them.

Post by Tawnyangel22 and Tikatu on 30/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 23:08:25 GMT
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Tracy Island Wednesday 7th March Morning

Christopher came out of the shower, having washed the stresses and strains out of his bones. He pulled on his clothes, then got down on the floor to peer under the bed.

"Mrrroaaaow!!!" an angry paw flashed in front of him.

"Asterix!" Christopher admonished the little cat. "How many times do I have to say I'm sorry"

Asterix just looked at Christopher with bright, angry green eyes.

"Fine." Christopher got to his feet and immediately felt sorry for his poor cat. "I'll go and get you some chicken, okay?"

"Mrroww?" Asterix peered out from under the bed.

"I'll be back soon." He kneeled down and ruffled Asterix's head. "I missed you."

Post by TheWrongTouser on 31/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 23:11:48 GMT
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March 7th, 9:45am

Brandon sat out by the pool. There was no one about and the silence was welcome. He was thinking back to the rescue and how close he had come to dying.

Christopher walked outside. He was happy that Asterix had been found, but the little cat was going to be angry with him for a long time. He saw Brandon sitting by the pool, and he groaned. A little too loudly, loud enough for Brandon to hear.

"Hey CJ, you got a minute? I need to talk to you." Brandon's voice was level.

"Yes, Brandon," Christopher said in a flat voice, then walked over to where his colleague was sitting. "What's the matter?"

"Look, we need to talk and try to work things out. We can't be at each other's throats all the time." Brandon looked Christopher directly in the eyes. "If I offended you in any way, let me know." There. Now it's up to him.

"Well." Christopher paused. "You can be a very arrogant sod. And you upset Asterix." Christopher looked at him. "But I think that I can try and forgive you after what you did out there on that rescue."

"I didn't think I was coming across as arrogant. Just rooting for the home team. As for your choice of sport, I apologize if it seemed like I slammed you. I'm used to extreme sports, such as extreme skydiving and powerboat racing."

"I'm sorry." Christopher sighed. "First impressions and everything. You reminded me of the American colonel who came over with Scott. He was arrogant and annoying."

Brandon smiled slightly. "You can't judge everyone by the actions of one person." He sighed, gazing off into the distance.

"Look, mate." Christopher moved closer. "We have to work together, so why don't we bury the proverbial hatchet right here, right now."

Brandon looked for any kind of deception on Christopher's part, but could see none. Smiling, he extended his hand. "Deal, CJ. I don't expect it to happen overnight but this is a step in the right direction."

"That's settled then." Christopher shook the offered hand. "But there are a few things..."

Uh-oh. I knew there would be a catch. "What might those be?" Brandon asked, his voice not betraying his thoughts.

"You'll have to teach me about those extreme sports and I'll teach you about my favorite ones." He paused. "And please call me Christopher or Chris."

Sure thing, Chris." At that moment, Asterix decided to put in an appearance. He walked up to

where Christopher was sitting, winding himself around his legs in greeting. Christopher picked him up. "I was going to come back with your chicken. He does get impatient." Christopher held Asterix to Brandon. "He is a friend now." He chuckled. "I'd love to know how you got here, you naughty cat." Asterix just purred.

From a discreet distance, Gordon watched the interaction between the two men. "I'd heard those two weren't getting along. Looks like I heard wrong." He watched the byplay a little longer before turning and walking back the way he had come.

Post by MagicMaster8 and TheWrongTrousers on 31/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 23:16:43 GMT

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Tracy Island, March, 7th Midday

Kat was just debating whether to go for a swim with the others, when Tin-Tin came in with an armful of post. To Kat's surprise there was a letter for her. She recognised Lady Penelope's handwriting on the thick, cream-coloured envelope. I wonder what she can be writing to me about? she thought. We normally communicate via the vidphone. Excusing herself, she headed for the lounge and out on to the balcony. She was so immersed in her thoughts, she didn't see Gordon already seated there, reading the newspaper. He looked up at her, and was about to say hello when he saw the letter in her hand and decided to let her read it in peace.

Darling Kat, her mother had written

Lady Penelope kindly offered to forward this to you for us. Both your father and myself are missing you, but Lady Penelope assures us that you are well and are being kept busy.

Andrew and Melanie announced their engagement at the end of February and we had a lovely celebration, Tim and his wife came over from New York, but it wasn't the same with you not being there. Melanie's ring is a single diamond solitaire. They are not getting married until next year; at the moment they are saving to buy their own home. I know that Melanie has expressed a wish that she would like you as a bridesmaid.

This brought a lump to Kat's throat. She could imagine the celebrations. Melanie was a very nice girl. There would have been so much happiness and love at that party. She continued reading.

Your Aunt Jane had some exciting news. You remember that Uncle Peter works for the company who owns the rigs in the North Sea? Well, apparently a fishing trawler had picked up a mine in its nets, and during the heavy storm was being pushed towards one of the rigs. He told her that International Rescue had had to be called out. Miraculously no one was killed, but it came close at one time, as the Captain was washed overboard. Your Aunt said that the Thunderbird crafts were amazing. Knowing your Aunt, it will be the talk of the local Women's Institute for years.

Kat smiled to herself when she read that. Yes, her Aunt was a gossip and loved to be the bearer

of news, the more sensational the better. The letter continued.

You will be pleased to know, I think, that Mr Patterson, the owner of the garage where you first started work, and had all that harassment, has gone into liquidation. I think he was messing about with the accounts, so now he has no business and has had to sell his large house.

Well, I don't think there is much more news, I just wanted to let you know about International Rescue, because I am not sure how much news you get where you are working.

If you are able to, please write back, we do wonder how you are. Both your brothers wanted to know what you were up to.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Lots of love,
Mum and Dad

Kat folded up the letter, replaced it in the envelope and let out a sigh. Gordon looked at her.

"Not bad news, I hope?" he asked her.

Kat spun around. "Sorry, Gordon, I didn't see you there. I hope I didn't seem rude, not saying anything to you earlier."

Gordon smiled. "No, you were deep in thought as you passed me."

"I have just received a letter from my parents, and reading between the lines, they appear a little anxious as to where and what I am doing. Mum went into great detail about the rescue in the North Sea, in case I didn't hear any news."

She sighed again. "They want me to write back, but what can I say? I obviously can't tell them the truth, and if I don't say much they may well wonder. I have always been enthusiastic about my work, telling them all that I did for Lady Penelope. Now I shall just have to be a bit evasive, which is not like the Kat that they know."

Gordon looked thoughtful. "You know," he said, "maybe this should be mentioned to Mom and Dad when they return. I don't think that your parents are the only ones who are wondering what their children are doing."

Just then Nikki and Brandon came out on to the balcony.

"We are going swimming in the sea, will you come with us?" Nikki asked Kat.

"Oh, lovely idea!" Kat replied. "Just give me a few minutes to go and change." Pushing the envelope in her pocket, she left for her apartment.

Gordon called after her. "I will talk to Mom and Dad about that problem."

"Problem? Has Kat got a problem?" Nikki asked anxiously.

"No, not a personal problem, Nikki," Gordon replied. "Just overly anxious parents."

Kat joined Nikki and Brandon and they headed down across the beach to the sea.

"How did your work on the winch motor go?" Nikki asked

"Absolutely fine," Kat replied. "Virgil showed me around Thunderbird Two. It's amazing what is stored in there, but of course, you know that."

"Yes, I do," Nikki replied. "But I find it very exciting! It was totally awesome working on my first rescue!"

Kat continued. "Virgil and I worked really hard on the engine. He is such a nice person, and I really think I proved to him that I can pull my weight."

"Yes," Nikki replied, "they are all really kind and helpful. I am really enjoying myself here."

"Yes, I am too," Kat said and then looked thoughtful. Brandon noticed and mentioned her thoughtful look.

"Penny for your thoughts?" Brandon asked.

"Well, I've had a letter from my parents," Kat replied. "They are obviously a little concerned as to what I am doing, and my being so reticent about things isn't really helping. Gordon said he would talk to Mr Tracy when he arrives back on the island, as to what could be told to parents like mine."

"I agree," Nikki said. "I often wonder what my parents are thinking."

"It will be nice to see Callie and John back," Kat said, changing the subject, "John has promised to show me the stars on his return."

"Oh, yes!" Brandon said, a twinkle in his eye. "I'm sure he has!"

Kat blushed. "Only as a friend," she said, as she dived into the clear blue waves.

"Hmm," Nikki added, as she and Brandon followed.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 31/08/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 23:19:38 GMT
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Wednesday, March 7, 2068; Thunderbird Five; 2:20 p.m.

Callie was checking transmissions when she heard John calling. "Yes, John?"

John motioned her over from where she stood and when she reached him, he sat her down at a computer station. "Now, down at base, everyone is working on doing maintenance on the various Thunderbirds which were used during the rescue yesterday, getting them ready for the next go-round.

"We have a similar task to perform. I'm going to show you the major systems that we need to check. Some we check on a daily basis, some on a weekly, and others once a month. Then when we're through running diagnostics and checking the systems, I'll show you how to create and store a rescue log."

Callie stood up and said, "Okay, John." She looked at all the systems and said, "Um, where do we start?"

"Sit down again, Callie," John replied with a smile. "We can do most of it right here from the computer."

He reached over and logged himself out. "First, let's get you set up in here with a user name and password. Then I'll show you how to run the diagnostics on our most basic systems: power, life support, and artificial gravity."

After he set up the screen for a new user, Callie typed away at the keyboard. "I'll use clspencer to log in. Now what's a good password--I've got it!" She typed up four letters and pressed the enter key. "That should do it."

John smiled. "Now that you're logged in, you can see I've set up folders for the different tasks. Dailies, rotating, weekly, and monthly. The monthly checks are done before you leave the station, so you know that you're leaving Thunderbird Five in the best state possible, and so that if parts are needed to make repairs and they aren't aboard, they can come up with Thunderbird Three."

"The rotating checks are done on a daily basis, but only one system is done per day. This pertains to our actual communications equipment. We'll take one bank down at a time and look it over, doing one bank per day."

Callie clicked on the folder marked "Daily" and opened the file. "I just start with this first file, right?"

"Right. That will run the diagnostic on the power systems. It takes a while, but it's the most important system, so we do that first. If there's a problem with another system, then we'll know it's not the power grid."

"Go ahead and start the diagnostic and I'll show you the logs while it's running," John instructed.

Callie double-clicked on the file and started the diagnostic program.

"Good. Now, during a rescue, we get everything. All the talkback, all the communications. It's our job to catalog it into print form for our records and then download a copy to base. Believe it or not, it's easier to thumb through a paper copy than to scroll through a print file or listen to all the

talkback.

"What we'll do is identify the speakers and report the action as told during the debriefing." John grimaced. "It's not easy and I usually wait until the wee hours to do it, but this is as good an opportunity as any to teach you."

"How long does it take to go through all the paperwork during a rescue?"

"Most of this stuff is on disk or is uploaded to us from base, or from Mobile Control, for example. We get to put it all together since we 'see all, know all' so to speak."

"As a result," said Callie, "we have to go line-by-line on the disk, and we also have to listen to all the audio. No wonder you said this wasn't easy. It sounds like a busy day at a hard-running radio station."

John laughed. "It's even more than that, Callie. We're an emergency services dispatcher as well."

"I don't see how you can handle doing this day in and day out. But, I need to get used to this; I'll have to do this on my own before too long."

"Very true, Callie." John looked over all the information files that were lined up in the upload queue. "Looks like we're waiting on an upload from Mobile Control. I suppose I'd better... oh, wait. There it is."

Callie noticed how quick the upload was. "So, this is where we start the tedious task, huh?"

"Right." John sighed. "Thunderbird Five may be the strongest link in International Rescue's chain of activities, but the work here can be boring... and sometimes lonely." He looked down at her, his blue eyes looking old and weary. "That's something else you'll eventually get used to, Callie."

Callie smiled with understanding in her eyes. "Hey, there were times I felt lonely working at the International Space Station. Some of the work I had was pretty routine and boring, too. What kept me going was the fact I was helping the people on the ground."

"That's what makes it all worthwhile, Callie. And now that you're here, things will be easier for all of us," John replied, smiling again. "Now, let me pull up an old log and you can see the format we use...." And he did, giving Callie her first lessons on keeping Thunderbird Five spaceworthy and inhabitable while teaching her how important the satellite was to the whole operation.

Post by TracyFan4Ever and Tikatu on 01/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 23:56:27 GMT
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Wednesday March 7th. 2.30pm. Tracy Island.

"Okay, you two." Brains talked briskly as he walked down to the pod bay, with the two nurses in tow. "Part of your job, as well as being medical personnel in the field, is to take care of Thunderbird Seven after rescues. It'll be your job to perform a detailed clean up and inspection of the craft when it returns to the island, and to report any problems or malfunctions you may come across."

The two nurses almost had to jog to keep up with Brains' fast, efficient walk. They descended to the bay, and both shared a look of awe as they caught a glimpse of Thunderbird Two on the way. The mammoth craft still seemed like a figment of their imaginations, something from sci-fi, not reality. Brains led the way to the port where Thunderbird Seven was stationed, and stepped up into the treatment cabin.

The remnants of the previous rescue were clear. There were thermal blankets piled up on one of the biobeds, and the cabin had a general look of well-used untidiness. Through the doors near the back, leading to the surgical bay, Dominic knew there was the need for a clean-up operation there, too.

"You'll be using the anti-bacteria/anti-virus gel as you work, and after the clean up is complete, the whole craft is disinfected." Brains regarded the two enthusiastic faces. "Shall we get started, then?"

He received two vigorous nods, and shook his head as the nurses started to formulate a plan between them. It seemed that they were raring to get started on the job. I've never seen anyone so enthusiastic about clean-up before, he thought, though I suppose this is something they are familiar with, and don't need any special training in. I'll chip in my opinion and guide them as they go along.

"I've finished checking over the biobed systems, Dom," Nikki said as she walked away from the twelfth bed. "All systems seem to be working perfectly, although I'm no expert. I'll ask Brains to give them another quick check.

"Good stuff, Nik.," Dom said as he closed over one of the storage compartments embedded in the craft's bulkhead. "All of the cold weather gear is stored, and I've catalogued and stored all of the medical equipment that was used."

"So we just have the surgical bay to do, and then the final disinfecting to do, right?"

"Right."

"Well, let's get to it!"

The two put on fresh gloves with the special gel, and Nikki pushed the door release with her elbow. Brains followed, and both noted that he seemed impressed by their quick and efficient clean-up operation. Of course we're brilliant, Dominic thought, we've both done this for a living for years. Though I'm sure he knows it.

Soon enough, the surgical bay was cleaned and all equipment was tested and stored away, ready for its next use.

"Now for the final clean," Dom said.

They went through the entire craft, with Brains giving them pointers and help along the way. Both nurses were enthused by their work, as the equipment was top of the range, and the recent rescue, which had given them a taste of what their jobs would really be like, had been the proverbial hammer falling, and neither regretted their decision.

After they had finished, Brains folded his arms across his chest and did nothing to restrain the reassured grin on his face.

"I am very impressed by your work here, today," he said. The two nurses grinned. "You've both shown real professionalism and enthusiasm, and I know you'll be excellent members of International Rescue."

"Thank you, Brains," Nikki said. "I know I can speak for Dom as well as myself when I say that we are very happy to be here." Dominic nodded his agreement.

Brains smiled, and beckoned the two recruits to join him in the cab.

"I'll show you the shutdown procedures, and if you'd like, I can show you the basic controls now, as well."

"That'd be great!" they said in unison.

All three laughed, and they made their way into the control cab.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 01/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 23:58:32 GMT
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Tracy Island; Wednesday, March 7th; 1PM

When Tin-Tin and Lena returned to the lab, Brains looked up, grinning. "I just had a call from Mrs. Parkhurst. She told me that if I didn't bring you two back to the villa for lunch, she'd personally see to it that I'd never get a piece of Grandma Tracy's apple pie ever again."

Tin-Tin laughed. "Oh, no. A dire threat indeed." She turned to Lena. "Grandma Tracy is famous for her apple pie. It's been an award winner at the fair, and everyone here who's had it loves it. In fact, she's always had a very hard time keeping the older Tracy boys from eating it up, straight out of the oven."

"Sounds like something worth checking into, while I'm here," Lena replied. She noticed the clock on

the wall. "Oh my, no wonder she called. It's one o'clock already." She looked at the others. "When I get into something as interesting as this is, I forget about the time."

"We're that way, too," replied Brains. "Ladies, shall we go to the villa? We'll be better able to work after some nourishment."

"Just a minute," Lena replied, as she went over to her desk. She checked behind the desk, and then looked around at the various electrical connections in the room. Brains and Tin-Tin looked at each other, puzzled.

Lena turned and saw the look on their faces. "A habit I've had for a long time, since my home burned down due to a frayed wire, many years ago. I never leave the house now without checking all the electrical connections."

Tin-Tin nodded understandingly. "I'd probably do the same thing, if something like that happened to me." Brains agreed with her.

She continued, "Well, if you're ready, let's go have some lunch."

They headed out of the lab and into the monorail. Soon they were back at the villa, eating another delicious meal. But they were all eager to get back to work, and ate quickly, talking very little.

An hour later, Lena was back in the lab. Brains had brought her back, then left, saying he needed to show Nikki and Dom the procedures for cleaning Thunderbird 7, the medical unit. She told him she'd be fine working alone, and he showed her how to contact him, should she need to.

Lena was now working on the computer, attempting to get different things done at the same time - revamping Brains' program, working on a way to sever the link between the two servers and repairing the glitch. Prior to that, she had checked her Tracy Industries mailbox and found several more misdirected emails forwarded to her. Fortunately, none of them had anything to do with International Rescue. But some weren't forwarded from people working in D.C. Then she found an email from Tom.

"I learned through channels that the problem you are working on spread to the New York offices. I sent an email to their I&M head, asking him to have all employees there do what we've been doing with the misdirected emails. I presume they are doing so.

If you want me to change the procedure, just let me know. Hurry and get it fixed; we all miss you already. Tom."

She smiled briefly, and then looked grim. This needs to be repaired fast, before it spreads to the wrong places, or before anyone else is able to figure out the same thing I did. She quickly checked her other messages, replied to Tom's, sent one to her son, daughter and three of her grandchildren, then closed the link. She made a mental note to advise Brains of the new development, then worked on establishing a trace that would stop misdirected emails from going to anyone other than the person for whom it was intended and herself. She completed it and started running simulations to check it out. Once she'd run several, and all were successful, she began getting it online.

She had just finished, when Brains returned.

She brought him up to date on what she'd learned and done, and he approved. "It will buy us some time and minimize the risk of someone else finding out more about International Rescue. Well done, Lena."

They started it and watched as it picked up three messages. Lena checked her TI mailbox again and saw the messages were there. She moved them to her special file and smiled in satisfaction.

Then Brains got a call from the villa. "Time to stop, Lena. Dinner is ready."

"Brains, maybe I should skip dinner, or it could be brought here. De sooner we get dis fixed, de better."

"You've made good progress today, but you can't get it done in one day, or even two. I couldn't get it fixed that fast. And look at you; you're exhausted. Let's have dinner, a relaxing evening and start refreshed tomorrow. Come on, you've done more than enough today."

Lena sighed heavily. She was tired and knew she wouldn't be at her best. "Okay, you're right. I'll shut down for de evening."

She saved her work and shut down the computer, and then did her usual check of the electrical connections. Finally, she picked up her bag and said, "I'm ready."

They left the lab and headed back to the villa.

Post by Hobbeth on 01/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:00:18 GMT

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Gordon strode over to where his colleague sat by the pool, and blocked the sun. "Okay, Big Mac, up and at 'em. There's more to International Rescue than just the rescues."

"What do you mean?" Brandon asked.

"Come on and I'll show you." Reluctantly, Brandon got up and followed Gordon.

Brandon sat before Thunderbird Four's controls. Part of his training involved checking the equipment and making sure all was in working order for the next rescue. He listened attentively as Gordon told him how to activate the diagnostics.

"Okay, go ahead and activate the system." Brandon nodded and pushed the buttons that activated the diagnostics. Gordon glanced at the readout and, satisfied with what he saw, showed Brandon the indicators of a properly working diagnostics program and what to look for in the

read-out.

"While that's running, we'll check out the rest of the gear; make sure it's in good working order." Gordon went to the equipment locker, pulling out the air tanks and setting them aside to be refilled. Together the two men worked, making sure the masks didn't leak and the regulators functioned as they should.

"Very good, Brandon. Just a few more things to check, then we'll be finished."

"What else is there?" Brandon asked, a hint of surprise in his voice.

"Let's see, we have the trough lights, and the rudder. Then there's the external check for damage."

"And you've got to do this every time Thunderbird Four goes out?" Gordon nodded. "In that case, lead on, Gordon." Both men walked back to the pilot's chair. The diagnostics program was complete and both senior aquanaut and his colleague looked over the printout. Occasionally Gordon would point out something in the readout to Brandon, reinforcing what he had said to him earlier.

After checking all the gear, filling the air tanks and verifying everything was in proper working order, Gordon and Brandon began the external check of the sub.

"Brandon, now we need to check every square inch of Thunderbird Four. Pay special attention to the seams, as they were put under a great deal of stress during the rescue. We also need to check the underside of the sub, making sure there's no hidden problems."

"Gotcha, Gordon." Brandon turned, looking at the sub, then back at his teacher. "Do you expect me to check out the bottom hull? It's too low for me to crawl under there."

"Ah, sorry about that." Gordon went to a control panel and pushed a small button and Brandon watched as Thunderbird Four rose up on a hydraulic lift.

"I take that as a yes," Brandon said good naturedly as he walked under the sub. He slowly went from one end to the other, looking for the external signs of metal fatigue. After he was convinced that nothing was wrong with the metal, he turned his attention to the side of the sub, paying special attention to the seams. As Brandon did his inspection, he noticed slight dents in the hull but nothing that would be considered a hazard. He double checked to be sure and, when he was satisfied, he made his report to Gordon.

"That's not too bad, considering the beating she took." Gordon nodded, pleased with his colleague's assessment.

"Not bad, Brandon, not bad at all. Soon you'll be able to handle the post rescue equipment checks solo."

"Thanks, Gordon. That's good to know."

"Now that we're through..." Gordon went over and lowered the sub back down to its turntable. As he did so, he winced slightly. This did not get past Brandon's eagle eyes.

"Are you okay, Gordon?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. Just a little sore from the rescue."

"So, how did your check-up go?" Brandon asked casually.

Gordon sighed. "Not too good. I strained my back when we hit the water. Brains told me to take it easy for a while."

"That could be a problem in our line of work." Brandon shook his head then smiled at his friend. "How about we go sit in the Jacuzzi? That should help with the pain."

"Sounds good to me," Gordon replied.

Both men went to their rooms, changed and met at the Jacuzzi. Brandon entered first. Gordon followed, sitting down in the hot water, letting out a contented sigh of relief. About 15 minutes later Gordon stood up. "I'm feeling much better now, Brandon. I'm going to go swim a few laps. He stood up and headed for the pool.

Post by MagicMaster8 on 08/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:01:38 GMT

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Wednesday, March 7, 2068, 3:30 p.m., Tracy Island

He was at Jeff's desk, going through the maintenance logs, trying to catch up on what he had missed while in New York, when Scott noticed Alan walking through the lounge, seemingly on his way outside. "Alan?"

Scott's voice stopped his youngest brother in his tracks. Alan sighed and turned around, knowing what was coming next, and rapidly trying to think of a way out of it. "Yes, Scott?"

"Where were you going?"

Alan didn't miss the subtle use of 'were' in his brother's question. "I was just going to check on something, and then..."

Scott cut him off. "Sure you were. Alan, you know too well that Thunderbird One needs maintenance."

"Scott, I KNOW!" Alan replied, irritated. Scott closed his eyes briefly counting to 5. "That was next on my agenda," Alan growled. "Now, if you'll let me finish what I set out to do, I'll be back here to

get to the maintenance."

Alan headed past Scott, ignoring the scowl his older brother gave him, and quickly padded his way down to the pool, where Gordon was swimming long laps. He stood there for a few minutes until Gordon acknowledged his presence and swam over to him.

"What do you want, Al?" the aquanaut asked without preface.

"Don't think for a minute I didn't see you as you got up off the floor last night, Gords," Alan responded, his arms crossed belligerently across his chest. "Now, do I report it to Scott, or do you?"

"I don't know what you're talking about, Alan," Gordon protested angrily. "So get off my back."

"You and I both know that your back isn't what it should be, Gords, thanks to my harebrained idea. Now, what are you going to do about it?" Alan replied, his voice moderating.

"Nothing, because nothing's wrong," Gordon informed him curtly. "Now, can I get back to my swimming?"

Alan sighed heavily, and then turned away. "If you don't tell someone on your own, Gordon, I'll have to. And I won't be too picky about who I inform. Just remember that."

"Yeah. Whatever." Gordon turned back and picked up his laps as Alan climbed the stairs and entered the lounge again. Scott was standing by the sliding glass doors and Alan jumped back as he entered.

"Do you like doing that?" asked Alan, annoyed.

Scott didn't answer that question, instead he came back with one of his own. "Al, what's up with you two?" Scott nodded his head, indicating Gordon who was swimming laps with a newfound energy.

"Nothing, Scott. Don't worry about it."

It didn't take a rocket scientist to detect the worry in Alan's voice and Scott wasn't going to let this drop. If something serious was going on with his brothers, he wanted to know about it.

"Alan, I saw the two of you and heard you both raise your voices. Now, what's going on?"

Alan knew from years of experience of trying to dodge Scott's interrogations that he would end up spilling all. "Really, Scott, it's nothing. I just had to tell Gordon I couldn't swim with him because I had to do the maintenance on TB1."

One look in Alan's eyes, and Scott saw through the lie. He sighed. Why, oh why do my brothers insist on keeping things from me? Scott stood there, hands casually on his hips, and stared at Alan. "Nice try, but not good enough. I want the truth, Al, all of it. If this concerns Thunderbird One in ANY way, you're going to tell me NOW!"

Alan knew it was no use. "It doesn't concern your Thunderbird, not in any way. Besides, don't you think I would have told you if anything was wrong? I am capable of that you know!" Alan was becoming rather defensive and Scott would not give him any slack.

"Then there is something going on with Gordon?"

Alan rolled his eyes. Didn't his big brother ever quit? "Well if you're so convinced of it, why don't you ask Gordon? I've got work to do!" Alan huffed as he stomped further into the lounge.

He was tired of being raked over the coals first by Scott, then by his closest brother, and then by Scott AGAIN! All he was trying to do was help. He was concerned about Gordon. Without another word, he backed up to the wall sconces and fingered the switches that turned the wall around so that he was facing Thunderbird One. He swore, and flipped the wall back around.

"What did you forget?" Scott asked. He had pursued Alan into the lounge, intent on seeing his younger brother work on the silver rocket plane.

"A disk to download Mobile Control's data. I'm sure John is waiting on it to put the log together." Alan went to a cabinet behind his father's desk and pulled out a microdisk, pocketed it, and headed back to Thunderbird One's hangar. By the time Scott had followed Alan through the wall, Alan was already in the cockpit and halfway down the maintenance tunnel that bored its way through the middle of the craft, providing access to the storage bay from the control area.

"Alan!"

Alan heard Scott calling and finally stopped halfway down the ladder in the service tunnel. Looking up, he called back "What, Scott? I'm busy." He waited for a reply, but all he heard were Scott's footsteps above him, coming down the ladder.

"Don't give me that line, Alan, I want... no, I need to talk to you." Scott was now standing on the ladder directly above Alan. He looked down at the blond head beneath him. "Do you think you could get off the ladder so I can come all the way down, please?"

Alan continued his journey and stood by the service tunnel entry hatch to give Scott enough room to descend. They were both now standing in the cramped space at the end of the service tunnel by the hatchway to the cargo bay and reactor maintenance gantry and it was not very comfortable.

"Okay, Scott, spit it out. It's cramped in here and I really need to get this disk loaded or John'll be after my head, too!"

Scott smiled slightly, hearing the exasperation in his brother's voice. "Al, if something happened to you or Gordon on that rescue that I don't know about, Dad's gonna have ALL of our heads! You know that! I'm in command when Dad's not here and I want to find out what's going on."

Alan sighed, defeated. Gordon would no doubt hang his hide out to dry once he was done skinning him alive, but Alan knew someone would find out soon, so that someone might as well be

Scott.

"Listen, Scott. I don't know anything for sure because Gordon won't tell me. But during debriefing last night, he fell on the floor laughing while we were discussing code names. When he finally got up, I saw him wincing. Now, falling from the chair onto the floor wouldn't hurt him, but the way I had him launch Thunderbird Four during the rescue might have." Alan turned and opened the hatch that would take him into the cargo bay where Mobile Control was sitting, clamped down for safety. He palmed on the lights, and made his way over to the equipment. "You could ask Tin-Tin or Brandon or maybe Nikki or Dom if they noticed anything more."

He opened up the Mobile Control unit enough to turn it on and slip the disk into its proper slot. Then he ran his fingers over some keys and let the machine download the information from the last rescue onto the disk.

While the disk was being loaded, Scott was still trying to absorb what he'd been told without imploding. If Gordon's back injury had flared up again, and he was hiding it, there would be hell to pay when Dad and Dianne found out about it. Especially Mom. Scott knew why Gordon would try to hide it. Gordon hated bringing attention to himself and hated the permanent reminder of an accident that almost killed him. But keeping this from everyone was not the answer. Gordon was a team player, and Scott knew if he told his sibling he was on the 'sick list' he'd throw a fit. Scott dreaded having to face it, but Gordon would have to be on stand down. Brandon would have to take his place as No. 1 on TB4.

Alan waited for the disk to finish, hating the silence. Finally he had to say something. "Scott?"

"Mmm?" Scott turned towards him.

"Are you going to talk to one of the others or to Gordon directly?"

"I'm going to talk to Gordon, He'll have to go on stand down, Al, and he's going to hate me for doing it."

Alan almost sympathized with Scott... almost. He was going to get a lashing from Gordon's tongue as well, but nowhere near as much as Scott when Scott 'threw the book' at the aquanaut.

"Well, no time like the present to get this over with. I'll talk to you later, Alan."

"Sure Scott."

There was an awkward silence for a moment and then Scott spoke. "Thanks, Al." The words were soft and Alan wasn't sure he heard right, but acknowledged them all the same by nodding and giving Scott a small smile.

Scott started his ascent to the cockpit and all he could think of was Gordon's back. He cursed under his breath, cursed his brother, then cursed his stubbornness, then cursed himself for not being the commander he was supposed to be.

Alan sighed, and shook his head, and then a thought occurred to him. "Scott?" he called up the

ladder.

"Yeah, Al?" came a reply as Scott stopped his ascent.

"You could offer him a week at corporate to rest his back," the younger Tracy suggested. "That way he'd at least feel useful. Not like he did the first months after IR started."

Scott was silent for a moment, then he said, "I'll think about it. Right now, I'd better go talk to him. And you'd better get on with the maintenance. I'll be coming through with a white glove...."

Alan snorted. "Yeah, right, Scott. We'll see what happens next time you have to take Thunderbird Three."

Scott chuckled, and tauntingly replied, "You know better than to test me like that, Al! You'll be eating your words and you know it, little brother!" The last thing Scott heard Alan mumble was a noise that resembled the sound a warthog might make!

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 10/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:09:36 GMT
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Wednesday March 7th, 2068, 4:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Gordon slung his towel over his shoulder and stepped into his flip-flops, and then shrugged into a loose shirt. I wish Alan would let me alone. I'm fine! he thought. He shook his head and took the small path from the pool down towards the cultivated garden, where a huge variety of tropical flora and fauna grew, with a winding path making its way down to the shoreline. Gordon headed towards a small, open paved area with a wonderful view of the ocean framed in thick, waxy leaves. He left his things on one of the benches, but he found some unexpected company; he didn't quite know what to say.

Dominic had one foot and one hand on a mat spread on the ground, while his left leg was extended outwards and his left arm reaching upwards into the air. He appeared to be staring at the sky above, but Gordon got the impression his mind was somewhere far off. He's got some balance if he can pull that off, and be so steady!

Gordon sat down on the bench, curious about the sight before him. Dominic remained in the same position for a while, until he got back on his two feet with a fluid grace, before standing with his legs wide apart, and bending his body downwards until the top of his head touched the mat. He positioned his hands beside his head, and Gordon stopped himself from whistling in respect. That guy can sure bend.

Dominic moved on once more, and Gordon stared in open-mouthed amazement after the man squatted down, before raising himself up on his arms, keeping his knees tucked against his shoulders, with his feet far above the ground.

Eventually, Dominic stood up and stretched, lifting his long arms high above his head. Gordon walked towards him, shaking his head, while a disbelieving smile crossed his face.

"That was some balancing you were doing there," he said.

Dominic shrugged and replaced his rectangular, thin-framed glasses on his face, as they had been off while he was.

"That was yoga," he said plainly. "I've been doing it for a couple of years now."

"I guessed that." Gordon said. "You seem like a pro."

Dominic shrugged shyly and looked away.

"Not really. I'm just...really bendy. Always have been." He stretched out a creak in his neck. "Yoga helped me out of a bad patch of my life, a while back. I'd recommend it to anyone, whether they think they're flexible or not." He looked back at Gordon. "I'm not in your way here, am I?"

Gordon shook his head quickly and held up a hand.

"Oh, no, not at all. I wasn't expecting to find anyone here, though."

Dominic nodded.

"I went exploring after working on Thunderbird Seven. I thought this would be a good place to come and practice. It's far enough away from everything that it seems like you're out in the wilderness. Almost."

"I agree." Gordon said, turning to look out across the ocean. "I like coming here when I need to get away."

Dominic sat down cross-legged on the mat and laced his fingers. He looked up at Gordon, who then sat down as well, hiding a wince as he did so. Stupid back. There's nothing wrong with me!

"So why are you here now?" Dominic asked quietly.

Gordon shrugged with one shoulder, still staring out across the sea.

"Just wanted some peace, you know?"

Dominic 'hmm-ed', and then raised his arms up for another stretch, closing his eyes.

"How much pain are you in?"

Gordon's head whipped around and he stared at the other man, uttering a terse, "What?" which was perhaps more severe than he would have liked. Dominic opened his eyes and stared frankly at Gordon.

"I've seen you wincing, and I've heard from certain sources that you suffered a back injury some time ago. Injuries like that don't always heal up perfectly. Are you in pain?"

Gordon was tight-lipped and turned his head away, before sighing and shaking his head, looking back.

"Okay, you've got me. Yes, I am in pain, slight pain, and only sometimes."

Dominic nodded.

"I can help."

"How?"

"Yoga."

Gordon snorted and shook his head.

"No way. I can't get into any of those pretzel positions. I don't bend that way."

Dominic shrugged.

"You don't have to. What I have in mind is a very simple pose, that helps to alleviate back pain."

Gordon was silent and contemplative for a few moments, and Dominic waited. Gordon could feel his eyes watching, and eventually decided to give it a try.

"Heck, why not?" he said, getting up on his haunches. "Bet it can't make things worse."

Dominic grinned and stood up.

"Great! Now first, I want you to lie on your front, and raise yourself up as if you're doing a press up. And keep your legs straight."

Gordon nodded and did as he was told, with a certain amount of scepticism and a dash of curiosity. Maybe, if this works, I can use it if my stupid back flares up again.

"Perfect." Dominic said. "This is the plank pose. Hold it for a few seconds. Great. Now, set your knees right below your hips. Yeah, like that. Now spread your hands out a little, and turn in your feet slightly."

Okay, there's more to this than I thought. I must look so stupid. But maybe it'll work... He followed the rest of Dominic's instructions with some difficulty, but eventually, he completed the pose. He was bent at almost ninety degrees at the waist, with his feet and palms flat on the ground. This is so strange!

"Hold that for about a minute. Breathe deeply. Concentrate."

Gordon did, all the while marvelling at the fact that he wasn't lying on the mat, writhing in pain. This is so weird. If I had seen this pose first, I would have said it would make me hurt more.

"Alright," Dominic said after the minute was up, "Bend your knees to the floor and exhale, and then sit up."

Gordon rested his hands on his thighs and shook his head.

Dominic sat down on the ground beside the mat.

"What did you think?" He asked.

"Well, it seems to have helped the pain somewhat -- not that it was really bad in the first place -- but it was weird. What exactly did I look like?" Gordon asked.

Dominic smiled, and then took off his glasses.

"I'll show you."

He got into the position, and Gordon's eyes boggled.

"No. Way."

Dominic unfolded himself and grinned, replacing the glasses and pushing them up his nose.

"Yes. It's the Downward-Facing Dog pose. It helps to alleviate back pain, somewhat. Of course, it would work better if you were doing a routine, and if you knew the philosophy behind it. Yoga's not just a bunch of people in leotards bending every which way. It's so much more."

Gordon got to his feet and placed his hands on his hips.

"Well, it helped soothe my ruffled feathers, in any case. Thanks Dom."

"Any time Gordon. Any time."

Post by ArtisticRainey on 12/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:11:36 GMT
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Wednesday March 7th, 2068, 5:00pm, Tracy Island

Nikki sat in the sun lounge by the pool with her eyes closed behind her sunglasses, listening to her personal stereo and tapping her fingers against her abdomen to the beat.

A smile played across her lips as her favourite song began to play. The drumming of her fingers began rapid along with the beat to the song.

Nikki was so into her music that she didn't hear Alan when he arrived.

He sat down in the lounge next to her before tapping her on her shoulder, causing her to jump slightly.

Alan smiled as Nikki pulled her earphones out. "Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you."

"It's alright. It wouldn't have happened if I didn't have the volume up full blast." Nikki answered as she turned her music off. "So have you been busy today?"

"If performing maintenance on Thunderbird One constitutes as being busy, then yeah I've been busy." Alan got comfortable in his seat. "How about you?"

Nikki lifted her glasses from her face and fixed them to rest on her head. "Well along with Dom and under the supervision of Brains, I preformed a detailed clean up and inspection of Thunderbird Seven. Brains also showed us the basic controls of the craft."

"Cleaning." Alan raised his eyebrows and nodded. "Sounds like fun. A whole day of cleaning."

Nikki narrowed her eyes slightly, but she couldn't help but smile at his sarcastic remark. He reminded her of one of her friends back home. "You know full well that it wasn't the whole day. And I'm used to cleaning. Part of the job description."

"Well then you can clean Thunderbird Three and my room anytime. Don't let me stop you."

Nikki laughed. "Nah, it's ok. I'll leave those jobs to you. Wouldn't want you to miss out on the fun."

"Sure, fun." Alan stretched and leaned back in his seat. "Well, it's your loss."

"No. Not really." Nikki replaced her glasses over her eyes. "So did Scott check over your work? Give his final approval of his craft."

Alan looked at Nikki and saw her trying her best to contain her laugh. "Don't get me started on Scott. I'm surprised that he didn't fix some camera on me to keep a close eye on what I'm doing. He's really protective of Thunderbird One."

Nikki looked at Alan over the top of her glasses. "And you're not of your own craft?"

"No."

"So if I, let's just say, spray painted it pink?"

"I'd catch you before you open the tin of paint," Alan replied. "Ok, so I am a bit protective of my ship, but not like Scott is of his own."

"Sure," Nikki mouthed.

"Hey I saw that." Alan smiled.

They both went back to relaxing and talking about the last rescue mission.

Post by Nikki-Browneyes11 on 13/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:16:21 GMT
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Wednesday 7th March, 2.30pm Tracy Island

Virgil pulled out his maintenance clipboard and looked around the cockpit of his beloved Thunderbird. "This is going to take me all night," he muttered to himself. "There's so much to be done after a rescue and I haven't been able to get to it properly since I've been in charge."

He tapped his stylus on his forehead. Then his face brightened. "Hey! I shouldn't have to do this alone any more. I can recruit one of our new people to help. Christopher would be the most logical choice. He'll be learning to fly this baby."

He lifted his wrist telecomm and spoke into it. "Virgil to Christopher. Come in Christopher."

Christopher was lying on his lounge, Asterix curled up on his lap. He was in the middle of a wonderful dream, when his own wrist telecomm beeped and Virgil's voice issued from it. He groaned, then raised his wrist telecomm to his mouth. "Christopher receiving you loud and clear."

"Could you come and see me in Thunderbird 2?" Virgil said, "I need your help with the maintenance list."

"F-A-B, Virgil," Christopher said. "I'm on my way now."

He stroked Asterix's head, causing the little cat to raise his head from sleep. "Mrrrrraoow?"

"As much as I love lying here with you in the sun," Christopher said as he smiled. "I have work to do."

Christopher lifted Asterix from his lap and got up, replacing the cat onto the lounge. Stretching for a moment, he headed back into the apartment to change. Asterix just sat on the lounge, gazing at him with one eye before going back to sleep.

A little while later, after a short ride in the cargo lift down to Thunderbird Two's hangar, Christopher clambered into the craft. He found Virgil in the cockpit, checking various readings on the displays.

"Afternoon, Virgil," Christopher said breezily. "What would you like me to do?"

Virgil handed Christopher another clipboard. "I'd like you to work your way down this list. Any ideas you have, write them down."

Christopher took the clipboard, nodded his thanks, then headed down into the bowels of the huge craft. Looking around, he saw the winch, which looked as good as new. "We could have used Kat in the RAF."

He started to work. He checked the equipment, getting freshly shrink-wrapped wet weather gear from the appropriate bin in the hangar. He checked the oxygen cylinders, replacing any that were getting low. He examined all the protective suits, making sure that none had any holes. He also looked at the first aid kits, noting down any items that were near to being out of date, then replacing said items with fresh ones.

He went all over Thunderbird 2 with a fine-toothed comb. He knew the value of checking the equipment personally; you never knew when you had to use it. His parachute instructor at the RAF had always insisted that he fold his own parachute.

"If it goes wrong, then you know who is to blame," 'Old Frank' used to say. Christopher smiled to himself as he remembered the crusty old Flight Sergeant. He walked by the area containing the spare uniforms. What happens, he thought, when we are wearing our new uniforms and we need oxygen?

"How about having a small lightweight oxygen cylinder made from plastic and a rebreather built into the uniform jacket?" He started writing his idea down. "With a small disposable plastic mask"

He read his idea back and felt pleased with himself, and then he looked around. "Needs a clean."

One of the things that had stayed with him since his time in the RAF was keeping things clean and in order. Things have to be used, but they need to be kept clean. So, he went down to the equipment bay in the hangar, and found a mop and bucket. Further explorations unearthed a bottle of cleaning fluid, some cleaning cloths and some cleaning spray.

Returning to Thunderbird Two, he began cleaning. The cockpit was first, so as to keep all the germs and the dust at bay. Then with the mop and bucket, he proceeded to mop the floors. He took his time, and after around an hour of work, he stood up and looked around. Nice to keep my hand in, he thought to himself and smiled.

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 14/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:20:22 GMT
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Tracy Island, Thursday 8th March, 9.00 am

Kat dialed the number for Creighton-Ward Manor. Parker's face appeared.

"Well, h'if h'it h'aint Miss Kat, 'ow h'are ye?"

"Absolutely fine, thanks, Parker. Is Lady Penelope at home?"

"She h'is h'indeed, h'I shall just call 'er for ye."

Presently Lady Penelope's face came into view.

"Kat! My dear, how nice to hear from you! I trust everything is working out well?"

"Everything is just wonderful, thanks," Kat replied. "Lady Penelope, I really must thank you for forwarding my mother's letter to me."

"Think nothing of it, my dear," Lady Penelope replied. Lady Penelope's thoughts went back to that afternoon when Mrs Williamson had called to see her. She was obviously worried about her daughter's well being.

"Your mother came to visit me," Lady Penelope explained. "I could see that she was anxious at not hearing anything from you."

"Oh, Lady Penelope!" Kat exclaimed. "I know how odd it must seem to my parents. I have usually been so open with them, letting them know just what I was doing in my work for you. They really must think that I have deserted them."

"Yes, I know, my dear, and I tried to put your mother's mind at rest. I reassured her that you were keeping very well, and were extremely busy, but that in the fullness of time you would write back to her. That's why I offered to forward that letter to you, more to give your parents peace of mind than anything else."

"Gordon was on the balcony when I read the letter. When I told him of my parents' anxiety, he said he would discuss the matter with Mr. and Mrs. Tracy when they returned from New York."

"That seems like a sensible idea," Lady Penelope said. "Now, tell me all about the rescue."

"There isn't much to tell, Lady Penelope; I didn't take part," Kat explained. "But the winch failed, and for the second time, so after everyone had returned, Virgil and I worked on changing the motor. That was awesome, working on a Thunderbird! I never dreamed that I would be working on them so soon after arriving. Virgil was great, we really made a good team, and he said that he could see I was a good mechanic. Isn't that great?"

Lady Penelope smiled at the young mechanic's enthusiasm. It was worth the sacrifice I made, letting Jeff Tracy have her to work on Tracy Island, she thought.

"What about the other new recruits, are you all getting on okay?"

"Yes, everyone is settling in really well, although there seems to be some aggro between two of

the new young men. Brandon and Christopher don't see eye-to-eye; male egos I guess. Nikki, one of the two nurses, is very nice. Dominic, who has a young son, Joshua, is very quiet; I don't see much of him. Callie at the moment is up in Thunderbird 5 training with John. She will rotate duty with John and Alan." Kat paused. "Talking of John, when he returns to earth, he has promised to show me the stars one night."

"Oh yes!" Lady Penelope smiled.

"Oh no! Not you as well!" Kat replied. "We are only friends."

"John is a very nice young man," Lady Penelope replied.

"Yes, I know, but then again, they are all very nice. It's just that he has offered to show me the stars, and everyone seems to be making something more out of it."

Lady Penelope laughed. "Well, I am glad that you are obviously settling in well. Give my love to the boys, won't you?"

"I will, Lady Penelope. It was so nice talking to you and once again thanks for forwarding Mum's letter."

"That's quite all right. You take care now, and please call me again whenever you want to."

"Thanks, Lady Penelope. Bye now."

"Goodbye." And the screen went black.

Kat stayed looking at the vidphone. "Penny for them," Virgil said, coming into the lounge.

"I have just been talking to Lady Penelope, oh and by the way she sends her love to you all," Kat explained. "I was thanking her for her letter she forwarded from my parents, and telling her about the rescue and you and me working on the winch." Kat went on, "And now I am going to rest by the pool with a good book. See you later."

"Yes, bye, MGM," Virgil grinned at her as she left for the pool.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 14/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:35:41 GMT
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Wednesday, March 7, 2068, 3:30 p.m. Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York City

Ned Cook took a deep breath and headed into the stairwell, followed closely by Joe, camera hidden in a backpack slung over one shoulder. Joe had again used his connections with his brother-in-law, Pete, and he and Ned were admitted, this time with the camera. Their stated

purpose was to attend the daily press briefing on Jeff Tracy; a briefing whose audience had gotten smaller and smaller as the man's recovery had gone on and his newsworthiness had faded. But their real purpose was to get a word or two with the man himself if they could. Hence, the little used stairwell that would take them to the floor where the secure wing was situated.

"Do you really think he'll talk to us, Ned?" Joe asked as they climbed the zigzagging flights higher and higher.

"I dunno, Joe. I hope so. This may be my last chance to get an exclusive. Rumor has it that he's going to be released soon," Ned replied, determination in his voice.

At last they reached the upper floor, and rested for a few moments to catch their breath. Cautiously, Joe opened the door and peered out into the corridor. No one was close to them, and he stepped out into the hall, motioning Ned to follow.

"How are we going to get past the security?" he asked his companion as they walked slowly down the hall. Ned shook his head, and as he did, he caught something in the corner of his eye that made him look again, then smile. He took Joe's arm and pulled him right into a room, closing the door behind them.

Joe looked around him, and then gave Ned a strange glare. "What are we doing here? This is just the break room."

"Yeah, but there have got to be some lockers or stashes of scrubs or something here, don't you think?" Ned asked, looking around. "Yes! In here!"

Joe followed him into an adjoining room where there were lockers and showers and, most importantly, a hamper of used scrubs. Ned started pawing through it, pulling out relatively clean looking shirts and pants and trying to find something that looked like it would fit him. He tossed a green top to Joe. "Here, try this on. We'll need to be incognito if we're going to get past the security."

Joe shook his head and started to pull on the shirt, wrinkling his nose as it passed over his head. "Phew! This guy sure needs a better deodorant!" Ned barked a short laugh as he dressed himself in the dirty laundry, wadding up his own outer clothing and stuffing it into an empty locker. Joe's things were added, and they looked each other up and down.

The cameraman shook his head. "It'll never work, Ned. You can't change your face. Everyone will still recognize you."

"I have an idea about that, too. C'mon, I need to find a sterile mask."

They walked into the hall, Ned with a bit more confidence and Joe treading cautiously behind him. Just short of the nurses' station, they found a crash cart that had just been used. Ned looked it over carefully and found what he was looking for: a paper mask to cover his lower face. He snatched it, and he and Joe proceeded along.

Ned turned his head away from the nurses at the station, talking with Joe about the latest

basketball scores in a heavy Bronx accent. Once past the station, he nonchalantly pulled the mask over his face, and they approached the one burly guard who stood at the entry to the wing they wanted. Ned held up a hand as if in recognition of the guard, who glared at them but made no move toward them. Grinning behind the mask, knowing that in just a few steps he'd be near his goal, Ned opened the double doors to the secure wing and stepped through.

That's when all hell broke loose.

A klaxon went off and lights began to flash. The guard was instantly alert and after Ned and Joe. He managed to catch up with Joe and grab him by an arm, stopping the photographer in his tracks. From the other end of the hall, another guard, just as burly, came steaming like a freight train. Ned kept his eyes on the room numbers, searching for the one he knew Jeff Tracy was in. And that's how he was taken by surprise when the second guard stepped into his path and they forcibly collided. Ned, being the lighter of the two, was knocked backwards and quickly grabbed by the guard.

More security forces converged on the scene, and Ned began to shout, "You can't keep us out! We're with the press! The public has a right to know about Jeff Tracy!"

As the guards were preparing to drag them away, a light went on over the door to one of the rooms, and a nurse hurried down the hall to tend to her patient. She ducked in, then almost as quickly popped out and ran down to the departing knot of security men. She spoke to the one who had been standing guard at the door.

"Mr. Tracy wants to see him."

Ned's eyes flew open with excitement. "Tracy wants to see me! Let me go! Let my cameraman go!"

The nurse stood in front of him, frowning. "He wants to see you, and only you but with an... escort."

"Okay, okay. I can deal with that. What are we waiting for? Joe, I'm going to talk to Tracy, see if he'll let you in for a proper interview," Ned said over his shoulder as his "escort" of two guards marched him down the hall. Joe shook his head. He had a bad feeling about this request of Tracy's.

The nurse preceded them down the hall, and knocked on the door to Jeff Tracy's room. She entered, and a moment later, opened the door to admit the reporter and the guards who flanked him.

"Mr. Tracy, I'm Ned Cook, and may I say that it's an honor to meet you!" Ned began eagerly as he approached the man in the bed, holding out his hand. "Do you mind if my cameraman comes in so I can interview you properly?"

There was no response other than an icy, blue-eyed stare. Ned shifted nervously. He had heard a lot of things about the sheer presence of Jefferson Tracy, the forceful personality that had gone to the moon and come back to make himself one of the richest men in the world. That personality

was still forceful, even in a hospital bed with one arm and one leg in casts, and Ned began to realize just why Jefferson Tracy was someone to be reckoned with.

Jeff glared at the dark-haired man, dressed in stolen scrubs, who now fidgeted slightly before him. He sat silent, impassive, letting the reporter stew for long moments. Then he spoke, his tones clipped and angry.

"Mr. Cook, what you've been doing to get your so-called story has been reprehensible. You tried to interview my wife when she was in no emotional condition to answer questions. You tried to interview my pilot when she was in no physical condition to be interviewed. You dared to approach my young children when they were alone and vulnerable. And now you try to invade my own privacy and security just to get your exclusive!"

Jeff jabbed an emphatic finger in Ned's direction. "I am going to tell you once and for all, Mr. Cook. Mind. Your. Own. Business. Leave my family alone. If you do not, you and your network will both be sued for harassment!"

He waved a hand at the guards. "Get him out of here."

"Wait! What about the interview?" Ned persisted, even as he was hustled from the room. "You can't do this to me! I'm Ned Cook! I'm a star! The public has a right to know!"

The door was closed behind them, and Ned and Joe were unceremoniously hustled from the secure wing and taken down to the security chief's office, where the police waited for them.

They were arrested and hauled off to jail, still in their stolen scrubs, for violating hospital regulations and penetrating the secure wing without permission. Joe kept mum about Pete's involvement; he had no desire to have his brother-in-law lose his job. As soon as Ned and Joe were off his hands, the head of security was in Jeff's room, apologizing profusely for the intrusion. Jeff waved him away, saying that it wasn't his fault and that his security measures were effective.

"Your men caught them virtually at the threshold, sir. They did good work."

The head of security thanked Jeff, and left having felt like he had dodged a very big bullet. As he left, Dianne walked in, her face full of puzzlement.

"What's going on? There are police cruisers downstairs and though there are reporters and photographers, for once they ignored me. Not that I'm complaining or anything...."

Jeff sat back wearily, reaching out his hand to her and as she took it, he began to tell her about the intrusion.

Post by Tikatu on 14/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:42:35 GMT

Wednesday, March 7, 5 p.m., Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York

Dianne gazed out the window of Jeff's hospital room, watching the sun begin to set. It was already behind the building across from her, but the sunset colors still lingered in the sky, punctuated by ripples of clouds that reflected the colors. Her mind was thousands of miles away, wondering what everyone was doing back at the Villa, trying to make plans on how to get Jeff around when they got back home. There were a million different things to deal with, and how many would fall to her? She turned as Jeff's bed was wheeled back into the room, and went to join him as the surgeon addressed them both.

"I have good news for you, Mr. Tracy, Dr. Tracy. The imaging showed us that the vertebra is fused and nearly healed. The arm and the leg are progressing very nicely and casts should come off in about a week, I think. The foot? Well, that's going to take some more time. Things are going as well as can be expected there but the internal swelling has gone down, which is a good sign." He smiled at them both. "I think, that barring any unforeseen circumstances, and knowing that you will be in the care of your family physician 24/7 when you return home, we can probably release you from the hospital this weekend."

Jeff and Dianne both gasped and turned to each other, a smile of delight on each face.

"This weekend? So soon?" Jeff asked, not daring to believe.

"Yes, Mr. Tracy. Saturday or Sunday, provided everything continues in this same direction," the surgeon said. He wagged a pen at them. "You realize that you would normally be going to a rehabilitation hospital from here. But as I said, you live with your doctor and I'm sure she'll be able to monitor your progress and make sure you do your physical therapy and all."

"Oh, he'll follow doctor's orders," Dianne said with a raised eyebrow and a sly smile, "or else."

"Ah, I don't think I'm going to ask what that 'or else' will entail," the surgeon quipped.

"Will I be okay to travel?" Jeff asked, thinking suddenly that being released from the hospital might mean being released to the penthouse.

"Yes, if you use a wheelchair and rest when your body tells you to. I know that your home is not in New York and that you'd have to travel to get there," the doctor said. "Go ahead and make you travel arrangements. I don't foresee any complications."

Jeff smiled, relieved. The penthouse was nice, and better than a hospital room, but it wasn't home.

"Thank you, doctor, for such good news. Now I have something to work for," Jeff said. He held out his hand and the doctor shook it, and then left the two of them alone.

"Home this weekend! Oh, how I've waited to hear that!" Dianne said with relief. She sat on the edge of Jeff's bed and leaned over to kiss him. "Should I call home and let them know the good news?"

"It can wait a bit. When you go back to the penthouse for the evening." Jeff used his right leg and right arm to push himself over on the bed, making room for Dianne, who climbed up to sit beside him. He took her hand in his and leaned over to kiss her head. "Right now, I just want to feel you beside me."

Dianne smiled softly and leaned her head on his shoulder, basking in his love and closeness, thankful just that he was there.

Post by Tikatu on 15/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:45:07 GMT
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Tracy Island, Thursday 8th March, 1:30 p.m.

Kat was enjoying some peaceful time by the pool, reading her book. Suddenly she heard male voices laughing and talking. Looking up she saw Virgil and Gordon approaching, both looking very happy.

"Had some good news?" she asked them.

"Yes!" Virgil replied. "Mom has just phoned. Dad is ready to leave hospital to convalesce here on the island."

"That's great news!" Kat exclaimed.

"What's great news?" asked Alan as he and Nikki approached the others.

"Dad's coming home," Gordon told his younger brother.

"Wow, when?" asked Alan.

"I don't have an exact date, but it looks like Sunday or Monday our time," Virgil replied.

Suddenly Virgil espied his youngest brother's water cannon, conveniently filled with water. He picked it up and carefully aimed it at Kat.

Kat yelled, jumping as the cold water hit her, soaking her and her book.

Kat gave Nikki a look and the two girls both lunged at Virgil, who, caught completely unawares, fell backwards into the pool. Kat and Nikki both grinned at each other and clapped each other on the back.

"Okay, truce," Virgil said, holding out his hand. "Kat, would you please help me out?"

Unthinking, Kat offered Virgil her hand and before she realised it, he pulled her into the pool with him. Kat surfaced, wiping the water from her eyes, and lunged at Virgil, dunking him under the water.

Without any more ado, Nikki, Gordon, and Alan jumped into the pool, and for the next half hour, had the biggest water fight for a long time.

Lisa, hearing the noise, came to watch and thought to herself, It's nice to seem them letting off steam after all the tension lately.

Eventually, soaking wet and breathless, the five got out of the pool and sank down on the chairs and loungers.

"Phew," Gordon said, "That was great to let off steam like that." Kat and Nikki could only nod in agreement.

Just then Lisa said, "I think that you would all like a drink." And she went into the house to fetch some drinks.

Christopher, Brandon, and Dominic, with Joshua on his shoulders, came out.

"What have we missed?" Christopher asked looking at the breathless and very wet group.

"Dad's coming home and we have had the biggest water fight ever," Alan answered.

"Wow, that is great news!" Christopher said. "I'm sure looking forward to seeing Mr Tracy back here on the island."

Brandon and Dom both agreed with him.

"I don't think you girls played fairly," Alan remarked

"Whatever makes you say that?" Kat laughed.

"You were ganging up on us males," Alan continued.

"Nonsense!" Nikki retorted. "After all, Virgil started it by firing water at Kat."

"Yes," Kat agreed, "and we girls must stick together! At the moment we are grossly outnumbered."

Just then Lisa returned with the drinks.

"Here's to a return water fight," Virgil said, raising his glass.

"You're on," Kat said. "But only when Callie is back, which will slightly lessen the odds against us."

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 15/09/2004

Saturday March 10th, Mt. Sinai Hospital New York.

Jeff Tracy thought this day would never arrive. His doctors had finally signed the release papers and he was going home! These past few days had tested Jeff's patience like no other. His sons and his precious wife had been out on a rescue; a rescue that neither he or Scott was in charge of nor Jeff had plagued TB5 constantly for updates on his family, the rescue, and anything else he could think of. He was sure that, at one point, John refused to talk to him anymore because Callie had been answering the comm-link every time he'd called. The doctors had actually become concerned with his heart rate and warned him that if it continued to rise the way it had been doing, it would delay his release. Scott had managed to calm his father somewhat and both were extremely relieved when Virgil had called to let them know that all was well and the rescue had been a success.

Alan had brought Dianne back to New York in TB1 that afternoon, landing at the airport. Scott was, of course, waiting anxiously for their arrival. He claimed he had been worried about Dianne, and Dad was a bag of nerves, but Alan knew better. He knew his big brother was checking to see if his silver baby was still in one piece, and had rolled his eyes when he thought Scott hadn't been looking. Now it was Saturday, and Jeff's room was once again buzzing with activity.

"Mom, can I push the wheelchair? Can I, please, can I?" Tyler was beside himself, bouncing up and down with excitement. His mother inhaled deeply and turning to her offspring replied,

"No, Tyler! For the tenth time, no! The orderly will push your father; its hospital policy."

Seeing the dejected look on her young son's face softened her a little. "Maybe when we reach the island, okay?" She smiled down at him and he gave her a small smile back.

"Okay, I guess I can wait."

"That's my boy!" Jeff interjected from across the room. Jeff then added "Tyler, why don't you come and sit with me for a few minutes?"

Tyler's face brightened immediately. "Can I, Mom? Will I hurt Dad?" Dianne relented and gave her youngest permission

"Just for a few minutes Tyler. Your father's still recovering, so try not to fidget too much please?" Dianne glanced at her husband who winked back and smiled knowingly.

Grandma and Cherie were packing Jeff's belongings and were almost done, when Cherie gasped.

"What's wrong, dear?" asked Grandma, suddenly worried that a catastrophe was about to strike.

"Cherie... answer Grandma!" prompted Dianne. Her daughter said nothing, but ran out of the room.

"What on earth...?" asked Dianne as Cherie rushed past her.

"I think I might know," offered Alex.

"Well, speak child! What's wrong with your sister?" Grandma practically demanded.

Alex just smiled. "You'll see!" he said gleefully as he enjoyed the puzzled looks he received. Cherie, in the meantime, had managed to raid the gift shop, nearly depleting the balloon supply, and had raced outside to find Bernie.

"Hey! Slow down there, young lady!"

"I'm sorry, Bernie! I totally forgot about bringing the balloons to Gordon! Alex told me you'd both be out here. Is Gordon in the car?" she asked worriedly.

"Yes I am!" came the reply as the redhead stepped out and hugged his sister. "Now, we need to get going if these balloons are gonna work!" Gordon grinned.

Cherie gave him a mock angry look and waved her finger at him "I'm not going to get myself in trouble for aiding and abetting Gordon Tracy! I'll deny everything!"

"Yeah! Right!" answered Gordon, obviously not in the least bit threatened by her.

Cherie laughed as she helped secure a rather large amount of colorful balloons all over the inside of the limo, and some on the outside too. Once they were sure the limo looked absolutely hideous, Gordon got back in.

"Aren't you going to go upstairs and come down with Dad?" Cherie asked curiously.

"Nah, I'll wait here. Too much commotion going on up there already!"

He tried to sound nonchalant about it, but he didn't want to face Dianne again so soon. Not after last night. He looked out the window as he thought back over the events of the last 24 hours or so.

He and Chris had flown Tracy One into New York airport. Gordon had agreed to go to corporate to keep Scott from telling Dianne about his back injury. Scott had been livid when he found out.

Now Chris knew too. He'd been concerned on the flight over and noticed how uncomfortable Gordon had been. Gordon ended up telling him everything, and as Chris was okay with what he'd been told, Gordon never gave a second thought to Chris telling anyone. How wrong he'd been! He'd taken Chris along at Virgil's urging and the two had actually had a great flight.

"If you think this aircraft is awesome, wait until you see the penthouse!" Gordon had told him. Chris was more than impressed with the penthouse.

"You Tracys sure don't leave anything to chance, do you?" Chris had joked as he took in the lavish surroundings. Gordon had laughed.

They reached the penthouse just before Scott and Dianne had returned from the hospital, and were sitting comfortably having a drink when the other two walked in.

"Hey Bro!" Gordon acknowledged his elder by raising his glass to him. "Hey Mom!" Dianne laughed

"Hello, Gordon, hello, Chris! How was your trip?"

"Great! Perfect flying weather. Long flight though," replied Chris. "Which reminds me, how's your back, Gordon?"

Scott, who had been pouring himself a drink, stopped and turned, looking straight at Gordon, momentarily stunned. He had no idea Chris even knew! Dianne had also stopped what she'd been doing and Gordon found himself on the wrong end of her stare.

"What's wrong with your back, Gordon?" she asked.

"Nothing, just a twinge. I'm fine." Gordon spoke awkwardly.

Chris hadn't picked up that anything was wrong so continued to tell Dianne.

"He thinks that he injured it on that rig rescue, when TB4 launched off that platform into the North Sea." He turned to look at Gordon who now had his eyes closed as if praying to be spared from the wrath of evil.

"GORDON! Is this true?" demanded Dianne.

"It's no big deal; it just twinged when we hit the water!"

"NO BIG DEAL? The last time you injured your back you almost didn't walk again! What the hell do you mean, NO BIG DEAL?"

Chris wasn't sure what had just happened, but he knew it wasn't good. He turned to offer Gordon his apology.

"Sorry, mate, I had no idea."

"Not your fault, it's mine."

"Damn right it's your fault!" yelled Scott.

Chris stood and excused himself for the night as this was obviously a family problem and it seemed to be getting worse. Scott was about to continue berating his brother when Dianne stopped him.

"Scott, I need to talk to Gordon...alone please. I can handle this."

"Okay, Mom, but don't let him side talk you into believing he's okay," Scott replied.

"I won't, don't worry. I know EXACTLY how to handle your brother!"

What followed was the biggest bawling out Gordon had ever received. His father knew how to yell and put the fear of God into you, but when Dianne let loose, Gordon suddenly wished he worked anywhere but International Rescue. He hadn't heard her yell this much since she found out his family were International Rescue. He tried to be apologetic...it didn't work. It seemed to only get him into more trouble. When she finally lowered her voice, she ordered him to the bedroom where he could lay flat and she could examine him. After that, she'd prescribed meds for him and soundly promised she would check up on him, every hour if need be while he was in NY.

Gordon sighed as he came back to the present. Yes, he was definitely safer sitting in the car for now.

Back upstairs, Alex had become quiet after receiving the "You have a lot of explaining to do!" look from his mother and his grandmother. Tyler was enjoying his few minutes on Jeff's lap. He figured it was the next best thing to pushing his Dad. They were all ready and almost out the door when one of Jeff's surgeons approached them.

"Going home at last!" He smiled as he stopped beside Dianne.

"Yes, he is!" she replied.

"Mr. Tracy, you've made a promising recovery. Don't jeopardize it by doing anything silly now; we don't want you back here just yet!"

"Oh, I can assure you, Doctor, I don't plan on returning for quite some time."

All lightheartedness aside, the doctor continued telling Jeff what his expectations were, also remembering to include Dianne. Jeff was not completely healed yet, and would need further evaluations, but the doctor felt comfortable leaving Jeff's care with Dianne.

"So, like I said, don't hesitate to call me at any time, night or day. Good luck to you."

He shook Jeff's then Dianne's hands as they both thanked him. "Well, husband? Are you ready to go home?"

Jeff squeezed her hand lovingly. "More than you'll ever know, dear heart, more than you'll ever know."

The entourage made their way out of the hospital. Dianne held Jeff's hand as the orderly pushed him. They hadn't even made it through the doors when Cherie's voice pierced the air.

"TA-DA!" She stepped aside to reveal Bernie, the limo, and hundreds of balloons!

Dianne looked at her daughter, who merely grinned and laughed, "You gotta go home in style, Dad!" Jeff laughed and shook his head.

"Do you know how much I love you?" he asked Cherie.

"Yep! This much!" she answered, throwing her arms around him.

Bernie stepped forward to start to assist the family when loud voices and hurried footfalls distracted everyone. Several reporters came running from the left side of the hospital entrance.

"Mr. Tracy! Mr. Tracy!"

"How are you feeling?"

"What is your prognosis?"

"Any word on what caused your chopper to crash?"

"Were you on secret business for a company takeover?"

"Where's your pilot, what happened to her?"

The barrage of questions kept coming, along with the continuous clicking of annoying cameras that were being shoved into their faces, momentarily stunning Jeff and Dianne. Bernie was the first to respond and sternly told the group of pestering reporters that Mr. Tracy had no comments, and asked if the family could please be left alone. The reporters naturally ignored him and continued firing their questions until Gordon emerged and helped to usher everyone as quickly as possible into the limousine.

"I'm sorry darling. I didn't even think they would show up here like this," Dianne apologized.

"Don't worry, it's not your fault. They're still looking for that story I won't give them," Jeff replied, tenderly kissing his wife's hair as she snuggled next to him.

The children settled themselves and Grandma huffed at the rudeness of the reporters. "Sorry Dad, Dianne, I didn't even see them coming or I would've stopped them." Gordon apologized.

"Thanks, son, but it's not your fault either. However, I do suspect that part of this balloon décor is your fault!" Jeff tried to sound serious but couldn't. His fourth son merely grinned and innocently replied,

"Moi? Dad! I'm insulted!"

Everyone laughed as the limo pulled away from the curb and made its way to the penthouse. They still had to pick up Kyrano and the last of their belongings before heading to the airport to meet Scott and Chris.

Dianne snuggled with her husband, gazing at his handsome features. He returned the gaze lovingly. "Let's get you home, Mr. Tracy!" she said softly as his lips met hers.

"Aw c'mon guys, can't you wait til you get home!"

"Gordon Tracy!"

"Sorry Grandma!" Gordon smirked, causing Alex, Tyler and Cherie to dissolve into a fit of giggles.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 16/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:50:24 GMT
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Saturday, March 10th New York Airport.

Scott sat in the cockpit doing his pre-flight check and waiting for his co-pilot and passengers to arrive. Chris whistled to himself softly as he approached the aircraft.

"Hello Scott, permission to come aboard?"

Scott laughed "Hi, Chris. Sure, c'mon in."

Chris was to be co-pilot on this the return flight, so he parked himself in the co-pilot's seat and began to help Scott with the pre-flight checks.

"So, are you feeling more at ease with the plane?" asked Scott.

"Yeah, took a little getting used to yesterday, but she felt good once I settled down and just let her fly!"

Scott smiled. He knew exactly what Chris was referring to. The noise of a car engine outside caught their attention. "Looks like our passengers have arrived," announced Scott, extracting himself from his seat and heading down the stairs to meet them.

His two youngest brothers were the first to emerge from the limo, followed by Grandma, Kyrano, Cherie, Gordon, and Dianne, who went around the other side to help with the wheelchair and Jeff.

"Here, let me do that, Mom."

"Thanks, Scott."

They both helped Jeff ease into his chair and headed towards the rear of the plane. The aft ramp had been lowered so that the wheelchair would have easier access and Jeff would not have to try and climb the stairs. Grandma and Kyrano herded the children on board and Kyrano then returned to assist Bernie with the luggage.

Scott helped his father into his seat. "All set, Dad?"

"Yes, thank you, son. Who's your co-pilot?" Jeff asked, seeing movement in the cockpit.

"Chris. He flew in with Gordon yesterday, Virgil thought he could use some flying time." Jeff

nodded his approval.

At the mention of Gordon's name, Dianne called out to him.

"Gordon, now would be a good time to say goodbye to your father!" She had noticed he was keeping his distance from her, and it served him right!

Gordon boarded the plane and gave his father a hug. "Behave yourself, Dad!"

"Likewise, Gordon, likewise!" Jeff smiled, but Gordon knew he meant what he said.

"Call me if there's anything you need me for."

"Yes sir!" Gordon also hugged his siblings, yelled goodbye to everyone else and deplaned. Dianne followed him out.

"Gordon, I meant every word I said to you last night. I will be checking on you. You can't afford to let this injury go, and we can't afford it either."

"I know, Mom," was the somber reply.

"Your dad doesn't know everything that happened, and I won't tell him, but you defy me one time and he'll know."

Gordon looked at her. "Thanks."

"Gordon Tracy, you're a mess, but God help me, I do love you!" She embraced her stepson and he was actually taken by surprise! He recovered quickly and hugged her back.

"Have a safe trip, I promise I will call you tomorrow."

He smiled. The charm was back and Dianne gave him a peck on the cheek and returned to the plane.

"Well, looks like we're all set back here. Hey, squirt!" Scott turned to Tyler. "Keep that belt on, you hear me!"

Tyler giggled "Yes sir, Captain sir!" he answered giving Scott something that resembled a military salute.

Jeff laughed as Scott shook his head and returned to the cockpit. "All set up here?" Scott asked his second in command.

"F-A-B!" came the reply, along with a grin.

Scott called the tower for clearance and within minutes they were on their way. Jeff relaxed back in his seat and closed his eyes. Home. He was going home. He knew his body still had a few milestones to reach before he would be back to what he considered normal, but that didn't matter. His family had nearly lost him, and he them, but all that mattered now was going home. Dianne

noticed her husband was resting and got up to gently place a blanket over him.

"I'm not asleep, you know." He opened one eye and looked at her.

"I knew that!"

She smiled down at him. He winked at her and closed his eyes again. Truth be known he was rather tired, and he knew he'd never get a moment's peace once they were home. Cherie and Tyler played cards together, under the watchful eye of Grandma, and Alex was playing a handheld video game. With her family relaxed and quiet, Dianne allowed herself to drift off to sleep. Kyrano busied himself with fetching snacks and drinks for all on board and even he smiled as he saw the sleepy faces of the family that meant the world to him.

In the cockpit, everything had gone smoothly and Scott was impressed with Chris's ability to learn quickly. The flight progressed smoothly until they were about an hour from California. Scott had been in contact with LAX Air Traffic Control and they had advised him of a storm system out in the Pacific near Hawaii, heading east. Scott talked it over with Dianne and they decided to layover for the night, playing it safe and giving Jeff a chance to rest up. Dianne decided the kids could do with some time to unwind as well.

They landed at LAX and Dianne proceeded to make reservations at Jeff's favorite hotel. The kids were excited, and it wasn't long before the entire group was transported and settled for some R & R and a good meal. Jeff was more than thankful that his son decided to layover instead of trying to navigate through a storm. Scott was capable, there was no doubt, but Jeff didn't think himself up to it. Dianne told Scott and Chris that she would like to take the controls part of the way home and they readily agreed. She had a pilot's license and didn't get the chance very often to use it.

Early the next morning, Chris checked in with the ATC and got a weather update. The storm system had subsided and was currently heading northeast so they were given a clear flight plan. Dianne was excited and looking forward to taking the controls and soon found herself in the pilot's seat. Scott would be co-pilot, and Chris would take first shift relaxing.

"All set, Mom?" Scott asked very seriously.

Dianne grinned back at him. "F-A-B. Control Tower, this is Tracy One requesting takeoff clearance, over?"

"Tracy One acknowledged, proceed to runway one seven and await instructions."

"Roger control tower, proceeding to runway one seven."

Scott had to admire the way Dianne became an instant professional when called upon to do so. His father was very lucky, and Scott hoped one day he would be able to find someone as dedicated, loving, and as passionate about life and family as his stepmother.

Tracy One was soon airborne and winging its way southward.

Halfway over the Pacific, Dianne relinquished the controls to Scott, who took the plane almost

home. He decided at the last minute to let Chris land. Practicing landing on the island would be good training for him. There was limited runway access and you had to have your wits about you to get it right.

Turning to Chris, he asked, "How about you take the landing? I'll let you call in the approach and everything!" Scott grinned at his co-pilot who returned the grin twofold!

"F-A-B!"

Moments later Chris radioed in. "Tracy Island this is Tracy One requesting permission to land?"

The radio crackled and then Virgil's voice came over loud and clear. "Tracy One, you have permission to land. Proceed as normal, and welcome home!"

Chris banked the plane with ease, and Scott advised his passengers to prepare for landing. In the lounge, however, things were frantic. Virgil may have sounded cool, calm and collected on the radio, but he was actually nearing the end of his nerves. The rest of the occupants on the island had decided to decorate and have this big affair ready for Jeff Tracy's arrival home. They were not ready and the ensuing chaos was giving Virgil a headache. Even Brains, who had enthusiastically agreed to help, had disappeared to his lab.

"Guys! They are on final approach!"

Virgil practically yelled across the lounge. Nikki, Dom and Brandon each mumbled something that Virgil swore was not in English and then scurried around the room putting up the 'Welcome Home' sign and the last of the balloons. Lisa Parkhurst burst into the Lounge and in a ragged breath announced that the food was finally ready. Joshua had begun running around the room entangled in streamers, babbling contentedly and laughing at himself! Virgil called the house intercom and asked everyone to come to lounge, whether they were ready or not. He for one would be so grateful his father was coming home. Elise came in from the kitchen, Dom gathered up his wayward son, and the rest mingled in and waited.

"Here they come!" announced Alan, seeing the plane make its final approach.

"Right, Brains, call TB5. Callie and John should be in on this too," Virgil asked.

"Sure Virgil."

Once the link was set up, they all waited quietly. Jeff would have to come up on the passenger elevator via TB2's hangar, and then up in the Villa lift from the lower floor to the upper, so it would take a while. Then they would have to come through the study into the lounge. Tin-Tin offered to be 'look-out' and positioned herself on the side of the study closest to the elevator. When she heard it rising up through the villa, she signaled to Dom who was standing at the entrance from the study to the lounge. Seconds later, Tin-tin raced back into the lounge and they all waited in silence. Dianne wheeled Jeff out of the elevator backwards and turned him towards the study. Neither one noticed the strange silence. The rest of the passengers followed behind as Jeff and Dianne made their way into the lounge. As soon as they had entered, the entire place erupted in a chorus of

"SURPRISE!! WELCOME HOME!!"

Dianne almost leapt out of her skin, Jeff merely shook his head, and as the others came in behind him, they too were caught off guard.

"Awesome!" was Alex's first reaction.

Cherie squealed in delight and Tyler thought this was the coolest surprise ever! Everyone cheered and clapped and Virgil stepped forward.

"Welcome home, Dad."

Jeff opened his arms and invited his son in for a hug. Jeff couldn't remember the last time he'd hugged Virgil and it felt good.

"Home...I like the sound of that, son!"

Laughter could be heard around the Tracy Villa for the next few hours. An enormous amount of food was consumed and Kyrano found himself complimenting Lisa on everything she had fixed. As the evening wore on, the homecoming wound down and one by one team members bid their goodnights and departed. Elise offered to help Kyrano clean up and Grandma insisted on helping too. Jeff and Dianne watched as his mother bustled off to her kitchen.

"She's been away too long!" Jeff laughed.

"So have you Jeff." Dianne walked over to him and sat down on the couch next to him.

"I thought this day would never get here." She sighed wearily. He gently stroked her hair, and replied,

"Me too." They stayed like that for a while, just comforting each other in silence, until three weary-looking children flopped onto the opposite couch.

"I ate too much," complained Tyler.

"That's because you're a piggy!" teased Alex.

"Am not!"

"Yeah you are!" The whining had officially begun.

Dianne raised her head. "I think its way past certain peoples' bedtimes, so who do you want to tuck you in?"

Cherie rolled her eyes.

"I'll do it! I haven't seen my angels in so long!" announced Lisa from the doorway.

The three of them cheered and bounced over to Jeff and Dianne, each child giving them a hug and a kiss goodnight.

"See you in the morning, kids! Love you!"

Dianne's voice echoed as the little brigade made its way out of the lounge. Suddenly, Tyler's little voice could be heard saying,

"I want Alan to tuck me in! Where is he?"

"Don't worry, my sweet, we'll find him on our way to your room," Lisa answered him.

Dianne snuggled down with Jeff again, but all too soon it seemed that his wife had turned into nurse mode and was telling him it was time to get some rest! This time he had no reasons to complain about being told to go to bed, even if it was in the sick room for now. As Dianne wheeled him out of the lounge, he turned to look at the mess strewn all over and smiled to himself. Home, I'm finally home.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 16/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:52:23 GMT

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Dianne wheeled Jeff into the lift near the study, and they descended to the lower floor. Neither of them said much; they both were too tired for talk. They stopped before the door to the sick room and Dianne toggled the switch that opened it then palmed on the lights. She smiled to see everything clean and in apple pie order.

Wheeling him over to the nearest bed, Dianne set the brakes, and helped him rise from the chair. During the last two days of his hospital stay, the nurses had insisted on getting Jeff up and moving as much as his casts would allow, so that now he was doing most of the rising and moving with her as support. He stood before the bed so that Dianne could help him remove his trousers, then shifted up onto the bed and began to unbutton his shirt one-handed. Dianne worked on his shoe and sock, and then helped him slide his shirt off over his arm cast. She smiled to see him dressed in only a t-shirt and boxers. They took a trip to the bathroom, Jeff feeling slightly embarrassed at having to be helped on and off the toilet, and then returned to the bed.

"Do I have to wear a hospital gown?" he asked.

Dianne shook her head. "Not if you don't want to. I can bring down some pajama bottoms."

He shook his head. "For tonight, this will suffice." He gazed at her wistfully. "Where will you be sleeping?"

She moved over to the bed next to his and began unplugging all the sensors from their ports. "I'll

be sleeping next to you, as close as these beds will allow." She finished the job and helped him lie down on his bed, turning on only the most basic of monitors. Then she moved the second bed over to butt up against his, setting the brakes so it wouldn't move away. She turned on a low light where it wouldn't bother his eyes, and gave him a smile.

"I'll be right back." Then she left.

Jeff lay back against the clean sheets, thinking about her and how tantalizing it would be to lie next to his wife again. He felt warm and knew that he could do nothing about it. He wasn't physically ready yet. But when he was...

The door swished open, and Dianne came in, dressed in her favorite silk dressing gown. She palmed the lights off, and Jeff smiled as he watched her slip the gown from her shoulders and lay it over the back of a chair. She was wearing pajamas that matched the robe's dark green color, the top of which bared most of her shoulders and back and was held up by thin straps. He sighed happily.

"You are so beautiful, Dianne."

"I thank you, love," she responded as she climbed into the second bed. Lying as close as she could to the edge nearest him, she reached out and stroked his hair back, then leaned over and kissed him, long and tenderly, whispering, "Welcome home, Jeff. Welcome home."

Post by Tikatu on 16/09/2004

Subject: Re: Learning The Ropes
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 00:53:35 GMT
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With that we end
Chapter Two: Learning the Ropes.
