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Subject: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 21:32:10 GMT

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The immediate crisis is over, but the effects of the Kansas tornadoes will be felt for some time to come. The family will be scattered, picking up the shattered pieces of their invulnerability, mourning over that which cannot truly be replaced. The team as a whole will also have to deal with the sudden blow to their numbers, and the destruction of a key piece of equipment. But help is on the horizon. Healing, both physical and emotional, will commence, and International Rescue will learn a surprising and valuable lesson about their place in the world at large.

Post by Tikatu on 10/17/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 21:33:54 GMT

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Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward looked up as Parker poured her tea into one of her favorite Wedgwood Butterfly & Posy cups. "Thank-you, Parker."

"You're quite welcome, Milady." The butler/chauffeur replied.

"Be a dear and turn on the telly, will you? I'd like to see the news," Penny asked, sipping at her tea. "Perfect, Parker, as usual."

"Thank-you, Milady." Parker turned on the television, then nodded to his mistress. "Will there be anything else, Milady?"

"No, I'm fine." Parker nodded and left the room. Penny picked up a croissant and nibbled delicately on it. She settled back into her plush chair, savoring the smell of the pink roses on the table across the room. It's going to be a marvelous day. I really must get to my correspondence. The Ladies Auxiliary needs my annual charity cheque. But that can wait until after breakfast, she thought, as her eyes traveled over the magazine she held in her hand. She was deeply into the article on this season's latest fashion trends, when a story on the television caught her ear.

"This is Nell Griffin reporting live from Mercy General in Los Angles, where three members of International Rescue are currently receiving emergency treatment. Their medical ship, Thunderbird Seven, was reportedly involved in a crash due to a tornado outbreak in Kansas."

"Oh, dear God..." The cup fell from Penny's lifeless fingers, and crashed to the floor.

"It is unclear at this time, what the nature of their injuries are. Hospital staff is being very evasive on the subject. Hospital spokesperson, Geraldo Montoya, had this to say last night:

Penny watched with great interest as the officious looking man took the podium.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am sure you have all heard about the arrival of International Rescue's Thunderbird One a little earlier this afternoon. The craft was airlifting three patients, one in critical condition, from the Wichita area to our facility, on orders from International Rescue's chief medical officer...IR's physician and two nurses are the patients that were brought in."

"I will bring you more as soon as we are updated on the situation. Now back to you, Martin, for the rest of the news..."

"Well, then." Penny shut off the television and pressed the intercom button. "Parker, bring the car around. We're going to Los Angeles."

Post by Lillehafrue on 10/18/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 21:35:36 GMT  
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Sunday, August 5, 2006, 2:30 a.m., Los Angeles (9:30 p.m., same day, Tracy Island)

Jeff sat quietly at Dianne's bedside, just watching her sleep. He'd been there for over two hours now. The dim light glinted dully off the oxygen cannula, and the muted beeping of the machines that monitored her bodily functions had disappeared into the background noise bred of familiarity. He held her hand, the one without an IV, and realized that her wedding ring was missing. I wonder if it's with her personal effects or if she stored it somewhere in Seven. I'll have to ask Scott about the one, and Dom or Nikki about the other.

He refrained from scratching at the thick, silvered beard that covered the lower half of his face. The idea had been Lisa's, with a little input from his own mother.

"You're not going into that hospital as the IR commander showing off those signature dimples," Lisa had declared as they'd flown to Los Angeles. "Em told me about some disguises you and the boys had used at one time or another and she gave me the box with your beard. You're to put it on en route from the airport. I'd help you do it here, but then what good would it do?"

Jeff had found it as impossible to argue with his mother-in-law as it was to argue with his own mother, and he added the box with the beard and its accessories to his attaché case. They had come up with a plan to get everyone where they were supposed to go. Maggie would be waiting at the airport when they landed, and would take Lisa, Kyrano, and the children off to her house for rest.

Jeff, however, had contacted their West Coast version of Bernie the cabbie. Hernando Garcia - owner of Garcia's Transportation and IR Agent - had promised to be at the airport with one of his limousines. The plan was for Jeff to get in there, and the IR Commander to come out when they

reached the hospital. Changing in the back of the car wasn't easy, but the spaciousness of the vehicle made it bearable. By the time he'd reached Mercy Hospital, he was in his uniform, complete with jacket, cap, visor... and beard.

Scott was waiting near the back entrance, and Carol Ferris, who was standing at the new security point, glanced back at him. Hiding a smile, Scott had nodded, and the security officers had let Jeff through.

"Sorry about the checkpoint, sir," she said as she walked him to Scott. "But it's almost as if all of Los Angeles has come out. We've had to set up barricades around the campus, and are screening people coming to the emergency room in anything other than an ambulance with a confirmed ETA."

Jeff thought this over for a moment, then asked, "What's the problem?"

Carol snorted a laugh. "You are, sir... or at least, your organization. This is the first time that one of your members has been in such a public accident or in a hospital quite like this -- at least, according to Maverick. There are all kinds out there: protesters, celebrities, rubber-neckers... but they're outnumbered by the well-wishers. People are lighting candles, praying, creating cards, leaving flowers... and the police department expects it to get worse."

Jeff groaned inwardly. I bet Dianne didn't think about this when she made the decision to pull Andy into the loop.

They met Drew on the secure floor, and Carol introduced them. Jeff shook his old friend's hand as if they were strangers, and Drew took Jeff and Scott on a brief tour of the operatives' rooms, reciting the symptoms of each as they stopped by. Nikki was awake and managed a sleepy smile, but when Drew asked her about pain, she admitted, "I think we're headed up to eight now."

"Ah," Drew responded. "I'll have Engracia bring you a pain reliever." He used his stylus on the data pad he carried.

"Get some rest," Jeff told her. She turned a sudden laugh into a cough when she realized who was behind the facial hair.

"Yes, sir."

Dom was sleeping, the sheets tangled around his legs, the hospital gown pulled up almost too far. Scott stepped forward and straightened the blanket out, pulling it up to Dom's waist. "They both should be ready for discharge tomorrow afternoon."

"The doctor's in here," Drew said, opening the door quietly. Jeff's heart had ached when he saw his wife, and barely listened to Drew's recitation of her injuries. Scott, knowing his father better than anyone, pulled a chair up next to the bed. Jeff had removed his hat and visor, slid out of his jacket, and sat down.

"I'm heading home," Drew said. "I have... family coming in from out of town."

Jeff gave him a distracted smile, then turned back to Dianne.

"They've got a room and a bed ready for me, but if you need me, just call," Scott said.

As the two men turned to leave, Jeff swiveled on the chair. "Andy? Scott?"

They paused, and Jeff nodded. "Thank you."

Drew gave a slight smile, and Scott nodded at his father. Then they had left Jeff alone with Dianne.

He sighed, and got up to stretch. Walking over to the window, he looked out through the slats of the blinds. Daylight was still hours away, and the bright halogen lights over the parking lot glinted off the skin of Thunderbird One in its secure spot. "God, how'd it all come to this?" He swallowed, closing his eyes against their sudden moisture and the combination of grief and relief that threatened to overwhelm him.

Post by Tikatu on 10/18/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:40:09 GMT

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Sunday, August 5, 2068, 8:00 a.m. local time, Kansas (6:00 am August 5, Los Angeles; Monday, August 6 , 1:00 a.m., Tracy Island)

The cat finished cleaning her four kittens. She had moved them under the workbench in the corner when she felt the wrongness in the air. Then the noise had come and the things flying through the air. Now it was quiet again. All of her kittens were safe. They had finished feeding and were now sleeping in a heap by the wall. She was going to go out to hunt while she could.

The place she hunted in was different. Part of it was outside now. Before there had been walls. Some of the big noisy things were gone or in different places. Some of them were on their sides. But there were still enough mice for her to catch one and eat her fill. She maneuvered under the machines towards her favorite hunting area. There was always grain that fell from the trucks and machines so there were always mice there.

Her kittens were too small for her to start to teach them to hunt. So, after eating, she headed back to her kittens without doing any more hunting.

She trotted past one machine and jumped up on another. Unfortunately, the cultivator had been hit by the tractor, which had then been thrown against the far wall. Instead of landing on the smooth metal she was used to, she landed on sharp jagged metal. She yowled in pain as her right back paw and left rear leg were cut.

She jumped down and started to clean the injuries. Fortunately no metal slivers had remained in the cuts. But the one in her paw was deep and both hurt. When she had cleaned them as best

she could, she limped back to her kittens and slept.

Post by susanmartha on 10/18/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:42:17 GMT

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The next morning, the sun rose into a clear blue sky, witnessing the destruction left behind when the atmosphere exploded so violently. With all the cheeriness it could muster, the glowing orb insisted on showing the human inhabitants that the storm was over. Sunlight seeped around the edges of Heather's windows at the Regis Hotel, slipping its fiery fingers underneath her closed bedroom door. The combination of sunlight and a distant beeping sound caused her to awaken to the feeling that she'd forgotten something important she had to do.

With a groan, Heather pushed the covers back, wincing at the light. Her eyes ached, her head ached, and her nose ran. Turning towards the clock on the nightstand, she stared at the electric blue numerals that read 9 :14 a.m. "I hate crying jags," she moaned. "My head hurts."

The beeping started up again, and Heather crawled out of bed. "This better be important." Opening the bedroom door, the beeping grew louder. She walked over to where she left her work slacks on the floor.

"Oh, crap!" she squeaked with realization. "I was supposed to be at work!"

Picking up her pants, Heather dug frantically in the pockets for her cellphone and hit the talk button. "This is Heath--"

"Where the hell have you been, woman?! The boss has been trying to get in touch with you! We thought you'd been run over by a twister!" yelled Richard worriedly.

Standing nude in the living room with a headache and a growling stomach, Heather snapped. "Lemme tell you what kind of day I had! I was nearly run over by a cotton-pickin' tornado, and then another one hit my aunt's farm--!"

"Heather--?"

"And it decided to take my home! Ripped every board and brick clean off the blasted foundation!"

"Heather!" The voice changed, but Heather continued ranting.

"So now I'm at the Regis with just the clothes off my back--!"

"This is the Supervisor Blake! You're on speaker phone, Kennedy!"

Heather's mouth dropped open. "Uh oh,"

"Is she always like this, Rich?" Blake asked.

"Uh-only when she's really stressed out."

Heather mouthed at the cellphone. I'm not stressed out! She made a fist at the phone.

"Heather, we've been calling everyone to make sure they're okay. Obviously, you've been through a lot and I understand that. Don't worry about making it in. Just sit tight and relax, all right?"

"Thank you, sir. By the way, what's the condition of the testing grounds?"

"A tornado tore up some of the runways at the edge of the fields," answered Richard. "The planes are all fine-including yours."

Heather breathed a sigh of relief. "Oh, that's good to hear." She'd actually forgotten about her Jet Star.

"We've got to go, Heather," said Blake. "You've got lots of vacation time accumulated anyway. Call your insurance agency. Do what you have to. If I can help, let me know."

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir, and goodbye, sir."

The dial tone returned and Heather shut the phone down. Relieved she wasn't in trouble, she gathered her bags from yesterday's impromptu shopping expedition and went to shower and get dressed for breakfast.

Running her long slender fingers through her hair, she grabbed her purse, walked back to the elevator she'd taken the night before, and took a smooth trip down to the ground floor. As the elevator opened to let her out, she smiled. She did happen to like staying at hotels and eating out, so when she reached the restaurant, she made up her mind to enjoy the experience. As she walked up to the podium, she was met by the redheaded headwaiter whose name tag read Brian.

"My name is Heather," she said which sent him typing in her name. "I like the color of your hair."

With a sudden grin and dimples to match, he studied her and said, "My long lost sister!" The two of them laughed. "Well, I'm afraid at the moment that all the tables are full. I'm expecting a table to open soon."

"I can wait. That's certainly no problem."

"We got an overflow of customers in the hotel from families who lost their homes, so we've been swamped."

"And you've all been overworked, I'm sure."

"Some people have been really struggling, but I'll tell you what. About the middle of the dining room you'll find a little fella in a wheelchair. His name is David. He was one of those kids rescued by International Rescue. Well, after his family took him home, they discovered their home was just

trashed. Like a bomb exploded. They lost everything they had except what they had on them. They came here. That little kid lost his own room with all his toys, computers and clothes. And yet, he's got to be the happiest little guy I've ever met. All because he was rescued by International Rescue."

Looking down on his board, Brian grinned. "Ah, we have a table about to open and it's all yours. Should be cleaned off in about two minutes here."

When Brian checked, the table was cleaned off. A cloth napkin was folded in the water glass and shiny silverware was set for her along with a menu. Brian led her to the table, helped her sit down, and then told her the server would be along soon. "What would you like to drink?"

"Hot coffee, ice water with lemon, and I take both cream and sugar." she answered.

"Hey lady," she heard someone say.

"Okay, this rates! They serve hash! Oh man, I want the hungry man plate." Suddenly, she realized someone was next to her. "Hi, I'd like the hungry man breakfast--Hold it. You don't look like a waiter."

Next to her sat David in his slightly scuffed wheelchair, laughing at her. "I can't be a waiter!"

"Actually, you could do it. Even do what the host does. The arms of your chair would be perfect for carrying trays for a start." Getting down near where only he could hear, she said, "And if you took a lady's hand to take her to her table? She'd be gushing! She'd think you were the sweetest thing since cinnamon rolls."

David laughed. "You're kidding?!"

With her brightest smile, Heather assured him, "Cross my heart and hope to die!"

"Look what I got!"

Looking at the outstretched wrist, Heather smiled knowingly at the bar coded bracelet with the IR stamp on it. "I got rescued by International Rescue! That's what I wanna do. Do you know how to become an International Rescue person?" Davy asked her.

"Boy, that's a pretty darn good question, I must say," Heather responded, blushing. That was the last thing she thought she'd ever be asked. She was thinking about a lowly job position, and he wanted the most intense job of all.

"Our home was wrecked by a tornado," Davy told her, not looking for an answer as many kids his age do. "But it's okay. I got to meet International Rescue. They come out only when somebody's hurt!"

"That's what I hear."

His next question surprised her. "Did something bad happen to you?"



She stared at him. Perceptive little kid! "What makes you say that?" she asked.

"You're eyes drooped for a minute just like my mom's did when she had to tell me our house was gone."

"As a matter of fact, I lost my home, too," Heather said wistfully. "I think it's no big deal and yet, it is a big deal." From the corner of her eye, she could see his parents studying their meals very intently, listening in.

"I have to talk about it, because if I don't, it hurts. If it hurts me, it hurts Mom. She loves me a lot. Daddy, too. They pretend it's no big deal, too, but I know it does."

"David, that is very wise. There's a lot of grownups that have a lot of trouble understanding that. If you stay as wise as you are, you can go anywhere you wish."

"Maybe even International Rescue?"

"Maybe International Rescue," she answered him with a smile.

A tall, sandy-haired man got up from his table next to Heather's and walked over. Heather noticed the jeans and denim shirt. He wore a chain of wooden beads. "I'm sorry, Miss. Davy, you still have to finish breakfast. Come on back to the table now."

Heather watched as David was led back to the table next to her as her own waiter came with her menu. She hadn't talked to the tyke for very long, but as she caught him spinning the band on his wrist, she smiled. David was so excited to be rescued by International Rescue; he wanted to become one just to return the favor.

On the way back to her room after breakfast, she made a mental list of the phone calls she had to make. As she made her way down the hallway to the elevators, she thought to herself how lucky she really had it as compared to David. I knew International Rescue rescued people from dire danger. Everyone knows that, but do they have any idea about the kind of inspiration they give? And good jumping grief, they've asked me to be one of them! My stars, that's a lot of responsibility! And they want me.

Catching the elevator back upstairs, Heather decided that the first call she had to make was to Jeff Tracy. He'd waited long enough and so had she.

Post by AmandaTracy on 10/18/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:42:36 GMT  
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Brandon crumpled the message in his hands. It had been a terse communication, written in Kyrano's neat script, telling him only, "Emergency, call Shannon." Emily Tracy had given it to him,



along with a sympathetic smile and a comforting pat on the shoulder, after the debriefing.

"I hope everything is all right," she'd murmured.

It wasn't. He'd called Shannon right away, and gotten her voice mail at first. He'd called again, a couple of hours later, even knowing that it was nearly midnight there. And again, around 2 a.m. in San Diego. He called his parents' house at similar intervals, and got the same results. Then he'd stayed up half the night to see if she'd call. She had no idea what time zone he was really in; she thought he was in Hawaii. Finally, at 3:30 a.m., she called back.

"Where the hell have you been, Brandon?" she shouted. Her eyes were red, obviously from crying, but she was angry, too. "I call, and I find out that you're "out". Just "out". And the old man wouldn't tell me where, and told me you couldn't be reached and would I like to leave a message?" She shook her head sharply. "Where the hell were you?"

"I was working, okay?" Brandon said, irritably. "And no, I couldn't be reached. I called as soon as I got your message." He took a deep breath, calming himself. "Now, tell me; what's the emergency?"

Shannon bit her lower lip and swallowed hard. Tears filled her voice as she said, "It's Mom and Dad. They... they were in an accident. A car accident. Hit by a drunk driver."

"Oh no," he whispered. "No." His voice rose. "Dammit, no!" Getting control of himself again, putting his feelings aside so he could do something, anything, he asked, "Where are they? What condition are they in?"

"They're... they're in the hospital. In San Diego. Mom's got a broken hip, and some facial lacerations. Dad... Dad's still in ICU. The airbags probably saved his life, but they're not giving much hope that he'll be able to walk again." She looked at Brandon, tears running down her cheeks. "I... I needed you, bro! I... I just couldn't handle it."

"Shhhhh," he said softly. "I know, sis, I know. Listen, I'm going to get out there as soon as possible, okay. I'll ask for a leave of absence right away, and be with you... as soon as I can be." He had no idea how long it would take to get to San Diego, and his head was spinning too much to do any calculations. Besides, someone was going to have to fly him home.

"Please come soon?" she pleaded. "I'm at Mom and Dad's now. I couldn't stay at the hospital another second!"

"I'll be there soon," Brandon promised. "Now, get some rest. I'm coming."

"Okay. I'll try." Shannon sniffed, and ran her finger across the base of her nose. But she seemed calmer. "Love you, Bran."

"I love you, too, Shan," he replied, giving her an encouraging smile. "Talk to you soon."

"Bye."

The connection was cut, and Brandon huffed out a deep sigh. What am I going to do? Mr. Tracy's not here to approve leave. He shook his head. I guess I'll just have to ask Virgil in the morning... later in the morning. In the meanwhile, I'd better try for a couple of hours' sleep.

He set his alarm for 6:30, and lay down on his bed. But despite his physical exhaustion, sleep eluded him, and he got up to pack his clothes for his anticipated trip home.

xxxx

8:00 a.m., the dining room

Brandon took a deep breath, and stepped inside. He hadn't been to breakfast with the Tracys since his early days as a recruit; after a while it seemed like an imposition, and an intrusion. But now... he knew he couldn't wait on this.

All eyes turned toward him. He noticed John sitting with his brothers, and Gordon trying to deal with Joshua. Tin-Tin came out of the kitchen with a platter piled high with waffles and smiled at him as she put the plate down. "Will you be joining us, Brandon?"

He shook his head. "No, but thanks anyway." Focusing his eyes on Virgil, he asked, "Could I see you for a few moments, Virgil? Privately?"

Virgil glanced at his brothers as if to ask, "Any ideas?" The responses, made in body language so subtle and familiar to the family, passed back with a resounding, "I've got nothing". Virgil looked up at Brandon and nodded, smiling. "Sure, Brandon. Will upstairs do?"

"Yeah," Brandon replied.

They left the dining room together and got as far as the study. Virgil made to stop there, but Brandon continued into the lounge. "This is an official request," he explained as he waited for Virgil to sit behind the desk. "I'd like to make it in an official way."

"All right, then," Virgil said as he sat down and waved Brandon to a chair. "What's on your mind?"

Brandon took a deep breath and began to explain the situation. Virgil nodded solemnly; his brows knit with a sympathetic look. He opened up the laptop on his father's desk, not Jeff's own but another one, linked to the Tracy Industries server and the IR one, just as his father's was. "How long do you need?"

"I... don't know," Brandon admitted. "I'm thinking this will be open-ended."

Virgil nodded. "How soon can you be ready?"

"How soon do you need me to be?"

Virgil smiled slightly. "John, my grandmother, and I are going to Kansas to sift through the rubble of the house. We're stopping in Los Angeles for a bit so we can see Dianne. We're leaving here at 10, and should get into L.A. around 7:30 in the evening... yesterday." His smile increased a bit at

the small jest. "I can arrange transportation for you from L.A. to San Diego." He glanced up at Brandon. "Will that work?"

Brandon sighed with relief. "It sure will," he replied. "I'll be down at the hangar at 10."

"Good man." Virgil got up and the two walked the length of the lounge. "Have you had breakfast?"

"No," Brandon said, shaking his head.

"Then you'd better come down and have some," Virgil advised. "My grandmother will not be pleased if you leave the island hungry."

Post by Tikatu on 10/18/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:43:51 GMT

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After realizing that calling the Tracys so early for her, would mean a late night call for them, Heather spent the day calling family and getting her insurance claim started. Finally, she felt she had put off her most important call long enough. "It's now or never. No guts, no glory!" Tapping the phone number into the communications remote, she heard a ring.

In the hospital, Jeff and Scott sat in the waiting room, waiting for Dom and Angel to be discharged, while Dianne had been sent back down for more scans. At that moment, a call came through to Jeff's cellphone. He took it from his pocket, glad for the new uniform that had pockets, and flipped it open. "Regis Hotel..." he muttered. "Wichita... don't know anyone at the Regis."

At that moment, the door opened, and Drew poked his head in. "We're back."

Jeff glanced over at Scott and held out the ringing phone. "Here, you take it."

Scott sighed. "Yes, sir." He took the phone, and Jeff quickly left with Drew. Scott locked the door behind him, made sure the curtains were drawn, and removed his hat, visor, and jacket. He was glad he had opted for a t-shirt; there was no logo on the collar to give his real job away. He sighed again, ran a hand through his hair, and pushed a button on the phone. "Scott Tracy here."

"Hi Scott. This is Heather. Is your father there?"

Scott glanced over at the locked door, and internally shook his head. He returned to smile at Heather. "I'm afraid I'm going to have to do, Heather. My father's kind of... occupied."

The slight tightness in Scott's voice told Heather that he was under some stress. Something's wrong. "Hi Scott. I won't keep you. I just wanted to let Jeff know I am accepting his offer."

Scott smiled, the first genuine smile he'd had... well, it felt like ages. "That's terrific, Heather! I'm really glad you're coming aboard. When would you want to come out?"

He heard her laughing in the background. "Well, I'm thinking in a week. I have some shopping I need to do. I'll need to get clothes, luggage--the works. Do you recommend anything for tropical weather?" she asked.

He smiled again. "Well, things aren't too terribly tropical just yet. Light clothes in light colors are always good."

"Okay. I could fly myself out there in about seven days. Or maybe give it seven days, plus the flying time."

Nodding, Scott replied, "Sounds good. Do you want a co-pilot? Someone who actually knows how to get there?"

"Yes, that would be nice. When and where? You know we could make plans later in the week. I know you've had your hands full with 'business'," she offered.

He thought for a moment. "Let me get back to you on that. At the moment, we're flying back and forth from home to Los Angeles, but we should have someone heading out to Wichita in a few days. I'll see who's available. Can I reach you at home?"

Heather found herself biting her lip. The image of her home whole and intact, came to mind again. "You can call me at the Regis Hotel. I'm in suite 15B," she answered.

"All right," Scott said, committing the room number to memory. He wanted to know why this gal was staying in a hotel, but didn't want to intrude on her privacy. Maybe Dad or I can find out with a call to her supervisor. We'll need to confirm her "transfer" anyway. "I'll give you a call, say Thursday?"

"I'll be looking forward to it." she answered. "Scott, how are things?" she suddenly asked.

Scott paused, gathering his thoughts. He moistened his lower lip with his tongue, then gave Heather a lopsided smile. "Rough, Heather. My stepmother's in the hospital, as are two of the family nurses. The nurses should be released today, but we're not sure how long Mom will be here." He stopped and sighed. "On top of that, our family homestead was destroyed by the tornadoes. I mean, it wasn't like we were living there full-time or anything, but it was still full of memories - lots of good memories."

"I'm so sorry, Scott. Is there--anything--I can do?" Knowing there really wasn't anything she could do, she was glad to have offered anyway.

He shook his head. "No, not really. We'll be out to sort through things in a couple of days. Just keep Mom in your thoughts, okay?"

"I will, and you as well. I get the feeling you put your share of work in yesterday."

"You got that right," he said wryly. He glanced at his watch. "I'd better go and see if the nurses are ready for discharge yet. I'll talk to you on Thursday. Regis Hotel, suite 15B."

"Goodbye, Scott," she said.

"Bye, Heather."

After he hung up, she sat and analyzed what he'd said as she looked out the window at the sky. "Funny. His face lit right up when I called. The pressure must be enormous!"

As he closed the phone, he smiled. Best news I've had all day, and maybe news that'll make Dad smile as well. Now, if Dom and Nikki are ready to go home, that'll be a load off my mind!

--decision finalized by AmandaTracy and Tikatu, posted 10/19/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:46:19 GMT  
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Monday, Aug 6, 11 a.m., T. I. time, over the Pacific en route to L.A.(4 p.m., Aug 5, L.A.)

"So, what happened?"

John glanced over at his brother, whose brown eyes seemed to be staring straight ahead. John couldn't be sure though since Virgil was wearing his best, most concealing pair of Ray-Bans.

"What do you mean, 'what happened'?"

"You've been out of sorts since we took off," Virgil explained. "I want to know why."

John sighed and his shoulders drooped. "Have I been that obvious?"

"To me, yes. To Grandma, you scream discontented."

Virgil had gone back to use the single toilet a quarter hour previously and been collared by his grandmother on the way back with a single order, "Find out what's eating your brother."

Making a face, John shook his head. "I should have known. There's no having a bad mood around this family; someone is always going to try and jolly you out of it."

It was Virgil's turn to shake his head, and roll his eyes in the bargain. "I'm not going to try and jolly you out of it. If you want to have a snit, that's your prerogative. But I'd like to know where it's coming from so I can duck if necessary."

There was silence, and Virgil was ready to poke his brother again, when John spoke. "It's... it's everything, I guess. Mostly the hellish day we all had yesterday. Two rescues that turned into three; three of our operatives injured. Our stepmother in surgery; Seven in pieces; Scott telling Dad off; the farmhouse... I was so stressed out. Still am, in fact."

"And Kat?"

John groaned. "She picked the worst time."

Just before they had left, Kat had approached the plane, smiling. She and John had words together, the result of which had Kat's smile dissolving into a distressed look, and John frowning as he slammed his bag into the cargo hatch and stalked off.

"What did she say?" Virgil asked, trying to sound uninterested... and failing.

"She was very sympathetic at first; saying how glad she was to see me 'even under such trying circumstances'. But then she wanted to know if we could spend some time together while I was down. Offered to cook me a meal." John dropped his head, shaking it slowly. "I told her that I had other, more important things to do and I didn't think I'd have time." He sighed heavily again. "I was short with her, and I shouldn't have been. But... it was as if she didn't even care that all this stuff was going on in our family. As if the only thing that was important was our... relationship."

It was Virgil's turn to be silent, and John despaired of hearing anything more from his brother. "Well?" he asked.

"Well what?"

"What do you think?"

Virgil glanced at him. "I promised I wouldn't try to jolly you out of anything."

When John groaned, he added, "Listen. You're right about being sharp; whatever your current emotional status, you had no right to take it out on her. I'm sure she saw your being planetside as an opportunity, but I'm equally certain she is fully aware of what's going on."

"You are trying to jolly me."

"No," Virgil stated emphatically. "I am not. I'm just pointing out to you what you yourself have already realized, and a possible reason why she might have approached you. You owe her an apology, if nothing else."

The heavy sigh sounded again. "I know. And I'll apologize to her. But..."

"But what?"

"I don't know. I guess I thought she'd have more thought for me, for our family. Once she asked if we could spend time together, it sounded as if her opening sentiments were... insincere. Like her first words were just the opening to 'Could we perhaps spend some time together when you return?' Not thinking of me or our family, just... us -- whatever that might be."

"I think you've made that clear." Still, Virgil wondered about his brother and the friendship he was pursuing. I have a feeling that John doesn't put the same weight on this relationship of theirs as she does, at least, not yet. And one would think she'd be more sympathetic, especially since John

was the only one who worked all three rescues... and simultaneously at that.

He glanced at John, who was leaning back, eyes closed. Relationships are the last thing on his mind right now. Kat probably should have realized that.

"Hey," he said, giving John a poke. "Why don't you go back and get some more rest? I'll be fine for an hour or so." He smiled. "Besides, I'd rather not hear you snore."

John nodded. "That sounds like a good idea." He took off his headset and hooked it over the copilot's steering yoke. "Holler if you need some help." He rose, then paused before he left the cockpit. "And for the record," he said, "I don't snore."

With that last shot he left, and Virgil snorted a laugh. "Wonder if Gordon still has that tape..."

Post by Tikatu on 10/20/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:49:22 GMT

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"Well, this isn't much fun," Dom said.

Paul, the nurse who had been enlisted to help him dress, held open the IR issue jacket.

"Strange being on the other side, is it?" He asked.

"Yeah."

The job was quickly done, and Paul stepped over to the door of the small private room. Dominic checked around to ensure he hadn't left anything behind, before following the other nurse out onto the busy corridor. He was immediately flanked by two members of hospital security, and Paul beckoned him on.

"This way. The others from your organisation are waiting for you."

Dom was glad for the cap and visor he was wearing as part of his uniform as many sets of eyes slid his way. He had to admit, if a member of IR had walked near him before he became one of them, he would have been one of the first to try and get a good look at them. Now...it was strange being on the other side indeed.

Nikki was already waiting with Scott and Jeff when he arrived. The blue uniforms of the IR operatives were almost lost amid a sea of darker-garbed security personnel.

"How are you, Tynan?" Jeff asked.

Dominic had to look for a moment longer than usual to recognise the face behind the beard. If the situation wasn't so grim, and he wasn't still so tired, he might even have chuckled.



"I'm fine, sir."

"Well, let's get moving, people," Scott said.

He and the nurses made a swift exit from the hospital, and were soon winging their way back home.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 10/23/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:50:50 GMT

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Sunday, August 5; 8 PM; Baltimore (5 PM, Los Angeles, 12 PM August 6, Tracy Island)

David and Sheila's home wasn't tiny, but when you put eighteen people into it, it began to seem that way. Lena's whole family had gone there for a belated celebration of Zuberi and Dalila's second birthday (David and Sheila had had a small celebration with their twins on their actual birthday, the first.). Sheila's mother, father, and older brother plus his wife were there, too

The twins, Siti, Naomi and Kevin were all sitting on the floor. Kevin was playing with Zuberi and his newly acquired stuffed lion, which was very soft and almost half the size of its owner. Naomi and Siti were playing hide-and-seek with Siti's new favorite blankie, a present from her aunt and uncle, David and Mai.

The conversation had been fairly general, but turned to the latest International Rescue outing and the consequences. "I heard on the way over that their medical vehicle got the worst damage, although one of the team members -- the CMO -- was pretty badly injured. However, the latest updates say the CMO will recover," said Sheila's mother.

"Dat's good to know, Patricia," replied Lena. "Dey do so much to help people, I tink it would be a great loss if dey had to shut down for any reason. Aldough I don't believe de loss of one or two of deir operatives would cause dem to shut down."

Naomi looked up at her grandmother. "I wish I knew who those people were. I'd love to give them a hug and thank them."

Lena hid her smile, made difficult when Kevin retorted, "If you knew, Naomi, the whole world would know within twelve hours. And they do need their security."

When the laughter died down, and Naomi had retaliated by throwing a bow at her brother that had been missed when the gift wrappings had been cleared away, Lena replied, "Well, honey, since you don't know who dey are, you can never know when you have hugged one of deir people. So spread your hugs around."

Siti, had been toddling around, getting attention -- and especially hugs -- from as many people as she could, stopped in front of Kevin and squatted slightly. A moment later, he screwed up his face and exclaimed, "Whoa! I think someone's ripe enough to be picked!"

There was more laughter as Leslie started to get up, but was stopped by E.J., who declared he'd take care of it. He picked up his daughter and headed down the hall to the twins room, where they'd left the diaper bag. He almost stopped and turned around when Kevin said, "What have you been feeding that kid, Leslie? That has to have been the worst smell I've ever experienced!"

Joy jumped in before Leslie could answer. "It isn't the worst I've ever smelled, young man. You could clear a room faster than anyone I've ever known when you were that age."

"Aww, Mom!"

A few minutes later, E.J. returned, with Siti asleep on his shoulder, and the diaper bag over the other. He glanced down to see Zuberi sprawled on his lion, also asleep. "I think it's time this party broke up, as much fun as it's been. This one fell asleep when I was cleaning her. And it is a workday -- and a school day -- tomorrow."

There was a general agreement, and everyone rose and began to collect their things. Naomi carefully picked up Dalila, who was half asleep wound up in her blanket, and yawning. She took her down the hall, followed by Sheila with Zuberi and the lion. They returned a few minutes later to say that both birthday children were out like lights. It took another twenty minutes for goodbyes, and last minute tidbits of information to be expressed, but soon the visitors were in their vehicles and on their way home.

As David closed their front door, Sheila moved into his arms. "We are so lucky. We have wonderful families."

"Yes we do." He put his arms around her, holding her close. "And we've started another one."

"Mmm." She put her head on his shoulder for a moment, then raised it and looked into his eyes. "Oh, guess what Naomi said while we were putting the twins down."

"What?"

"You know how she likes to write. She told me she got an idea for a story about Zuberi. She's going to write it and send it to us. She even has the title - Zuberi and the Lion."

Post by Hobbeth on 10/28/2006 11:04 AM

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:52:04 GMT  
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The flight home seemed to take twice as long as usual, despite the fact they were in Thunderbird One and flying at top velocity. Dominic rubbed at his eyes with one hand; Scott's request for

landing clearance was bliss. His fingers were clumsy as he tried to unbuckle the seat restraint, and he almost had to drag himself to his feet and force himself out the door. He followed Nikki across the gangway to the villa, followed closely by Scott. It felt surreal, not only swinging through the wall to TB1's silo, but backwards, too. He suppressed a laugh; no one else would get it.

"Da!"

His eyes had found the source of the squeal before it had sounded, and an easy smile spread across Dominic's face. Joshua broke free of Tin-Tin's grasp and bounded across the room. His small feet tripped over each other, however, and he fell hard onto the ground, skidding a few meters. Dominic forgot his own troubles and rushed forwards to scoop the child up as the inevitable wail filled the air.

"It's all right lad, it's okay. Sure you're fine aren't you? You're fine. Aaah, you're fine."

The child continued crying, and Dominic stood up. He stilled as he did so, however, and squeezed his eyes shut -- My neck...aiyee...

"Are you okay, Dom?" Nikki asked.

"Yes, I am," he said, as the pain had subsided. "I'm only back two minutes and you're causin' trouble for me already," he said, kissing his son's forehead.

Joshua didn't stop crying.

"Aww, come on wee man, we'll get you sorted. We'll get you sorted."

He nodded his goodbyes to those in the room, and headed back towards his apartment, the grogginess temporarily cleared by the needs of a tired child.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 10/28/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:54:02 GMT

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Tracy Island - Monday, August 6th

As she made her way back to Thunderbird Two's hangar, Kat was thinking about the conversation she had had with John. She had honestly thought that he would have liked to spend some time with her, after he had visited Dr Tracy in hospital. Of course she had been sorry about the circumstances surrounding his arrival on Tracy Island, and had thought that by asking him to spend time with her, she could help him. However, his comments had somewhat shocked her. How could he have said those things to me? I was only trying to help.

Arriving at the hangar, she headed once more to the pod that housed the DOMO. Climbing aboard the vehicle, she continued with her work carrying out the normal checks. For quite a while

the young mechanic worked on the vehicle, making sure that the grabs were fully working. Remembering the episode with the jetpack, she worked slowly, testing everything thoroughly after she had checked it. Finally satisfied that the DOMO would be ready when next needed, she turned her attention to the Firefly. Just as she was about to start, she began to experience that familiar dizzy feeling. Oh, no! I had such an early breakfast. Fetching the sandwiches and drink she had brought with her, she settled down to eat.

Without warning, her thoughts returned to the recent rescues. That had been such a traumatic time for everyone. The rescue of those hit by the tornado, the space rescue, Dr Tracy, Nikki and Dom being caught up in the twister, and finally, the total destruction of the Tracy farm - no wonder John had been so terse with her. She began to think back to their conversation. Was I too pushy? Could I have said or done things differently?

Her thoughts then turned to her own family. She was well aware that she had to be discreet when talking to her family about her job. True she had found it difficult lying to them, but that didn't excuse her not writing more often. She remembered back to when she was working away, and that on her visits home, how often her mother had looked tired. How could I have overlooked that? I'd been so excited at getting a job with Lady Penelope that everything else seemed to fade into insignificance. But during those four years was I really so blind to events around me? And then I was recruited to International Rescue, and left without a second thought for my family.

Oh Mum, we were so close once. What's happened? Surely I should have noticed, and again she couldn't get rid of those disturbing thoughts that maybe she could have done things differently.

Realising that she was daydreaming and that she had spent longer on her lunch break than she intended, she brought her mind back to the work in question. After completing the checks on the Firefly, she again tested the vehicle and once satisfied, started work on the Excavator. The time went quickly and having carried out the final checks, she glanced at her watch. Heavens! It's later than I thought. It's gone 6.00pm. The young mechanic tidied up her tools, washed her hands, and wearily headed back to the monorail to Cliff House.

She thought about visiting Nikki and Dom on the way, but then decided against it. They'll probably be tired, and I don't think I could bear anyone else being short with me today. I'll visit them tomorrow.

After she had cooked and finished her evening meal, Kat sat at her computer. Remembering the recent rescue and the Tracy's farm destroyed by the tornado, she began to type.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 10/28/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:54:24 GMT  
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Monday, August 6, 12:45 a.m., Tracy Island (5:45 p.m., previous day, Los Angeles)

"Tin-Tin to Gordon."

Gordon glanced at his watch and fumbled with the activation button. It felt funny to be using it now; the earpieces had become second nature... almost. "Gordon here."

"Thunderbird One has just landed."

Gordon glanced over at Alan, who was fitting a power connection to Thunderbird Seven's medical cabin. The connection would be linked to the engines of Recovery Vehicle One, and would activate the still-functional hover jets under the cabin. They'd be able to easily tow the larger piece up to the pod vehicle repair bay next to Brains's lab.

"Thanks, Tin-Tin. We'll be up soon."

Alan glanced at Gordon. "One of us needs to take the desk, right? Scott's going to need some rest, and Tin-Tin's in charge of the kitchen, too."

Gordon sighed heavily. "Right." He glanced around at the pod. He, Alan, and Kat had moved the intact pieces of equipment out, and Kat was busy working on the pod vehicles. Callie was doing post-rescue maintenance on Three, while Elise was working in Two. Early that morning, before Virgil and John left, a good hour or more had been given to figuring out just how to move Seven out of the pod. He still wasn't sure how they were going to move the control cabin.

Glancing that way, he saw the doorway he had cut, and beyond it, the spider web of cracks in the windshield. He took in a sharp breath, and shuddered slightly.

I was so focused on what I was doing. Just cut the door. I couldn't let my mind do anything else, go anywhere else, think anything else. If I had, I might have lost it. I almost did when we got inside. Dom had just finished cutting Mom's leg free. There was a small pool of blood on the floor... I mean the ceiling, a small puddle of it, her blood. I couldn't take my eyes off it for a moment. When I looked at Mom, she was so pale, and hiding her fear. I could tell by the set of her mouth... when the hell did I get so good at reading her? Then I got that call, and Dom took it, and she started vomiting... I felt like ripping those restraints off and pulling her down myself. But we had to do it the cautious way, the safe way... we were so damned lucky...

"You okay, Gords?"

Alan's voice and grip on his arm brought Gordon's thoughts back from the dark place they'd been heading. He shook his head. "Not really, Al." He nodded toward the cabin. "I'm not looking forward to pulling that out."

"Then let me do it."

Gordon stared at Alan, who walked away, taking the lines to the power link with him. "What did you say?"

"I said, let me do it," Alan reiterated. He slid under the recovery vehicle to make the connections, and his voice became muffled. "You're better at taking the desk, anyway." He worked for a few moment, then slid back out from under. He brushed his hands on his overalls, and began to pick

up his tools. "There, done. As I was saying, you're better at taking the desk for a few hours. And... I have the advantage of not having been there... if that's an advantage." He glanced at his watch. "Speaking of the desk, we'd better get going. Scott's probably already waiting on us. Besides, I want to see Nikki."

Gordon's eyebrow went up. "Nikki?"

Alan stopped what he was doing. "Yeah. Nikki. She's become a... a friend."

Gordon bit back what he was going to say, and instead just nodded. "Okay. Let's get up there before Scott comes down looking for us."

They left the pod, and Alan glanced toward where Kat had been working on the auxiliary vehicles. "I don't see Kat, do you?"

"No. She's probably gone to grab some lunch. We'll see her upstairs."

Alan shrugged, and the two made their way to the monorail terminal.

Post by Tikatu on 10/28/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:55:40 GMT

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Sunday, August 5, 2068, 8:30 p.m., local time, Los Angeles (Monday, August 6, 3:30 p.m., Tracy Island)

"John, dear, would you get that?" a weary Emily asked. "It must be room service."

John nodded, and got up from the sofa in their multi-bedroom suite. He was concerned for his grandmother; the flight to Los Angeles had been physically taxing on her. He knew that the emotional fallout had yet to come. She wanted to see Dianne; she wanted to see the children, but there was just no time, not then. Besides, the security issues at the hospital precluded her from getting inside. Virgil and John had toyed with the idea of trying to get in by wearing their uniforms, but a quick consultation with Jeff had shot down the idea.

"You have no idea what's going on around here," Jeff had told them. "The hospital is surrounded by crowds, and more IR members would worsen the situation. We'll figure out a way to get everyone in as soon as possible, but for now, it's better that you stay away."

John opened the door, expecting a cart and liveried hotel personnel. "Lady Penelope!" he cried.

"Hullo, John. May we come in?" Lady Penelope smiled. She looked her sleek and stylish self, and Parker, dressed in his gray chauffeur livery, hovered in behind her.

"Of course, of course!" John stepped back to allow the pair entrance. "Grandma, Lady Penelope's

here."

"I'm not deaf, John," Emily said testily. She rose and took both of Penny's outstretched hands. "It's good to see you, Penelope." They sat together on the smaller sofa. "But what brings you here?"

"Why Dianne and Jeff, of course," Penny replied. The door chime sounded again. "Parker."

"Yus, milady." Parker went off to answer the door, just as if he were home at Foxleyheath, returning with the cart from room service and the hotel staff who were there to set the small table and serve the food.

"Please excuse us, Lady Penelope, for eating in your presence," Emily said as Virgil guided her to the table.

"Of course, Mrs. Tracy," Penny said. "I have already supped, and I believe Parker has done the same."

The staff departed, and Parker made sure the door was closed and locked behind them. Parker moved one of the wing chairs close to the table so that they could continue their discussion as the Tracys ate.

"I was able to gain access to the hospital through the auspices of our physician-agent," Penelope said. "I wished to see security measures for myself, and of course, visit briefly with Jeff and Dianne."

"How is she?" Emily asked.

"She is not in pain; the medications they are giving her are working well. However, they make her drowsy. Dr. Carmichael is of the opinion she will fully recover, given time and rest."

"Can we get in to see her?" Virgil asked.

"Not at the moment, I fear," Penelope replied regretfully. "However, we are working on a plan to allow for visits without compromising security."

"How did you get in?" John asked, frowning.

Penelope smiled slightly. "I was allowed into the hospital building in disguise, wearing a dark wig."

"Wanda Lamour?" Virgil asked, smiling a little.

Penelope nodded. "Yes, or much like her. Then I changed into my uniform..."

"Uniform?" Both John and Virgil were stunned at this news. "Since when?" John asked.

"Jeff thought it prudent for me to have a version of the uniform if I ever needed to appear in an official manner," Penelope replied. She took the cup of coffee that was offered to her with a murmured, "Thank you", and continued. "Of course, I am to always disguise myself further, with a



different hair color and perhaps a beauty mark that would draw attention to itself -- and that I myself do not have." She took a sip of coffee and added, "The trim is a light pink, of course. And I wore a skirt for the occasion."

"Wow." Virgil shook his head. "The things Dad does that he doesn't tell us about."

"I am under the impression that my uniform was an afterthought," Penelope said. "No matter. I was able to see the security measures for myself, and later, discussed the option of moving Dianne from hospital temporarily, then returning her to it as herself. Dr. Carmichael seemed to think it was a feasible plan, as long as the move was temporary. We will have it appear that 'Doc' has been discharged to another facility, and that Dianne Tracy, auto accident victim, has been admitted to hospital to be under the care of her uncle." She sipped her coffee again. "He was gratified to hear the plan; hospital administration is less than pleased about the extra security expense."

"I'm sure that Jeff will make it worth their while financially," Emily said tartly. "You'd think they'd be considering more than the bottom line on a few guards to keep people away from her room."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Tracy. The internal security is not the issue." Penelope hastened to explain. "They are quite used to having celebrities of all stripes visiting and using the secure wing. The external security is the problem. No one foresaw the crowds that have gathered."

"Crowds? What crowds? Why should crowds be there?" Emily asked, looking puzzled.

Virgil hastened to explain. "Grandma, they're there because... well, because of us. Because of what we do. If you could have seen the crowds in Ust'-Uls after the rescue in the Ural Mountains. They lined the streets, cheering as we came back into the city after dealing with the avalanche victims. We are hardly ever in a populated center long enough for people to actually come and say 'Thank you', but when we are, they do. In droves."

"The crowds around the hospital contain more than well-wishers this time, Virgil," Penelope said. She sighed lightly. "There are also protesters..."

"Protesters?" John asked. "What the hell could they be protesting?"

"John! Language!" Emily said sharply.

"Sorry, Grandma," John said in an apologetic tone. "Still, I don't see what they could possibly be protesting."

"Nor can I," Penelope said. "But I am informed that there are some present, and that there have been some altercations between them and IR supporters." She put down her now-empty coffee cup. "Both the hospital and the local police will be pleased when we have withdrawn our presence."

There was a pause, then Virgil said, "Whew! What a mess!" He shook his head. "What do you need us to do?"

"At the moment, to continue with your plans. I shall be in touch with Scott about the arrangements."

"You might want to have Thunderbird Two fly Dianne away," Virgil said. "She's got the sickbay and all. Elise can do the honors."

"An excellent idea, Virgil. We also have considered using a Tracy Industries helijet to bring Dianne back to the hospital."

"Elise would be good for that, too. She's on the payroll as Dad's pilot."

"I hate the fact that we are all stretched so thin," Emily complained. "But there's just no way around it right now."

"Does Dad know about Brandon?" John asked suddenly.

"Brandon?" Penelope looked puzzled. Parker began clearing the small table, moving dishes to the room service cart.

John sighed. "Brandon was called home for a family emergency, Lady Penelope. We flew him here and had Tracy Industries supply a ride to San Diego for him."

"Oh dear," Penelope said, shaking her head. "Jeff may not be aware of it."

"If he isn't, Scott will be sure to tell him," Virgil said. "When will this transfer happen?"

"Dr. Carmichael and I have planned this for Tuesday. He believes Dianne will be up to the move then."

"We'll be returning soon after that," Emily said. "I don't want to spend too long at the farmhouse... or what's left of it."

"You have my deepest sympathies, Mrs. Tracy," Penelope said, putting a soft hand on Emily's arm. "I could not imagine having to sort through the remains of Foxleyheath after such an event."

"Thank you, Penelope," Emily replied. "Most of my keepsakes are on the island, but there are still some things I left to furnish the house. I don't hold out much hope they're salvageable, but we won't know until we get there."

"I hope you will find more than you expect to find," Penelope said. She began to rise, and Parker pulled her chair back for her. "And on that thought, I will take my leave. You will all need a good night's rest to fortify yourselves for the task tomorrow."

"Thank you, Lady Penelope, for coming," Emily replied, smiling a little. "I'm very glad you're here for Jeff and Dianne."

"So am I," Penny responded, giving Emily's hand a squeeze. "I am also happy to make the acquaintance of our newest agents. Dr. Carmichael is an excellent physician and very personable."

I am scheduled to meet his wife, and look in on Kyrano, Lisa, and the children in the morning." She smoothed her skirt. "Good night, Mrs. Tracy. Good night, John, Virgil."

"You haven't seen the kids yet?" John asked as he walked her to the door, opening it. Parker wheeled the room service cart out to the corridor.

Penny shook her head. "No, though I have heard they are very anxious to see their mother."

"Thanks. I may give them a call before we leave in the morning. Touch base with them, especially Tyler."

"An excellent idea."

"Good night, Lady Penelope," John said, giving her a small smile. "See you again soon."

"Good night, John."

The door closed behind her and Parker, and John sighed. He returned to the sitting room to find Emily waiting. "Good night, John," she said, reaching up to give him a kiss. "We've got an early start tomorrow."

"I know, Grandma," he replied as he returned the kiss.

"Get some sleep, then. You, too, Virgil." Virgil came over for his own good night kiss. "Don't spend half the night talking."

"We'll sleep, Grandma, I promise," Virgil told her. She nodded, and headed for her bedroom.

John and Virgil glanced at each other as the door closed behind her. Virgil stretched, making a loud groan as he did so. "I'm heading for bed," he said.

"I'll be there soon," John promised. "Just want to check the news."

"Want to see those crowds around the hospital?"

"Yeah." He sat down on the sofa and turned on the televid, beginning to surf the channels.

Virgil sat down beside him. "Then we can watch together."

Post by Tikatu on 10/29/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 22:56:53 GMT

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Monday, August 6, 2068, 9:30 a.m., local time, London, England (9:30 p.m., same day, at Tracy Island; 1:30 a.m., same day, Los Angeles)

Jacques sipped his morning tea as he looked over the reports he'd gotten from the mole in Gazelle Automations, Inc. He shook his head. "This is worthless to us. The man hasn't had a military contract in three years and there don't seem to be any on the horizon either. Why would we need automatic bartenders?"

There was a knock on the door, then, without leave, Desdemona breezed in. "Good morning, Jacques," she said cheerily.

Jacques raised an eyebrow and put down the data pad. "You are in a good mood, sister dear. Did somebody die?"

Dez rolled her eyes, and took her favorite chair. "No, but I had a wonderful morning, and I came up with a smashing idea."

"Smashing?" Jacques took another sip of his tea, then sat back with a sigh. "I hope it doesn't mean breaking any more of Giles's bones. We do need him, you know."

"No, Jacques, darling," she said with a smug smile. "I just thought of a new target, one that will prove a challenge for us."

"Oh, and who would that be?"

"International Rescue."

Jacques steepled his fingers, and regarded his sister with a questioning expression. "International Rescue. Hm, why them precisely?"

"Well, they do have some of the most advanced technology available," Desdemona said. She got up to fetch a cup of tea for herself. "And with this accident, they're very likely vulnerable to a spot of pilfering."

Jacques shook his head slowly. "Dez, Dez, Dez. How do we get in? We have no idea who they are or where they are located, never mind knowing anyone who could possibly get inside to get technology specs for us."

"There are people," Desdemona said, returning to her chair. "Those who have been rescued by them! They must have learned things about the group and may even have kept in contact with them after the fact."

"All right, Dez. Name one."

Desdemona's smile grew wider. "Ned Cook, reporter for NTBS. He's going to air his retrospective today, ahead of schedule, from Los Angeles. I even hear he's going to interview their doctor there at hospital."

"Hm." Jacques rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "I would like to see that." He sat back up. "All right, Dez. We'll contact him later today, after his show, see what he can do for us." A pause, then he

asked, "What luck are you and Giles having with that Penelon formula?"

Dez sighed. "Not much and all of it bad." Her face took on a thoughtful expression. "You know, it's odd that we haven't heard anything about that new Penelon-Kevlar blend that Giles's young friend developed. According to Fatma, a good deal of the fabric was ordered and shipped elsewhere. Nothing with red dye was ordered since it hadn't turned out colorfast, but the rumors are that Tracy found another manufacturer somewhere else who was able to make the red dyes stick." She sipped her tea, leaving marks from her red lipstick on the fine china. "You should think that such a revolutionary discovery would be widely publicized, and that a huge buzz would be created around it. But there's been nothing. It's as if Tracy doesn't want anyone to know of its existence."

"Are you sure that it's Tracy who ordered its development?"

Dez nodded. "Yes, I am. Giles may be a fool, but he does have thorough contacts. Besides, both Fatma and our grubby little window cleaning friend have identified Ms. Kyrano's chaperone. She is Emily Tracy, mother to the famous Jefferson."

"He sent his mother along?" Jacques laughed aloud, throwing his head back. "What possessed the man to do that?!"

"To hear Giles tell it, she was a very good chaperone. Very good at keeping him from his mark."

Jacques's laughter wound down, and he wiped an eye. "It sounds like you and Fatma are on good terms."

"I wouldn't say that, Jacques," Dez replied as she carefully put cup and saucer on the table next to her. "But I can be very... persuasive when I want to be."

"Ah, yes." Jacques's demeanor turned serious again. "I know your methods. They can be very painful."

"But they are very effective," Dez countered sweetly. She rose from her chair, smoothing her skirt as she did so. "Well, this has been fun, but I have work to do. I need to build another virus to try and infiltrate Tracy's stronghold, and come up with something that will block any attacks from that damned Matumbo woman."

"I hope you can," Jacques said, picking up his data pad again. "She seems to be a formidable opponent. If you see Giles, tell him I want to see him... this morning, not this afternoon."

"You should tell him yourself. I doubt I'll see his puffy little face for another week," Dez said airily as she stopped at the door. "Luncheon?"

"If my schedule permits."

Dez nodded, a slight, smug smile on her lips, then left the room. Jacques paid no attention to her leaving. He was already engrossed in his data pad once more.

Post by Tikatu on 10/30/2006

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Monday, August 6, 10:00 a.m., L.A. (5 a.m., August 7, Tracy Island; noon, same day, Kansas)

"So, will we be ready?"

Ned Cook glanced over at Joe, who sat down beside him at the table in the RV. "I think so. The roadies are putting up the scaffolding for the stage, and the electricians have started their work. People are getting interested, watching what's going on."

"You think you'll be able to get in and see the IR doctor?"

Ned sighed. "I doubt it, but we've got her orthopedist to interview this morning, and I'm still waiting on that footage from MWAN's Gavin Belle. He struck a hard bargain, but at least I don't have to send our people out there."

"Will he do it live?" Joe picked up one of Ned's data pads and started scrolling down the long list.

Ned shook his head. "It's the last spot, and it'll be dark out there by the time we get to it. He's going to record it and get it to me by one for editing." He put down his data pad and rubbed his temples. "You sure you don't mind doing the man on the street stuff?"

"Nah. I don't mind. I'd rather be out there than stuck up here."

"I'd rather be back in New York, to tell the truth, but this is far too big an opportunity to pass up." Ned picked up another data pad and looked through the notes he had there. "It's custom made to frame my retrospective, and if we have to make next year's a little longer, so be it. A chance like this happens once in a blue moon, and I have to take advantage of it." He glanced at his watch. "That doctor will be along soon. I'd better get make up in here."

"Right." Joe rose. "Let me know what you need help on. I can edit that ISS piece for you if you want."

"Thanks, Joe, that'd be a help. You know what I'm looking for."

"I'd better," Joe said with a chuckle. "We've been working together long enough."

Xxxx

Dr. J. Edward Willis was feeling on top of the world. He would have whistled if he knew how as he strode to the public relations director's office. He was on his way to have his interview with Ned Cook approved, and didn't see any reason why it wouldn't be.

It's not like I'd violate International Rescue's security or anything, he reasoned. I never really saw her face, after all. Not with the anesthesia mask and hair cover. And I won't talk about her injury, either; that would be unprofessional. I mean, it's not like I've even been allowed to follow up either; Carmichael's been very picky about who is let up there. He smiled a little. Still, having IR's CMO

for a patient is going to get my career restarted, and so will this interview.

He breezed into Geraldo Montoya's office and told the secretary who he was. "Mr. Montoya's expecting you, Dr. Willis," she said pleasantly, as she activated the vidphone. "Mr. Montoya, Dr. Willis is here."

"I'll be right there."

Willis gave her a smile as Gerry Montoya came out of his office. "Come with me, Dr. Willis," the public relations man said, "We're meeting in the conference room down the hall."

"All right." Willis sounded puzzled, but was amenable. The two men strode down the hall to a small conference room.

"Good morning, gentlemen." Sitting at the head of the table was Dr. Theresa Mercado-Tucker, Mercy General's head administrator.

"Good morning, Dr. Tucker," Willis said smiling. She nodded at him, then at Montoya as he greeted her.

"Well, hello, Andy," Willis said as he saw Andrew Carmichael already seated in one of the comfortable chairs around the table. "Are you here for the same reason I am?"

"I don't think so, Jonah," Drew said, his voice holding just a hint of his original drawl.

"No, he's not," Dr. Tucker said crisply. "Sit down, Dr. Willis, please. We're just waiting for one more person."

Dr. Willis sat down, putting one ankle on the opposite knee. "So, Gerry, did you get the request for an interview?"

"Yes, I did." Gerry picked up a data pad, one of several on the table.

"I'm afraid we're going to have to say 'no' to this, Dr. Willis," Dr. Tucker said firmly.

Willis frowned. "Why? I won't be breaching International Rescue's security or doctor/patient confidentiality."

"We'll get to the reasons in just a moment," was her reply. The conference room door opened again to admit the head of the legal department, Eugene Koberle, who carried a briefcase. "Hello, Gene. Come and sit down."

"Thank you, Dr. Tucker." Koberle shook hands with her, and with each of the men, then sat down. Willis frowned a little, but Drew focused his attention on Dr. Tucker.

"Well, now that we're all here, we can get to the reasons behind our refusal to allow you the interview," she said. "Gene?"



Koberle turned to Willis. "Dr. Willis, I'm here to tell you officially that an investigation has been opened into your handling of the injuries suffered by International Rescue's CMO."

"What?!" Willis cried, incredulous. "What kind of farce is this?"

"No farce, Jonah," Drew said quietly. "Gene, please show him the evidence."

Koberle opened his briefcase, and pulled out two sealed plastic bags, each with a vial in it. There were papers tucked into each bag. He handed one to Willis. "Do you recognize this, Dr. Willis?"

Willis looked it over carefully. "Yes, I believe so. These are the bits of metal I pulled from the patient's leg."

"Do you recognize these?" Gene handed over the other bottle.

Willis shook his head. "They look the same, but..."

"But you didn't pull them from the patient's leg, Jonah. Dr. Singh did, after you left," Drew explained. "There are affidavits written and signed by those in the surgical suite. And this isn't the first time something like this has happened. Jonah, you're in it deep this time."

"So, I missed a few pieces. I would have found them eventually. Anyone could make a mistake like that," Willis said, handing the bags back to Koberle.

"Not on a patient like this, Dr. Willis. You've seen the crowds out there, haven't you? How do you think they'd react if they knew you'd made such a major 'mistake'?" Dr. Tucker said, looking Willis in the eye. She shook her head. "No, Dr. Willis. You will not be giving any interviews."

Koberle spoke up. "We will be conducting our investigation discreetly, of course, for the sake of the hospital."

"But until that investigation is complete," Dr. Tucker said firmly. "Your practicing privileges here are suspended. We will decide later whether or not to refer this to the state authorities."

"This... this... this is ridiculous! I'm a physician... a surgeon in good standing here! You can't do this to me!" Willis shouted. He stood, his face red with anger. "That interview... Ned Cook... that's national exposure. International! I need... I deserve to have that!"

"Jonah." Drew's sharp voice cut across Willis's bluster. "That's enough."

The angry man stopped, and Dr. Tucker added, "Dr. Willis, you say so much as 'boo' to Ned Cook or any other reporter, and the hospital will cut you loose." She lowered her tone. "It's bad enough that this happened in such a high profile case. Don't make it any harder on yourself than it already is."

Willis dropped back down into his seat. He rubbed the bridge of his nose and shook his head. "Doesn't look like I have much choice, does it?"

"No, Jonah," Andrew said quietly. "I'm afraid you don't."

"You can call Mr. Cook from my office, so you can give him your regrets," Gerry said, as he rose to his feet.

xxxx

"Damn!" Ned slammed his satellite phone closed.

"What?" Joe asked, directing his attention away from the piece he was editing.

"Dr. Willis has declined to be interviewed." Ned shook his head. "The hospital has reminded him that it's against their policy in high profile cases. Now what am I going to use to fill that time?"

"I'll just do some more 'man on the street' stuff," Joe said. "And there's always a montage to tie things together at the end. Get Sylvia on it; she's good at that kind of stuff."

Ned took in a deep breath and let it out, slowly. "You're right. We can fill it in. I just wish I could talk to either of the doctors who worked on her."

"Hey, Belle may get lucky and talk to one of the EMS workers or something. Just chill, Ned. This will pull together. You'll see."

"All right." He moved over to where Joe had been working on the ISS rescue. "Show me what you've got."

Post by Tikatu on 10/30/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:00:29 GMT

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Monday, August 6, 1:45 PM,Kansas (11:45 AM same day, L.A.; Tuesday, August 7, 6:45 AM, Tracy Island)

Marion pulled her van up next to the foundation of the Tracy home. Nothing remained above the ground. Debris covered part of the cellar. Other parts of the house were spread out over the surrounding fields. Virgil could see the tractor, bright yellow, upside down about a quarter mile away.

The family climbed out of the car and walked over to one of the open areas in the cellar. Virgil shined a flashlight down the steps. They were clear. Virgil and John went down them. Grandma and Marion followed. Halfway down, Grandma suddenly sat down, as if her legs had suddenly given out.

"Grandma, are you ok?" John turned and went back up the stairs toward her.

"No, I'm not ok. But I'll recover." She smiled, a little shakily. 'I'd lived in this house for 60 years. It's a shock to find something you've always thought of as so solid just," she shivered, "tossed away like this."

"Hey. The storm cellar is still intact. So if anyone had been here, they would have been ok." Virgil shut the door to the side room. "In fact, most of the basement looks untouched."

"When your grandfather's great-grandparents built this place they couldn't afford to build the house at first. So they built the basement and lived in it for two years before building the house. It was built to last." Grandma smiled, a bit sadly. "They had seven kids at the time. If the basement could stand that I suspect the tornado was easy."

"I see you did your canning again last year, Marion. There are plenty of empty jars to do this year's canning." John was looking at shelves of canning jars, still standing as if nothing had happened.

"Hey Grandma," Virgil called. "Here's a bunch of boxes, including your Christmas decorations. And it looks like some boxes of our old stuff."

John wandered over and opened a box at random. "Here are Alan's old cowboy boots. Remember them? And our old rocking horse," he added, noticing it in the corner.

"All the stuff we packed away when we went off to college," Virgil added, opening another box. "Here's Scott's favorite teddy bear. Should we bring it home for him?"

"I think we can safely leave everything in the basement here for right now. We can have everything that's ours shipped latter. Marion," Grandma turned to her old friend, "how hard would it be to hire some of the high school kids to sort through these things and arrange to ship our things to us? And move anything of yours to wherever or put it in storage?"

"I suspect the high school kids will be busy on the farms. But I'm sure I can find someone."

"How long do you want to stay with your grandson in Wichita?" Virgil asked as her as he helped his grandmother up. Coming out of the basement, it was hard to imagine there had ever been a house here.

"We get along all right. I suspect there will be a housing shortage for a while. Are you going to rebuild?"

"I don't know. It depends on what happens to the farm. I don't know if we will want to come back as often, with the original house gone." Virgil started walking through the wreckage looking for anything recognizable. He picked up a deep drawer, lined in tin with a tin sliding top. "Here's your old breadbox drawer. But I don't see the rest of the kitchen cabinet."

"Over here," called John. The old fashioned kitchen cabinet lay smashed into pieces, only recognizable by its paint.

"Oh dear. That was my great-grandmother's. She got it during the Great Depression." Grandma

started to walk toward John, then looked at the footing and decided against it.

"I've found two pairs of underwear and one sock. I don't think there is much point in looking for anything else." Marion held up the sock. "I didn't have anything valuable to lose."

"No pictures or anything?" John looked surprised.

"The important ones, I gave copies to other people. I can have them make me a copy. Most of my keepsakes were still in storage after selling my house." Marion smiled at them all. "I needed to stay in the area after Harold died, but now I think this is God's way of telling me it's time to move on. I don't think I could handle another Kansas winter anyway. Let's take a quick look at the barn, and then head back. I need to check on the cat and kittens."

"Cat? Kittens? When did you get a cat?" Emily looked surprised.

"I didn't. Some fool city people still dump their animals out here, figuring we'd feed them cream, I suppose. Most don't survive. A couple did and momma just had kittens a few weeks ago. She's semi-feral, will let me close but won't let me touch her. There are enough mice around for her to hunt so she does ok. I want to live trap her and get her fixed; I've taken several in before, but she's too clever for that." The group walked toward the barn, Virgil still holding the drawer.

The barn was a different sort of mess. One side had been ripped off but the inside was relatively undamaged. Some of the large machinery had been thrown around and tools were scattered everywhere, but there wasn't the large scale destruction like the house. The office and workshop on the other side of the building didn't look like anything had been disturbed at all.

John walked over to the office. "Everything looks ok here. Is that Grandpa's old leather coat and hat?" He pointed to the wall where a coat and hat were hanging from a hook.

Grandma smiled. "I used to use them whenever I needed to come out here to check on anything. There didn't seem to be any reason to pack them."

"The people working your farm use this as a break area," Marion said, pointing at the coffee maker and refrigerator. "They used the workshop too, for repairs. I'd bring them out lunch and I'd use the jacket in the spring and fall when it got chilly."

"Grandpa would like that. He liked to have things used for what they were meant for." John went over and slipped the jacket on. "Way too big for me."

Virgil put down the drawer, as if he suddenly remembered he was carrying it. "Let me try." John handed him the coat, which fit perfectly.

John grabbed the hat from its hook and put it on Virgil's head. "Perfect. Now all we have to do is figure out why you would need a leather jacket on a tropical island."

"Better than leaving it to rot here," Grandma said as she went to the next door.

As soon as she opened it, they all heard the cries. Marion darted in ahead of them and followed

the noise to the workbench. She looked underneath and saw momma cat and her kittens. Momma hissed at her and tried to stand up.

"Hey, momma, what's wrong?" Marion reached out for her. The cat struck with lightning fast claws. Momma tried to stand up, lurched forward, and fell down again.

"It looks like she's been injured." Emily looked under the workbench. "If she's been hurt, her milk would dry up. The kittens are probably hungry." She straightened up. "John, go see if there is any milk or meat in the fridge."

"It wouldn't be any good by now. One of the workers is diabetic. He keeps some canned tuna salad in the cupboard for emergencies. Bring that and a bowl of water." Marion sucked on her hand. Blood was already coming from the scratches.

John quickly returned with the tuna salad and a coffee cup filled with water. He knelt down and pushed both of them toward the cat, who hissed at him, but started eating immediately. She only ate a little, but she drank a lot of water. She collapsed as if eating had been too much for her.

"We need to get her to a veterinarian." Emily looked at Marion. "Who do you use?"

"Dr Dodobara. I'll call and set up an emergency appointment." Marion pulled out her cell phone and dialed.

"John, see if you can find some towels or something. Put them in the bottom of that drawer." Grandma's orders would have done a drill sergeant proud. She looked around and spotted a pair of welding gloves. "Virgil, put these on and grab her."

Virgil looked with amusement at the gloves. "Do you really think I need these? And why me?"

"Yes, you will need them and you because you're wearing a leather jacket, which you will also need."

Virgil shrugged and knelt down by the workbench. He grabbed for the mother cat just as John came back with the drawer and a few towels.

"Come here, momma, I'm not going to hurt... ow!! Listen, you stupid cat, stop fighting. I'm not going to hurt you! Stop it!" The unequal struggle continued until Virgil finally brought the cat out. She was still trying to scratch everything in sight when he put her into the drawer and closed the lid. "Next time, remind me to wear Kevlar."

"Ooh, did the little kitty hurt you?" John was grinning.

"Yes, she did. She got me right through the jacket. Just for that, you can get the kittens."

John knelt down and grabbed for one of the kittens. "See, you should just let the... Ouch! These little suckers have sharp claws! Hey! Stop that! Let go!" He handed the first kitten up to Virgil and sucked on his hand where the kitten had bitten him.

Virgil slid open the top of the drawer and dropped the kitten in. Momma still hissed at him but immediately started licking the kitten.

John handed him the second kitten, a little black and white. It wiggled out of his hand. Grandma grabbed it and calmed it down. "Yes, oh mighty hunter. I know what a brave boy you are. Let's put you in with momma." She handed the kitten to Virgil who had just dropped the third kitten in. John handed him the last kitten and stood up.

"Ok, Grandma that's all of them. Now what?"

"Virgil, please double check. See if any of the kittens crawled off. Now we take them to Marion's vet. Does he have time for us?"

"No, he doesn't. He's mostly a farm animal vet, not small animals. And he's overwhelmed with calls right now. He gave me the number of a friend in Wichita who is expecting us."

Virgil pulled a box out from under the workbench and looked underneath one more time. "No more kittens, Grandma."

"Is there anything else we need to do here?" John looked around at the farm. Some of the trees were still standing, but it didn't seem like home anymore.

"No. I said goodbye a long time ago. There is nothing left for me here." Emily headed straight for the van. She sat in the rear seat and John put the drawer with the cats in it between them.

Post by susanmartha on 10/30/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:01:28 GMT

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Monday, August 6; 2:30 PM; Wichita Memorial Hospital (9:30 AM 8-7 on TI; 12:30 PM in LA)

Michael Hart wheeled himself down the corridor of the children's section of the hospital. He was recovering swiftly from the injuries he'd suffered, although his left leg was in a cast and sticking straight out in front of him, and he had a bandage on his head. Plus, part of his head had been shaved. But he wasn't thinking of that. He was looking for Peter Valerian's room.

He almost passed it, but the door was open, and when he glanced in, he saw the boy's mother. She was sitting next to the bed, holding her son's hand and talking to him softly, but Peter was just staring at the ceiling, and not responding.

Michael backed up slightly, and turned to go in. As soon as he was close enough to the door frame, he knocked on it. Mrs. Valerian looked up and her face brightened when she saw who was in the doorway. She motioned for him to come in. She released Peter's hand and stood up, moving forward to greet her son's visitor.

"How is he?" Michael said quietly.

"His injuries are healing, but he isn't eating. They've got him on IVs to give him nourishment, but he won't respond to anything. It's like he's given up and wants to... to..." She couldn't go on, and tears streamed down her face.

He reached out and took her hand, squeezing it comfortingly. "We can't have that, now, can we? I'd like to talk to him, if that's okay."

She nodded and he moved the wheelchair to the left side of the bed. "Hey there, Peter. I've been hearing things about you that I can't believe are right. They say you won't eat. Now, I know that hospital food isn't the best tasting thing in the world, but it is nutritious, and will help you get better faster. Look at me; I've been eating it, and I'm still here, and getting well faster than the doctors said I would."

Peter still stared at the ceiling, so Michael tried a different tack. "Besides, how do you think it would make the people of International Rescue feel, to know that someone they saved didn't want to get well?"

There was a hint of a reaction, and he went on. "Look at us; we've got a lot in common here. We were both hurt, we were both saved by International Rescue, and we're both in the hospital. Now, I think we could have a little competition of our own here. Whoever gets out of this place first, the other one has to buy him a hamburger, soda and fries. What do you say?"

He waited for a long minute, the Peter turned his head and looked at him. He smiled slightly, and nodded. Michael let out a breath he didn't know he'd been holding, and grinned. He took Peter's hand and shook it. "There. We've just made a gentleman's transaction, and we shook on it. To me, that's as good as a written contract, a promise, and I'm holding you to it. So you start eating and see how fast you can get out of the hospital, okay?"

Peter's smile got bigger and he nodded again, then turned to look at the tray of food lying on the table near his bed, then at his mother.

"Okay, honey. I'll feed you in a minute. I want to speak to Mr. Hart first."

"I gotta go, Peter, before the nurses on my floor hunt me down. I'll see you again, soon. Right?"

Peter grinned and Michael turned his wheelchair carefully around. Mrs. Valerian pushed him out into the hall and began to thank him.

"No need for that," he interrupted. "Peter's a great kid; I thought that when I first saw him. He just needs a little motivation."

"Which you gave him, Mr. Hart."

"Michael, please. Mr. Hart is my father."

She smiled. "Michael. And I'm Carol. Thank you for being his motivator." She bent down and



kissed his cheek.

He grinned. "Aw, shucks, ma'am. 'Tweren't nothin'."

She laughed. "Yes it was." Then she grew sober. "I don't know if you heard, but the Thunderbird vehicle that brought us here encountered a tornado on the way back. They came out badly."

"No, I hadn't heard. Is the medical team okay?"

"They said the two nurses had minor injuries, but the doctor was badly hurt. I recently heard that she is expected to recover, though."

"I'm sorry to hear that. I hope this doesn't prevent them from continuing to go to where they are needed when they are called."

"I very much doubt they would stop. From the articles I've gotten for Peter, there have been some injuries, and they're still going." She glanced past him, and her smile returned. "But I see someone heading this way, and giving you the evil eye. I think you've been found out."

"Mr. Hart!" the nurse exclaimed. "You are not going to get better if you keep gallivanting all over the hospital against doctor's orders. If this continues, we're going to have to sedate you or tie you down. Now, are you going to behave or not?" She reached the couple and took the handles of the wheelchair, turning him around. "Now say goodbye and we're going back to your room."

"Goodbye," he said obediently, with a wink and a grin.

"Goodbye, Michael."

As the nurse pushed him toward the elevators, Carol heard him say, "Now, nurse, we need to negotiate this. If I promise to be good the rest of the time, you need to allow me to come down here and..." The closing of the elevator doors prevented her from hearing the rest of his words.

She smiled and went inside to feed her son.

Post by Hobbeth on 10/30/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:02:40 GMT

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Monday, August 6, 7:30 PM Kansas (5:30 PM same day, L.A.; Tuesday, August 7, 12:30 PM, Tracy Island)

Virgil collapsed onto the couch. Why am I so tired today? It's not like I did any physical work. I guess seeing the old house destroyed affected me more than I thought. He reached for the phone on the coffee table.

Scott was sitting at his father's desk. He picked up the phone on the first ring. "Virgil. What's up?"

"You sound surprised to hear from me."

"I was hoping it was Dad with a report on Mom. They will probably be moving her tomorrow. How did it go at the farm?"

"The house is gone. There wasn't anything left to salvage in the upper part. The basement was untouched. I found your old aviator teddy in one of the boxes. Should I bring it home?"

"You may as well. I could use all the help I can get to keep my spirits up."

"We did find one good thing. There was a momma cat with four kittens in the barn. She'd been hurt, so we took her and her kittens with us. They're at the vet's now; he wanted to keep them overnight."

"What are you going to do with them tomorrow?"

Virgil took a deep breath. "Grandma wants to bring them home with us."

"She never let us have indoor pets when we were kids!"

"She says she has to take something good from the farm. You argue with her."

"No, I'll leave that to Dad."

"Care to bet who wins?"

"No contest. Dad doesn't stand a chance." The two brothers grinned at each other over the vidphone.

"So, where are you staying? And where are Grandma and John?"

"We're in the Regis. So is Heather Kennedy. We met her in the elevator. Grandma and John are in the dining room with her and one of the families we rescued. Their house was totaled."

"That's a lot to have happen in one day." Scott looked glum.

"Davy doesn't think so. Heather was telling us about him before we ran into the family waiting for a table. He's showing everyone his IR identification bracelet. The one we handed out to keep the wheelchairs and other equipment straight. He's telling everyone he's going to be a Thunderbird when he grows up." Virgil grinned. "We should run it by Dad. He sure understands 'never give up'. Unfortunately, his parents might recognize me, so I'm getting room service."

"What suite?"

"Room 1502. A room with two beds and an adjoining sitting room. They were full: we were lucky to get this. Grandma gets one bed, John and I get to share the other." Virgil yawned. "As badly as he

snores I probably won't get much sleep tonight."

"You might want to stay up. Ned Cook has moved his yearly IR retrospective to tonight. He's broadcasting from outside Mercy Hospital. He says he's hoping to get an interview with IR's doctor."

Virgil snorted. "Fat chance."

"He also had an interview scheduled with one of the surgeons who worked on her. But that has been firmly squashed."

"Drew wanted to give an interview?"

"They had two surgeons in there working. Actually, there were three. One of them was trying for a career boost. He's not getting it. I guess the hospital administration came down pretty hard on him. Dad said the head of security filled him in about the interview. Dad was about ready to blow up, but Mom calmed him down. She told him, in front of the security lady, that this is why she wanted to come to Mercy General. She knew Drew would handle any problems that came up."

There was a knock on the door and a call of, "Room service."

"Just a sec!" Virgil replied. "There's dinner. Will we be able to see Mom tomorrow?"

"I hope so. Call Dad when you're ready to leave. See you."

"Bye." Virgil hung the phone up and went to get the door and his dinner.

"Nuts!" Scott said as the call ended. "I forgot to ask Virge if he knew why Heather was at the hotel!"

Post by susanmartha on 11/1/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:04:14 GMT

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Monday, August 6, 6 PM, L.A. (7 PM same day, Kansas; 1 PM, Tuesday August 7, Tracy Island)

"There's something on televid that we should watch this evening." Jeff turned on the televid in Dianne's room.

"Oh?" Dianne gave him a puzzled look. She still wore the oxygen cannula, and there were monitors keeping track of her blood oxygen levels. She was still breathing shallowly, to take a deep breath hurt too much. An IV still pumped fluids into her as eating was also difficult. It was also set up for pain relievers and for antibiotics to stave off infection. One leg was propped up on a pillow, uncovered except by the wide bandage that encircled the calf. The hospital gown covered the bruising along her shoulders and abdomen. And she wore a soft cervical collar, a

result of the whiplash she had sustained.

"Yes. It seems that Ned Cook is doing his IR retrospective early this year, and has set up his circus tent outside the hospital." Jeff surfed until he found the appropriate station, then settled down in a chair next to her, lowering the bed rail so he could take her hand. The door was locked; anyone who wanted entrance would have to knock at the very least.

She smiled slightly and squeezed his hand gently. "Hm. Circus tent. You're not usually so cynical."

"It's not usually like a circus." He ran a hand over his face, and grimaced as his hand encountered the beard. I cannot wait until I can get rid of this! I will never, ever grow one of these things!

"I don't understand," she said, looking puzzled again.

"You'll see." Jeff lowered the lights with a remote. "I asked Drew to have Maggie to record this for us, just in case the team had to go out. Then they'd be able to see it all."

"Okay," Dianne said softly. She raised the head of the bed a touch more so she could better see the machine. The show's trademark music started, the show began, and her eyes opened wide in amazement. "Oh, my word." Turning to her husband, she said, "Jeff, just look. All those people."

He glanced back at her. "I know, love. I know."

Ned Cook was sitting in a director's chair, under the light shade of his outdoor studio. Behind him, the California sun shone brightly on with a familiar looking building. "This is Ned Cook," he said, "reporting from Mercy General Hospital in Los Angeles, and welcome to International Rescue -- The Year's Amazing Rescues." He gestured to his backdrop. "I'm sure many of you are wondering why I've chosen to do this show here instead of in the studio as I usually do. And why I've chosen to do it now, instead of nearer to the year's end. It's because of the extraordinary events of the past few days. We'll recap those events as we go along, but first, let's look back to the early portion of this year and the scenarios that International Rescue found itself involved in."

"In mid-January, International Rescue was called out to aid a Chinese tourist sub that got caught in the kelp fields off the coast of Japan. Here's Hsin Yu with a report on that rescue."

The picture segued into a pre-recorded portion. A Chinese man, wearing a light jacket and with his dark hair ruffling in the breeze, stood on a pier, next to a long submarine with large portholes studded in the sides. The man's name appeared in the lower right corner with a blue line running from it to the opposite side. When the man's name disappeared, he began to speak.

"The vessel beside me is the Manchuria, one of the tourist submarines that visit the scenic undersea vistas off the coast of China, moving north in international waters to view the myriad creatures of the deep. But on Friday, January 13, 2068, the tourists on the Manchuria got more excitement than they bargained for."

The view switched to a sharp-looking young man in a sea captain's uniform. He began speaking in Mandarin, with an English-speaking voice overlying his original words.

"We were following the coast of China, when a malfunction in our guidance computers caused us to veer off course, to the northeast. We tried to reboot the computers, but that was futile. The next thing we knew, we were in the kelp fields. I put the boat on manual control, but before we could get out of the fields, we were caught fast. First the kelp fouled the aft turbines, then it wrapped around the conning tower. We couldn't go forward, and we couldn't go back. We could not go up, and we began to sink. There were injuries, so we called International Rescue."

The scene changed to a middle-aged couple. The woman twisted her hands nervously in her lap, while the man sat ramrod straight beside her. They, too, spoke in Mandarin, and their words were translated into English. The woman spoke first.

"I remember it was getting dark outside. The kelp was very dense and cut off the sunlight. The sub lurched to one side and I fell down, injuring my ankle. My husband was thrown across the room, and hit his head. It knocked him out for a long time. Everyone was very tense, and the air began to feel hot and stifling. Suddenly, I saw these two young men in wet suits outside the port hole. One of them gave a wave, and we all cheered. They began to cut away the kelp. In the meanwhile, there was another young man who came aboard. He was very cheerful and encouraging. He put my husband on a backboard, and with the crew's help, transferred him to a small submarine."

The man now took up the tale. "I don't remember hitting my head or anything of my rescue. I woke up in the hospital. But my wife had been treated and the doctors and nurses said that I had been well treated while in International Rescue's care."

The scene shifted again, and now a female crew member spoke, her words translated. "I had gone down to the engine room to see what I could do to help with the ventilation system. A grating fell down and gashed my leg. The young man with the submarine took me to the little hospital, where I was treated. He smiled, and spoke to me kindly, though I do not know much English. While I was in the little hospital, one of the men who had been cutting the Manchuria free was brought in. He had a bad gash in his arm. I was very impressed that he would risk himself for us."

The captain came back on. "Once the kelp was cleared, the large green aircraft pulled the Manchuria free with its grabs. The small sub towed us to one of our retrieval vessels, which had sailed out to meet us. The green aircraft, number two, flew the injured to our home port, where they were taken to the hospital." He paused, and sighed. "If it were not for International Rescue, we may have perished before help could arrive. I wish to thank International Rescue for their assistance. They are truly miracle workers."

Hsin Yu returned. "Ten people were injured in the incident, and two others died, one of a heart attack, and one from an electrical surge. The Manchuria is still undergoing repairs and refitting not only to make it seaworthy again, but also to upgrade its systems so this doesn't happen again. Without the help of International Rescue, the death toll would have undoubtedly been higher."

Ned appeared back on the screen. "Thanks, Hsin. More on International Rescue's year in review after this message." Just before the commercial came on, there was a shot of people milling around outside the hospital. The camera zoomed in on one elderly Hispanic lady who had her rosary in her hands, and appeared to be praying. Then the commercial came on.

"How long have they been there?" Dianne asked.

"As soon as the word got out that you and the nurses had arrived," Jeff said. "Most of them are here to wish you well, to thank us for what we do."

Dianne looked down and away, closing her eyes, and biting her lower lip. "I... I don't... I don't know what to say or think. All of a sudden, it feels like a weight, doing what we do."

"It's always been a huge responsibility, love," he said, squeezing her hand gently. "We don't often get to see how the rest of the world sees us. That in itself is a heavy burden."

They sat quietly for a while, then Jeff said, "I need a drink of cold water. Can I get you one, too?"

"Yes, please," Dianne replied, nodding slightly.

He rose, and picked up the pitcher from her bedside table. It was full of ice water; the nurses were very good about keeping it full and fresh. As he poured out two cups of water, his eyes kept straying back to the televid, and the events unfolding there.

Post by Tikatue on 11/1/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:04:52 GMT

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Joe finished adjusting the camera onto his shoulder and took a glance around. Spying the tall, auburn haired woman across the room, he smiled. Perfect...

"Rae! Can you give me a hand?" he called out.

She smiled and came over. "Sure, Joe, what's up?"

"Ned wants me to do a few informal interviews. Man on the street kind of stuff. Want to join me?"

"Great! Let's go!"

Together they walked outside and paused. Spying a group of young women standing near the barricades, they headed there first. "Hi there, I'm Rae McCormick, would you mind answering a few questions?"

One, short with bright red hair, giggled. "I'd love to!"

"Great! What's your name?"

"Margy."

"Thanks, Margy." Rae turned to Joe and nodded. "Rae McCormick here, asking the people's

opinion." She turned back to the young woman. "Maggie, what are your thoughts on International Rescue?"

Maggie giggled again. "Well, Rae, I think they are just wonderful. They do such good work. And the guys \*sighs\* just gorgeous. Would like to take them home to meet Mom if you know what I mean..."

One of her friends nodded in agreement. "Not that we've actually seen them... but hey, anybody that has a body like theirs has to be hot, right?"

Joe rolled his eyes. Not exactly what we're looking for, Rae, he thought to himself.

Rae smiled sweetly at the girl. "Thank-you very much. Back to you, Ned."

Post by lillehafrue on 11/1/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:05:50 GMT

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Ned glanced up at the camera and said, "Thanks, Rae. We'll have more from Rae McCormick later in the broadcast." He glanced up at the teleprompter above the stationary camera. "Friday the thirteenth was certainly unlucky for International Rescue. Not only did they respond to a disaster off the coast of Japan, but they also took on the job of bringing a space cruiser in for what ended up as a safe - if imperfect - landing at Cape Canaveral. Here's Sarah Gerrold to tell us the story."

The scene changed to a dark-haired woman standing on what had to have been a breezy, sunny day in Florida. The gantries that marked Cape Canaveral's launch pads were in the background. "The flight of WSA's space cruiser, Yamato, was normal up until re-entry..."

Jacques, coming home in the morning's early hours from an evening of social obligation, heard the televid and walked into the drawing room to find Desdemona watching avidly. "Why are you up at bloody two ack emma?" he asked, checking his watch.

"I wanted to watch this live," was her reply. "Now hush!"

Jacques glanced at the screen and thought for a moment, then sat down in one of the chairs near his sister. He steepled his fingers, and gave his attention to Sarah's interrupted monologue.

"...The crew of two thought they were finished, until IR's little-known Thunderbird Three arrived on the scene."

The screen changed again, to an official press room in the Cape Canaveral complex. Two astronauts, a mustachioed man and a dark-skinned woman sat next to each other, their chairs slightly turned towards each other. The man spoke. The words, "Astronaut Frank Camp" appeared on the screen below him.



"We were really concerned with the situation as it stood. The odds that a system with so many redundancies built in might fail is pretty astronomical, but it can happen. Unfortunately, it seems the odds were against us on that flight. We were glad that International Rescue could make it in time."

The camera zoomed in on the woman, and the name "Astronaut Haley Roberts" appeared on the screen. "Thunderbird Three was so awesome. We could see its silhouette, and it looked sleek, with two or three nacelles. When our running lights splashed on it, the rocket was bright red. A long, beautiful vessel from our perspective."

Sarah, who sat facing the two astronauts, asked, "What exactly did Thunderbird Three do?"

Camp replied, "The pilot, who said we could call him 'A', managed to get the nose of his craft under ours for just the right amount of time, and changed our trajectory to a safer vector. We were able to bring the cruiser in at a better angle."

The camera angle switched to Haley again. "They were waiting for us on the ground, too. They sprayed this foam-like substance all over the cruiser, and kept us from burning up while the emergency crews pulled us out."

The scene went back to Sarah, standing outside. "The story doesn't end here, though. In the days that followed, something odd turned up in the area surrounding the cruiser's landing zone."

They cut back to the press room, where the astronauts had been replaced with a man wearing an Air Force uniform. The name "General Michael Seese" was now displayed on the screen.

Sarah asked, "What was it you noticed after International Rescue left?"

General Seese straightened his shoulders a touch. "Well, we noticed a marked difference in the plant growth around the landing site. At first, we didn't know why things were growing so quickly, but one of our civilian adjuncts, Professor Callie Spencer, posited that it could have had something to do with the flame retardant that International Rescue had sprayed on the cruiser. She felt that the mixture of the cruiser's fuel with that foam had created a new, super fertilizer. Turned out that, somehow, IR heard about our problem, and conducted their own tests. Lord only knows where they got the samples! They sent Professor Spencer the results of their work, and sure enough, it was exactly what she thought it was. They even pinpointed which parts of the chemicals were reacting. Don't know how they got the information to her; they must have an ear at every keyhole or something! I have to admire people like that. They must have some top minds working for them."

"Were you able to neutralize the effects of the fertilizer?" Sarah asked.

General Seese smiled. "We didn't need to. The compound broke down on its own and, according to our testing, has been rendered totally harmless to the environment. We have passed some of the information along to the relevant authorities in Washington, but we don't foresee any latent effects." His smile turned wry. "It did keep our groundskeepers hopping, I'll give you that!"

"A super fertilizer?" Jacques said, shaking his head. "Is that what you're watching this for?"

Desdemona rolled her eyes. "Of course not. But there may be hints to other technologies that we could use."

He shook his head again, and tuned back in to Sarah's wrap up. "...Spencer could not be contacted for an interview, but her findings are now on file with the Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency."

The camera angle shifted, and Sarah ended her piece with, "It's been long known that IR has a covert intelligence network like none other; they are often aware of situations requiring their aid without an official call. Here we have a fine example, not only of the existence of that network, but also of International Rescue's continuing response to issues outside of mere rescue operations."

As the picture shifted back to Ned, Desdemona remarked, "Hm. We could use that network to our advantage."

"If we could design a scenario that would interest IR," Jacques said. He stood up. "Let me know if you find anything promising. I'm off to bed."

Post by Tikatu on 11/1/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:07:01 GMT

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"The next major, recorded event that International Rescue was involved in was an explosion at Saudi oil field refinery. To report on this, we have Ansari al-Majid."

The image of a thin-lipped man with heavy brows appeared on the screen, with his name at the bottom. It disappeared, and he began.

"On February, 19 of this year the oil fields you see behind me were aflame, and a small group of riggers were trapped in a metal and concrete structure deep within them. The oil company worked as quickly as they could to contain the blazes and cap the flaming gushers, but they knew time was against them, and against the trapped riggers. So, the call went out for International Rescue."

The camera changed from the reporter to footage of the smoking aftermath of the disaster. Charred steelwork and smouldering ruins stood on the blackened ground, and lingering smoke turned the air a pale grey.

"In true fashion their operatives arrived with great speed, and immediately set to work. Several of the evacuated riggers stayed to watch the events unfold from a safe distance, including Faisal Madani, who is with me now."

The camera switched again, this time to focus on a wizened-faced man with greying hair.

"Faisal, describe to us what you saw on the day."

The man began to speak animatedly, belaying his appearance. The translation failed to do his enthusiasm justice.

"The size of their cargo carrier... man! I was so surprised when the only things that trundled out were these two... vehicles. That's the only way I could describe them. One had a plow blade on it. Massive thing with a hole in it. The other looked like a more or less standard fire truck, but it sure didn't use water! The fire truck worked on the structures that had caught fire, but that other thing went off into the gushers.

"I thought the guy who was coordinating things was crazy; I really did. He sent the bulldozer thing off into the field without any way to put out the flames; at least, none that I could see at first. Then there was this massive boom! And the first of the gushers was doused! Seems they had some sort of concussion shells that they could shoot off. One by one, they cleared the derricks, and we were able to move in and cap.

"It was amazing watching them work. I've never seen anything like it. They are brave people. But even more than that, the guy -- the co-ordinator -- he must have incredible patience. The head of Disaster Control wouldn't leave him alone. I was too far away to see that much, but I'm sure he was irritated!"

"Thank you, Faisal."

The camera panned back to Ansari.

"Without the bravery of the members of International Rescue, there would surely have been tragedy. But, as a result of their selfless actions, all of the riggers were rescued, with only minor injuries sustained. Back to you, Ned."

\*\*\*

"Irritated doesn't even half cover it," John said, leaning forward on the couch.

He, Virgil, and Emily were watching Ned's program from the latter's hotel suite. Virgil glanced across at his younger brother and chuckled.

"Even now I can see the veins bulging in your temples," he quipped.

"I was very, very close to giving him one right in the kisser," John said.

"John!" His grandmother admonished.

"Sorry, Grandma, but he really was getting on my nerves. 'Why don't you do this? Why're you doing it that way?' Man, what wouldn't I have given for a security guard right then..."

Virgil shook his head and continued to grin.

"There are very few people who can get you that angry," he said.

"True. Anyway, pipe down, the next one's coming on..."

Post by ArtisticRainey on 11/2/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:07:46 GMT  
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"Thanks, Ansari," Ned said.

He grinned as he performed as smoothly turned to face a different camera.

"There you have it, folks. Another example of how these amazing people persevere through every obstacle in order to achieve their goals. In our next installment, we see another example of this. Reporter Mikhail Petrov tells us more."

"On the twenty-fifth of February this year," Mikhal began, speaking English with a strong, but unobtrusive Ukranian accent, "one of the coal mines here at Vyshhorod, Ukraine, collapsed as a result of a methane gas leak. The mixture of coal and gas created a large explosion, trapping around 20 miners underground at a depth of 1000 meters. The rest of the 300-strong mining crew were safely evacuated, but it quickly became apparent that there was no hope for the others -- unless, of course, International Rescue could be prevailed upon.

"In true fashion, they arrived swiftly, bringing with them their fantastic equipment. We caught up with several of those involved in the incident earlier today, to get first-hand accounts of this tremendous rescue effort."

The film cut to footage of an interview with a young couple, the woman holding a toddler. Her name was cited as Anastaysiya and his as Ivan Dmytro, and beneath the voice-over translation, the tremor in her voice was evident.

"It was terrible at the time," she said. "My husband, Ivan, was one of those trapped underground. We thought that there was no hope. But when we heard that International Rescue was coming, I knew that my baby's father would be saved."

"The men who rescued us were incredibly calm and collected," Ivan said. "They dug underground to save us in a huge drill-like machine -- when I was on the surface again, I could not believe the design, and how fast it had dug down. The operator, who called himself Vee, went back and forth in it to get us out from underground. The air was getting thinner, and many of us were hurt, but he kept us all calm, promising to be back quickly. And he was true to his word."

The camera changed, this time showing an older man with greying hair, standing with the aid of crutches. His name was given as Oskar Oriana.

"I was among those who were trapped, and also badly injured. My legs were crushed beneath

fallen beams. The operative Vee was excellent in keeping my moral up, and I was the first one extricated and taken to the surface. All of the people who came to our aid were truly good. You couldn't do such work and have a bad heart."

The camera returned to the image of Mikhal, who wore a slight smile.

"Again, International Rescue prevailed. Long may they continue their work. Mikhal Petrov, reporting from Vyshhorod, Ukraine."

\*\*\*

John glanced over the top of his grandmother's head to check out Virgil's reaction. His face was fairly neutral, although there was a faint blush on his cheeks.

"Well, Vee, how does it feel to know you can't have a bad heart?" He asked.

Before Virgil could retort, Grandma pinned her grandsons with a proud look one after the other, before turning her eyes back to the televiewer.

"All of you boys have good hearts," she said firmly. "You come from six generations of perseverance and doing good on your grandfather's side, and just about the same on mine. There isn't a bad bone in any of your bodies, and that's the truth."

"Thanks, Grandma," the two boys said, giving their grandmother simultaneous kisses on her cheeks.

"Now, that's not to say you aren't cookie-stealing up-to-no-gooders sometimes," she said with a grin.

"You're right there," Virgil said. "You're right there."

Post by ArtisticRainey on 11/2/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:08:33 GMT

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"Sit down, Alex!" Cherie sat back in her chair and adjusted her glasses.

"I still think that Sarah lady looked familiar," Alex groused as he sat back down on the floor of the Carmichael's family room. Cherie rolled her eyes and shook her head.

"How come I don't remember the oil fire rescue?" he asked, still frowning. He glanced back and reached up as his grandmother came to stand behind him, a cold glass of lemonade in her hand. "Thanks, Grammy."

"You're welcome," Lisa said as she handed a drink to Cherie, too. She glanced around. "Where's

Tyler?"

"Dunno," Cherie said. She took a long drink of the lemonade. "Thanks, Grandma."

"You're welcome," Lisa repeated. "I'd better go find Tyler."

She heard Kyrano saying, "I believe that you were celebrating your birthday during the rescue at the oil fields, Alex," as she went off in search of her youngest grandson.

She found him in the guest room he was sharing with Alex, lying on his stomach, reading a book. Lisa smiled, remembering when she found her own daughter doing the same thing in the years after the divorce. Clearing her throat so she wouldn't startle him, she sat down on the edge of the bed. "You might want to come out to the family room. The IR year in review is on tonight."

Tyler shook his head, but didn't look at her. "No thanks."

Lisa frowned. "You usually like this show."

The boy shrugged, not trying to explain himself. Lisa reached over and felt his forehead. "Are you feeling all right?"

"I am a little tired," Tyler said, putting a bookmark in his book and setting it aside. "Maybe I should go to bed early."

Lisa's face creased in a concerned frown as Tyler got up and pulled his pajamas out of his suitcase. He gave her a pointed look. "Can I get dressed?"

"Are you sure you don't want to see the show?" she asked again. "John will probably ask if you watched it."

"I'm sure," Tyler replied, sighing. "I just want to go to bed."

"Okay," Lisa replied, getting up. "I'll tell Alex to be quiet when he comes in."

Tyler nodded, and Lisa kissed him on the forehead. "Goodnight, Ty."

"Goodnight, Grammy."

She left the room, and wondered if she should go back in to press the issue. Instead, she wandered out to the kitchen, where Maggie had almost finished preparing a light supper for the family. "Is everything okay, Lisa?" Maggie asked.

"I don't think so," Lisa replied, sitting at one of the stool's in the kitchen's breakfast bar. "Tyler just went to bed."

"Without supper?" Maggie's frown now mirrored Lisa's. "That's not like him. I mean, he's not been eating a whole lot, but I thought that was due to the time zone change."

"He also doesn't want to see the retrospective, either. And he's usually been very excited to see it before."

Maggie washed her hands and put one on Lisa's shoulder. "Maybe he just needs to see Dianne."

Lisa sighed again. "You're probably right. I can hardly wait for them to make this switch so that the kids and I can see her. Even though Drew's assured me that she's okay and will make a full recovery, I need to see her for myself. And so do the kids."

"You just wait. John's planning on being in L.A. tomorrow, isn't he?"

"Yes. He, Virgil and Emily will be stopping overnight on their way back to the island." Lisa smiled ruefully. "Poor Em is going to be exhausted when they get back home."

"Well, they're to come here for dinner," Maggie said firmly. "Jeff will be able to be himself again and actually get some rest."

"I hope that's all that Tyler needs. To see his mother and father, and to spend a little time with his favorite brother. We don't need a repeat of what happened after the tsunami."

"Grammy?" Alex stuck his head in the door to the kitchen. "Can you come out to the family room? I think the... I think Dad's rescue is next."

"Oh my! I'm coming!"

"Me, too," said Maggie as the two women followed Alex out to the family room.

post by Tikatu on 11/2/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:10:34 GMT

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Brandon sat by his father's bedside, looking at his sleeping form. Holding his father's hand, he thought back to the flight from the island.

Flashback

He stared out the window of the plane, seeing nothing, thoughts in turmoil. He was making an emergency flight home to San Diego and, after a few hours flight time, he felt a hand on his shoulder. Looking up, he saw John standing beside him.

Hey, mind if I join you?" John asked.

"Be my guest." Brandon turned back to continue looking out the window.

Sitting across from Brandon, John laid back and closed his eyes, trying to relax, his features tense



and drawn. Working two rescues and knowing his mom was injured had taken its toll. Opening his eyes, he looked at his friend, noticing the distant look on his face. "Hey, buddy, how are you holding up?" he asked, concern in his voice.

"Okay, I guess," Brandon replied, shaking his head. "I can't believe this is happening." He struggled with his emotions, trying to keep them in check. "Both my parents are in the hospital and there's a strong possibility that Dad may not walk again; all because some damn fool decided to drink and drive!" He pounded the arm of the seat angrily, causing Emily to jump in alarm.

Brandon, calm down," she said. "You're not doing yourself or your family any good when you're angry. They need you to be strong for them." "She's right," John replied. "When I was up at TB5, trying to coordinate the two rescues, it was hard to keep calm. For the sake of the victims, though, I had to."

Brandon didn't say anything. Instead, the others watched as he closed his eyes, taking slow deep breaths. Finally his body relaxed and he opened his eyes.

"What was that all about?" John asked, noticing the change in Brandon's demeanor.

"I remembered a relaxation exercise I learned in tai-chi a couple of years ago," Brandon replied with a smile. "It's come in handy a lot. Maybe I can teach it to you when I get back.

Arriving in Los Angeles, Brandon turned to John and Virgil, shaking their hands. "Thanks for everything, you guys. Take care and I wish Dianne a full recovery."

"We'll pass it along," Virgil replied.

"Don't you worry about us," Emily said. "You just focus on helping your family."

"We'll keep you in our prayers," John added.

Standing up, Brandon worked the kinks out of his shoulders. He'd been at the hospital since 10:30 in the morning, and, looking at the time, he realized it was almost 4:00. Knowing there was nothing more he could do, he got ready to leave. Brushing his hand against his father's cheek he said softly, "I'll be back later, I promise."

Some time later

He had arrived home tired and hungry. Going into the kitchen he looked for something to eat, ending up with a double decker sandwich and a cold beer.

Walking into the living room, he sat down on the couch and reached for the remote. "I wonder if there's anything good on," he said, surfing through the channels and commenting on what he saw. Something caught his attention and he stopped, listening as Ned Cook introduced the next segment of the retrospective. "This should be interesting," he remarked, taking a sip of his beer.

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:11:21 GMT

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Ned smiled at the camera. "As you can see, International Rescue excels in large scale disaster scenarios. But that is not their only claim to fame. They have also been called upon to help in much smaller mishaps. Take February of this year for example. A freak Nor'easter blew up in northern New England, catching billionaire ex-astronaut, Jeff Tracy, and his pilot off guard."

"Their helijet went down near Black Mountain, in Jackson, New Hampshire. The storm was too severe for the local rescue personnel, and pilot Elise Collins managed to get a hold of IR. They flew through the blizzard, somehow managing to get both Ms. Collins and Mr. Tracy to Mount Sinai Hospital in New York."

"I took a news crew to the hospital and attempted to get a statement from Dianne Tracy." Ned shrugged a bit. "I was told, most emphatically, to 'Mind my own business.' While Tracy Industries did a marvelous job of keeping us updated on Mr. Tracy's progress, I tried to get to speak to the man himself. Unfortunately, this was impossible. As was speaking to Ms. Collins."

Ned smiled again. "I now take you to Jackson, New Hampshire with reporter, Tamara Poirier."

"Thank-you, Ned." Tamara, a short blonde woman, gestured behind her. "Here behind me, you see the location where billionaire Jefferson Tracy's helijet went down this past February." The camera panned outwards to show a small clearing, surrounded by red maples and white birch. The ground was covered in tall grass, but there were a few obvious bald spots on the forest floor.

"Nor'easters are not a rare occurrence here in New Hampshire. It's a miracle that Ms. Collins was able to get the helijet down as well as she did. There's no reason why either she or Mr. Tracy should even be alive. The Mount Washington Observatory told us that winds that night were over 80 mph, and wind-chill temperatures were well below zero. Survival rates are less than 10 percent in those conditions."

The camera panned around the small clearing, focusing on the broken tree limbs, now covered with moss and tiny flowers. "It's hard to believe this was the site of a near fatal crash. It's amazing how nature will reassert herself. Of course, having Tracy Industries here as soon as the blizzard was over to help with clean up didn't hurt either."

The camera focused on Tamara again. "It has since been confirmed that Mr. Tracy was here in NH buying a piece of property. We have been unable to gain permission to film the house, but according to public record, he bought an A-Frame ski lodge here in town."

"As you can see by my location, local authorities would have had a tough time getting here. Without International Rescue, Ms. Collins and Mr. Tracy may not have survived. In fact, I'm sure of it. This is Tamara Poirier from WJKS, Jackson, New Hampshire."

"Thanks, Tam." Ned turned back to the camera. "As I've said before, I tried repeatedly to talk to Mr. Tracy himself, but was unable to get an interview. He did however, issue this brief statement: 'Although I remember nothing of my rescue by International Rescue, I am very grateful for their sterling efforts on behalf of me and my pilot'."

"I suppose the best we could say is that International Rescue did it again. And if he could reach them, I'm sure Jeff Tracy would give them a big 'thank-you'."

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"...And if he could reach them, I'm sure Jeff Tracy would give them a big 'thank-you'."

Heather looked up from the book she had picked up at the hotel gift shop, and shook her head at the TV. "What an idiot. The man almost died! And Ned Cook's turning it into a media circus!" She turned off the television in disgust then got up and paced the room. She came to a stop near the window and stared out, not really seeing anything.

Elise Collins...I wonder if that's who I'm replacing? Or does Mr. Tracy have something else in mind for me altogether? I know the job is dangerous, how could it not be! But this wasn't even a rescue, just a freak act of nature. She shuddered, thinking of her own close call. I guess then all I can do is just do what I do best. Fly, and take care of those who need taking care of.

She stood there a moment longer, then sighed and went back to her reading.

Post by Lillehafrue on 11/8/2006 6:48 PM

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:12:52 GMT  
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"We're standing here now with a group of people opposed to International Rescue." Rae turned to speak to the woman standing next to her. "Would you mind telling us why you think IR is the proverbial 'bad guys'?"

One young woman, somewhere in her early twenties, stepped forward. She was dressed in skin-tight leather, with bright pink spiky hair and carrying a "Share the Tech!" sign. "International Rescue's 'secret' technology belongs to the world. If they're so perfect and noble, why not share it then?" She yelled out, causing the group behind her to shout in approval.

"How do you know they're not already doing just that?"

The woman rolled her eyes dramatically. "Oh, please. If they were sharing it, why does the organization even still exist?"

"Well, some would say that would cause friction between the world governments," Rae said easily. "It could start a war of sorts over who had control over it."

"And how do we know one of them doesn't control them already?! If they're so high and mighty, why all the cloak and dagger?" the woman protested. There was a general cheer of consensus from the group behind her.

A blond man wearing a faded punk concert t-shirt, pushed himself forward. "And what of the stories?! The women who say their rescuers demanded 'payment'?"

Rae raised an eyebrow. "Just what are you implying? That the members of International Rescue are forcing people do to things against their will?"

The man nodded. "That's exactly what I'm saying! There's witnesses who's seen it happen!"

Rae's tone grew cold. "I'd like to speak to some of these 'witnesses'."

The two young people shared a glance. "I'll...I'll see what I can do..." the man stammered and grabbing his partner's arm, dragged her off into the crowd.

Rae smiled into the lens. "Back to you, Ned."

Post by lillehafrue on 11/11/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:14:57 GMT

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"Our next story takes us to the frigid cold waters of the North Sea," Ned Cook said, his voice full of drama, as his salute to International Rescue continued. "It was in the midst of a ferocious storm that a crew of twelve local trawler fishermen found themselves in dire danger. One of our reporters on the scene at the time, Sara Troughbridge, picks up the story."

The camera shot changed to show a lovely young dark haired woman, seated in a studio with a backdrop picture of the North Sea and a gas rig behind her. "Ned, the last thing the crew of the Saucy Lady expected at the end of their fishing trip, was to be rescued by International Rescue. It was Monday, March 5th and the trawler and its tired crew were returning home after days away at sea. Life is hard for these men, but it became even harder when the fishing nets they were dragging became entangled with an unexploded World War Two mine. The mine's chains rendered the propeller useless and the boat was drifting perilously. Despite efforts from the crew, they were unable to free the mine themselves and had no choice but to send out a 'Mayday.' Captain James Bowers of the Saucy Lady recalls the events as they unfolded aboard his ship."

The angle of the camera changed as Sara turned towards the backdrop which now became an enlarged screen. The pre-recorded segment began to play. Captain Bowers, comfortable in his home being interviewed, began talking.

"In all my years as a sea captain I've never seen a storm hit so fast as that one did. Once we realized we were dragging a mine, it was no use. We became a dead duck. Aye, m' lads gave it their all tryin' to free the mine, but the sea was against us that day. We hadna choice but to huddle

below decks and get tossed around."

The camera shot changed to a close up of Sara as she continued. "The World Navy naval base at Lossiemouth, Scotland picked up the distress call and launched the Excelsior, but by the time the rescue boat reached the trawler the situation had become worse. The Saucy Lady had drifted too close to one of the gas rigs, and if that wasn't bad enough, seven more mines were discovered between the two ships. Unable to assist the stricken trawler, the World Navy sent out a call to International Rescue. Meanwhile, as the brave trawler fisherman huddled below decks fearing impending doom, the 1st Mate, Ian Drummond became very concerned with the dangers of what's known as 'icing-up'."

She briefly explained to the viewers what this was and then a pre-recorded segment of Ian Drummond played. "Aye, the real danger of icing-up is that once it happens, the ship is lost. Those Dunlap pads weren't working and as I turned to return below to tell the Cap'n, I saw the rig and knew we were doomed. The worst feeling in the world came over me because I was th' one who had to go and tell the Captain that we dinna stand a chance." Ian paused and then continued, "But God love th' man, Captain Bowers swore t' us all we were not gonna die that day! Some of crew were injured and I remember Tommy was in a real bad way. When we slammed up against the rig, I thought t' myself, 'We're done; it's over,' but we managed to remain on the surface and International Rescue somehow got their people on board. Ya ken imagine the shock when I saw two women!"

Ian chuckled at the memory. "They were part of the medical team and dinna waste no time gettin' t' work! They got Tommy up and loaded onto a stretcher and then a cage whisked him away. Amazing, absolutely amazing, those ladies were."

The screen once again returned to Sara in the studio who continued. "Suffering from severe injuries, Tommy Brennan, one of the youngest fisherman on board, was lifted to safety in record time, but his story doesn't end there. I asked Tommy what he remembers most about his rescue."

Tommy, his wife, Mary and their baby daughter, Charlotte, now appeared on the screen. "I was so afraid I was going to die that all I could think of was my wife and baby. I panicked and got myself smashed up bad. Jock, our medic of sorts, patched me up as best as he could, but I kinna remember a time of such pain as I was getting then. When those nurses from International Rescue appeared, I thought I was seeing angels from heaven. The doctor was so gentle; I can still see her soft smile and feel her soothing hands. They gave me a sedative and I was groggy but asked her if I was going t' die, and I'll never forget her telling me I wasn't and that everything was gonna be okay. I had to have emergency surgery then and there to save me and I will always owe them my life for that. They brought me back to m' wife and daughter."

He hugged his daughter and squeezed his wife's hand as she smiled softly at him.

"As you can see," said Sara, "the crew were well on their way to being safely rescued, but our story doesn't end there. We return now to the rest of our interview with Captain Bowers, who was about to encounter a personal close call."

"I remember thinking about these International Rescue folks, and wondering 'how do they do this kinda stuff all the time?' They freed that mine and saved the crew. Losing m' ship hurt, but those

men are my family and they were all rescued safely. In all the chaos, I tried to thank one of the frogmen who'd helped us. The guy was a winner! He risked his life t' save us and we were total strangers. As I reached over to shake his hand, a rogue of a wave struck and knocked me clear overboard! I knew it was then that I was going to die. The waters are so cold that a man will perish within minutes. All I can remember from then on was freezing cold water and tugging and pulling and constant re-assurance from the International Rescue fella. He never quit on me. We finally managed to get aboard their undersea vessel and then I was transferred to the Excelsior and taken to hospital in Peterhead. I am completely healed from the effects of hypothermia and frostbite, and will never forget the brave men and women of International Rescue and what they do. God bless them."

The segment faded and the story closed with a snip of the newscast on the day of the rescue, "... the rescue has been successful. The Captain, who was washed overboard along with a member of the 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."

The screen returned to Ned Cook, who added, "I couldn't have said it better myself. Thank you, Sara, for bringing us that story."

Back at his parents' house, Brandon sat watching the TV. Shannon lay sleeping on the living room sofa. Exhaustion had caught up with her while they watched the Ned Cook special together. The North Sea Rescue segment brought back memories and Brandon smiled as he watched the Captain Bowers interview. The warm fuzzies he felt faded quickly as his thoughts returned to his parents.

"All those rescues, and yet I still wasn't able to rescue you both." He sighed and settled back with his guilt.

Post by FrankieTB2 on 11/14/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:15:51 GMT  
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On Tracy Island, the girls were gathered in Elise's apartment to watch the retrospective. After the commercial break, Ned Cook reappeared to continue.

"In March, International Rescue was called to help with an accident in the Ural Mountains, when an avalanche trapped a bus-load of children and a number of drivers in other vehicles. We are now going over to our reporter in Russia, Mikhail Petrov."

The picture changed to show a dark-haired older man.

"Hello! This is Mikhail Petrov reporting from Ust'-Uls. With me today in the studio are a group of people who were all involved in the accident. But before I continue, let me give you some



background information. A truck and a car collided, causing other vehicles to crash. The resulting explosion triggered an avalanche which almost completely covered the vehicles."

He turned to an older man. "Vladimir, I believe you were driving a bus from an orphanage."

"Yes, I was." The voice over began to translate, and Vladimir's name appeared at the bottom of the screen. "I was driving the children from Vele Orphanage to Ust'-Uls. The traffic was light at first, as it was early in the morning. However, as we approached Ust-Garewaya, a larger town, the traffic became much heavier. Just as I was approaching the bridge across the ravine, a very impatient driver three cars behind the bus, decided to overtake us all. However, at that moment, a large truck approached us from the opposite direction. The impatient driver had nowhere to go, and despite frantic braking and swerving, the two collided."

A woman interrupted his story. "Foolish driver! Still, he got his just desserts."

"I suppose the driver didn't survive," Callie murmured.

"I'm not sure, but it would have been a miracle if he did," Tin-Tin replied.

"No, he didn't," Nikki replied sadly, shaking her head slowly as she remembered the flaming wreckage.

Vladimir glared at the woman, and continued. "Trying to avoid the two vehicles, I drove in the other lane. The driver of a truck had the same idea, but unfortunately skidded into the back of my bus, forcing it to end up tilted precariously over the edge of the ravine."

Mikhail thanked Vladimir and then turned to a younger man with light brown hair. The name "Ilya" appeared where "Vladimir" had been. "You were riding the bus to Ust'-Uls for a job interview, weren't you, Ilya?"

Kat coloured slightly as she watched Ilya. "Isn't that your admirer?" Nikki said, smiling at her friend.

"Yes. That is true." He spoke in halting English. "I called International Rescue, and very soon they found us. Some members came to help us. One small, slim young woman was able to climb on board. The children thought she was like angel, and I agreed. She looked at our injuries, and told other rescuers. The younger children began to panic, and she sang to them. She sang many nursery rhymes, until International Rescue could get us off.

He then turned to Mikhail and spoke in quick Russian. The voice over translated. "If you are watching, you were wonderful. If you ever leave International Rescue, please come to Vele."

Kat blushed as her friends giggled.

"Obviously an ardent admirer," Elise said, grinning at her friend

"Well, he's not bad looking," Callie commented.



Mikhail thanked Ilya, and turned to a young woman, whose facial injuries were now fading. Her name appeared at the bottom of the televid screen.

"My father and I were on our way to visit friends when we were involved in this accident. I had been very badly cut on my face by flying glass, and couldn't feel my legs. My father was suffering from whiplash. A young man and woman stayed with us, comforting us, until we could be rescued from the car. We were taken to their mobile hospital and we received care and attention of the highest standard."

Mikhail began talking to a young man with dark hair and wearing glasses.

"I understand you lost a relative in the accident." Across the screen flashed the young man's name, Tom.

"Yes, I did", he replied in a quiet, rather sad voice. "My fiancée, Belinda, died in the accident. She was pregnant, and had been visiting her father, who had recently remarried. She had just had a promotion, and would have taken up her new appointment after the baby had been born. We were very excited both at the forthcoming birth and also a new house that we were going to buy. She was on her way to the airport to return home.

"I understand from the British Embassy that despite all their efforts, the personnel of International Rescue could not save her, only my daughter. It would appear that one member in particular stayed with her in the car until she could be rescued, and went with her to International Rescue's mobile hospital. According to my source from the Embassy, that person had been most comforting to Belinda, and for that I send my heartfelt thanks. Someone had written Chris on my daughter's nametag. I don't know whether that person was male or female, but in his or her honour, I have christened my daughter Christina."

Nikki smiled at the others. "I'm glad Tom named her that."

"Mmm, I wonder what Christopher is doing now," Kat remarked.

Tin-Tin gave a brief smile. "Oh, I expect he is doing well for himself."

"Well, I hope he's watching this programme," Elise remarked.

Finally Mikhail turned to the other female in the group and once more the voice over could be heard. Her name, Galina, appeared in bold, white letters near the bottom of the screen. "On behalf of those standing here and the others who were rescued but couldn't get here, I'd like to say thank you, International Rescue. I would also like to say something here to the young woman who we know only as Kay. If you are watching, I'd like you know that arrangements are being made for Yuri to be adopted. A couple have approached the orphanage and have fallen in love with him."

Kat smiled at that. "He was so adorable. I'd love to have been able to adopt him."

The girls all smiled at her remark.

"He was cute," Nikki said. "Those big brown eyes would melt the coldest heart."

Elise was silent, thinking of the orphans.

The scene changed back to the Los Angeles venue, and Ned smiled as he said, "That's all from Russia. Thank you, Mikhail, and those who were in our studio. We'll continue with our retrospective after the commercial break."

--Ural Mountains rescue by TawnyAngel22 (with help from the Mod Squad) on 11/18/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:17:33 GMT  
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As Elise, Kat, Nikki, Callie and Tin-Tin continued to watch Ned Cook's coverage on International Rescue, Nikki's expression changed to an uncomfortable look and she shifted in her seat.

Elise caught on to the change in demeanor. "What's up Nikki?"

"Nothing," came the reply from Nikki.

Tin-Tin looked at Nikki when she heard Elise's question. "The look on your face tells a different story."

"It's nothing big. It all just feels weird. People we don't know commenting on what we do. I guess I'm not used to it yet."

"In your previous job, didn't you ever have major emergencies or subjects that ended up being televised on the news?" Callie asked. "The media, if they can, usually report on what's happened from the hospital site."

"Yeah, but that was different. This one seems more personal. People who were rescued talk about their experiences with us, where as before when I worked in the hospital, the media looked more at how the accident occurred and the seriousness of the injuries. Rarely did they mention what we did to save the victim," Nikki explained.

Kat nodded. "I can understand that. It does feel a bit strange. Being in the limelight is new to some of us." She sighed. "I wonder how long it'll take to get used to it."

"It will become easier trust me." Tin-Tin smiled reassuringly. "And if it doesn't, at least you can talk to anyone of us about it."

"I wonder if the guys felt like this the first time Ned Cook praised them?" Kat asked.

"I thought they would've been used to it seeing how they were known in their own fields before International Rescue came about," Callie replied.

The women grew silent and continued to watch the programme. The silence was soon broken

when the next rescue segment was announced.

"Oh no. Not the earthquake," Nikki complained.

The rest of the women laughed at the comment, knowing the reason behind it.

Post by Nikki-browneyes1 on 11/18/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:18:19 GMT

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Gordon was with Dom, in his apartment. He'd gone over to help him with Joshua and to watch the retrospective. The little boy seemed to sense that his father wasn't as able to take care of -- and play with -- him as he usually was. He'd squealed with glee to see Gordon, whom he considered to be another playmate.

He was sitting on the floor at Gordon's feet, playing with some of his toys as they watched. During the commercials, Gordon would lean over and play with him, usually making Joshua chortle with delight, while Dom observed their antics with amusement.

Although immersed in the game, the redhead's attention was caught by the next segment.

"On the afternoon of the twenty-fourth of March, an earthquake hit Argentina," Ned said, as the show continued. "The epicenter was located five miles south of the city of Mendoza, much of which was seriously damaged -- so much so, that the local rescue organizations were swamped. The mayor of that city called International Rescue to help. And, as usual, they responded. Here is Reuters reporter, Maritza Rosales, in Mendoza."

At first there was a brief video of the city after the earthquake. A female voice said, "In this footage, taken the morning after the earthquake hit, you can see that there was great damage." The picture switched to a young woman with dark wavy hair. Behind her were buildings under construction. As she spoke, the same female voice translated her words. "As you can see behind me, the city is in the middle of a rebuilding process. All of the damaged or destroyed buildings were removed, and are being replaced with ones that will be better able to withstand another earthquake."

She walked to the viewer's right as she finished, and an older, distinguished looking man came into view. Behind him were a few other people. Maritza stopped beside him and continued. "Here with me is the Alcalde -- the mayor of Mendoza. Alcalde," she asked as she turned to face the man, "will you tell the viewers how you felt when you saw International Rescue's vehicles arrive?"

The mayor - identified as Mayor Juan Arroyo - spoke and a male voice translated. "Maritza, I fell to my knees and thanked God for them. The damage and destruction was so widespread throughout the city, I was totally overwhelmed. Fires were raging, people were screaming for help, and our own rescue people couldn't be in all the places they were needed.

"International Rescue worked tirelessly to find victims, so they could be treated for their injuries. Without them, the death toll would have risen significantly. These people behind me are just a few of the ones rescued by that fine organization."

The two separated and gestured for the others to come forward. "These people do not speak English, but wanted to express their thanks for their rescue." As she questioned the first person in Spanish, there was both a voice over, translating the words to English, and closed captioning as well. "Can you tell the viewers what happened"? she said to a man in his mid-twenties, who was with a pregnant woman his age, holding a child about four. At the bottom of the screen, they were identified as David and Angelina Medina.

"I was working not far from here. My wife," he answered, indicating the woman beside him, "was just returning to our apartment from the park a few blocks away. She and my son, Pablo, were both knocked to the ground. I wanted to go to them, but I couldn't get out of the building I was in for a long time. She told me later that she and Pablo had become separated by debris, but she found him by following his cries. He was so afraid, it was difficult to comfort him. And she was also afraid for the baby to come.

"But when the first vehicle from International Rescue showed up, Pablo's eyes got big, and he stopped crying." David smiled. "When the second one arrived -- the big green one -- his eyes nearly popped out of his head, Angelina told me. Then the green vehicle landed and raised up, leaving part of itself on the ground. Out of it came other vehicles and people to help get victims out of the damaged buildings. By this time, I had arrived, and found my family."

An older man and his wife, who were identified as Jose and Maria Paloma, took up the story. "We were trapped in our apartment," Maria said, as the translation continued. "My husband and I are both frail, and we can't go up and down the stairs like we used to. The people from that wonderful International Rescue helped both of us out and were so very nice, and patient with us."

Jose added, "They would lift us if there was an obstruction we couldn't possibly get over, and support us as we walked. I am ninety three and my wife is ninety, so it was slow going, but not once did they try to make us hurry."

"They made sure everyone in the area where they were working was out of danger," Mayor Arroyo continued. He suddenly smiled. "Whether they wanted to be or not."

A look of amusement showed in Maritza's face as she said, "You mean the man who was hit by one of IR's people?"

"Yes, Maritza. The man wanted to sue, but when we investigated, we found out that he had become violent when they tried to get him to leave his apartment, which was in grave danger of collapsing. It was a last resort act by the person who knocked him out with a right cross, as I understand it. And I also have heard that it was a woman who did it."

He chuckled and turned to look directly into the camera. "If the woman is watching, I salute you. It is better to have a bruised jaw for a few days than to be buried alive under a pile of stone. Doing whatever it takes to save lives is commendable."

They heard a commotion off camera. They turned to see a young man rushing toward them, followed by another man and two people in uniform. They reached him and stopped him when he was just a few feet away from the others. The mayor was heard to quietly say something to the reporter, and the translator, in an amused voice, repeated it: "Speak of the. . ."

The man began shouting something in Spanish, very angrily, which wasn't translated. Maritza and the Mayor listened to him for about ten seconds, before he was dragged away. The man with him who wasn't in uniform was arguing with him loudly as they moved off.

Maritza turned back to the camera. "That, obviously, was the man who had been knocked out. Most of what he said shouldn't be translated; it would probably be censored. But his friend who stopped him told him, as they left, that he should be glad the woman did what she did, as the building he was in collapsed less than thirty minutes later."

"He was the last one to be taken out of that building, or so I was informed," the mayor added. "Why he is still acting this way, I cannot say. I believe we will have to investigate further." He turned and looked directly into the camera. "I think that I speak for the people of Mendoza when I say 'Long Live International Rescue!' May they be around for as long as they are needed."

"Thank you, mayor. I agree with that sentiment, and believe that most of the people in the world do, too." She shook hands with him and turned once again to the camera. "There you have it, Ned. Back to you."

Gordon looked over at Dom, as the scene changed on the television. "Too bad you weren't there. You should have seen it. Nikki's got a right cross that could fell a bull rhino."

Dom eyed his friend quizzically. "I think that's a bit of an exaggeration, but I get what you mean. I'd love to have seen it, myself."

"Maybe she should start a boxing class here."

Dom laughed. "Let me know when you're gonna ask her to. I wanna be there to see her reaction. She might just deck you!"

Post by Hobbeth on 11/18/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:19:07 GMT

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"Thank-you, Maritza. I guess even International Rescue members have their boiling points." Ned smiled disarmingly into the camera. "Now back to Rae and Joe on the street. Rae..."

Rae nodded. "I'm standing here with Joe, Blanche and Tommy Carter. Two years ago, the Carter family was on a visit to the newly completed Thompson Tower just as the building was destroyed in an accident. I'm sure you all remember the circumstances surrounding that tragedy." She turned to Joe. "Sir, do you mind telling me what you remember about that day?"

The dark haired man smiled. "Sure. We had just gotten to the Tower when Tommy decided to play hide and seek while Blanche and I were trying to find him, the fire alarms went off. Before we could react, the fire doors slammed shut and we were locked in."

Blanche stepped forward. "I didn't think we were going to get out of there. No one knew where we were!"

"Easy, honey." Joe placed his arm around his wife's shoulders. "We tried to open the doors, but it was no use. We were trapped. We later found out that they could see us on the security cameras. International Rescue was called in, but before they could get there, the Tower collapsed."

Rae's eyes widened. "While you were still inside?"

Joe nodded. "Good thing for us, we were down in the tunnels."

"Then what happened?"

"It gets hazy after that. The heat and smoke were building up, the ceiling and walls were falling apart. Tommy here fell unconscious; that's when I thought it was over." Joe looked down at his son. "Then Blanche fainted." Joe shook his head. "I really thought we were goners..." His voice trailed off at the memory.

"You had no way to contact the outside?" Rae asked.

Joe shook his head again. "None. We were completely cut off. But suddenly, there was a strange sound. Then doors blew apart and there they were."

"International Rescue?"

"Yes," Joe nodded. "Two of their...operatives, I guess is the word. They got the three of us out and onto some kind of hover-craft. We were taken to this giant drilling machine and got out of the building just as it came down for good. He, the International Rescue man, gave Blanche and Tommy oxygen which revived them, then left us in the hands of the paramedics when we got to the outside." He pulled his family close. "Without them...I would have lost everything," Joe said hoarsely.

"I only wish I could have met them!" Tommy said wistfully.

Rae smiled down at the boy, then looked back up at his parents. "So, why are you here today?"

Blanche nodded towards the hospital. "When we heard about the accident on the news, we just had to come. They saved our lives. Showing our support is the least we could do," she said, with an angry glare towards the protesters.

Rae smiled and turned back to the camera. "There you have it folks. Another day saved, thanks to International Rescue. Ned, back to you..."



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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:20:57 GMT  
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Lady Penelope and Parker settled into their hotel room, both worried for the safety and welfare of Dianne.

"Parker, I need to get my mind off the present situation," she said with a sigh. "Please turn on the television."

"Yes, milady." Without hesitation, he did so and started changing channels.

When one channel was showing the Ned Cook retrospective, it got her attention. "Parker, wait, go back two channels."

It returned to NTBS, and they both watched the retrospective special. "I hope Mr. Cook didn't get as much information as he wanted from us."

Ned continued his recap special from the special outdoor studio which was stilted about 18 inches off the ground, and electrical fence barriers holding off the swarm of screaming people, all of them wanting to be on camera to either support or protest International Rescue. "As we moved into the month of April, International Rescue got called out...way out. The Multinational Cancer Research Center is a privately-owned space station designed to treat cancer patients. It was still under construction when a terrible accident occurred. Let's go to our colleague Susan Kucan in San Francisco, California, for more details."

Another pre-recorded segment started with Susan standing outside a research facility. "I'm standing here on the campus of the University of California, San Francisco, one of two universities funding the construction of the Multinational Cancer Research Center. The exterior of the M.C.R.C. was already completed, with parts of the interior done as well. However, an unfortunate accident with one of the empty oxygen tanks created a potentially life-threatening situation for everyone on board. Via our space satellite system, we were able to talk with three of the station's key people."

First to appear was Chief Engineer Don Bailey. "Three men were replacing the tanks at the time of the incident. The second empty tank struck the bulkhead, causing the connectors to loosen. When they tried to test the connectors, the spark caused a small explosion, followed by a bigger explosion. Two of the men, Ken Jackson and Nick O'Reilly, were killed as a result, but somehow Paul Conners survived. We needed to get him back to Earth for treatment and fast."

The picture cut to Assistant Chief Engineer Corazon Sanchez. "We knew Paul needed help, but no organization was available--or in some cases willing--to help us. They needed a week; we had just 12 hours before the radiation level would reach dangerous proportions. Our only hope was International Rescue. They responded by sending their space rocket to us in less than three hours. That gave us hope that Paul would somehow live through this ordeal."



Parker shook his head. "H'I can't believe 'ow selfish some organizations can be, 'specially when someone's life is in danger."

"You're right, Parker. I read information about the Research Center. Many organizations did not believe in it because it was truly groundbreaking research, treating cancer patients in space."

Mick Haggerty, construction supervisor of the M.C.R.C., was the last to appear. "One of the IR people got Paul back to Earth for emergency treatment while the other two helped my crew and me with installing the temporary replacement panels. The young lady did a great job in coordinating the operation while the guy with us had no trouble helping us put the panels in. Let's face it; if it weren't for those International Rescue people, there would've been a lot more fatalities than just the two."

"From the reports," said Penny, "Callie did very well on her first IR mission where she became directly involved."

The scene was soon back on Susan again. "The survivor, Paul Connors, was unavailable for this interview, but he did issue this statement, and I quote, 'I want to thank the people of International Rescue for saving my life along with the others aboard the M.C.R.C. space station. My wife and my six-year-old son will always be grateful to the organization.'"

Susan added, "An additional statement was issued by the M.C.R.C.'s Board of Directors: 'We would like to praise International Rescue for their tireless efforts in protecting the people of the medical station.' There you have it, friends. International Rescue once again saved several lives and prevented an even bigger disaster from occurring in space."

"As for the M.C.R.C. itself, interior construction was set back about two months. There is good news to report, though. The permanent replacement panels are now in place, and extra safety measures are now being taken to make certain this doesn't happen again, according to Chief Engineer Bailey. Construction of the station should be completed and ready for patients by June 2069. For NTBS, this is Susan Kucan from San Francisco. Ned, back to you."

Parker smiled. "I 'ope Miss Callie's watching this. She should be proud of 'erself for 'er first successful job."

Penny said, "I think Callie is proud of her efforts, but I just hope she's doing all right following her encounter with the Hood last month. That must've been very frightening for her. Perhaps we should stop on the island for a visit sometime next week."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 11/19/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:21:40 GMT  
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"Behind me is Number Ten Downing Street," Giles Baxter, reporter for BBC News, began, "home

of Prime Minister Baker and her family. Earlier this year, however, a terrifying ordeal could have led to this house being bereft of its occupants, and the country in mourning for its leader, if not for the valiant deeds of International Rescue.

"Earlier today Number Ten issued the following statement in response to our inquiries over the situation..."

As Giles spoke, the words appeared as writing on the screen.

On Monday April 19th of this year, Prime Minister Baker, her husband Gerard, their sons, Alexander and Toby, and their chauffeur, Thomas Deveraux, were caught up in events that would have led to tragedy, if not for the brave actions of International Rescue. A freak accident caused by the inclement weather, led to a cruise ship crashing into London Bridge, whilst the Prime Minister's limousine was crossing. It was only as a result of the actions of International Rescue that there were no fatalities, and additionally, that the cruise ship involved could be salvaged.

Prime Minister Baker would like to give her deepest thanks to the crew that worked to save them, and has no doubt that without their bravery, lives would have been lost.

Thank you.

"It was a harrowing day, and the nation held its breath as International Rescue carried out its fantastic rescue." The camera zoomed out and panned slightly to the left as Giles continued. "With me now are Fiona Brotherton, my fellow BBC reporter who was on the scene at the time, and PCs Brian Meehan and Stephanie Atkins, who were also there. Fiona, describe to us the feeling from on-site that day."

"The reaction of the general public on the day was one of abject horror," Fiona said. "All eyes were glued to the limousine teetering on the precipice of the bridge, until International Rescue arrived on the scene, when some people began to cheer them. Thankfully there was no mass-panic. The people were more in awe of the great Thunderbird machines, and in desperate hope that the Prime Minister and her family would be saved."

"Fiona, you managed to speak to one of the IR members, a feat never before achieved by the media. What did he say to you?"

"Well, Giles, I can't say I got much out of him. In true International Rescue style he was largely tight-lipped."

"Thanks, Fiona." Giles moved his microphone towards the police officers. "PC Meehan, as we've heard the crowd were mostly well-behaved. What were the roles of the police force?"

"Well," Brian said, "we were there obviously as the immediate response to the emergency situation. It quickly became apparent that there was little we could, nor was there anything the RAF could do, so we then ensured the peace was kept until International Rescue arrived, and whilst they carried out their work."

"PC Atkins, what was your experience of the day?"

"Well, me, like my colleagues, were on 'and to provide extra s'curity for the rescuers, makin' sure no one took pictures or the like. It were a bit 'arrowing watching the two men climb up the bridge in that rain. Must've bin awful. Me 'art went into me mouth when I saw one of 'em slip, but 'e made sure Prime Minister Baker, 'oo 'e were brining down, didn't get 'urt. I tell ya, it was fantastic and terrifying to watch at the same time."

"Thank you, PC Atkins, and Fiona and PC Meehan. This is Giles Baxter, reporting on another fantastic achievement by those heroes, International Rescue."

xxxx

The man with his head bent over a pint of bitter cut a lonely figure as he sat in the Horse and Axe Bar. On the wide screen televiwer screen above him, the Ned Cook show was being broadcast. An American import, it wasn't usually screened. This particular one, however, focused on one of the hottest topics on peoples' tongues all around the globe: International Rescue. Christopher glanced up; he pushed his glass from one hand to the other across the damp bar as he waited for his friend to arrive. He watched the screen with a blank face; he wasn't sure how to feel.

The barman followed his eye-line as he dried a glass, and set it on the counter behind him.

"International Rescue, eh? What a bunch of amazing people, right mate? I mean, they put themselves in danger to save others, without getting paid, and without any personal recognition. Couldn't even add it to their CVs if they left, could they? I tell you, they must be some really amazing people."

Some of them are, Christopher thought, and took another swig of his drink.

"Cat got your tongue?" The barman asked.

Christopher started and put his glass down, wiping off his mouth.

"Sorry, mate. Just a bit pre-occupied."

The barman smiled briefly, before turning to put away another glass. Christopher looked down at the slowly swirling dregs of his drink, his face still impassive. That was the start of the decline, he thought. That Fiona woman...and then the uncovering of the blatant discrimination in the organisation... He shook his head, and his lips thinned. Still, it wasn't all bad. He glanced up at the screen, lifted his glass, and almost imperceptibly, tipped it at the images flashing past. Here's to you, guys. It was a good ride while it lasted. He drained the drink, just as his friend arrived.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 11/20/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:22:34 GMT

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"Welcome back to our International Rescue year-in-review program. The next rescue IR was called for was the tsunami that hit Samoa and Fiji in April. I tend to think of IR in terms of rescuing people who are trapped, like I was. But this was more of a case helping people who had survived to recover from the disaster. N BTS reporter Bob Arlington covered the tsunami so we are switching over to him. Bob?"

The picture changed to a middle aged man, standing in front of a large building. You could see construction was going on behind him. People were going in and out of the doors. A large caduceus was lying on the ground to one side. "The earthquake occurred at 3:30 AM Tuesday, April 17th, approximately 600 miles north of Samoa. The people at the geographic research station in Brisbane, Australia sent out the alert to all of the islands in the tsunami's path within 30 minutes. They also called in all of the rescue organizations they could think of, including Doctors without Borders and International Rescue."

"By the time IR arrived, the tsunami had already passed by. This is what they found." The camera cut to film of the devastated areas, the collapsed buildings and the hospital with the caduceus hanging askew. A blue line on the bottom of the screen read "Tupua Tamasese Meaole II Hospital."

"This is the main hospital on the island of Savai'i, one of the eight islands that make up Samoa. When the wave went through, it went through the hospital as well as other buildings. The hospital was completely out of commission -- it sustained severe damage and its back up generator was knocked out of service. The staff managed to set up a field hospital, but the small generator they were using wasn't nearly enough.

"When IR got here they set up Thunderbird 7 between the hospital building and the temporary hospital. Surgery was possible now. Something equally important also happened. Two IR operatives set up a generator to replace the small one being used by the field hospital. They then went to repair the main hospital's broken generators."

The camera switched to a middle-aged Samoan man. He started talking and the translation scrolled across the bottom of the screen. "I was helping to bring patients out of the building. I heard a scream from the basement and went to look. This tiny lady in an IR uniform was sitting in the mud, with a fish trying to swim away from her. I picked up the fish and took it to a woman who was trying to make food for the workers and survivors. She cleaned it and made fish soup. She told everyone that the lunch was courtesy of International Rescue's fisherwoman."

"Oh no!" moaned Kat as the other women in Elise's apartment started laughing. "I am never going to live this down."

Bob reappeared on the screen. "Although they did search for survivors in the water, the medical help and the repair and replacement of the generators probably saved more lives than anything else done that day. It allowed people to get medical treatment, to cook food and to get warm. Another generator repair kept the drinking water pure and flowing. It also allowed the people trying to reunite family members to use their computers to keep track of people."

A young woman appeared on the screen. Again the translation appeared on the bottom of the screen. "I was visiting my mother when the wave came. The water pulled my mother out. I

huddled in a corner but the water started to pull me out too. Then the wall behind me fell away. We were swept down a street past other houses. I grabbed a window and tried to hold on, but I couldn't. But the water wasn't as fast inside the house so I pushed my baby through the window. I kept grabbing things and finally held on to a tree. But I couldn't find my baby. I was frantic. I saw this lady in an IR uniform. She listened to me. She spoke my language! She took me to a place where there were people trying to find families. On the way there, two other people in IR uniforms came by and one of them had my baby!! I lost everyone else that day. My mother, my husband, his family, all are gone. But I have my little one here to remember them by."

The scene changed back to a picture of Ned Cook with Mercy General behind him. "IR also went to Fiji later that day. But one other thing happened on Savai'i. Doctors Without Borders has been around for a lot longer than IR. They are geared more towards recovery than rescue. The tsunami was exactly the sort of thing they are good at. Their first response team was at Samoa within hours. And the head of that team, Dr. Andrew Carmichael, of Mercy Hospital, met with International Rescue's Chief Medical Officer to coordinate patient care. Dr Carmichael was not willing to speak with us about his meeting with IR's CMO, but he has stated he was impressed. And apparently, so was she."

"We'll be right back after this."

"I think I'll get some chips and drinks. Want anything?" After taking Alan's request for a soda, Scott headed for the kitchen. Alan thought about joining him, but was stopped when the eyes on John's portrait started flashing.

"What's up, Brains? Do we have a rescue?"

Brains appeared in place of John's picture. "No, Alan. I just wondered if you had been watching Ned Cook's show. And I wondered if Kat was also."

"Kat and the other girls are watching it in Elise's apartment. Gordon is with Dom and Joshua. It's just me and Scott here."

"I was wondering if we should do something in honor of our official fisherwoman. Do you or Gordon have any rubber fish?"

"I know where we can get a large rubber fish to put in her bed. Or maybe in the pool next time she's there." Alan grinned.

Post by susanmartha on 11/20/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:23:56 GMT  
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Deep within his hidden temple in Malaysia, the Hood was watching television in a small room. Taking an interest in the Ned Cook retrospective, he was somewhat anxious. "I hope he will get to the segment with the Pir Panjal tunnel, since I was very successful in my mission there."

At Mercy General, the crowd around Ned was still as boisterous, if not even louder than before. Fortunately for Ned, he was well protected by local police and the electrical barriers set up around him and the specially built outdoor studio.

He spoke into the camera. "It was very unusual for International Rescue not to have any distress calls during the month of May. Despite the tornado outbreak in the Great Plains, most people had heeded the warnings with very few injuries as a result. Despite an F4 tornado doing damage in the eastern suburbs of Oklahoma City, only 20 people were injured, none of them seriously."

"That means nothing to me!" the Hood shouted. "I want information about International Rescue itself, you fool reporter!"

"In June," said Ned, "IR started the month with a call to a remote mountain range in northern India. The India Star monorail train was just entering the Banihal Tunnel in the Pir Panjal Mountains when disaster struck. Allegedly someone deliberately set off explosives on both sides of the long tunnel, causing the rails to become twisted and the train to become trapped. The front part of the train was able to avoid the front end of the blockage, but many parts of the train dragged along the ground, which forced the train's freight to fall over. Several people sustained injuries, and to make matters worse, some of the freight started leaking dangerous chemicals."

The Hood cringed. "I cannot believe I had to call that blasted organization for help. I shall curse myself until my own death because of it!"

"The Indian Government was very hesitant to give us details about the chemicals involved. However, some passengers on the train, who all asked to remain anonymous, did share what their experience was like."

Going to another prerecorded segment, a woman was in shadow and her voice distorted. "It was frightening," she said. "There was this awful smell of a strange gas. I had to grab a handkerchief to cover my nose and mouth so I would not breathe the vapors. None of us knew what to make of it, but we knew with no air, no ventilation, we would all die in a matter of hours."

An Indian man soon appeared but was also in shadow. "We have no idea who called International Rescue to help us, but thank the gods they came to our rescue. I looked outside the train and saw a fairly small-sized person, I believe a woman, pouring a simple solution over the chemicals: baking soda. What genius this little person had to solve such a difficult problem with the easiest of neutralizers. She and the person working with her needed a couple of hours, but they succeeded, and not one life was lost as a result."

Ned's face reappeared on the screen. "Reuters journalist Sanjya Patel was able to get an exclusive interview with one of the injured passengers just hours after the incident."

Sanjya appeared on the screen with the passenger, lying in a hospital bed with gauze around his head. "What happened?"

"It was sabotage," replied the passenger. "I've ridden that train for more than 20 years, and that was no accident. Someone wanted to derail the train for a reason, but I have no idea what that is."



The Hood smiled wickedly. "Getting the anti-aircraft device was worth all the trouble I went through with IR."

Reappearing on the screen, Ned said, "Several e-mails were sent to the Bombay Reuters office. Those e-mails came from confidential sources that revealed the chemicals on the train were zinc oxide and alsterene. Scientists say this is a deadly combination that should never have been on board. In addition, a confidential source revealed to us that a unique anti-aircraft scanner was also stolen from the train. The person behind the train disaster was more than likely after the device and succeeded in stealing it. Indian Defense officials have denied all knowledge of this device."

The Hood chuckled in delight. "Of course those fools would deny it because they no longer have it." Walking out of the room and into another room filled with stolen treasures, he walked up to the pedestal which held the scanner. "I have the one piece of equipment that will put an end to that organization. I succeeded in jamming their communications once, and I shall do so again. One day, the secrets of International Rescue shall be mine."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 11/20/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:24:43 GMT

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"Last month," said Ned, when he appeared on the screen once again, "there were two rescues: one in Egypt and the other in Malaysia. First, the Egyptian one. It involved a sheik, his caravan and a sandstorm. And the effects went beyond the rescue. From Baris, with his report, is Rashidi al-Fulani."

Anna and her daughter had just settled into a booth at a cafe in Merivale Mall. They'd been shopping for things for Mary to take back to college, and both were footsore and hungry. The young woman glanced up at one of the TV screens hanging from the ceiling and exclaimed, "Look, Mom. It's a show about International Rescue." Anna looked up from the menu.

"Interesting. That has to be a group of people who probably needs counseling on a regular basis. I hope they have a good one." She went back to reading the menu.

"I wish I could have seen them when they were here last year. I bet they are cute."

"I'm glad you weren't there. I had three patients from that and believe me they did not have a fun time. " Anna put down her menu. "Watching your death come toward you, and being helpless to stop it, is not something you just 'get over'."

The scene switched to a desert. A man in his early thirties was standing amid some ruined buildings, that looked like they had been sandblasted several times. He began to speak.

"I am standing amid the ruins where a sheik took refuge not so very long ago. Out in the deserts, sandstorms appear frequently. It is not good to be away from shelter when they happen; the sand



can literally skin you alive. Sheik Farees al-Rahman and his retinue were in vehicles when the storm hit them, and one vehicle overturned. Another skidded and came to a rest, leaning on it. They were the last vehicles in the caravan, and carried some of his wives, concubines and children, as well as drivers and bodyguards.

"The driver and bodyguard of the overturned vehicle were killed. Others were injured. And since the sheik knew that local rescue organizations didn't have the ability to go out in such storms, he called International Rescue.

"Because he still held to the old traditions, he asked for -- and got -- an all-female rescue team. He declined an interview for this show, nor did he allow any of his people to speak with us, stating that he had said all he needed to when he arrived at the hospital in Baris where the more severely injured were taken. Here is the tape of his remarks."

Seconds later there was the sheik and his son, standing in front of the hospital, with several reporters asking questions, Rashidi among them. "I want to thank International Rescue for coming to our aid. I wish to express my respect and admiration for the women of that organization -- although I never got to meet them -- and to tell them they have given me much to think about. Change is never easy, especially that of long term beliefs and traditions, but it may be time to begin. Now, if you will excuse me, I wish to check on the condition of my people."

The tape shifted back to Rashidi. "All of the injured recovered fully, and are back with the sheik. We have also learned that two wives and some of the concubines have been given opportunities to learn. One is currently enrolled at the university in Cairo, and the others have been given access to computers, and are taking online classes. The other women were given the choice to do the same things, and are currently trying to adapt to their change in lifestyle. And it is apparently due to the work of the female members of International Rescue."

As the broadcast shifted back to Ned, then went to a commercial, Mary said, "Wow, Mom. Imagine that, being a female member of International Rescue."

"I'd expect you to be more interested in the male members." Anna smiled mischievously.

"You mean you wouldn't mind sharing?" was the equally teasing reply. "I bet you'd enjoy counseling one or more of them."

"Counseling, no. I'd have to be professional. Now sharing a swimming pool, that's another matter entirely."

Post by Hobbeth with Anna-Mary dialogue assistance from Susanmartha on 11/21/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:24:53 GMT  
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Rae stopped in front of a strangely dressed group of people. Men and women both wore robes in

a familiar looking hue of blue that were accented by burgundy sashes. They were all bald and stood calmly and quietly, arms folded into their sleeves, not responding to anything around them.

"Hi there. I'm Rae McCormick; do you mind if I ask you a few questions?"

One nodded. "As you wish."

"I was just wondering what you are all doing here today. Are you protesting International Rescue? Showing your support? Or, just watching the crowds?" Rae held her microphone in front of the man.

Joe zoomed in on the man's face. His blue eyes were strangely expressionless, yet not in a threatening way. He had some sort of deep red earring in his right ear. The man seemed to reflect a moment, then spoke softly, with a trace of accent that Joe couldn't identify. "We are here to uphold a vigil for our fallen brothers and sisters."

Rae arched an eyebrow. "Brothers and sisters?"

"The International Rescue operatives, of course."

"You're saying you know them?"

The man leveled his gaze on her. "They are one of us," He replied simply.

"One of you." Rae tried to keep the skepticism out of her voice.

"Like us, our brothers and sisters hail from Tyrikalica, what you Earth people call, Jupiter."

"So, International Rescue is made up of aliens?" Rae asked, as Joe tried to stifle a laugh.

The time the look he shot her was full of disdain. "We have grown accustomed to your species' distrust of anything you do not understand."

Rae smiled charmingly. "Forgive me. Please, help me understand."

The man paused a moment. "International Rescue--or as they are known on our planet, Jestreethzi n'Hildrathuk, the Saviors--were called by Undlieek, to transplant here to Earth. Here, they could do their millennium old duty of protecting the weaker species."

"Undlieek?" Rae asked.

"Our Holy Master. The great Star that burns over us all." The man replied, raising his face and hands towards the sun. Behind him, his followers did the same.

Rae nodded. "I see. Please, go on."

"There is much speculation as to the Savior's technology. Technology that you Earthlings have yet to discover for yourselves. We, the Tyrikalicans, have vowed to aid your peoples, using our

superior skills and intelligence."

"So, we Earthlings don't understand the Thunderbirds' technology because it comes from Jupiter?"

The man nodded. "That is correct. It is a sacred duty we have sworn to uphold, no matter what persecutions come upon us."

Rae turned back to the camera. "Well, there you have it. Many things now become clear. The reason we cannot begin to comprehend International Rescue's security or technology is because it is indeed, of alien origin. Back to you, Ned."

Post by lillehafrue on 11/22/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:27:03 GMT  
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"Oh my God!" Gordon howled. He was rolling on the floor in Dom's apartment, laughing hysterically, arms over his belly, eyes streaming with tears. "That is just too funny! Aliens from Jupiter!"

Dom, who had been laughing too, asked, "Have you never heard of them before?"

Gordon shook his head. "No! Never! And I'm sure we'd have seen them before now if they'd been at any rescue!" He laughed some more. "Oh, that is too rich!"

Josh clapped his hands and laughed, then toddled over to the still prone Gordon. He made as if to jump on Gordon's belly, but was caught and held in the air at arms' length.

"Hey, little man, no fair tackling a guy when he's down!"

\*\*\*\*\*

At the Regis, it was Virgil who had tears streaming down his face from the interview with the aliens. He smacked his brother on the arm. "Hey, John! Picked up any messages from 'home' lately?"

John, trying hard to hold back the laughter and look severe, said, "Idiots! We're from Mars, not Jupiter!"

Grandma gave him a sly, knowing smile and corrected him. "Only half are from Mars, dear. The other half are from Venus."

This set John off, and Virgil fell off the sofa laughing.

\*\*\*\*\*

Scott glared at his younger brother. Alan was laughing so hard that he was choking. Scott leaned over and pounded him on the back. "It's not that funny."

Alan looked up at Scott through bleary eyes. "H-How can you...say that?! I'm...dying here!" He took a deep breath, trying to steady himself, then with another look at the television, burst out laughing again.

Scott rolled his eyes, but this time a hint of a smile appeared on his face. "I guess it does explain Gordon."

This time Alan fell off the couch, and a moment later Scott joined in the laughter.

\*\*\*\*\*

Elise, Kat, Callie, Nikki and Tin-Tin stared at the screen in various stages of shock and disbelief. "Tell me I didn't hear what I thought I heard." Nikki said.

Elise shook her head. "Aliens? We're aliens?"

"A few of us maybe, but not us girls," Callie added.

They all giggled. "I can't imagine some people actually believing in things like this!" Kat commented.

"That they do. Most people will believe nearly anything they hear," Tin-Tin told them. "However, I've never heard this one before!"

Nikki frowned thoughtfully for a moment. "You know, this explains Dom's accent. He's not really Irish after all! He's...what did they call us? Tryikalican!!" They all burst out laughing.

"We're going to have a lot of fun with this!" Callie grinned mischievously.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Gimme that pillow!"

Jeff handed over the spare pillow and Dianne wrapped it around her abdomen, hugging herself hard. "Oh, God, it hurts!"

An alarm went off as Dianne's blood oxygen levels dropped. Jeff hurriedly donned his hat and visor as a nurse came rushing in.

"Doc?! Are you all right?" the nurse cried as she turned off the squealing alarm.

"Y-Yes!" Dianne replied between gasps, tears of both pain and mirth on her face. "It just hurts to laugh so much!"

The nurse's face brightened with comprehension. "Oh! I see! The weirdos! We're watching that, too! Man, where did those kooks come from?"

"They already told you," Jeff said with a grin. "They came from Jupiter."

"I believe it!" the nurse replied. "Come on, Doc. This is no time to start hyperventilating."

"I'll... I'll be all right. Just let me get calmed down," Dianne gasped. She closed her eyes and tried to breathe through her nose. Eventually, she calmed, and her blood oxygen levels looked better. The nurse, satisfied, left, and Jeff took off his visor and hat once more.

"I hope there are no more surprises like that in this show," he said, shaking his head.

"Shouldn't be," said Dianne as she lay back, exhausted. "As I recall, the only things left are the rescue of the King of Thailand, and the most recent stuff."

He nodded. "You're right. But I'm beginning to think this show has a good purpose after all."

"Hmm?" Dianne questioned wordlessly.

"We've been made aware of some public perceptions that we might not otherwise have known. Like our... 'brethren' out there." Jeff rolled his eyes and Dianne let go of a strangled laugh. "For me, it's nice to put a face to some of the people we've rescued. I hear about them second or third hand and it's like meeting them in a way."

"Um hmm." Dianne nodded sleepily. "Shush now. The commercial's over. Here comes the next segment."

\*\*\*\*\*

Brains stared, open mouthed, at the view screen. "Crazy, absolutely crazy!" He shook his head. "Aliens! From Jupiter! Everyone knows Jupiter is made up of hydrogen and helium. There's no way a sentient organism can evolve from a gas giant!" He shook his head again. "Crazy..."

--reaction time from Lillehafrue and Tikatu on 11/22/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:27:49 GMT

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Lena had been watching the show, fascinated by what she'd seen. Dis puts tings in a whole different light. I know what dey do, but dis tells me even more. It's interesting to see it from otter people's perspective. She'd gone to get herself some tea during the commercials and returned just in time.

When the commercial break ended, Ned once again appeared, with the hospital and both pro and anti International Rescue demonstrators behind him. There were also police, preventing any of

those people from rushing up to Ned to try to have their say on camera. Lena was about to take a sip of her tea when the little interview with the "Tyrikalicans" came up on the screen. For a few moments she watched, her eyes and mouth wide open in sheer astonishment, almost forgetting the teacup in her hand. As soon as Rae finished her last comment, she began to shake with laughter. The tea slopped out of the cup and she hurriedly put it aside, still laughing as she got up and fetched a dish towel to sponge up the spilled drink.

She sat down again, still chuckling and wiping the tears from her eyes. Aliens indeed! Dose people look more alien to me dan IR ever has. She picked up her cup and took a sip. Then she smiled again. I wonder what dey would do if dey saw de new uniforms. Change deir robes?

"Welcome back. Still later last month, International Rescue was needed in Malaysia. Here to report and update us, is one of the victims of that crash, reporter Solada Srisai."

The picture switched to a young women, standing at the edge of a jungle. She appeared to be very nervous, but determined. "This is Solada Srisai. Behind me is the jungle where the plane carrying King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Third, his wife, Queen Manya-Phathon, and their retinue -- including myself -- crashed, ending up in several trees, with no obvious way to get out and down to the ground. We were on our way back home to Thailand from a visit to Australia when it happened.

"So far, investigations have come up with no reason for the crash. The people in Australia who checked it out prior to our departure stated unequivocally that the jet was in perfect condition. The pilot and co-pilot were highly experienced and well trained individuals. They were also loyal to the royal family. There was no reason for them to deliberately crash the jet.

"We had no way to call anyone, as communications apparently went out, too. We are very grateful to whoever contacted International Rescue. And we were disbelieving at first that anyone had come to help. But once we realized that it was so, relief spread throughout the jet's cabin. It took some time, as they had to stabilize the jet so it wouldn't fall further to the ground while they got us out. They not only did, they took care of our injuries, at least enough to enable us to get to a hospital. The medical vehicle they had seemed to be extremely well equipped to handle just about anything."

She took a deep breath before continuing. "We have since learned that this area of the jungle has been the scene of many disappearances. The locals have become very afraid to go in, and say there is some kind of curse on the area, although they can offer no reason for it. But no one will venture in, which is why International Rescue was called.

"As for the passengers, we are all recovering physically. We have returned to our jobs and are trying to get back to normal. The king and queen couldn't be here with me, but sent a recorded message."

The scene switched to an elegantly furnished room. The king and queen were sitting side by side, with one bodyguard and the king's secretary standing behind them. The queen's secretary was also seated, a little off to the side. The king began to speak.

"I wish to thank all of the members of International Rescue for coming to our aid. If it had not been

for them, I'm sure more of us would have died." He looked over at his wife and took her hand, squeezing it affectionately. "The queen and I have always felt that this organization serves a vital purpose in the world, and now we have firsthand proof of it. As you can see, three members of our staff who were with us in the jet are also here. They, as well as the other survivors of the crash are in agreement on this. I only wish there was more we could say or do to show our gratitude."

The scene switched back to Solada, who said, "I have nothing more to add, other than that I, too, am thankful that International Rescue was willing to help. I do understand that some of their operatives were injured recently. I believe I speak for the king and queen as well as all those they rescued on that day when I say that we wish them a speedy recovery."

The video ended, and Ned appeared on the screen. "Thank you, Solada. We'll return with more on the latest rescues after these messages."

Lena sighed. Dose poor people. It was very brave of dat woman to do dat piece. I wonder if Dianne and Jeff are watching dis. Probably. I bet dey all are. Even Christopher -- I wonder where he is and what he's doing now.

She paused to finish her tea, then smiled. But most of all I wonder if Dianne got my get well present yet. I hope she likes bot regular and butterscotch brownies. I'm glad I found a business dat does dat kind of ting. It's a good ting I knew about her uncle Andrew and was able to find de Carmichael's address; otterwise I couldn't have sent dem. She probably has plenty of flowers. I would be surprised to hear she hadn't awakened to tink she was dead and in a funeral home. But den, dey may not have allowed too many bouquets in her room. She grinned, remembering the card she included with the brownies. It read To Doc, from Agent 62 (PS. No one had better lay a finger on the contents before she gets it.)

She took her mug into the kitchen and rinsed it out, putting it on the drainer to air dry, then returned to the living room. She hesitated before sitting down and glanced at her office door.

Hmm; I wonder if....

Her thoughts were interrupted by the commercials ending and Ned Cook once again on the screen.

--written by Hobbeth, with a tweak or two from Tikatu on 11/22/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:28:37 GMT  
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Luke turned on the TV while Barry was still packing his clothing. "Hmm, there's got to be something good on TV." After flipping channels, he happened to see something that caught his attention. "A crowd? Where is this?"

A group of people stood behind Ned, and as the camera panned across the crowd, some of them yelled, "Down with International Rescue!" Another man added, "They may rescue people, but they



don't do it without getting money and special government favors!"

"I don't believe them!" Luke said angrily. "The nerve, saying International Rescue's only doing it for the money. They're out rescuing people because they want to make a difference in the world. I hope he gets arrested!"

Barry shook his head. "Sorry, Babe, but he has the right to say it, even though he's completely wrong about IR. They started it to help people in situations so dire conventional rescue would be impossible."

"I would love to meet those people and maybe help them out somehow."

Ned sat at his chair amidst the improvised outdoor studio in front of Mercy General. "When this month started, International Rescue already had two major rescues under their belt. We'll discuss the Kansas tornadoes which led to the three operatives' injuries a little later. The other rescue involved the International Space Station. Joining me live via satellite are Colonel Peter Roberts aboard the ISS; Bryce Cullen and Jenna Welkins, two technicians at ElecSignal, Incorporated, in Silicon Valley, California; and Doctor Rose Windham, head of International Space Control in Upham, New Mexico."

The four faces soon appeared on the TV screen in a triple split-screen effect. Peter was on the left, Bryce and Jenna in the middle, and Rose on the right.

"Good evening to you all," said Ned.

All four greeted him at the same time.

"Bryce and Jenna, let's start with you. You were working your job when something happened to your high-definition TV satellite."

Bryce nodded. "That's correct. Jenna had just walked in to start her shift when one of the thrusters on the satellite became defective. It suddenly shot downward toward the space debris."

"I see. Jenna, what did you do then?"

"I was keeping track of the satellite while Bryce contacted ISC about the satellite."

Rose was next to speak. "He explained the situation, and we started keeping track of it just before it collided with the old GOES-4 weather satellite. The collision resulted in the two satellites fusing together. Amazingly, the thruster on the HDTV satellite was still functioning, resulting in the pair moving in geostationary orbit around the equator."

"Colonel Roberts, please explain the moment you received the call from ISC," Ned requested.

"They contacted us on the emergency frequency, and we knew this wasn't a drill. The fused satellites at first wouldn't have been considered a threat. Because they were in geostationary orbit, and the ISS travels north to south, we were faced with a possible collision. We didn't have the necessary means to prevent the collision, so ISC contacted International Rescue for help."

Ned asked, "Did you know they were already out on a rescue mission in Kansas?"

"No, sir, we had no idea IR was busy with the Kansas tornadoes. We assumed they would respond quickly, and they did. They sent their space rocket to the satellites."

"Why didn't they send it to the station instead, since it was in danger?" Ned questioned curiously.

"Because, Mr. Cook, stopping the satellites was much easier than bringing the station to a stop." Peter became slightly annoyed with Ned's line of questioning. "We're moving at a constant speed of over 17,000 miles per hour. We can't exactly hit the brakes."

Rose spoke up. "Colonel Roberts is correct, Mr. Cook. ISC would have to program the ISS to stop, and that would've taken at least three to four hours to make it come to a complete halt. International Rescue went to the satellites instead to get them out of Earth orbit completely."

Peter said, "The gentleman who communicated with us explained that two others were working to shut down the satellites. After they stopped the thruster, they were able to move themselves and the satellites completely out of the way. As a result, we were saved without having to halt the station. Those two should receive a commendation from the WSA for their actions."

Ned turned back to Bryce and Jenna. "What about the HDTV customers who lost service for a couple of days?"

Jenna sighed and said, "We did have several customers send us e-mails complaining about the loss of service, but our company responded by explaining the faulty thruster on our satellite. We just launched the replacement yesterday, and service to the West Coast should be completely restored by tomorrow evening."

Luke said, "I know Ned wants to make IR look good, but he doesn't quite understand that getting the satellites out of the way saved the people aboard the ISS."

"I agree," Barry said. "The people in that organization get to the brunt of the threat most of the time, like they did when they had to stop the Crablogger from destroying that dam near San Martino."

"Colonel Roberts, Mr. Cullen, Miss Welkins, Doctor Windham, thank you very much for appearing on here this evening," Ned said. "Now don't go anywhere, everyone. The dramatic rescue mission that went terribly wrong will be discussed as soon as we return from this commercial break."

As the camera again panned around the crowd, which included several protesters, Luke rolled his eyes. "Why are they there in the first place?"

"Because they think IR's being selfish, but we know that's not true. They're only protecting their technology from enemy hands."

"I know, but still. They'd change their tune if they ever had to be rescued by IR--or any other specialized rescue service."

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:28:53 GMT

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"Welcome back to International Rescue -- The Year's Amazing Rescues." Ned smiled slightly at the camera, and nodded just a touch. "Just a few days ago, International Rescue faced one of its toughest challenges. While events were in motion high over the Earth that resulted in danger to the International Space Station, the IR operatives were busy digging out a very special group of people from the aftermath of a violent tornado. Here with the details is MWAN's Gavin Belle."

The scene changed to that of a parking lot with a large, destroyed building behind it. Jeff, clutching Dianne's good hand, frowned at the sight. "That's the school?"

"Yes," Dianne said, bringing up her hand, and leaning her head so that she rested against the back of Jeff's hand.

Gavin Belle walked into the camera's view, and motioned toward the building. "Behind me, you see the remains of Murray Gill High School, in the little town of Murray Gill, Kansas. On Saturday, August 4, this sports field was the site of a Special Olympics Challenge Day. A group of special-needs children, all under the age of seven, had gathered - along with their parents, caretakers, and several troops of Boy Scouts -- for a day of outdoor competition, where everyone was a winner.

"At around 11:30 a.m., the town's tornado sirens went off, and Murray Gill's mayor, Tom Riverton, organized the evacuation to a place of safety: the school's basement."

Gavin moved to his left, and standing there was Tom Riverton. His name and title appeared at the bottom of the screen. "Mayor Riverton, describe for us the retreat to the school's basement."

"Well, Gavin, it was hard to be heard over the winds, but we got the crowd started in the right direction. Able-bodied people were carrying equipment and the Scouts were helping the parents get their children moving toward the school. Suddenly, we could hear the twister coming. I ordered everyone to pick up those kids, and run for it!" He turned to point at the hole left by IR's digging machines. "We all headed for the doors that used to be there. It was a really close call; the tornado ripped through just seconds after the last man was inside."

"Were there injuries? Fatalities?"

"There were injuries but, thank God, no fatalities. The worst of the injured was Michael Hart, who was buried under some rubble. We located some battery-operated lights and the uninjured men and older Scouts started carefully digging him out. The nurse who had come for the day started to assess the injuries, and did what she could to stabilize those who'd been hurt. Several people tried to call our emergency services with their cell phones, only to get busy signals or no connection at all. Finally, one of the Scoutmasters, Brian Guillaume, gave me his radio, and suggested we call International Rescue."

The pictured shifted once again to show another man, dressed in a neat shirt and tie. "Standing next to Mayor Riverton is Henry Dolan, one of Murray Gill's structural engineers. Tell us what happened next, Mr. Dolan."

"Well, the mayor here managed to get a call out to me after he got hold of International Rescue. Told me to get some plans of the school for them. I also got a front end loader and a couple of bulldozers over to the school to do what we could while we were waiting for IR. We hadn't been working more than ten minutes when that Thunderbird One showed up. I talked to the pilot and gave him the plans. He told us to keep at it; that anything we did was a help. The second ship, the big green Thunderbird Two, took a little longer to arrive, but once it did... man! Did they get to work fast! They had all kinds of equipment and enough people, I guess, men and women both. There was this one gal standing on top of the debris, guiding the big grabs from Thunderbird Two as it pulled some of the bigger pieces off. Took some guts to do that, I'll tell you. And it didn't take them too long to get inside."

Gavin moved again, and the camera pulled out to reveal Lynne Feller, who smiled nervously. Her name and title appeared at the bottom of the screen, the letters "R.N." displayed prominently.

"This is Lynne Feller, the nurse who was responsible for first aid at the Challenge Day. Ms. Feller, can you give us your side of the story?"

Lynne clasped her hands in front of her. "Well, I had pretty much triaged and treated everyone I could, including Mr. Hart, who seemed to be unconscious. Still, I could only do so much and some of the children were really hurting. We all cheered when IR broke through. The first person they sent in was one of their nurses. He was very professional in every way. They had the most amazing equipment; a stretcher that floated on air, it seemed! It didn't take them long to get everyone organized. Every child was given a bracelet with a code printed on it, and their ambulatory equipment, whether it was wheelchair, walker, or crutches, was given a matching one. That way they could pull the children out first, and the equipment wouldn't get mixed up once it was all gathered together. The Scouts did a great job in helping to carry the kids out while IR kept the way clear." She smiled. "There was this one husky, dark-haired IR gent who always had a smile when he was working with the kids. Always a good word, a little joke; he'd make a terrific father. I was proud to be working with them that day."

The screen returned to Gavin, who held a piece of paper in his hand. "Michael Hart, a local entrepreneur whose name has been mentioned more than once in this broadcast, is still hospitalized, and he is expected to make a full recovery. Earlier today, he gave me this statement: 'I have long been a supporter of International Rescue, and of what they do. From the bottom of my heart I thank them, not only for rescuing us all from the basement of the school, but also for the hope they bring to people all over the world every day. Their motto is: 'Never give up' and I sincerely hope they never do'."

Gavin nodded to the people who were standing next to him. "Ms. Feller, Mr. Dolan, Mayor Riverton, thank you for speaking with us today." They murmured their responses, and moved off to their left, out of camera range. "Back to you, Ned."

Ned appeared on camera once again. "After these messages, we'll go back to Kansas -- and

Gavin -- to give you the details on how two simultaneous rescues became a horrifying three."

The commercials came on, and Jeff turned to Dianne. She was looking anywhere but at the screen... or at him, so he got up from his seat, sat down on the edge of the bed, putting himself between her and the televid screen. He reached out and he cupped her face with his free hand. "Are you up to this?" he asked. "I can always turn it off, see it later on at Drew's."

"I... I don't know," she murmured, finally looking up at him. "I guess we'll see."

Post by Tikatu on 11/25/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:30:27 GMT

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The commercials ended, and Ned came back on screen. No panning across the crowds now, just a tight, close up of the man from the waist up. He was somber and professional as he spoke.

"Since International Rescue made their debut three years ago, the public has grown accustomed to hearing about the amazing Thunderbird crafts. Thunderbird One, speedy and first on the scene. Thunderbird Two, the mighty cargo carrier craft. Thunderbird Three, the sleek space ship. And the tiny but important submarine, Thunderbird Four. No one has seen or heard much about Thunderbirds Five or Six; we can only surmise that they exist and that they are so technologically advanced and of such great importance that IR keeps them under tightly under wraps."

"I wouldn't say that about Thunderbird Six," John murmured.

"Don't let Brains hear you," Virgil warned him. "You know Six is his baby."

Ned continued. "But less than a year ago, a new Thunderbird vessel was unveiled to the public. A sophisticated, mobile hospital, complete with scanners and surgical bay, first appeared at a fatal chlorine leak in New Zealand. At first using a sturdy caterpillar tractor arrangement, then later a sleek hovercraft design, Thunderbird Seven made a big impact on the types of rescues that IR took on, as well as dramatically cutting the mortality rates involved in those operations. Until recently, its sole occupant was a woman known as 'Doc', a physician with a tender bedside manner and tremendous skill in treating the injuries sustained on the field. Within the past few months she has been joined by at least two nurses, both every bit as professional as she is. Those were the pilot and passengers of Thunderbird Seven on August 4, when disaster struck, turning two intense rescues into a harrowing three, and showing the world that even International Rescue must bow to the might of Mother Nature. Gavin Bell tells the tale."

The scene shifted to a farmer's field. Large swathes cut through the dirt and grass scarred the field, yellow "Do Not Cross" tape fluttered in a light breeze. Gavin Bell squatted low and looked directly into the camera.

"I'm here in the fallow field where the severed halves of Thunderbird Seven were deposited after being picked up by what has been classified as a F3 class tornado." Gavin rose. "The tornado

was one of two that were ripping through the just south of Wichita at the time, and though it seems Thunderbird Seven managed to outrun one of them, in doing so, it was caught by the other. Here's some eyewitness footage taken of the scene." And the recording that Gavin Belle made while en route to Murray Gill began to run.

In his apartment, Dom stared at it in horror, blood draining from his face. He made a small, strangled noise, and Gordon looked back at him. "Dom? Are you okay?"

"No." Dom stood up suddenly and ran for the half bath. Gordon glanced back at the scene, shuddered from head to toe, then picked up Josh and went after Dom.

Downstairs, the girls gathered around Nikki, as she watched in horrified fascination. "I'm turning it off," Elise said firmly.

"No," Nikki whispered. "I want to see... I have to see."

The girls glanced at each other, and Callie, who had been blocking Nikki's view of the televid, stepped away. Kat sat close to Nikki and took her hand, squeezing it gently. "Tell us if you can't take anymore," she murmured.

In the lounge, Scott watched, stony faced, as Alan's eyes grew wide. "Oh, God," he whispered. He glanced over at his oldest brother. "I had no idea it was that bad."

"There's worse," Scott stated flatly.

At Andrew Carmichael's house, Cherie screamed and covered her face, while Alex made a little moaning cry and ran from the room. Maggie knelt down beside the girl to draw her close. "Drew! Kyrano! Go after Alex! Elisabeth! I need you... now!"

Her sharp commands sent her husband and a shell-shocked Kyrano after the boy, while a pale Lisa stumbled over to her granddaughter's side. The teenager all but threw herself into her grandmother's arms, and Maggie moved in to support them both.

"Oh, dear Lord in heaven!" Emily cried as the film showed Thunderbird Seven split in two. She kept shaking her head, murmuring, "No, Lord, just... no." Virgil tapped a shocked John on the shoulder then put his arm around his grandmother. After a moment, John followed suit, still gazing at the screen.

In Thunderbird Five, Brains shuddered as he saw the sections separate. "How did this happen? What did I do wrong?" he asked to no one in particular.

Jeff glanced over his shoulder at the sight, and closed his eyes as he held Dianne tight. Her face was buried in his shoulder, and she trembled in his arms.

The tape ended, and the camera returned to Gavin, who had moved to one of the scarred areas. "I'm standing where the cockpit, containing three injured International Rescue personnel, landed. The surgery and patient module," he pointed to a spot hundreds of yards away, "ended up over there, just by that stand of trees. The IR crew had just dropped off victims from the Challenge Day



at Wichita General Hospital, so the patient module was unoccupied at the time. My crew and I ran up to see if anyone was alive inside the cockpit, and this is what we saw and heard."

The camera bounced up and down as it followed Gavin, still talking a mile a minute, to the cockpit. "Is anyone in there? Are you all right?" he called. There was no view of the cockpit's interior, but Nikki's voice called back, sounding angry, yet garbled enough that you couldn't make out what she shouted.

The piece suddenly stopped, and Gavin was seen again in the field. "It was at this point that Thunderbird Two arrived and my camera was blocked. The IR operatives began to cut open Thunderbird Seven and, with the help of local EMS workers, freed the medical crew. Thunderbird One arrived late; speculation is that it was returning from their base after bringing key personnel there to aid in the rescue of the ISS. I tried to speak with the on site commander, but he steadfastly refused to say anything. However, our helijet managed to get a brief bit of aerial footage as Thunderbird One lifted off, carrying the three occupants of the cockpit away for medical treatment."

There was a brief, thirty-second shot of the site as seen from above, and the helicopter pilot could be heard to murmur, "Oh, sweet Jesus! What the hell happened to that?" The two halves of Thunderbird Seven were clearly shown, the cockpit sitting nearly upside down, exposing the hoverjets, and the medical cabin on its side, the large dent in the back corner clearly visible. As the helijet moved over the two lead Thunderbirds, giving a tantalizing, split-second view of them, the screen went dark. Someone could be heard to say, "Da...", then the sound cut out as well.

Alan drew in a sharp breath. "I see what you mean, Scott," he said, casting a troubled glance at his eldest brother.

Scott nodded. "At least Virgil was able to cut off the helijet's feed. I wasn't sure he could."

Back as the center of attention, Gavin paused for a moment. "When Thunderbird One left the area, its destination was unknown. But within five minutes, it had arrived at Mercy General in Los Angeles. However, they left a crew behind to salvage what they could. I have with me, John Forrest, who owns this field. Tell me, Mr. Forrest, what happened after Thunderbird One left?"

Farmer Forrest, a tall, rangy man with a bit of a pot belly, pulled up his cap to scratch his balding head a little, then put the cap firmly back on. "Well, the people who were still here had a little powwow, and then some ran off to the big green Thunderbird. One or two of them stayed behind, looking over the situation, and makin' plans from what I could see. And a couple of 'em worked on the motors, tryin' to get them workin', I guess. The body of that Thunderbird pulled up, and left a little Quonset-hut of a barn behind. Out of that barn came the oddest assortment of vehicles I ever did see!"

"What did they do with those odd vehicles, Mr. Forrest?"

"Well, first thing they did was pull that big square part of the ambulance off its side, so it stood upright. Then me and my boys helped them put chains around it; this pretty girl with a funny accent told us where to put them so they wouldn't slide. She was a smart one! Then they used a big plow with a hole in the blade to smooth the way so they could tow one part to the other. While



the towin' was goin' on, they righted the smaller bit, and then we chained 'em together, and they got the whole shebang into the barn. Then they put everything away and took off."

Gavin glanced around, and motioned toward the obvious scars left in the field. "Looks like they did a good bit of damage to your land here."

Farmer Forrest waved a dismissive hand. "Pffft. T'weren't nothin'. I was letting this field lie empty this year anyway. Before they left, one of the men came up and asked who owned the land. When I told him I did, he apologized for the mess, and shook my hand. Far as I'm concerned, they saved me some plowin' come spring!"

Gavin smiled slightly. "Thank you, Mr. Forrest, for your time today."

"You're welcome, Mr. Belle, and to the guys of International Rescue, hope y'all get back to normal soon!"

Virgil smiled. "That man was great. Volunteered himself and his sons to give us a hand. I was glad to know that the field was his. If it hadn't been, I would have taken him with me to whoever's it was while I apologized."

"Glad to know he's not looking for compensation," John said. "So many people would be."

"Well, you wouldn't find too many folks like them in Kansas," Grandma snapped. "Most are like Mr. Forrest there; hard-working, salt of the earth people. Give you the clothes off their back - and the back to go with them - if they thought you needed 'em!" She gave each of her grandsons a sharp look. "I certainly hope I helped raise you boys to do the same!"

"I think you did, Grandma," Virgil said softly, squeezing her gently to his side. "After all, we're part of International Rescue."

The camera pulled to one side so only Gavin was in the picture. "This has been Gavin Belle reporting. Back to you, Ned."

"Thanks, Gavin," Ned said as the feed went back to him in Los Angeles. "Back with more after this commercial break."

Post by Tikatu on 11/26/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:32:12 GMT

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The woman was not young. Her shoulders slumped and she moved slowly, shuffling her way down the sidewalk. She paused in front of the wall surrounding the hospital where a make-shift shrine had been put together. There were candles, flowers, stuffed animals, cards, posters, all saying "get well" in as many ways as there were people to say it.

She bent low and added a small white votive candle to the pile. Then, she straightened and took a set of rosary beads out of her purse. She closed her eyes and began to pray.

"Excuse me."

Startled, the woman opened her eyes, and took a step back. "Yes?"

Rae smiled. "I would like to ask you a few questions, if you don't mind." The woman paused a moment, then nodded. "Thank-you. I notice you placed a candle here; would you tell me why?"

"They are always the ones who help us. Now it is time for us to think of them," she said simply before turning away and resuming her prayers.

Rae faced the camera. "And there you have it. We've seen many opinions towards International Rescue today. From hate and fear, to thanks and love."

The camera zoomed out, showing the front of the wall covered with its offerings. Rae's voice continued off camera. "But, no matter what you believe, there can be no denying that without International Rescue, the world would be a much more perilous place. This has been Rae McCormick reporting for Ned Cook."

Post by lillehafrue on 11/26/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:33:01 GMT

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"Oh my Lord," Dianne breathed, shaking her head gingerly. "I had no idea."

Jeff took a tissue to wipe away the tears that had slid down her cheeks. "Neither did I. There have been so many flowers that each patient here could have three or four bouquets," he murmured, squeezing her hand gently, and waving toward the flowers that were already there with his free hand. "I've made arrangements for them to be distributed in nearby nursing homes and veteran's centers. There are teddy bears and stuffed animals by the score. I've chosen a few to keep, and the rest will be given out to the children here in the hospital and distributed to police and fire departments to be used for traumatized children. The hospital staff will collect the hundreds of notes and poems for us to look at later." He kissed her hand. "As hard as this has been, it's also been a good thing just to realize how the public views us. It's heartening, and at the same time, humbling."

The camera went back to Ned in his outdoor studio. "Thanks, Rae. So there you have it, folks. It's been a year of changes for International Rescue. There are definitely more operatives, as evidenced by the presence of nurses in Thunderbird Seven. It appears that some of these new operatives are women. There are new uniforms, and new technology is being utilized. But more importantly, with the downing of Thunderbird Seven, we see how truly international the scope of their operations has become."

The camera angle shifted. "There have been rumors before, some more reliable than others, of IR craft being brought down, and its operatives being injured..."

"I guess no one believed Wilson and Lindsey about my crash in the desert," Scott said wryly, over Ned's comments

"... They've come close to death, as in the incident with the Sun Probe..."

"That was a close one," Tin-Tin murmured. The other girls looked at her.

"You were on that?" Elise asked, eyes wide. Tin-Tin nodded slowly.

"... And there was a rumor that the U.S. Navy had once shot down Thunderbird Two."

"Unsubstantiated, of course," Virgil muttered. "There's no way that the Navy would admit to that!"

"But never before had a Thunderbird been brought down so publicly. Never before have we actually had footage of it. And never before has International Rescue openly taken their operatives to a public hospital." Ned waved toward the building behind him. "Ever since IR's chief medical officer and her companions were brought here, there have been people surrounding the hospital campus. Some are here to protest, some are here to gawk, but the vast, vast majority are here to lend their support and add their prayers and best wishes for the injured, and for International Rescue overall."

He shifted in his chair, and lifted the data pad he had in his hand. "Many, many dignitaries from around the world have sent messages of support and get well wishes. I have here an official statement from the office of the World President, Her Excellency Maria Ynez de la Vega."

The screen changed to show a small picture of the President in the corner, and the text of her message beside it. Ned read in voice over, "'To the members of International Rescue, I would like to tender my personal prayers and best wishes for a speedy recovery from your injuries. Our world owes you much, and I hope its citizens will join me in expressing thanks for the hope you bring and the lives you have saved. May you long continue in your good work.'"

The screen went back to Ned, who took a deep breath before speaking again. "As someone who has been rescued by IR, I must second those sentiments, and I ask that those around the world whose lives have been touched by them - as mine has been -- would be at the forefront of those wishing them well at this difficult time." He paused once more, then smiled and said, "As we wrap things up, we'll leave you with a sampling of the notes and messages that have been sent to the hospital for International Rescue. Until next year, this is Ned Cook, saying goodnight from Los Angeles."

A montage of rescue venues, taken from edited bits of the many reports, began to flash across the screen. Superimposed over them, in text that would show up easily, were the messages from various heads of state, and even from celebrities they had rescued in the past. An alternating male or female voice read them off.

Jeff smiled. "I'm glad we had this recorded. It's not easy to keep up with the messages." He turned

to his wife, only to find her asleep. "Wore you out, did we?" he said softly, giving her a fond look. He brushed the hair away from her forehead and gave her a light kiss there, hoping that the bristles of his fake mustache wouldn't wake her. "Sweet dreams, love."

Post by Tikatu on 11/26/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:33:11 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 7, 5:35 PM, Tracy Island (Monday, August 6, 10:35 PM, L.A.; 12:35 AM, August 7, Kansas)

Light slowly filtered in when Nikki opened her eyes. She rubbed the foginess from them and looked around, taking in her surroundings.

She sighed after remembering what her dream had been about. It wasn't the first time since the accident that she replayed the medical team's close up experience with the tornado.

Part of her hated the fact that she had fallen asleep. After the show was over, and she'd gone back to her apartment, she'd felt slightly drowsy, so she decided to lie down for a little bit. What she hadn't expected was to blink one second and be asleep the next.

Getting up, Nikki made her way to the bathroom and ran the bath. After getting undressed and taking the bandage off her foot, she sat in the bath and let the warm water caress the tightness in her neck and foot away.

She allowed her mind to wander for a while. That could've been it. The end for us. If it came to the worst, how would it be explained to my family? Would they be told the whole story or a cover up version?'

Nikki fully submersed herself into the water before resurfacing five seconds later. She ran her hands over her hair gently and swept it out of her face.

All too soon for her, the water began to get cold. Taking it as a sign that she had been in the water long enough, Nikki pulled the plug and vacated the bath. As she towed herself off she thought about her family and friends back in England and the promise she made to keep in contact more often. I'll do it as soon as I'm dressed.

--recovery begun by Nikki-browneyes1 on 11/29/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sun, 22 Jul 2012 23:33:59 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 7, 2068, 6:20 p.m., Tracy Island (Monday, August 6, 11:20 p.m., Los Angeles; 1:20 a.m., August 7, Kansas)

Nikki sat down in front of her computer and read the latest e-mail from her friend Emma back in England.

She had to laugh at the last paragraph. Emma's cousin announced to the family that she was engaged to be married. Emma was pleased for her cousin, but she dreaded what the bridesmaids' dresses would look like. Especially since she had been chosen to be one of them and her cousin didn't have the best taste in style.

She read the paragraph again.

'They better not catch me on camera when the big day arrives. I'll probably look like I'm wearing one of her curtains (you remember what she wore to my birthday last year). Kind of glad you won't be here. I'd never hear the end of it. Hopefully the maid of honor will steer Rachael in the right direction.'

Nikki opened the reply to message window. She smiled as she began to type.

Hey you,

Two words of advice. Stop stressing. I'm sure she wouldn't dress you up to match her curtains, unless she's feeling extra cruel. For your sake, I hope you haven't done anything to bug her recently. And as for being caught on camera, you know it's going to happen. You can't get away. It'll always find you, ha ha ha.

Moving on, my friend, I hope you and your family are well. I'm doing ok, just feeling a bit sore. Must be working too hard (I can hear the 'pfft' escaping your lips, cheeky). At the moment I'm just relaxing while thinking about home and other things.

Could you spare some advice for me please? Asking you this makes me feel like I'm back in school. Ok, straight to the point. There's a guy who I'm friends with, I also work with him. I talk to him lot on and off duty and I really enjoy his company. Emphasis on the really. I'm wondering if I should tell him that I've developed feelings for him or not. Part of me keeps thinking that by telling, I'd ruin the friendship or working relationship.

If you were in my shoes, how would you handle it?

Nikki re-read the e-mail to make sure it made sense before sending it. Opening up another window, she began to write an e-mail to her mother.

--news from home by Nikki-browneyes1 on 11/29/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 12:52:33 GMT

(Tuesday, August 7, 10:00 a.m. Wichita, KS; Wednesday, August 8, 3:00 a.m. Tracy Island)

Tuesday afternoon, Andrea's eyes lit up when Heather asked if she'd want to help her go shopping.

Heather met Andrea during a late night organ donor flight three years ago when Andrea had been sent by the Meteorology department of the local television station to cover one of Heather's flights. Heather had to coax Andrea in the co-pilot's seat and as soon as the iced box with its precious cargo was locked down, Heather taxied the Blue Streak to the runway. Up until then, Andrea had only flown on commercial flights and she hated flying. Heather settled her down as they flew, and by the time they returned with their mission accomplished, Andrea hated flying even more, but appreciated Heather's work, and the two became fast friends. The meteorologist's report gave a rare glimpse into organ donor flying and the need for more planes and pilots.

Andrea hurried over to the Regis with a limousine and two glasses of champagne. Handing a flute to Heather when she stepped in, Andrea asked, "Okay, what's going on? Why am I picking you up at the hotel and not in El Dorado?"

"A tornado took the house," Heather said simply. "And knowing how much you like to shop, I thought you might like to come with me."

"That beautiful brick home of yours?!"

"The whole thing and everything in it," Heather replied. "More than likely it's flattened a wicked witch wearing ruby slippers. I would like to have the slippers if nothing else."

Andrea broke into giggles. "Okay, 'Dorothy' let's see what we can find! I'm so thrilled you called me!"

The ever efficient Mr. Howe drove the women in style to Harriman's department store. Knowing Andrea's sense of adventure in clothing, Heather wasn't ready for micro-mini skirts, mini dresses, and platform shoes. Putting up her hands, Heather announced, "Hold it! I'm not going for anything radical!"

Andrea gave her a look of comic alarm. "Nothing? Not even for the bedroom? Come on! Let me find something radical at least for lingerie."

Her nose twitching from the bubbles in the champagne, Heather relented. The word radical to Andrea meant sex kitten style. "Okay, I'll let you go radical for lingerie, but it's got to be comfortable." Heather winced. "I cannot believe that I've got to redo everything! This will take forever!" she said as they walked in.

They both grabbed catalogs. "Will you need an evening dress?" Andrea asked. "They've got some drop dead gowns on the third floor! I might just pick one up."

"Or two," Heather replied.

In the dressing room, Heather stripped down, while Andrea began choosing outfits. "Just remember, I don't have a man I'm trying to impress here!" Heather called out.

Finding three outfits, Andrea gathered them up and threw them over the door. "Try these, and you darn well ought to! So, are you going to rebuild then? How about a split level?"

"Well--I've gone ahead and accepted Jeff Tracy's offer." Heather said over the dressing room door.

"Jeff Tracy? So you're leaving?!"

"Uh--well--yes. I am," Heather answered. I've finally admitted to it. thought to herself.

Miffed slightly by the news, Andrea thought about the possibilities. "Well, you won't be too far away. Rumors at the station say that Jeff Tracy's brood live somewhere around Kansas City," she said as Heather wiggled into an outfit.

Heather studied her reflection in the mirror. "They're a little bit further out than that." She walked out of the dressing room so Andrea could look at the design. Andrea shook her head. Going back into the dressing room, Heather tried a silk white babydoll set. With rhinestones running up and down the two straps of the halter, and the skirt coming down just barely to her thighs, Heather thought it had some merit. If I did have a boyfriend, and he saw this, it would be shredded to pieces in twenty minutes! Andrea thought the same thing when Heather came out with it on.

When Heather and Andrea reached the next department, filled with the finest evening gowns, they were set down in soft, comfortable chairs by a tall, elegant, woman. She had flashing ebony eyes and soft blue-black hair carefully coiffed and dressed as if she walked directly out of a French fashion magazine. She made Heather feel slightly underdressed.

"My name is Monique and we'll run through each design until you find something you like. This first design is called the 'Emerald Isle'." The model was a strawberry blonde, dressed in a shimmering green gown with an empire collar. Heather shook her head. "This next design is called 'Opalescence'."

"You know," Andrea spoke hopefully. "Jeff Tracy has all those sons of his. You might get hitched up with one of them. Maybe Virgil or Scott?"

"What? You mean as husband material?" Heather stifled a bad need to laugh. "Much as I hate to be so deflating, I met four of them and not one of them had any interest in me--at all. Besides, you know how much Jeff Tracy makes. I wouldn't have a dowry big enough to offer!"

Andrea laughed. "More than likely, he'll marry them off to women to seal business deals!"

Heather wasn't laughing, and pretended to study the next dress. Andrea's words reminded Heather a little too much of her mother's desires.

Continuing on with her work, Monique looked at her cue card. "This next design is called 'Champagne For Two'." The next model was tall like Heather and wore a dress that seemed to be



poured on pale yellow crystals. As she did a slow pirouette, the dress was ablaze with flash and sparkle.

Both girls turned to look and Andrea's eyes lit up. "That's it! That's perfect!" she cried out, waving a finger at the model.

Heather released a concerned breath as she gave it a critical study. "Andy, do you think I've got the figure for that?" This comment had Andrea and Monique looking at each other wide-eyed. "Doesn't leave much for the imagination."

Andrea looked at Monique and said, "We'll take it. Trust me, Heather. A dress like that will trigger more imaginations than you'll know what to do with!"

"This next dress is a stunning masterpiece created by Francois Lemaire called 'Lady In Red'."

The dress was simply a turtleneck floor length dress in a rich dark red velvet. With a simple jewel necklace, Heather thought it looked comfortable. "I'll take that one."

As Monique recorded Heather's choice, Andrea asked, "I wonder what the Tracys are really like. The tabloids have them as a bunch of playboys, carrying on all over the place."

"That's because they can't get to them. I've met them, and they are so normal, they could be your next door neighbor that you hope invites you over for the occasional drink or a party."

"You've met them?! What's Virgil like?"

Me and my big mouth! I've got to remember that Andrea works for a television station. "He's a lovely pianist, very gracious, and his eyes twinkle."

"How about Gordon?"

Heather thought back for a moment as the dresses continued to be paraded. "The Olympic swimmer? He's a bit of a tease, but he's very caring."

With a gleam in her eye, Andrea asked, "What about Jeff? I would die to meet Jeff. He is so good looking! He's married, isn't he?"

"Fraid so."

Heather chuckled as Andrea looked sad. "Wouldn't trade up, huh?"

"Fraid not."

Both of them suddenly laughed as Monique rolled her eyes at them.

Finally, they made their way to the Casual Corner where Heather could buy the things she felt used to. Boots, slip on pumps, sandals, jeans, silk shirts, three suits, and everyday underthings. By the time they finished in the shop even Andrea was tired. "Okay, it's a small core of things."

That should at least give you the ability to run around with something other than your lounge slippers. Let's get these to the limo, and get you back to the Regis. In about an hour and a half, I'll be due on the set."

Soon, they'd gotten back to the Regis where Andrea's driver went in to find a baggage cart and piled Heather's things on it. Before Heather was given a hand out of the limo, she hugged Andrea. "Thank you for everything."

"There's something special in one of the bags for you. Bye!"

Heather got out suddenly wishing she wasn't leaving. As the door closed to the limo, Heather waved goodbye, wondering if it would be the last time she saw her excitable friend. A bellhop followed her into the elevator with her packages.

As the last bag was brought in, Heather slapped her forehead. "Oh no. I forgot to get luggage!"

The bellhop, Craig, waved a hand. "We're hooked up to the broadband internet through the vidtv communication system. Just order at your leisure and the parcels will be brought to your door." Handing the bellhop a handsome tip for his help, Heather walked into her room.

As soon as the last bag was pulled into her room and Craig had gone, Heather flopped herself on the bed. "Oh man, I'm tired. Think I'll order room service with a drink from the bar," she groaned. "All that training in the naval academy and she wears me out!"

She touched a button on the control console by the computer which called room service directly, careful not to snap at the operator. Heather began to feel the uncomfortable sense that she was in transition. Shopping with Andrea had done it. Her home near Aunt Jenny was gone, her life at the testing grounds was now gone, she'd said goodbye to Andrea realizing it was for good.

"Room service!" a young male voice responded. "This is Michael."

"I'd like dinner brought up to me including sushi and a lobster. A bottle of white wine and a glass of crème de menthe, please. I guess I need comfort food tonight."

"In that case, I'll send up some chocolate covered cherries. They're imported. You like them."

Laughing, Heather thanked Michael, realizing she was suddenly feeling lonely and homesick. "I sure hope to heck I know what I'm doing."

Post by AmandaTracy on 11/29/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 12:57:03 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 7, 11:45 AM; Denver International Airport

"Lena! Over here!"

Lena looked in the direction of the voice calling her name, and saw the petite woman standing on a chair, waving her hands. She grinned and waved back, and moments later they were hugging.

"Welcome to the Mile High City, although, technically speaking, you aren't there yet."

"Helen Morrow! I didn't expect you to meet me yourself!"

"Are you kidding? I told you once that I was going to get you to come to my neck of the woods, and when you did, I'd meet you. Anyway," the younger woman continued, "do you have more luggage or is this it?"

"For de short time I'm here? Dis is it." Lena indicated her carry on and her laptop as they headed toward the elevators.

"Well then, we can go straight to my car. What about lunch? I don't know about you, but I'm getting a little hungry. I came in early, so I could have everything done before I left to come here. But it's two hours later for you, so you must be starving, unless you had a good meal on the flight. Well?"

Lena grinned. Helen had been one of her staff people, until she had been recommended for a supervisor position in Denver. She loved to talk then, and hadn't changed, it seemed. "On a two hour and fifteen minute flight, dere isn't much time for more dan a snack, even in first class. So yes, I am hungry."

"Great! I know of this wonderful Italian place on the way to the office where we can savor some of the best food, and get caught up. I love to eat there whenever I can, which isn't as often as I'd like." She pushed open the door and held it for Lena, then led the way to her car. Shortly afterward, they were out of the parking lot and on their way.

"I know there's a small apartment at the top of the building, and you're supposed to stay there," Helena said. "But that seems to me like you'll be at work the whole time you're here. Wouldn't you like to stay in a hotel or something? I'd love to have you stay with me, but I'm in the middle of moving, and the place is total chaos."

"No, it's fine staying dere. I won't have to get up so early to be on time, and won't have to fight traffic or anyting like dat."

"Okay, if you're sure. Oh! I'd better give you a heads up. Someone else from the D.C. offices is here; Don Wilson."

Lena looked at her in surprise. "What's he doing here?"

"Beats me. He showed up yesterday, and has been in meetings the entire time. They were taking a break about the time I was leaving to pick you up, and walked by when I told my staff I was on my way to pick you up. He asked my why you were coming here and I told him. Boy! That man sure has a loud voice. I bet he could talk to someone in another state without using a phone. Of

course, everyone would know his business then."

"Dat's strange. I was sure he was aware of dis facet of my job. I hope he isn't getting senile; he isn't old enough to." She chuckled. "But you are right about his voice. Ah well, maybe we can avoid him most of de time."

"Avoid him? Why, outside of getting your eardrums permanently damaged?"

"I find him pompous and arrogant much of de time, aldough he is a good V.P. I make it a point not to be in his vicinity as much as possible."

"That shouldn't be much of a problem, Lena. I think he's only supposed to be here for another day." Helen grinned. "I wonder if he knows about your living arrangements."

"I hope not and I hope he doesn't while we're bot here. I hate to tink of what might happen."

Helen laughed. "Well, don't worry. I'll be behind you all the way."

With a mischievous grin, Lena replied, "How far behind?"

The women laughed, and continued to chat until ten minutes later, when Helen pulled into the parking lot of an attractive looking restaurant. They went in and, while they ate, filled each other in on what they'd been doing since they last saw each other.

Post by Hobbeth on 11/29/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 12:57:13 GMT

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Brandon and Shannon walked a familiar path down the hospital corridor leading to their mother's room. It had become a daily routine for them since the accident and, as they made their way to Sarah's room, Brandon heard snatches of conversation about the Ned Cook retrospective.

"How do the International Rescue people handle it?" "I hope the ones that were injured in the tornado are going to be okay." "Can you believe the nerve of those protesters?"

If they knew what it was really like, the protesters wouldn't be so quick to judge, Brandon thought to himself.

As they continued walking, Shannon stole a glance at her brother, noting the worry lines creasing his face. "Hey, bro," she said, putting a gentle hand on his shoulder, "are you all right? You've hardly said three words since we got here."

Brandon let out a heavy sigh. "I'm sorry, sis," he replied. "I have a lot on my mind and not sleeping well last night didn't help." The truth of the matter was that he hadn't slept well since he'd arrived. Concern for his parents' well-being, coupled with the guilt he felt at not being there sooner made

for sleepless nights.

Arriving at Sarah's room, Brandon and Shannon found her talking on the phone and they both stepped inside the door, waiting for her to finish her call.

"I tell you, Marion," Sarah said, talking to her friend, "International Rescue is a godsend. If it weren't for them, a lot more people would die. I hope their people will be okay." Looking up, she saw Brandon and Shannon waiting patiently for her to get off the phone. "Listen, I've got company; I'll call you later." Hanging up, she smiled at her children.

"Hello, Mom," Shannon said, reaching down to give her a kiss. After her brother did likewise, she asked, "How have you been?"

"I've been doing much better, thank you." Sarah shifted, making herself more comfortable. "Dr. Stanfield is amazed at how well my hip is healing. I'm already up and walking short distances and she said I should be able to go home in a week to ten days."

"That is great news," Brandon said with a smile. "Rocky'll be glad when you and Dad finally get home. I'll be sure to tell him," he said. Rocky was the family dog, a Lab with a shiny, jet black coat. He knew something was amiss and had been moping and whining for days.

A couple of hours later, Brandon excused himself, heading out to get some fresh air, assuring his sister and mother that he'd be back shortly. As he walked down the hallway, he heard more people talking about the retrospective and the people International Rescue had saved from certain death.

Brandon thought back to the multi car pile-up in the Ural Mountains in March. He and Scott had been searching the mangled vehicles for survivors. Some people had survived the avalanche, albeit with severe injuries. Others had not. We managed to save most of them; I wish there were a way to have saved them all.

Post by MagicMaster8 on 11/30/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 12:59:22 GMT

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Wednesday, August 8 into Tuesday, August 7, crossing time zones over the Pacific Ocean, Thunderbird Two.

"You sure you know how to fly this baby?" Elise asked from her position in the passenger seat.

Gordon didn't turn around, but the tone of his voice spoke more than his eyes could. "Woman, I'll have you know I was flying this monster since before you were in diapers."

Elise snorted. "I'd believe it, 'Grandpa', if we didn't buck everytime you hit a pocket." She could see him wince when they hit another pocket of turbulence and Thunderbird Two shuddered a little.

"And she doesn't like being called a 'monster'."

"Sheesh, Elise!" Gordon replied peevishly. "You are sounding more and more like Virgil every day!"

Elise just smiled slightly, and glanced upward. "He didn't mean it, baby. He really didn't," she murmured. In the pilot's seat, Gordon shook his head and rolled his eyes.

"Can't you keep her steady, Gordon? I swear you've hit every pocket of turbulence in the sky." Alan came onto the flight deck, and took a seat beside Elise, who was dressed in her Tracy Industries flight uniform but with her IR jacket, cap and visor handy. "The sickbay's ready to go. It'll be good to see Dad and Dianne again. I hear Dad's wearing that beard."

"Your dad with a beard... what an image!" Elise said, shaking her head and smiling widely.

"You may not get to see it," Alan warned her. "He'll probably take it off the moment Two is airborne again."

The trio had gotten up early on Wednesday morning, around 5:30, with take-off from the island around 6:00. The plan was for them to fly between cruising and emergency speed to a rendezvous on the Pacific coast, where Elise would be dropped off. She was supposed to be met by Hernando Garcia, who would take her to a Tracy Industries hangar not far away. Thunderbird Two was then to continue on to Los Angeles and pick up "Doc", who was to be discharged on Tuesday around 2:00 p.m., US Pacific time. Elise would get a Tracy Industries helijet, and would rendezvous with Two at a different locale. Dianne would be transferred to the helijet, and then returned to the hospital, but this time as Dianne Tracy, auto accident victim. Then Elise would return the helijet, and again rendezvous with Two for the flight home.

xxx

"She's really not ready for discharge from the hospital," Drew had argued.

"We need to take the heat off of your hospital and the L.A. police," Jeff had insisted. "By removing 'Doc', with a press release that she's being taken either back to base or to a different, unnamed hospital, we'll do just that." He'd sighed and asked, "She's strong enough to endure a couple of hours away, isn't she?"

Drew had thought about that for a couple of long, hard minutes, then had sighed and nodded. "Just as long as you bring her back quickly. I'll do what I can to expedite her admission under her real name."

Jeff had smiled wearily. "Thanks, Drew. The hospital has been great, but it's time to take the pressure off and let you get back to business as usual."

"There's the rendezvous," Gordon said, homing in on a secluded bit of woodland. There was a glade big enough for the cargo carrier to set down, and an old logging road as access. A flash of light showed him that Hernando awaited them.

Elise and Alan got up and headed to the lower level, Alan making sure of his ordnance as he did so.

"You expect trouble?" Elise asked, her eyes narrowing.

"No, but that's when it usually happens, when you don't expect it," Alan said grimly. "Especially after that last encounter with the Hood." He helped her attach the winch cable to the rescue cage. "You have everything you need?"

Elise hefted her duffel. "My ticket to the helijet is right here. I'll remove the IR stuff and put on the rest of my Tracy Industries gear on while en route."

"Sounds good. I'll come down with you and introduce you to Hernando." Alan stepped into the rescue cage as Thunderbird Two landed with a wholly unexpected bump. He glanced upward. "Virgil would have his hide."

"Hey, I might have his hide! She's now my baby, too!" Elise quipped. Then her voice softened. "But I understand. He's in a rush to get this over with so you two can see Dianne."

"True," Alan admitted. He tapped his earphone and said, "Cousteau, we're ready down here."

"F-A-B," Gordon said. "I'll be right down."

Post by Tikatue on 12/3/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 13:00:02 GMT  
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Mercy General Hospital, Los Angeles, Tuesday Aug 7th.

The nurse entered the room quietly and smiled at Jeff. Dianne was starting to wake up slowly. "Just here to check your vitals and make sure that everything is set for your transfer."

"Thank you," Dianne groggily replied.

The nurse set about her work and adjusted the oxygen cannula then made sure Dianne's cervical collar was comfortable enough. "The IV fluid is almost gone, so we'll be removing it shortly. We'll send another with you, just in case you need it." Dianne smiled her thanks and the nurse returned one of her own before turning to Jeff. "Carol Ferris will be in charge of the transfer and has made the arrangements. She'll be here soon to finalize everything."

"Thank you. You've all done a great job, and we truly appreciate it."

Not sure what to say, the nurse smiled again and left the room. Jeff walked over to Dianne, taking her hand and gently massaging it. "Are you sure you're ready for this?" he asked softly. Dianne nodded. "I promise you it'll get easier once we have you back here."



"I know, love, I know. I just miss the kids." She sighed deeply. Talking was still exhausting and she was worried about the kids, especially after the Ned Cook show.

"The kids are holding up well. They're being well cared for," Jeff said, trying to reassure his wife. Moments later, there was a knock on the door.

"Who is it?" Jeff asked, releasing Dianne's hand.

"Carol Ferris."

"Come in."

The security chief poked her head in, then -- at Jeff's nod - walked to Dianne's bedside. "We're all set for the transfer. We'll have you leave the same way that you arrived. You'll be transported on a gurney, along with three nurses to the helipad. I've been assured that the International Rescue aircraft will be waiting, and we'll get you safely on board as quickly as possible. Do either of you have any questions?"

Dianne shook her head 'no' and Jeff also answered no.

"Right then, I'll double check everything and we should have you out of here right on schedule." She smiled and left.

Jeff leaned over to Dianne, gently stroking her cheek. "Indy and Cousteau have been itching to see you. I hope they can contain themselves when they bring Two here."

Dianne smiled and tried not to laugh, knowing full well how Alan and Gordon could be when left alone to their own devices for too long. "Frankie will keep them under control," Dianne whispered.

"Lord, I hope so," Jeff scoffed, trying not to smile.

xxxx

"Frankie, this is Agent 97," Alan said as he introduced her to Hernando Garcia, the IR agent/cabby.

"Buenos dias," Elise said graciously.

"No need for the Spanish, ma'am," Hernando replied with a chuckle and a deep Texas accent. "I was born and bred here in the US of A." He glanced at Alan, then back at Elise. "You ready, ma'am?"

"F-A-B," she replied.

He opened the cab door for Elise and then closed it once she was inside. The drive to the airport wasn't long and he was allowed to pull the cab up next to the helijet. Opening the door for her, he bid her farewell, and Elise thanked him. "I'll see you later, Hernando."

He nodded and returned to his cab.

Looking up at the helijet, Elise took a deep breath. This would be the first time she'd flown a helijet since the crash. She knew she could do it, but her emotions were still raw and she had to tell herself several times to get it together. She boarded the jet and familiarized herself once again with the cockpit and controls. She placed the headphones on and started up the jet, noticing that her palms were sweaty.

Rubbing them on her pants, and closing her eyes, she tried to calm and reassure herself. C'mon, Collins, this is a piece of cake. You used to fly these things daily for a living!

Once she started talking to the control tower, she found herself calming; the professional pilot in her had taken over.

Meanwhile, Gordon had lifted up Two the moment Elise was in the clear and turned in the direction of Mercy General.

Alan called Jeff. "ETA, fifteen minutes, Boss," he said.

"F-A-B," Jeff replied. "We'll be waiting."

"Give Doc our love, and we'll see you soon."

Jeff smiled and shook his head, and Dianne smiled with tears in her eyes. "Make sure you land gently, or Van Gogh will have your hide." Jeff warned.

"If Frankie doesn't get it first," Gordon grouched in the background.

Carol arrived with the three nurses and they prepared Dianne for transport, helping her into a set of the hospital's scrubs. Drew Carmichael was also with them, checking Dianne over from a medical point of view.

"You're as good as you can be under the circumstances," he said, a tight smile on his face. "Follow my instructions when you get to your destination."

Dianne squeezed his hands in thanks. "Yes, Doctor."

"I hope you don't need medical assistance of this nature again, but if you do... we're here for you."

"We'll remember that," Jeff told him.

Carol came in. "They're on approach."

"We're ready," Jeff told her.

"Okay, then, here we go," Carol said as the nurses and security people closed in and they left the

room. As the elevator stopped, Jeff heard the mighty roar of Thunderbird Two as she put down in a cleared area of the parking lot. It seemed like only moments before Dianne was safely aboard and secured in the sickbay for the flight.

"Nice beard, Dad," Gordon quipped, before gently adding, "Hey, Mom, we've missed you," and giving her a small kiss on the cheek.

"Can't wait for you to get back to the island, Mom." Alan added, also kissing her cheek.

"Okay, boys, I know you missed her, but let's get going. This is strenuous enough for your mom without having you two to worry about!"

"F-A-B, Dad!" Gordon answered cheekily.

Jeff rolled his eyes as his two sons headed for the cockpit, leaving him with the task of helping his wife change over to "Dianne Tracy" clothing.

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"Tracy helijet from Thunderbird Two, we are returning to rendezvous point." Alan's stern voice made Elise jump. She'd been waiting patiently and daydreaming a little to stay calm when Alan called.

"F-A-B, on my way." She lifted the helijet up with ease and flew towards the clearing area. So far, so good, she thought as she left the city behind and approached the landing area.

Thunderbird Two was already there as she set down the helijet. Jeff and the boys were assisting Dianne, who had been placed on an anti-gravity stretcher.

Jeff smiled when he saw Elise. "Everything okay?"

It was a simple question but she knew he was asking about her own state of mind as well as the flight.

"Yes, sir. No problems, considering."

Jeff smiled again and nodded, fully understanding her reply. She turned and looked at Dianne and smiled. "Good to see you Doc. You've been missed."

The patient nodded as if to say, "I know."

"Well, let's get Mrs. Tracy aboard and to the hospital." The four of them made short work of getting Dianne onto the helijet and secured once again. Jeff had changed from his uniform and disguise back to civilian clothes while he was on Thunderbird Two.

"Don't you two dare get into mischief while I'm gone," Elise warned Gordon and Alan, both of whom merely put on innocent, "What? Us?" looks. Jeff winked at his sons and the helijet took off once more.

Although tired, Dianne had felt better than she had in days. She'd seen two of her sons, and Elise, and knew her family was taken care of.

Landing back on the helipad once again, a team of emergency room nurses -- and Dr. Carmichael - were there to meet her. He and Jeff shook hands and transported "Mrs. Dianne Tracy" into the hospital. Elise watched them go and once the elevator doors closed, she lifted off and headed back to the airport.

Hernando was once again waiting for her and drove her back to the rendezvous point.

"Thanks, Agent 97," Elise said as she got out to board the green machine.

"My pleasure, ma'am," Hernando replied, tipping her a wink.

As she entered the cockpit, she announced, "Gordon, move your butt."

"What? Why?"

"Because I'm flying this baby home, and don't you even think of arguing with me."

"Wouldn't dream of it," Gordon replied, getting up from the pilot's seat. "Besides, this way Virgil can blame you if his baby happens to get scratched."

"Yeah, right, like that's even gonna happen," she growled. "Strap in. We're headed back to base."

--a change of identity by FrankieTB2 and Tikatu on 12/9/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 13:00:33 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 7, 3:30 p.m., Los Angeles (Wednesday, August 8, 2068, 10:30 a.m., Tracy Island)

The conference room was standing room only again, when Geraldo Montoya took the podium again. He had gotten used to this daily press release and was rather sad that this was the last he would be making on this particular subject.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sure you are all aware of the arrival of the International Rescue craft known as Thunderbird Two. The craft was here to remove the CMO of that organization from our care and take her to another facility for recuperation."

A woman down front raised her hand. "Where have they taken her? To another hospital? To their base?"

"International Rescue declined to tell Mercy General where they were going, so your guess is as

good as mine," Geraldo said with a smile.

"Does this mean that Doc is fully recovered?" One of the reporters to Geraldo's right asked.

"I really can't answer that, due to patient confidentiality, but I will say that part of the move was occasioned by the increased police and security presence needed to keep the hospital operational. IR wished to take that burden from us and from the Los Angeles Police Department, though the hospital was willing to continue to provide care for as long as was necessary."

"So, Doc may be traveling to another medical facility?" a man at the back shouted.

"As I said, IR declined to tell us their plans," Geraldo reiterated.

"Is she dead?" came another shout from the back.

Geraldo's face became stern. "I can confirm that IR's CMO was alive and stable when she left here." He glanced around the room as if daring someone else to question him, then his voice became more pleasant. "I hope you will all join me in wishing Doc, and the organization she serves, a speedy recovery from this accident."

He glanced around the room again quickly, then said, "That's all I have. Thank you for your attention."

Outside, the police were removing barriers and hospital staff were collecting the last letters and stuffed animals from the makeshift shrines. The few people who remained after seeing Thunderbird Two's approach began to disperse, hearing through the grapevine that Doc was no longer in residence. Rumors began to fly, most of which were quickly quelled by Geraldo's statement. And through the newly reopened drive came a limousine, carrying the first members of the famed Tracy family to see their mother, who had been newly transferred to her uncle's care.

Post by Tikatu on 12/9/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 13:00:45 GMT

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PM [b]Tues, Aug 7, 4:00 PM, Mercy General Hospital, L.A. (Wed, Aug 8, 11 AM, Tracy Island)

"Mom!"

Alex ran through the door, past Jeff, straight to the bed where his mother lay. He slowed as he saw the I.V., oxygen cannula and cervical collar, and leaned over the edge of the bed to gingerly kiss her. Dianne smiled, and reached out an arm to draw him closer and give him a gentle squeeze.

"Mom, oh, Mom," Cherie said as she came up behind her brother. She was trying hard not to cry, and Dianne reached out a hand to cup her daughter's face.

"It's okay, Cherry, it's all right," she murmured. "I'm going to be okay. Let me kiss you."

Cherie leaned her head down near her mother's mouth, received her kiss, then laid her head for a moment on her mother's chest. "I was scared, Mom, especially after I saw..."

"I know," Dianne said, cutting off what her daughter was going to say. "That scared me, too, but we can't talk about it here, okay?"

Cherie lifted her head, and nodded. "How come you're talking so soft?"

"Because of the accident," Jeff said as he closed the door and joined Dianne by her bedside. "She's bruised in places that make it painful for her to breathe, never mind talk." He glanced around and asked, "Where's Tyler?"

"He's back at Drew's, with Maggie," Lisa said as she came to give her daughter a kiss of her own. "How are you feeling?"

"Exhausted," Dianne admitted. "The transfer took more out of me than I expected." She frowned and asked, "What's going on with Tyler?"

Lisa shook her head. "I don't know. He's been particularly well behaved, but he won't talk about what happened. He didn't watch the show, so he didn't see the... you know what. But I can't get him to talk to me. And he has no appetite, either."

Jeff sighed. "I hope we don't go through what we did after the tsunami," he said, shaking his head. "I don't know that I can handle that again." He gazed down at Dianne, and took her hand. "I know you won't be up to it either, love."

"We will do what we can," said Kyrano, who was arranging the bright flowers he had brought along in a crystal vase. "Perhaps I can tempt him with some of his favorite foods."

"Thank you for the flowers, Kyrano," Dianne murmured. "They make the room look brighter. Though there were already flowers here when I arrived."

Jeff chuckled. "Yes, flowers courtesy of the public... and International Rescue. I gather things are quieting down outside?"

"Yes, they are," Kyrano told him. "We had no trouble getting to the hospital."

"Good." Jeff blew out a relieved breath. "That was... eye-opening, to say the least."

There was a general murmur of assent from the adults in the room, and a pause in the conversation. Alex took advantage of it. "Hey, Mom! Guess what?"

"What?" Dianne replied.

"Grandma Tracy has some kittens!" Alex told her, his eyes bright with excitement. "And she says I

can have one!"

Dianne gave her husband an inquiring look, and he shrugged his shoulders. "It's true. I heard about them from Virgil. He says they rescued a mama cat and four kittens from the remains of the barn. She's adamant about bringing them back to the island, and truthfully, I don't see any harm in it." He paused, and rubbed the back of his neck. "Besides, I'm too tired to argue with her right now."

"The house?" Dianne asked. "What happened there?"

Jeff sighed. This was a piece of information he'd kept from her, not wanting to upset her. "It's... it's gone. Twister took it and half the barn." He shook his head sadly, and squeezed her hand. "I'd like to say it's only a house, but... it was much more than that to me, to Ma. I don't know that I'll be able to go back there. The boys got footage... I haven't looked at it yet."

"Marion wasn't there, thank God," Lisa said gently.

"That's a blessing, anyway," Dianne whispered.

"Come, children," Kyrano said. "Your mother is tired, and we should go."

"Can we come back later?" Cherie asked.

"Yes, you can." Jeff leaned over and gave Dianne a kiss. "I'm going with them this time, love. Tyler needs me, and I need to spend time with the kids and catch up with life outside the hospital."

"Go." Dianne gave him a wan smile, and squeezed his hand.

"Virgil, John, and Em said they'd be by later," Lisa told her. "They're going back to the island in the morning, but wanted to see you before they left."

"I'll be glad to see them," Dianne said. "Give Tyler a kiss from me."

"I will," Lisa assured her.

"Goodbye, Mom. See you again soon," Cherie said, kissing Dianne once again.

"I'll be here."

"Bye, love," Jeff added. "I'll be back this evening."

Dianne nodded as much as the cervical collar would allow, then Jeff, Lisa and Kyrano herded the children out and the room was quiet. For the first time since the incident, Dianne thought about all that had happened, and how fortunate she was, and she sent up a prayer of thankfulness for her family, her husband, and her very life.

[b]Post by Tikatu On 12/9/2006

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(Wednesday, August 8, 2068 Tracy Island, 9:11 a.m./ Tuesday, August 7, 2068 Wichita, KS 4:11 p.m.)

Wednesday morning, Scott sat at the command post, tapping a stylus on his father's desk. The field commander stared at the duty list that he made for himself every day. On his electronic notebook, Heather's name was highlighted in electric blue. First, Scott needed to call the testing grounds to start affecting Heather's transfer to the island, and perhaps, he could satisfy his curiosity as to why Heather was staying at the Regis. He suspected that she had been driven out of her home due to a tornado. There were a few reasons he could come up with as to why she didn't want to tell him. Being in the military for so long, she probably had the stiff upper lip drilled into her. Technically speaking, it wasn't his place to insist on her telling him, but that warred with his natural instinct to care. From the short amount of time they had to talk, she seemed to genuinely care that his family was enduring so much trouble after rescuing the disabled kids. Scott, himself, complained little and was surprised to find himself confessing his troubles to her.

Well, I best get this going, Scott thought to himself. The clock on his father's command console read 9:11 a.m. Searching the phone listings, Scott found and dialed the testing grounds.

Before the vidphone completed its first ring, the tough scraggy face of Commander Langley appeared on the screen. "This is the Tracy Testing Grounds; Commander Langley speaking."

"Commander Langley, this is Scott Tracy, calling on behalf of my father Jefferson Tracy--" His voice was strong and heavy with practiced authority.

"Scott! It's wonderful to hear from you! How are you? How's the family?"

"We're all doing pretty well, Commander. I won't take up much of your time, but we're transferring one of your test pilots to serve as a family pilot at our facilities."

"Who's this?" Commander Langley asked, curiously as he leaned in his black leather office chair. Grabbing his electronic notebook and a stylus, he prepared to write. There would be one person to transfer and that meant there would have to be a new test pilot brought in.

"Heather Kennedy," Scott answered.

"Kennedy?" Hearing Heather's name surprised Langley. "Well, when you gotta go, you gotta go. We'll get to work on it."

Scott grinned. "Great. By the way, I was wondering if you might know what it was that caused her to move to the Regis Hotel?"

"No idea, Scott, but I could transfer you over to her direct supervisor. That would be Kenneth Blake. He might know."

"Do that for me, would you?" asked Scott. "And thanks."

"Anytime. Give my regards to Jeff."

"I will, Commander," Scott agreed.

A few minutes later, Blake came on the screen. "This is Kenneth Blake."

"Mr. Blake? This is Scott Tracy calling. I've put in a transfer for one of your pilots. Her name is--"

"Heather Kennedy?" Blake finished.

"Yes. She applied for the family pilot position with us; she's been interviewed, and she's accepted."

"Okay," said Blake. "The commander knows about this?"

"Yes, he does. I wanted to ask you--how's she doing?"

Blake shook his head. "Well, if you mean her work here, she's doing just fine. Exemplary, in fact. If you mean her life away from work, that's not so good. I don't know if you've heard or not, but we've had a unusually strong thunderstorms come through last Sunday. Several tornadoes touched down between Wichita and El Dorado. After the first siren went off, Heather left to make sure her aunt was okay. On the way, she was chased by one tornado. When she arrived home, she discovered a second tornado had taken her house. I didn't find out what happened, until I found out she was late for work and I called to check on her. She's so punctual that if she's late for work, I get worried."

"Thank you, Mr. Blake. It confirms what I suspected. I'll see to it that Tracy Industries offers its help to her."

"Glad to hear it, Scott. When I called, she was still pretty hyper."

"Hyper?" Scott asked.

"Well, she had just realized that she was supposed to have reported for duty the day after that crazy storm hit so bad. That's how any of us found out about what happened. I told her to just relax and not worry about coming in."

"That's the best advice she could receive. Thank you, Mr. Blake. That's all I needed to know."

"You're welcome."

Sitting back in his seat, Scott rubbed his chin thoughtfully, frowning with concern. Remembering the still fresh feelings of losing the Tracy homestead made him think about what Heather must have lost. That explains why she's at the Regis. She's going to have to start all over again. Maybe I can talk with Tin-Tin to see what we can do, but for right now, we can at least help with hotel expenses for her.

With a satisfied smile, Scott got to work. Pressing the vidphone, he called the Regis in Wichita and talked with the manager. Without her knowing, Heather's hotel bill would be paid for through Tracy Industries. Second, he ordered a bouquet sent to Heather's room with a note of encouragement.

Ordering the bouquet of flowers for Heather got him to thinking of his mother in the hospital. Scott put in one more order for a bouquet full of roses and carnations. "I'm sorry I can't be there, Mom. At least, you'll know I'm thinking of you."

Next order of business? Call Heather, Scott thought. He punched in her number, and waited for her to answer.

Hearing the televid ring in her room, Heather tapped the receive button, causing Scott to appear on the screen. His sea blue eyes still had a hooded look to them. I wonder if he's gotten much sleep? Either there's another storm brewin' or that's pretty strong coffee he's drinkin', Heather pondered. "Hi, Scott. This is Heather."

"Hi, Heather. Tin-Tin volunteered to be your co-pilot. I told her what sort of plane you fly and she got pretty excited. Your Jet Star is faster than my father's jet."

"I shouldn't be, but I'm rather fond of it. Dad helped me finance it, so it means that much more. And I'm glad Tin-Tin's coming along. I'd like to discuss with her this thing she has for 'water mambas'." Heather tried to explain the fact that 'water mambas' were in reality elapids designed for existing in warm tropical waters and were built with their own singular swim fin, but Scott was bent over laughing so hard he couldn't hear what she said. That was one thing he liked about her already. Heather had a wonderful natural gift for deadpan.

As he got control of himself, Scott gave her a warning. "Just to let you know; Dad might insist on testing out the product in question, just to make sure it's living up to its performance requirements." He took a deep breath. "Heather, are you settling down okay?"

Now, that's an odd question. she thought. "Yes, I am."

"The reason I asked is that when I initiated your transfer with your supervisor, Blake, told me how you nearly lost your life, and lost your home to the tornadoes. I'm sorry."

Heather sat down heavily in the lounge chair, wishing she had a glass of crème de menthe straight. "Lost my home? Yes. Nearly lost my life? It wasn't that dire of situation. Fortunately, the tornado turned away before it could destroy El Dorado. There were several people who had to get out of the tornado's path along with me," she admitted.

"Heather, is there anything we can do for you?" he asked kindly, knowing full well that there was more to her story than that.

Several things came to mind, such as a foot massage, a back rub, a shoulder to cry on and a monster teddy bear. "No, Scott. I can't think of a thing. This is where I need to travel lightly, anyway. Thank you for asking. How's your mother doing? I know it's a bit soon to ask."

"Father has gone up to stay with her. My last update said she was already doing better, but Dad has to make sure she's staying put. Hopefully, Mom will be able to come home soon."

"Doctors make the worst patients, or so I hear," she said, laughing.

"Father is actually worse than that." Scott chuckled.

"Who's the worst?" Heather asked, curious.

"Me!" Scott answered without hesitation. "We'll see you on Saturday. Fly safely and may the skies be clear for you."

Post by AmandaTracy on 12/10/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 13:04:29 GMT  
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Tracy Island, August 8th, midday

It had been a couple of days since Nikki and Dom had returned to Tracy Island. Nikki had had plenty of visitors; she had been very pleased to see everyone.

Looking around her apartment she groaned to herself at the hamper of clothes. The lid was partially open, due to the amount of clothes in it. The young nurse was just contemplating how she could do some washing, when her door chimed.

"Who is it?" she called out.

"It's me, Elise."

Picking up her crutches, she hobbled to the door and opened it. "Hi, Elise. Come on in."

"I was wondering if you wanted any help at all," her friend asked.

"Gosh! You must've read my mind. I was just wondering how I could get my washing done." She pointed to the hamper.

"I'd be more than happy to help," Elise said, piling the clothes into a basket.

"You don't have to," Nikki began to protest.

Elise grinned at the young nurse. "I don't mind. And anyway, how are you gonna put your clothes into the machine while balancing on crutches?"

Nikki hobbled beside Elise as they headed for the lift. Entering the laundry room, Elise separated the whites from the dark colours, putting the different piles separate machines before adding the

detergents and setting the controls

"It must have been one heck of an experience being tossed about in Thunderbird Seven. Gordon told me how he helped Alan and Kat to move some of the intact pieces out of the pod, which I think was traumatic for them all."

Nikki half smiled at her friend. "Yes, that's something I don't want to repeat in a hurry."

Switching the machine on, Elise remarked, "Why don't you come to my apartment for coffee and a chat while we wait for your clothes to wash?"

Nikki accepted Elise's invitation, and soon the two young women were seated in Elise's apartment, sipping hot cups of coffee. "So," Elise commented. "How're you coping?"

Nikki hesitated. "I thought at first, I'd be okay. But last night I had a pretty dreadful dream."

Elise looked concerned. This is becoming too regular. First me, then Callie and now Nikki. Maybe Dom is suffering as well. I found both Dr Tracy and Virgil helpful, but neither of them is here right now.

"Well, I guess in the absence of Dr Tracy, you could talk to either Gordon or Alan. They've had a lot of experience on rescues. I'm sure they'd be more than happy to talk things through with you."

Seeing that her guest had finished, Elise offered her another cup. Conversation then turned to Virgil's birthday.

"I'm so looking forward to seeing Paradise Peaks," Nikki remarked.

"Yeah," Elise replied. "I think it's going to be a lot of fun, and I can't wait to see the guy's faces when we all turn up in the same coloured dresses."

Nikki smiled at that, and then added, "At least I should be able to dance by then."

"Well, if not, I'm sure that someone will keep you company," her friend replied, grinning at her.

They talked for a while longer, before Nikki got to her feet. "My washing should be ready to go into the dryer now."

"Hey. You stay here. I'll switch your stuff to the dryer."

"Thanks, Elise. But there are some things that shouldn't be tumble dried."

"Okay, come along and show me what clothes can't be put in the dryer, and then we can come back here to wait until your clothes are dried," Elise suggested, as they left her apartment together.

--simple assistance by TawnyAngel22 on 12/10/2006

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Wednesday, August 8, 2068, 9 p.m, Tracy Island (2 a.m., same day, Los Angeles)

"I hate the IDL," Emily Tracy was heard to say when she disembarked from Tracy Two. "You leave at one time on one day and end up back home at nearly the same time the next... or the previous day."

"Hi, Grandma," Alan said, smiling as he helped her out of the jet. "How was the flight?"

"It would have been noisy if we hadn't sedated them," Virgil said as he came out, a large hard-sided case in his hand.

"'Them'?" Gordon asked as he brought up the luggage float. "Who are 'they'?"

"The cats," John said with a sigh as he opened the luggage compartment. "One semi-feral, injured momma cat and four kittens." He pulled out, one by one, six 20 pound bags of cat litter. "We found them in what was left of the barn, and brought them home."

"And what did Dad say about this?" Alan asked, peering into the dark case.

"Nothing, really," Grandma told him. "He was too busy tending to Dianne to give me any lip."

"How's Mom?" Gordon asked as he pulled three new, automatic, self-cleaning litter boxes from the cargo hold. "We didn't get to see her long. Just a few minutes while we were transferring her from the hospital. She looked tired, and didn't talk much."

Grandma sighed. "Yes, she's still very tired, and talking is still painful. We saw her for about a half hour this evening, before we left." She shook her head. "I hope we can bring her home soon."

"Did you get to see the squirts?" Gordon asked. "How are they holding up?"

"I called before we left for Kansas," John said. "And paid a brief visit in the morning, when we got back to L.A." He shook his head, and closed the luggage compartment. "Cherie and Alex were getting antsy about seeing Mom, but Ty? I'm not sure. Something's wrong there, though he was pretty well-behaved. He didn't see the show; Grandma P. said he went to bed early."

"Good thing," Virgil said. "That footage of the tornado... gave me the shivers!" He, Emily, and John entered the elevator... with the cat case.

"Where you going to put those cats?" Alan asked, leaning on the handle of the antigravity float.

"My quarters for the moment," Grandma said. "Got to get momma cat used to living indoors." She smiled wearily at her grandsons. "Bring up the luggage for us, please, and bring the litter boxes to me so we can get things set up."

"Sure, Grandma." Gordon grinned. "See you in a few minutes."

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 18:49:29 GMT  
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Thursday August 9th, 11:45am...

John stood in the doorway of the repair bay. He ran a hand nervously through his hair, then taking a deep breath, opened the door and stepped inside.

Scanning the area, he repressed a shudder as he gazed upon the pieces of Thunderbird 7. He ran his hand lightly over the metal and shivered. Too close...way too close. A figure in overalls caught his eye and, squaring his shoulders, he walked over to her.

"Kat? Can I talk to you for a minute?" John called out.

Kat looked up, her eyes growing cold. "I'm a bit busy at the moment, John. Perhaps later." She turned back to her work.

John placed a hand on her arm. "I'm heading back to Five right after lunch. Kat, please?"

She stared at him a moment, then put down her wrench, folding her hands across her chest. "All right. What is it, John?"

He sighed. "I just wanted to apologize for the other day. I didn't mean to snap at you like that. I was just...stressed, and I took it out on you. I'm sorry."

Kat didn't move or reply and John paced around Seven. "Look, Kat, you have to understand how it looked to me! I hadn't slept in twenty-four hours, my mother was...badly hurt. Simultaneous rescues are hell on the best of days...this one was the worst." He shook his head. "Having dinner with anyone, not just you, was the absolute last thing on my mind."

He turned and looked at her. "I'm sorry."

Kat's expression softened. "You just looked so...worn, like the weight of the world was on your shoulders."

"It was," John said quietly.

"All the same, I just wanted you to know that I was here for you. That's all," she told him simply.

John sighed again. "Kat, I really appreciate your friendship, you know that." He glanced over at her, his blue eyes troubled. "You must know how the whole thing looked. It seemed as if you were only asking about my mother as a round-about way to get me to have dinner."



Kat flushed. "That is not true," she said indignantly.

"Isn't it?" John replied simply. "Kat, I'm not trying to be cruel. Right now, my family comes first. If you and I are ever going to have something together, you have to understand that."

She didn't reply, but nodded, her eyes looking at the floor.

"Thank-you, Kat," he said, smiling. "How about we take a rain check on dinner? Maybe next time I'm down?"

She finally met his gaze and smiled back, trying to keep the disappointment out of her voice. "That would be fine."

"Good." John glanced down at his watch. "I'd better go. Alan's taking me back." He glanced over at Kat. "Talk to you soon?"

"Yes, of course. Have a safe trip, John," she told him.

"I will. Bye!" John waved as he walked out the door. Well, that went better than I thought it would. He started whistling a tune of his brother's as he made his way up to the house.

Post by lillehafrue On 12/10/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 18:49:57 GMT  
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Wed Aug 8, 7:05pm, SARS cabin, outside of Boulder, Colorado...(Thurs Aug 9, 1:05, Tracy Island)

Luke sighed as he leaned on the rail up on the lookout at the SARS cabin. He'd gotten back that morning and managed to avoid everyone by volunteering to muck out the stables. It was good, back-breaking work and it meant he didn't have to think.

The sun was still high, though from the way his stomach was growling, Luke knew he had missed dinner. Rommel, his German Shepard, gave a moan as he rolled onto his back. Luke smiled. "At least I've still got you, right, mutt?" he rubbed the dog's stomach and Rommel's tail thumped in pleasure.

"Luke? Hey, you up here?"

Luke turned to see his friend and co-worker, Irwin Jones, step up on to the deck. Rommel gave a 'woof' and trotted over to him. "There you are. What's up?" he asked, idly scratching Rom's head.

Luke shrugged. "Not much."

"I just came up from the stables; they look good."

"Thanks."

Irwin frowned. Luke was quiet and reserved by nature, but this was out of character even for him. "Luke, you've been avoiding us all day. What's going on?" he persisted.

Luke turned away. "Nothing."

"Don't 'nothing' me, pal. Something's bothering you; spit it out." The young black man folded his arms across his chest, and waited.

Finally Luke sighed. "Barry and I...we broke up."

Irwin's expression softened. "Oh, man, that sucks. I'm sorry."

"Thanks."

They both stood quietly for a few minutes. "What happened?" Irwin asked.

"Remember that big promotion he got a few months ago?" Irwin nodded. "Well, they transferred him to the LA office."

"You guys couldn't work something out?"

Luke shook his head. "We tried. It just didn't work."

"Man, I'm sorry," Irwin said again.

Luke straightened up. "It wasn't this big blow up kind of thing. We're smart enough to have recognized that it was over before things got really ugly. At least this way, we're still friends."

"Yeah, but it still sucks." Irwin smiled and Luke sent one in return. Irwin clapped him on the shoulder. "Look, don't mope up here all night. The Rockies game starts in a few minutes. We've got hot wings and stuff downstairs. I know you didn't eat all day, so I expect you to join us." Irwin tried to glare, but failed miserably.

Luke laughed. "Thanks, I'll be down in a little while."

"You'd better be. Or I send Jesse up to find you!"

Luke threw his hands up in defeat. "Anything but that!"

With one last wave, Irwin vanished down the steps, leaving Luke and Rommel alone again. Luke sighed and turned back to face the forest, one hand on his dog's head. "Guess it's just you and me now, pal. Maybe it's time we broadened our horizons, too."

Post by lillehafrue On 12/11/2006

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Thursday, August 9, 2068, 4:30 p.m., Thunderbird Five (same time and date on Tracy Island)

The flight up in Thunderbird Three was smooth. It helped John to put his last meeting with Kat aside to focus on piloting and making plans for the remainder of his stay. Alan, as co-pilot, wanted to talk about the new inhabitants of the household.

"You should see them, John! They are so tiny, and when I went to look at them, two or three of them actually hissed at me! They've got the sharpest little claws, too. Next time I visit, I'm wearing that leather jacket you guys brought back."

John rolled his eyes. "I know all about their claws... and their teeth!" He held out his hand, which still showed the marks of his struggle with the kitten. "I was there when we picked them up, remember?" Shaking his head, he added, "As far the leather coat is concerned, it's not as much protection as you'd think. Just ask Virgil." After a pause, he asked, "Did Grandma tell you about the little guys getting first pick?"

"Yeah, yeah," Alan said, waving a hand. Then he turned thoughtful. "Hey, John? How do you think a cat would do in space? Y'know, like on Thunderbird Five?"

John laughed. "Wouldn't want to change the litter box in micro gravity!"

But as they approached Five, it became evident that something wasn't quite right. Brains, when he spoke to them, sounded distracted, and there was a lag between requests for various docking protocols and their implementation. So instead of beginning the unloading procedures right away as usual, the Tracy brothers went looking for the chief engineer.

"Brains?" John poked his head out of the lift that connected the lower level of the station with the upper level. He glanced at Alan, who shrugged.

They found him in the monitor room, staring at a computer screen. "Brains?" John said again. "Are you okay?"

There was a pause, then Brains looked up and did a double take, startled. "Oh, ah, I didn't know you were there, John. Hi, Alan." He gestured at the screen. "Take a look at this, will you?"

The footage of the tornado picking up Thunderbird Seven played once again on the screen, this time in slow motion. Brains zoomed in on the image, showing a blurry close up on the vortex where an occasional glimpse of the ambulance could be seen. "See! There!" Brains froze the frame. "That's when the two sections separated. I'm trying to find out what happened and why they separated." He shook his head. "I did something wrong in the design of this vehicle and I need to correct it so this doesn't happen ever again!"

John and Alan glanced at each other, concerned at the anguished tone in their friend's voice. "Brains," Alan said, very matter-of-fact, "you're not going to get your answers here. You need to get down to base and talk with Nikki, Dom and Mom. Take a look at the black box, too." He

punched a few keys, and the screen went to the standby mode, with the IR logo plastered across it. "Now, give us a hand. The faster we get Three unloaded, the faster you and I get back to base and you can pursue this."

Brains blinked owlishly at Alan, then sighed. "You're right, of course." He stood and stretched. "I'll come help." Rubbing the back of his neck, he said, "Sorry that I was so distracted, but I can't stop thinking that I did something wrong here."

"Personally, I doubt it. No one can think of every possible scenario, not even you, Brains," John told him. "But you'll get more pieces of the puzzle down on Earth than you'll find here. Now, come on."

"F-A-B," replied the weary scientist as he followed the brothers down to the lower level.

Post by Tikatu On 12/11/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 18:52:02 GMT  
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Tracy Island --Friday 10th August, 7.30 a.m.

Virgil and Scott were waiting in the gym for Alan and Gordon to appear. "Do you know what this is all about?" Virgil asked.

"No idea," his brother replied. "All I know is that Alan asked if you and I would be judges at some sort of competition they're undertaking."

Virgil laughed. "I've never known these two to compete against each other. Maybe it's to do with male testosterone. You know, showing off in front of our new female members."

"I doubt it," his brother replied. "There's no one else here. I'm sure that if the others had been invited they'd have been here by now."

At that moment the two competitors came into the gym.

"Now guys," Scott said. "Care to let us know what this is all about?"

"Alan has challenged me to a couple of gym exercises and a race along the beach," Gordon answered.

Virgil raised his eyebrows.

"Well," Alan continued. "Gordon came in and remarked that I seemed a little out of shape, but he would have been red in the face as well, if he'd been working out as long as I had. So I challenged him to a couple of exercises and a race along the beach."

"Of course the reason for him being out of breath wouldn't have had anything to do with the fact that he was stuffing himself full of Grandma's apple pie the evening before." Gordon chuckled.

"Okay, that's enough. Let's get on with it. What's first?" Scott said.

"The first exercise is to see how many sit ups we can do in two minutes," Alan answered.

"Okay," Virgil agreed, "but I think that you should add a twist. Touch your right knee with your left elbow and vice versa."

Both brothers sat down on the floor and then lay flat on their backs. Bending their knees, at the same time placing their feet flat on the floor and their arms bent allowing their fingertips to touch the back of their ears, they looked to Virgil to start the timer. Scott and Virgil held Alan and Gordon's feet, so that they didn't rise off the mat.

"Okay, ready, set, go!"

Both men simultaneously began the exercise, grunting each time they twisted to touch the opposite knee.

"Alan, that was nowhere near your right knee," Virgil said. "Touch your knee with your elbow each time."

Before long, Virgil called out, "Three, two, one, stop!"

Both brothers lay on the floor, breathing deeply.

Virgil and Scott compared numbers.

"Alan, you did 35 and, Gordon, so did you," Scott said.

Gordon fetched his towel and laid it around his neck. "Are you sure that Alan touched his knees every time?"

"One was nowhere near his knees, but he still managed to do the same number as you, Gordon," Virgil replied.

"So, if there hadn't been one where I didn't touch my knee, I would have beaten him," Alan said.

"Okay, little brother; shall we continue? Next is bicep curls using a 25-pound weight in each hand. Let's see who can do the most," Gordon said.

Both brothers picked up the weights and at Virgil's "Go", began the next event.

This time when they had finished, although neither could continue for more than two minutes, it was Gordon who managed to do three more than Alan.

Both young men headed for their water bottles and each took a few sips of the cooling liquid.

"Okay, let's head for the beach," Alan said.

"No, you need to do some stretching exercises," Virgil stated. "Otherwise you won't be able to move tomorrow."

Both brothers stretched their arms and abs before following Virgil and Scott to the beach. Scott was driving a hover bike. While they were deciding how far to run, they began some leg stretches, knee bends and arm circling.

"I say we run as far as that funny shaped rock, the one just out of sight, and then return," Gordon suggested.

"That's not very far," Virgil observed. "Why not run the length of the beach as far as the caves and back?"

Gordon looked at Alan. "Are you up for it?"

Alan nodded.

"And I intend following on the hover bike," Scott explained, "just to make sure that neither of you cheat."

Both competitors nodded in agreement.

"Ready, set, go!" Virgil shouted.

Both brothers sprinted off, running almost neck and neck, followed by Scott. While the brothers were gone, Virgil tied a tape across from one palm tree to another, to create a finishing line.

"What's happening here?" Dominic asked, as he and Josh came along the beach towards them.

"Alan and Gordon are trying to see who is the fittest," Virgil explained.

"A bit of sibling rivalry?" Dom queried, smiling at Virgil. "Where are they now?"

"Running the length of the beach and back," Virgil replied, "followed by Scott on a hover bike so make sure neither of them cheat."

Josh tugged his dad's hand. "We watch?"

"Of course you can," Virgil said, smiling at the youngster.

It wasn't too long before the runners came in to view. Alan was a little ahead, but Gordon was making up ground fast. Unfortunately, Alan slipped on some seaweed, and half stumbled, allowing Gordon to overtake. Gordon sprinted for the finishing line, arms above his head.

"Yippee, Gordon!" Josh shouted, jumping up and down.

"Looks like Gordon is the overall winner," Scott remarked.

"You owe me, kiddo," Gordon said, holding out his hand.

"Well, I haven't got the money on me; I'll get it to you," Alan said a little huffily.

"Just don't forget," Gordon said, laughing at him.

"I won't," Alan called out as he turned and headed back to the villa.

"Somehow, I don't think Alan is a very good loser," Gordon chuckled, as he and his brothers followed his competitor.

Josh ran ahead of his father as they continued along the beach. "Hey, not so fast. We're not racing." Dom caught the little boy up and swung him onto his shoulders. "I think it's time we headed back for breakfast."

--sibling rivalry by TawnyAngel22 on 12/11/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 18:52:31 GMT

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Tracy Island... Friday, August 10th, 8:00 am...(Thursday, August 9th, 1:00 pm Los Angeles)

Brains stared intently at the computer screen in front of him. This should not have happened. What did I miss?

He ran the video again, watching as Thunderbird Seven was tossed about in the wind as if she were a child's toy. He paused the video at the part where the cabin tore from the main unit and jotted a few notes down on his data pad. He then started the footage over and watched it again.

And again.

And again.

"Hiram?"

Brains shook his head and zoomed in closer for a better look. There, that's when it starts to break free. But why? We ran test after test. She should have held together.

"Hiram?"

"I'll have to examine the metal fragments. Could I have mixed the formula wrong?" he muttered to himself, adding more notes to his pad.



"Hiram!"

Brains looked up, startled, to see Tin-Tin standing next to him. "Tin-Tin, I didn't see you there."

"I know. I've been watching you for the last ten minutes." Tin-Tin took in his bloodshot eyes and rumpled appearance. Her voice softened. "It's not your fault."

Brains shook his head and turned back to the computer. "I designed her."

"Yes, with input from Dianne, Virgil, and even myself."

"But the final decision was mine." Brains put his face in his hands. "They could have died," he said in a choked voice.

Tin-Tin knelt next to him and took his hands in hers. "But they didn't. We can't predict everything, Hiram. No matter how many simulations we run, or tests we do, we can't anticipate what will happen. No one can."

"But..."

"But nothing! Hiram, don't you think that if you had overlooked something, someone would have noticed? You may have designed Thunderbird Seven, but Jeff had the final say on her. If he had seen anything, anything out of the ordinary, she never would have been built!"

"I-I suppose you're right," Brains said, after a few moments thought.

"You know I am." Tin-Tin smiled, her green eyes soft. "Why don't we go get something to eat. I know you haven't left here since you got back yesterday."

Brains shook his head. "I can't. I have to finish my report first," he said as he turned back to the computer.

Tin-Tin leaned forward and pushed the button on the console, effectively shutting the system off. "No, you don't," she said forcefully. "It can wait until you've had a decent meal and a few hours' sleep. Nothing is going to change before that."

"But Jeff will be waiting."

"Then he can wait a few hours more. Dianne's transfer was completed earlier, and I'm sure he's at her side. Right now, your data must be the last thing on his mind."

"I know, but..."

Tin-Tin interrupted, "Has he asked you for your report?"

"No, no, he hasn't. But he'll want me to call him as soon as I have something."

"And do you have any new information to give him?" Tin-Tin folded her arms across her chest.

Brains shook his head. "No," he said quietly.

"Then a few more hours won't matter, will it?"

Brains looked a bit taken aback at Tin-Tin's outburst. Then, seeing the concern in her features, he smiled. "Perhaps, you're right."

Tin-Tin's lips curved upwards in a smirk. "I'm always right." She reached out and took his hand. "Come, breakfast is ready. We were only waiting for you."

Brains squeezed her hand affectionately. "Thank-you."

The worry faded from her face and she smiled softly. "You're welcome."

Post by lillehafrue On 12/19/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 18:53:12 GMT  
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Friday, August 10, 2068, over the Pacific (after 10 p.m., same day, Tracy Island)

"How's it going up here, Callie?"

Callie took in a deep breath and smiled at Scott. "It's good, Scott. Been a while since I've flown a private plane. With so many pilots on the island, I've often felt like my skills were kind of redundant. So it's nice to put them to use again."

"It's not Thunderbird Three," Scott said as he settled in beside her.

"No, it's not," she admitted. "And, for once, I'm happy to be suborbital and in the atmosphere."

Scott smiled and nodded. "And I'm glad to have someone else flying me somewhere, too."

That made Callie chuckle. "Feeling like the family chauffeur?"

"Yeah, sometimes... lately," Scott replied as he automatically scanned the instruments. His hands were itching to take the controls, but he steeled himself. "I'll be doing enough flying after we get to Wichita. Instead, he changed the subject. "Looking forward to this family time?"

Callie took in and let out a deep breath. "You have no idea how much I'm looking forward to this. A chance to just put... to put things behind me and not have to be on call."

Scott caught the slight emphasis on the word "things" and extrapolated what she meant. "It has been a rough week for all of us," he said quietly.

"More than a week," she murmured softly. Then, realizing that he'd probably heard even that, she smiled ruefully. "Hopefully the change of scene and pace will do me some good."

"I think it will," Scott agreed. "Just like getting the rest of the family back home will do us a lot of good." He glanced back toward the cabin and frowned a little. "Does Tin-Tin seem a bit... preoccupied to you?"

"She wasn't too terribly talkative, if that's what you mean," Callie said. "She looked kind of sad, and worried." She paused for a moment, then asked, "Do you think she could be worried about her father? About him getting remarried? Or about what's been going on in Los Angeles and what he might be going through there?"

Scott thought for a moment, then shook his head. "No, I don't think she's worried about her father. He's a pretty level-headed guy and I know she's thrilled about him getting married again. She might be worried about Brains, though."

"Hmm, yeah, I guess I can see that," Callie said, nodding. "He's got a lot of work ahead of him with Seven being damaged and all."

Scott smiled slightly; he wasn't sure if he should spill the beans on what he himself knew about the engineer and his assistant. "Yes, he does. They both will have a lot to work on as far as Seven is concerned; in fact, we'll probably all be involved in repairing and rebuilding it at one point or another."

They sat in a companionable silence for a moment, then Callie asked, "Have you seen it?"

"Seen what?"

"Seven. Since you've been back. Have you gone down to see it?"

Scott let out a breathy sigh. "Yeah. I have."

It hadn't been easy either. Jeff had mentioned Dianne's wedding and engagement rings. They weren't in her personal effects at the hospital, and Jeff had thought it wise not to ask at that point. Scott had mentioned it to Virgil, who checked through all of Thunderbird Two's sickbay and lockers, and found nothing. So, he himself had gone down to Seven to see if he could find the missing rings.

He couldn't do it. He just couldn't go inside. He took a quick glance in the cockpit from outside the cut off door, but no one had gotten into the medical cabin and Scott couldn't bring himself to get out the oxyhydrite equipment. It was all still too fresh, too close. When we get to Wichita, I'll give Nikki a call. She's most likely to know if the rings are in Seven. Wish I'd talked to her before about it, but... it's probably still too close for her, too. For all of us.

"Scott?"

He was shaken from his reverie by Callie's question. "Are you all right?" she asked when she got his attention. "You seemed lost out there for a bit."

"I was, Callie. Thanks for bringing me back." He smiled at her, a tight, slightly strained smile, then glanced over the instruments again.

"Would you like to take over?" she asked dryly. "Don't think I haven't seen you checking out the readings."

"Curses, foiled again," he said, snapping his fingers in mock annoyance, then waving a hand at her. "Nah, you can keep going. I'll have plenty of flying to do after we get to Wichita."

Post by Tikatu On 12/19/2006

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 18:53:55 GMT  
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Friday, August 10, 2068, 10 a.m., Los Angeles (Noon, same day, Kansas; 5 a.m., August 11, Tracy Island)

"Good morning, love," Jeff said as he entered Dianne's room, smiling. He dropped an overnight case on the chair, and made his way over to the bed.

"You're a sight for sore eyes," she replied, smiling back, reaching out for him.

"Ready to get out of here?" he asked as he gently hugged her.

"More than ready." A puzzled frown crossed her face. "Where are the kids?"

"I've got them packing up for the trip home," Jeff explained, sitting on the edge of Dianne's hospital bed. "Scott should be here soon. He's dropped Tin-Tin and Callie off at the base in Wichita. Tin-Tin's supposed to escort Heather Kennedy back to the island, and Callie's gone for a little vacation over her birthday."

Dianne sighed. "I feel so out of the loop."

Jeff cupped her face with a hand and chuckled. "You and me both, love." He leaned forward to touch his forehead to hers. "We'll both get up to speed once we get home."

"Well, there you are," a voice called from the doorway. They both glanced over to see Drew come in, a data pad in his hand. "I was wondering when you'd show up, Jeff. Surprised you're not out pestering the nurses to hurry things along."

"Not when it comes to Dianne," Jeff said mildly. "Besides, I knew the head honcho would show up soon enough."

Drew chuckled. "I guess we know each other too well, huh, Jeff?" He glanced over the notes again. "Looks like you're good to go this afternoon, Di. I have a meeting in about a half-hour, then

I'll be by to process your discharge... as long as no emergencies arise."

"Close the door, will you?" Jeff asked. "I need to talk to you about something."

Drew turned and closed the door, then locked it. "If it's about the donation..."

"It is," Jeff said quietly, relief in his tone. "Did it arrive?"

"Yes," Drew replied, his voice also dropping to a murmur. "That's what the meeting is about, announcing the donation." He shook his head. "I don't know how you did that, really. The bean counters are trying to trace where the money came from, Gerry's running around in circles trying to trace the message you sent, and Dr. Taylor's just sitting back in stunned -- but pleased -- surprise."

"I hope it covers the bill," Jeff said, grinning.

"More than covers it, I'd say." Drew returned the grin. "I hear that the police also heard from International Rescue, and their benevolence fund's coffers were quietly filled as well."

"They did stellar work," Jeff said. "It was the least we could do."

"And when were you going to share the details with me?" Dianne asked, one eyebrow raised.

"On the way home, if you weren't too tired," Jeff told her, stroking her cheek.

"And with that I'll make my exit and leave you two lovebirds alone," Drew said, turning toward the door.

"You're coming out to the island soon?" Jeff asked.

"Yes, as soon as my schedule allows," Drew replied, opening the door. "Maggie's planning on going with you to help with the kids, and I'll need to drag my bride away from your tropical paradise." He raised a hand in farewell. "I'll be back later with the discharge papers." As he left, he closed the door behind him again.

Dianne drew a deep breath in through her nose and let it out in a loud, shaky sigh. "I can hardly wait to get out of here."

"And I can hardly wait to get you home," Jeff said, resting his hand on the side of her neck. "Though you're going to find it hard to get around for a bit with your leg still healing and all."

"I know. But even the sick room at home will be better than the hospital here," she told him. "For one, the food will be better..."

"I could have snuck in something from Maggie's kitchen," Jeff remonstrated. "You should have asked."

Dianne shook her head. "It's okay. She had enough to do feeding the rest of the family. But thanks

for smuggling in those brownies that Lena sent. They were soooo delicious. I'll have to send a thank you." She glanced over at the overnight case. "Are those my clothes?" She pulled back the covers and maneuvered herself carefully to the edge of the bed.

Jeff got up to give her room, and fetch the case. "Yes, I hope they'll suit. Your mother picked them out, with Cherie's help."

"I'm sure they'll be fine, though I'm not going to be walking down any fashion runway anytime soon... if ever." She took the case from his hand and began to pull out the clothes.

"I think Cherie wanted to feel needed. She and the boys have had a rough time."

"I know. It's been rough for all of us."

Jeff moved behind her and began to untie the strings of the hospital gown. As he did, he kissed the back of her neck, and smoothed his hands gently over her still-bruised shoulders.

"Mmmm." Dianne let out a soft groan. "That feels so good.... but..."

"But," Jeff said, his voice sounding husky, "you're in no condition to go any farther, right?"

"Unfortunately true," she replied, turning her head to look at him.

He came up close to kiss her, making sure that she didn't have to twist to reach his lips, holding onto her upper arms. "We'll find a way... soon."

"Ah'll hold you to that, suh," she murmured as she kissed him back.

Post by Tikatu on 1/5/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 18:54:24 GMT  
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Plop.

Plop.

Plop.

Tyler threw another stone into the Pacific, and watched as it skipped across the surface of the water, before disappearing under a wave. He sighed and picked up another.

"Tyler! Hey Tyler!"

He looked up from where he was sitting to see Cherie waving from the top of the sand dune. He sighed to himself and turned back to the water.

Cherie, huffing and puffing from her trek through the sand, frowned down at him. "What are you doing? You know you're not supposed to come down here alone."

Tyler shrugged and muttered something Cherie couldn't hear.

"What did you say?" she asked.

"I just wanted to watch the tide come in," Tyler replied, skipping a rock over the waves.

"You heard what Dad told us before he left. Uncle Drew is discharging Mom. Scott's on his way back from Wichita and we're all heading back home. You need to finish packing," she told him.

Tyler mumbled something again.

"What?"

"OK! I'll pack!" Tyler sighed and sat there, his legs swinging.

Cherie sat down on the boulder next to him. "Mom's OK, Tyler."

"I know."

"Then why are you down here moping?"

"I'm not moping," Tyler replied shortly.

Cherie rolled her eyes. "You'd better get back up to the house and pack. I want us to be all ready when Mom gets here." She got to her feet and started back up the dune. She was at the top when she turned to look back at her brother. Tyler hadn't moved off the rock. "Tyler! Let's move it! Now!"

Tyler threw one last rock into the water, then got to his feet and shuffled after his sister.

Post by lillehafrue On 1/7/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 18:54:52 GMT  
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Fri, Aug 10; Dothan Regional Airport; 1:45 PM (Sat, Aug 11, 6:45 AM on Tracy Island)

Joseph and Brian Spencer had just arrived at the airport when they saw a commuter jet making its final approach.

"We'd better hurry, Joe! I don't want Callie to think we were late."

Getting a strong grip on Brian's shoulder, Joseph said, "Will you take it easy?"



"How can I?" Brian started surging ahead of him while saying, "Callie's coming home for the first time since she started working for Tracy Industries! Aren't you the least bit excited?"

"Yeah, but this is overdoing it. Calm down or I'll lose you."

Brian finally slowed down and said, "Sorry, bro. I can't help myself."

"You were always the most impatient out of the three of us."

As they entered the airport, Joseph looked at the flight arrival screen. "Yeah, her flight should be landing any minute now. Let's get to the lobby and wait for her. The airport's busier than usual today."

"That's unusual. I--wait a minute, I know what it is. A lot of people from the area are leaving for Canton, Ohio, for the Hall of Fame Game."

"I forgot that game was coming up next Saturday. Alabama's playing...Penn State, right?"

"Yeah. I'd give an arm and a leg to go to that game."

"Bro, we've already got tickets to the Alabama-Florida game for next month. Don't worry about it."

Meanwhile, Callie had walked through the boarding ramp from the plane and into the terminal. I hope I didn't get here too early, she thought. Knowing Joe, he'll probably burn rubber if he thinks they'll be even a minute late.

The two brothers waited in the lobby near the security checkpoint. "Well, here we are," said Brian. Seeing his sister, he yelled, "And there she is!"

Joseph could see her as well. "Callie! Callie!"

She walked into the lobby and saw them waving their arms wildly. As they ran toward her, she yelled, "Joe! Bri!" When all three met, she greeted them with a tight hug. "I'm glad to see you guys."

With a big smile, Brian said, "Me, too, Sis. It's great you could come home for your birthday."

"I know it. I can't wait to see Mom and Dad, but they're probably at work right now."

Joseph said, "Hey, it's okay, Sis. We've got the house and your room already set up for ya, so you can enjoy time at home through your birthday."

"I appreciate it, Joe. I really appreciate it." A lot more than you could possibly imagine.

After the brothers helped her get her luggage to the car, Joseph asked her to sit in the front passenger seat. Brian didn't mind being in the back.

On the drive back to their house in Opp, Brian asked a lot of questions about her job at Tracy Industries. "Relax," said Callie, "I'll tell you all about my job when we get home. Right now, I'm a little tired from jet lag." And a whole lot more. I needed to get away from my Hood-related nightmares. I don't want anyone to know I'm even on these meds Doc gave me. If they find out, I don't even want to think about what my folks would think of me then...

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 1/7/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 18:55:25 GMT  
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Friday, August 10; 2:25 PM; Denver International Airport (8:25 AM Saturday on Tracy Island)

Lena settled back in her seat on the aisle and fastened her seat belt. I should feel guilty about flying first class, but if de boss insists, who am I to argue? She smiled to herself and pulled the airline catalogue from the seat pocket in front of her, while the rest of the passengers boarded.

When she heard the cabin door close, she looked around. There were some empty seats and one of the attendants, noticing the look of surprise on her face, said, "It isn't a holiday weekend, and those who are on vacation now are either at their destinations or not coming back until Monday. We're about two-thirds full today. So you can spread out, if you like."

"Tank you, but I tink I'm just fine like dis."

The attendant moved on to make sure everyone's seat belt was fastened, as the plane began to move away from the terminal. The usual instructions were announced, and the plane taxied to the end of the runway.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the cockpit, the crew was doing their last minute checks. They were next to take off, and received permission from the tower. Everyone heard the engines powering up, and soon the jet was speeding down the runway, into the afternoon sun. Takeoff was smooth, then the pilot received instructions to bank right and was given a heading.

"Tower, will you please repeat? There's a storm along that heading."

"Yes, but it is moving north rapidly, and will be all but gone by the time you reach there."

The pilot and co-pilot looked at each other, then the pilot looked back at the navigator, who shrugged. "Roger, tower. I'm turning now."

The course change was made, and it looked like it would be a smooth trip all the way to Maryland. But the co-pilot looked out the side window a few minutes later and said, "Oh, my God, Paul! Look!

The pilot glanced to his right and saw the storm. It was indeed moving rapidly north, but had been much farther south than the controller indicated, and would soon envelop them. He called the tower.

"The storm's heading right for us, and it's a bad one. I need instructions."

"Figure it out for yourself, Captain Conner. That's what you get for trying to take my sister away from me."

Everyone in the cockpit was stunned. "Don? You gave me this heading because I'm dating Chris? Do you realize how many people you've put in jeopardy?"

"I don't care about that. Get yourself out of it, if you can."

Communications went dead, and the pilot and co-pilot worked together to get away from the storm. They tried to climb above it and turn back, but it was on them before they got very far. The thunder and lightning shook the plane, and the captain made an announcement to the cabin to put away any loose articles and make sure their seatbelts were fastened, while the co-pilot sent out a mayday.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lena looked out the window to see roiling dark gray clouds. A bright flash of lightning startled her, and the plane shook again. She followed instructions, but made sure her palm pilot and cell phone were in her jacket pocket, the one which buttoned.

Suddenly, there was a bright flash of lightning, and the plane shook violently. It sheared off to the left and began descending rapidly. There were screams, and one of the attendants got on the intercom. He reminded the passengers of the emergency procedures and asked them to follow them. The other attendants immediately went to their areas to help anyone who needed it, and make sure the rest were following orders.

Lena looked at her watch, then braced herself as instructed. She heard a roar, screams, then after what seemed like hours, crunches, bangs and the sound of metal tearing. Then the passengers were jostled violently as the jet broke in two, and the screams grew louder. Something hit Lena in the head and she was knocked out.

When she regained consciousness, she was still in her seat, but not in the jet any longer. The whole seat assembly had been torn from its mooring. Her left shoulder was causing her a great deal of pain, as was her head. She was soaking wet, but it was no longer raining. Slowly she opened her eyes. It was still cloudy and somewhat windy, too. She carefully looked around, but saw only the broken fuselage and people scattered, some sitting with their heads in their hands, crying. Other people were moaning and calling for help. A few were on their feet, but wandering around aimlessly, not paying attention to anyone else.

She tried to raise her left arm to look at her watch, but the pain increased and she gave up. Instead she reached over with her right, and gingerly got the watch off her wrist. She held it up to so she could see it. Only fifteen minutes had passed since she had last looked at it, in the plane. It

seemed like it took much longer for de plane to go down, she thought, amazed.

Her headache caused her to close her eyes again. She felt the rain start again, falling on her. She shivered slightly, then began to pray for help. Finally, realizing no one had shown up, she opened her eyes again and looked at her watch. Two hours had passed since she last checked the time.

I wonder why no one has come. We can't be dat far from de airport. She came to a decision and unbuckled her seat belt -- marveling that it was still there - then slowly unbuttoned her pocket and reached into it. No one was near her, or even looking at her, so she pulled out her palm pilot, raised it so she could see the screen, and activated the emergency signal.

Almost immediately, John's face appeared. He looked at her, puzzled, and said, "Ma'am? Who. . .?"

Lena interrupted, quietly saying, "I am Agent 62. And you are, I believe J-, er, Quasar, right?"

"That's correct. How did you know?" He brought up her file as they talked.

"Br- Einstein sent me your code names when he advised me of mine. And you're de only one of de originals I've never met." She looked around again to see if anyone was near, then closed her eyes as her headache intensified.

"What's wrong? You look terrible; and you're all wet!"

"De jet I was flying home from Denver in crashed shortly after take off, a little over two hours ago. No one has shown up to help us. Can you get word to de right people, so dey can come to de rescue?"

"I was contacted earlier by the airport tower. They saw the jet go down, and got a mayday from the co-pilot, but the storm was preventing them from getting a fix on it. And they couldn't get any readings from the emergency transmitter. They called here for help in locating the jet. I didn't know you were on it. Are you okay?"

"I've been better, but I'll live. But please tell dem to hurry. Dere are a lot of people who need medical attention, from the moans and groans dat I'm hearing."

"Including you, I take it."

She smiled wanly. "Yes, including me. Also, many of us are wet, and it's getting colder here. All I would need is to get pneumonia, too."

He smiled back at her, then muted his end of the transmission and turned away. A minute later, he returned and turned the volume back on. "They've been informed of your location. Contacting me was the best thing you could have done; the jet's emergency transmitter isn't coming through at all. They'd better check it out. So you hang in there; help is on the way."

"I'm glad to hear it. By de way, how is your -- how is de medical team doing? I heard dey were injured."

John looked at her, mildly astonished. There she is, obviously in pain, and still concerned about the team and the family. He replied, "Two of them went back to base the next day, and the third is on the mend. But you should be thinking about yourself now. A rescue team or two is on the way to your location and will take care of you."

She winked at him. "F-A-B."

He chuckled as she terminated communications, then immediately sobered as he considered whether or not to inform base. He decided to wait. They have enough on their plate to think about and handle. I'll give them a little time, then let them know, when I make my end-of-the-day report. Another thought occurred to him. I wish I could notify her family, but how could I tell them without revealing how I know? I'm sure they don't know about her involvement with IR, so I can't say she called me; she'd have called them first. He sighed in frustration, then continued to monitor communications from the planet.

Post by Hobbeth On 1/7/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:09:53 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Saturday 11, 9:30 am

Gordon found Alan sitting by the pool. His younger brother was sprawled in a lounge chair, a tall glass of lemonade on the table next to him. He was engrossed in a book; Gordon couldn't make out the title from where he was standing. He jogged down the steps and sat down on the chair next to Alan.

"Hey."

"Hey," Alan replied without looking up.

Gordon rolled his eyes. "C'mon, you're not still miffed at me, are you?"

"Nope," Alan replied unconvincingly.

Gordon plucked the book out of his brother's hand. "Look, it was all in fun, and you know it." Then he grinned. "Though that fifty will help with my new dive mask."

Alan scowled and snatched his book back out of Gordon's hands. "I'm trying to read here." He quickly found his page and turned his attention back to his reading.

Gordon sat back on the chair and watched Alan out of the corner of his eye. Alan didn't move. After a few minutes, Gordon started whistling.

Off-key.

On purpose.

After two minutes, Alan slammed the book down on the table. "What? What do you want?!"

Gordon grinned. "I was just thinking..."

"I thought I smelled smoke."

Gordon ignored the jibe. "Since the...accident, things have been pretty tense around here."

"Yeah? No kidding," Alan snorted as he picked up his book again.

"Anyway, like I said, I was thinking. Dad's still on the mainland with Mom, and Scott's away..."  
Gordon's voice trailed off.

Alan looked up, a wolfish expression on his face. "Go on."

Gordon leaned back and put his hands under his head. "Did you know that wet spaghetti, applied to...for instance, the edge of a bureau drawer, when dry, achieves the consistency of hardened cement?"

Alan smirked, his blue eyes twinkling. "No, Gordon, I didn't know that. Are you sure?"

Gordon shrugged nonchalantly. "Well, not one hundred percent. It was just something I read once."

Alan put his book down and got to his feet. "Then I think we'd better go and investigate this, just to be positive."

Gordon got up and bowed, one arm extended towards the house. "After you."

Post by lillehafrue on 1/8/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:14:42 GMT

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Friday, August 10, 2:45pm, SARS Cabin, outside Boulder, CO (8:45 AM Saturday, Tracy Island)

"I can't believe you're taking this so calmly!"

Luke barely looked up from the piece of wood he was carving. "There's nothing to get excited about, Jess," he replied quietly.

Jesse Hanson sat down in the chair across from him. "C'mon, Luke, you and Barry were together forever. Aren't you at least a little upset over this?"

More than I'll ever let anyone know. Luke shrugged. "It's not like we'll never see each other again. I'm off to L.A. for a few days anyway."

"You're serious about that, too?" Jesse picked up the newspaper from the table and read the circled ad.

"Environmental Consultant needed.

An exciting career opportunity with one of Fortune Magazine's top 500 companies. Tracy Industries has long been known as one of the most innovative, diverse, forward thinking and ethical companies in the world today. The successful candidate for the position of Environmental Consultant will further our goals to preserve the environment by researching potential development sites and presenting ideas to maximize the functional capacity of a new site while minimizing the environmental impact. Extensive traveling may be involved. Five years of experience in natural sciences a must. Piloting skills optional."

"Tracy Industries, huh?" She shook her head. "Somehow I don't see you working in an office, Luke."

"I won't be in an office, at least not all the time. I've done some background checking on the position. It's mostly fieldwork." He carefully shaved off another strip of wood. The twig was starting to look more like the chain he had envisioned, than an aspen branch. "I think it's just time for a change. Besides, it's just an interview. There's no promise that they'll hire me."

"Here's hoping that they won't. We don't want to lose you!"

Luke ignored her, and after a few minutes, Jesse sighed and picked up her book.

Suddenly, Luke's German shepherd, Rommel, got to his feet and walked to the window, whining. "What's up, boy?" Luke asked, walking over and glancing out the window. "Rain's gotten worse."

A loud rumble sounded over the cabin, fading away as fast as it had come. "What was that?" Jesse asked.

Luke shook his head. "I have no idea. Sounded like a plane, but too low." He peered out into the storm, his blue-grey eyes straining to see through the storm.

"I'll get Irwin to call headquarters. See if they know anything." She got up and left the room.

Luke ran his hand over Rommel's head. "Well, boy, think we'll have to go out?" The dog merely wagged his tail and gave his master a quick lick before going back to stretch out in front of the fire. "Nice, Rom, lazy thing. No more treats for you."

Jesse came back in, followed by Irwin. The tall black man smiled. "We're clear. Headquarters has received nothing about a plane going down anywhere. They'll keep us posted if that changes."

"I'm sure they will." Luke sat back down and got back to work on his wooden chain.



\*\*\*

The crackle of the radio, almost two hours later, startled them all. Irwin hurried to the other room. He returned a few minutes later. "We should have listened to Rom. A jetliner went down somewhere in the vicinity. For some reason the plane's emergency transmitters aren't working. One of the passengers managed to get a hold of International Rescue and they pinpointed the location. I've programmed it into our equipment. It's not far, probably about 2 miles or so."

Luke was already fastening a bright orange vest around Rommel. "Let's get going then. Even though the storm's stopped, we haven't got much time before nightfall."

"Right." Jesse ran off to get the other members of their team ready.

Luke pulled on his own jacket and hurried out the door. He opened the garage door and quickly started the ATV. While the engine warmed up, Rommel leapt on the back of the bike and lay down on the pad attached to it. Luke fastened a pair of straps around the dog's hips and shoulders. Then he turned to the rest of the team. "You've all got the co-ordinates on your GPS?" The team nodded in unison. "Then let's move out. Go as fast as you can. The other teams will be converging at the same time. Irwin, how many did they estimate were on the plane?"

"Roughly 200 passengers and 8 crew. It's an off weekend, so the plane wasn't full." Irwin replied.

"Thank God for small favors. All right then, people, move out!" Luke climbed onto his ATV, and gunning the engine, led the others into the forest.

Post by lillehafrue on 1/8/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:16:06 GMT  
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Tracy Island, 11th August -- 8.30 a.m.

Kat had just finished folding the last piece of clothing and had put it into her basket, when Dom and Josh entered. "Hi, Dom; hi Josh." She smiled at them.

"Want to go," Josh said, trying to pull his Dad away from the machines.

Dom sighed. "I have to wash your dirty clothes; you've been a lot messier than usual lately. You've even managed to spill things on my clothes as well."

"Dom," she said, glancing at her rather tired looking friend, "would you like me to take Josh out for a while?"

"That would be a help, but I'm afraid he is not in a very good mood."

Kat knelt down in front of Josh. "Hey, Josh, would you like to go with me back to my apartment? We could make some cookies."

"No," he said, moving to the other side of his father.

"Okay then, how about we go and build sandcastles?"

"No!" he shouted back.

"Maybe looking after him is not such a good idea, Kat," Dom said wearily.

But she refused to give in; she could see that her friend needed some respite. Picking up her laundry basket, she turned as if to go, and said to Dom, "Well, I was going to walk on the beach and look at the rock pools. I had hoped that Josh would come along, but I guess I shall have to go alone."

Suddenly a little hand grabbed her jeans, and tugged gently. "Me come?" Josh said, smiling at her.

"Then you'll need some buckets," Dom said. "Let's go back to the apartment. I know we have two in your room. We'll get them while Kat puts her clothes away."

Kat joined Dom and Josh at their apartment, where Josh found two buckets and carrying them in each hand, walked with Kat to the monorail. He began to get excited, asking Kat all sorts of questions about what they would find. Getting out of the monorail, they headed towards the pool and walked in the direction of the beach. They wandered to the far end where there were plenty of rock pools.

"Careful!" Kat warned. "Those rocks can be slippery."

Josh knelt down at the edge of one, and peered into the water. "Kat, look."

She bent down beside him. Around the edges was seaweed. He picked some up, and flapped it at her. It smelt horrible.

"No, Josh, that's awful," she said. "Throw it back in."

Josh threw it back in but as he did so, he splashed water all over her. She tried to retaliate but he ran away, laughing. To get his attention, she called him back, saying. "Look at the starfish and crabs moving around in the shallow water."

He rejoined her and tried to grab a crab.

"Careful, Josh," she said. "That's a crab; it could nip you."

"Take home, show Da," he replied.

"Hmm, I don't think so," she answered. Standing up, she said. "Let's see if we can find any more

pools." Reluctantly he scrambled to his feet and followed her further along the beach.

They came to a larger rock pool. Josh began prodding something soft.

"Kat, look?" he said, trying to pick up the jellylike thing.

"Looks like some kind of jellyfish," she replied.

"Take home, show Da?" he asked, trying in vain to grasp the slippery thing.

"Josh, I don't know much about jellyfish. Leave it alone; it may sting you."

"No," and he leaned precariously over the pool. She tried to stop him but in doing so she slipped on the wet rocks and tumbled headlong into the pool.

"Kat wet, Kat wet." He was jumping up and down.

"I think we had better head for home," she said, as she wiped some seaweed from her face, and clambered out.

"Take cwab, please, Kat," the youngster begged. Resignedly, she scooped up a small crab and placed it in one of the buckets, filled with water. She then filled the other bucket with water, just in case Dom let him keep it. It would have plenty of water.

The two trailed back along the beach, Kat feeling distinctly cold and uncomfortable. To her horror, just as they reached the base of the steps leading to the swimming pool, they met Virgil and Gordon.

"Hey, Kat, isn't it rather cold for swimming?" Virgil laughed at her.

"No, Virg, she's all right; she's kept her clothes on," Gordon replied chuckling.

She looked embarrassed, as Josh shouted, "Kat fell, Kat fell, all wet." And he began jumping up and down.

Virgil looked at the dripping wet young woman and raised his eyebrows. By way of an explanation, she said, "I offered to take Josh out and give Dom a break."

"What's in your bucket, Josh?" Gordon asked.

"Cwab, for Da," Josh said as he proudly showed the two young men his catch.

"Kat, I hope you didn't touch that crab." Gordon looked serious.

"Why? What if I did?" she asked suspiciously.

"Because it's one of the most deadly crabs there is. Just one touch can cause terrible pain and swelling of the body, followed by...." And he rolled his eyes upwards.

She looked rather white. "But I feel okay."

"It takes time for the poison to work. Sometimes several days," he continued.

"Isn't there an antidote?" Kat asked sounding nervous, and then she saw Virgil's lips twitch.

"Gordon, you beast; you really had me going." And with that she flung the bucket of sea water at him.

Gordon looked at his brother. "Did you see that?"

"Yes, I did, and it serves you right," Virgil replied grinning.

"Come on Josh," she said, "I think we had better head for home." Taking hold of his hand, they headed back to Cliff House.

"Hey, Kat, that seaweed in your hair is quite becoming," Gordon called after her, as he and Virgil went on their way, chuckling at her expense.

Post by Tawnyangel22 On 1/10/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:16:46 GMT  
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August 11th Tracy Island: 11am

Virgil sat by the pool, enjoying the quiet, as he thought about the events that happened in Kansas.

We came so close to losing Mom as well as Dom and Nikki. We were lucky this time; we may not be so lucky next time. I don't think Dad could stand losing someone close to him again.

He grew restless. Wanting to banish the thoughts that bothered him, he went to his room and gathered up his painting supplies. Returning to the pool area, he set up his easel and, after a few moments thought, began to apply paint to canvas.

"It's too beautiful a day to stay inside," Elise remarked as she put on her shoes. Leaving her apartment, she went to the monorail, taking it to the Villa. Exiting, she started down the steps leading to the pool. Noticing Virgil painting, she approached him, slowing her pace. She stopped for a moment to look at the painting and was surprised by what she saw. Instead of bright vibrant colors, the painting was done in shades of brown and grey. In one corner of the canvas there were two white spots.

"Interesting painting," Elise said so she wouldn't startle Virgil. He turned around to face her.

"I'm sorry," he said, wiping the paint off his hands, "I didn't hear you come up."

"I was going for a walk and saw you painting." Elise looked at the canvas again. "I don't think it will make it into the Louvre any time soon."

She gave the painting another look, recalling the ones she had seen in the lounge.

"Do you prefer to paint with dark colors?"

"Depends on my mood," Virgil answered honestly. "I've been so caught up in what's happened that I've kept things bottled up. This painting is my way of venting."

"I know what you mean. When I'm upset, I try to find something to help me vent, whether it's cleaning my place, going for a walk or..."

"Giving somebody an earful?"

Elise saw the grin on Virgil's face. "That too," she replied dryly.

The two continued talking until Virgil's stomach growled loudly. He looked at his watch. "Man, I was so busy painting that I lost track of time."

"In that case, I'll let you go get something to eat while I continue my walk."

"Sounds like a plan to me," Virgil replied.

"See you later," Elise replied as she went to continue her walk.

Post by MagicMaster8 on 1/10/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:17:26 GMT

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Friday, August 10, 6 p.m. Local time, Colorado Mountains (August 11, noon, Tracy Island)

"Someone's coming!"

Lena opened her eyes when she heard the shout, just in time to see a couple of men appear, followed by several more. A dozen or so people, fortunate enough to escape serious injury and able to walk, hurried over to them. There were faint cheers mixed in with cries for assistance. Lena kept quiet, but she watched the rescuers.

It wasn't long after the first team arrived when two others showed up. She tried to count the number of people in those teams, but gave up when her headache increased. There must be at least fifty rescuers. Good; maybe we'll get out of here soon. She shut her eyes until the pain diminished somewhat, then opened them to see if she could focus on one or two people, to take her mind off her situation.

One man caught her attention, probably because he had a dog with him. She watched as he moved from one person to another, saying a brief prayer when he realized he couldn't help this one, talking softly to another, giving them comfort. Once she saw another man -- possibly his superior -- tell him not to waste time on something (she couldn't hear all of the conversation), and saw him argue with the man.

She continued to watch him, her respect for him growing. She became more and more impressed with the way he worked, both alone and with his dog. He'd make a good addition to International Rescue. I must remember to let someone know, when I'm able to do so. Her headache increased a bit, so she closed her eyes.

She opened them suddenly, when a cold, wet nose touched her right cheek. "Hello dere," she said softly, lifting her hand to let the dog sniff it, then scratching the side of his neck.

"I see you've met Rommel." Lena looked up into a pair of kind blue eyes. "I'm Luke, how're you doing?" He knelt down next to her and took her wrist in his hands, taking her pulse. "Hmm.... it's a little higher than normal, but given the circumstances, I wouldn't worry about it." He looked closely into her face. "You seemed unconscious when Rom found you. How do you feel now?"

"My name is Lena Matumbo. And my eyes were closed because I have a headache. I was unconscious for about ten or fifteen minutes. I tink something hit me in de head, because I don't remember my seat being torn loose, or de plane crashing. When I woke up, I was here, still buckled in my seat. My left shoulder hurts badly, but any otter pains I have are mild, like scrapes or bruises -- dat sort of ting."

Luke nodded. "OK, I'll get a medic over here to give me a hand, and we'll get you out as soon as we can."

She closed her eyes again, only to open them when he said, "Hey! Stay with me!"

"I am not losing consciousness. I am praying," she replied.

"I've been doing a little of that myself," Luke said quietly to himself, his eyes scanning the wreckage. Then he turned back to her and smiled. "I'll go get that medic. Want me to leave Rom?"

"Dat would be fine. He is a beautiful animal." Lena lifted her good hand and ran it over the dog's head. Rommel whined, his tail wagging in pleasure.

Luke grinned. "Yeah well, don't tell him that. It'll go to his head. Back in a flash. Rommel, stay," he commanded, then got to his feet and quickly disappeared among the other rescue personnel.

Post by Lillehafrue and hobbeth on on 1/10/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:18:18 GMT

Saturday, August 11, 2068, 5:50 p.m., Tracy Island

"Tracy One requesting permission to land."

"Permission granted and welcome home!"

"Sweetest words I've heard all day, huh, Kyrano?" Scott asked as he banked the jet around to approach the runway.

"Indeed, Mister Scott. Very sweet." Kyrano, who had piloted part of the way home, gave the young pilot a weary smile. It had been a long week, full of anxiety that had only eased near the end, when it was plain that things were looking up again and the end of the stressful visit was in sight. He enjoyed getting to know his future brother-in-law, his wife and family, and watch his bride-to-be allow herself and her grandchildren to be surrounded by their love and support, support extended to him as well. Jeff himself was enveloped by it when he came to them from the hospital on those rare occasions he could be torn away. Now it is time for us to come together as a family to support each other, and not only ourselves, but Mr. Dominic and Miss Nikki, too. How I wish Tin-Tin were here.

Scott brought the jet down like a feather, earning a pleased smile from his father and a murmured, "Nice landing, son," once he'd taxied the plane into the hangar. The kids got off first, tired, but happy to see their brothers. Brains was there to take over guiding Dianne upstairs. "Dr. Carmichael emailed me and told me you're to go to the sick room..."

"I know, I know," Dianne said with a weary smile. "It was part of my discharge orders, too." She turned to Jeff. "Coming?"

"In a moment, love," Jeff said. Lisa had whispered in his ear that she needed a moment of his time, in private.

"Hey, Spud!" Gordon said with a happy grin as he tousled Tyler's hair. "I think Grandma's got some macaroni and cheese in the oven. Wanna go find out?"

Tyler smiled slightly and nodded, but his lack of enthusiasm was swallowed up by Alex's eager, "Where are the kittens? Are they okay?"

"Yeah, Alex. They're just fine. They're in Grandma's room. We can see them later, okay?"

"Aww, I wanted to see them now!"

"Grandma's making dinner, and she'll want us up there just as soon as we get the luggage squared away," Virgil said. He stacked another bag on the antigravity float, then paused to drop a kiss on Dianne's cheek and whisper, "Welcome home, Mom."

"Thanks, Virgil. It feels good to be home... even if all I've seen of it has been the hangar..."

"And on that note..." Brains said, taking charge of the wheelchair that he'd brought down.



"Jeff?"

"In a moment, love," Jeff said, flashing a smile her way before returning to the conversation with his mother-in-law. "You're sure? He was vomiting?" he asked, lowering his voice.

"Yes, Jeff. Cherie heard him and he admitted it to me," Lisa told him. "I don't know when it started... he wouldn't tell me that. Just said that his tummy hurt -- but somehow, I think there's more to it."

Jeff glanced over at his youngest son, being herded upstairs by Gordon. "I agree. But none of us are in any condition to deal with this right now." He shook his head slowly, then turned back to Lisa. "Thanks for telling me, Lisa. I'll see what I can do."

"If I can be of any help..."

"You already have -- but I'll keep your offer in mind, too." He glanced over again to see that Brains was already wheeling Dianne toward the lift. "I've got to go. See you later."

"Right."

Jeff hurried off in pursuit of his wife, while Alan came up to put an arm around Lisa. "Good to see you again, Grandma P. It feels like ages since we saw each other."

Lisa turned and smiled, giving Alan a firm hug. "Good to see you, too, Alan. Now, let's help get Maggie upstairs and settled, huh?"

"F.A.B."

Post by Tikatu On 1/10/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:18:54 GMT  
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(Saturday, Aug 11, 6 a.m. Wichita, Kansas/ Sunday, Aug 12, 11 p.m. Tracy Island)

As the rays of the sun glowed just above the horizon, Heather's taxi pulled into the parking lot. The door was held open for her, and the little that she had she carried on her left shoulder; a medium sized leather bag hung from her right hand. The cabbie offered to carry everything to wherever she wanted to go, but she shook her head. She paid him handsomely, and then walked slowly towards the hangers. Her slip-on pumps tapped against the cement. Stopping briefly, she stared for a moment and then walked a little faster. Her Jet Star sat just outside of her hanger.

"That's strange. I was planning to do that myself." Reaching Blue Streak, she opened up a hatch and stowed her luggage, making sure to leave plenty of space for Tin-Tin's luggage. "She'll need more room than I will." The vase she received her flowers in from Scott she put in a cubbyhole in

the pilot's cabin.

The sun rose further, highlighting the silent airfield. The smell of cut grass permeated the air, tugging her around her aircraft. She walked out towards the field until she reached the edge of the parking area and stepped into the grass. Heather wanted to remember everything she saw. Now, knowing the Tracy family's secret, she began to wonder if she'd ever come back. A yellow feathered meadowlark chirped nearby. I'll miss Aunt Jennie most of all. How long will it be before I see her again?

Turning around, she walked towards the airfield's terminal near the control tower. Walking in, she discovered a roomful of pilots, Richard, Langely, and Blake. Richard walked over to give her a hug and pushed an envelope into her hands. "What this? Am I getting all my vacation pay in cash now?"

"If we did that," said Ken. "We'd have to bring out armed guards and send a couple of stealth bombers out as your escort--" This had everyone laughing. "We'll be sending all your pay by direct deposit. Before you leave, make sure we get your new address. We all heard about what happened to your house, and wanted to pitch in and help."

Richard gave her a hug. "Ken and I were the ones who brought out your plane. We got here early so we could surprise you."

"But how did you know when I was coming? I came at the crack of dawn!" Heather asked in surprise, her prairie accent flavoring her words. "That means y'all came before the crack of dawn."

"Well, knowing you as well as I do--" Rich grinned, eliciting a few whistles. "I figured you'd try to get out of here without saying goodbye. Especially knowing that the Control Tower has to be open at this time to do its recalibrations. I did the checks on Blue Streak, but feel free to double check me."

"I assure you I wasn't trying to sneak away, and I'm going to miss all of you," she said sadly as she went through and hugged everyone who was there, including two other women pilots.

"We collected the funds before we knew you were going to pilot for Jeff Tracy. By the way," said Ken. "Scott Tracy called to check on you. He asked to have a transfer put in for you and we took a chance to tell him what happened to you. Hope you don't mind."

"Not at all, Ken. I appreciate it." Heather smiled, thinking of the flowers sent to her. She'd been surprised to find them in her room along with the card. Speaking of sneaks, she thought. I hope Dr. Tracy is doing all right. I'll have to check with Scott when we get there to see how she's doing. Everyone must be worried sick. Even if Mother does drive me nuts, I'd be worried sick, too.

After she'd made her final goodbyes to everyone and she'd given her new address, Richard walked out with her to her plane. In the cool of the dawn's light, Richard gave her one last hug. They both turned to observe another cab drive through the security gate. "You know, I'd always thought it would be you and me for a long time--" Richard said with a trace of a frown.

Sighing quietly, Heather looked at him with fondness. "Well, you had umpteen number of chances. I figured you didn't at least offer me the pleasure of a date, because I beat you so badly at poker!"

Richard laughed. "Well, y-y-yeah," he agreed reluctantly. "No man likes a woman to clobber him that bad, I guess. I did get over it though." With further thought, he admitted, "Eventually."

The cab they'd spied earlier pulled out and Richard observed a green-eyed Far Eastern beauty he could have melted all over the cement for. Noticing his attentions wavering, favoring Tin-Tin, Heather swatted him. It figures. I'm just 'one o' the guys'. Shaking her head, she whispered, "So sorry. She's taken."

"Figures!"

Turning his attention, she insisted, "Richard, keep the organ donor flights going. Don't be afraid to hire someone new, and for Pete's sake; make sure you at least offer to take her out. More than likely she won't beat you at poker."

"Okay, okay! I will. Won't be the same though."

As the cabbie brought up Tin-Tin's luggage and set it next to the Jet Star, Heather introduced her. "Tin-Tin, this is Richard Tate. He is--was--my partner for the organ donor flights."

With a delighted smile, Richard offered his hand which Tin-Tin accepted, and gave her a firm handshake. "It is a pleasure to meet you, Richard," she said in a silky voice.

Noticing that Richard hadn't let go of Tin-Tin's hand and was staring into her eyes, Heather rolled her eyes and smacked her hands together twice. "C'mon, Richard! We've got to go!"

"Oh--uh--yeah. See ya' round," he said. "Don't be a stranger, lady."

"I won't, Richard. I'll miss you." As Tin-Tin joined Heather, she raised her eyebrows causing Heather to raise hers in response. After Heather stowed Tin-Tin's luggage--which was as light as hers--they climbed into the Jet Star, strapped in, and Heather touched the button that would cause the Blue Streak's canopy to slide forward and lock into position. "And into the wild blue yonder we go," said Heather with finality.

Checking her instruments quickly and finding them properly set, she started up the engines to warm them. When the engines quickly roared to life, Heather could see Richard's hair blowing up from the winds caused by the Jet Star. She gave him a hearty wave. Moments later, she taxied up to the beginning of the runway. "Blue Streak to Control Tower," she radioed in after slipping on her headset. To her surprise, Ken answered.

"This is the Control Tower. Go ahead," answered Ken.

"This is NGC-3524 requesting permission for takeoff."

"Permission granted, Blue Streak. Be careful and have a nice flight."

"Roger that, Control, and thank you."

Heather guided the plane quickly down the runway. Dropping the flaps on the wings, Heather and Tin-Tin soared into the fresh morning air.

Post by AmandaTracy on 1/11/2007 7:26 PM

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:19:38 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Sunday August 12, 8:13 AM

Scott wasn't sure what woke him, the chill emanating from his open window, or the squawk of the birds outside said window. He cracked one eye open and squinted at the clock. It was later than he usually slept, yet earlier than he had wanted to get up.

Groaning, he rolled over and pulled the covers over his head. He lay there under the blankets, shivering and listening to the birds until he couldn't stand it any longer. Whipping the blankets off, he strode over to the window and slammed it shut. He threw himself back on the bed and closed his eyes.

Ten minutes later, Scott gave up trying to go back to sleep and headed for the bathroom. Last night he hadn't done much more than grab a bite to eat and a quick shower. He hadn't even the energy to put on his pajamas, just crawled into bed. Now he took his time, first shaving then indulging in a long, hot shower.

Getting out, he wrapped a towel around his waist and made his way to his bedroom. He walked over to his closet and pulled the door open.

Or tried to anyway. It seemed to be stuck.

"What the..." Scott tugged again, harder this time, but the door wouldn't budge. "The wood must have swelled or something," he muttered as he struggled with the door. Swearing under his breath, he turned from the closet and headed to his bureau. He grabbed the handle, pulling open the drawer. It too was stuck.

"Dammit!! What is going on here?!"

He fought with the drawer, pulling as hard as he could. Suddenly, the handle flew off and Scott went sprawling to the floor. Swearing, he got to his feet and pounded on the bureau. When that failed, he tried prying the drawer open from the edges.

Still nothing.

Finally, after struggling with it for another ten minutes, Scott sat in the middle of the floor glaring at the bureau. If looks could kill, the furniture would have been reduced to cinders by now.

"Well, now what do I do?" he griped to the room at large. All his clothes were in his closet and bureau. Sometime during the early morning, Kyrano had come and taken his dirty ones from the day before, so he didn't even have those to put back on. Scott had never even grabbed his bag off the plane, figuring he'd do it when he cleaned up and refueled it today.

He got to his feet for one more try. As he knelt in front of the dresser, something on the floor caught his eye. Frowning, he picked it up and examined it closely. Suddenly realization dawned and he got to his feet. "That son of a...I'll kill him." He tightened the towel around his waist and rushed out the door.

"...Grandma's calling her, Big Momma." Gordon leaned back in his chair, his arms behind his head. "It's kinda nice having another cat around. We had them everywhere on the farm, remember, Dad?"

Jeff nodded. "I do. And I remember you talking Alan into climbing up into the hayloft to look for kittens and he got stuck up there."

Gordon grinned at Dianne. "How was I to know that he would be too afraid to climb back down the ladder?"

"Because he was six!"

Dianne let out a low chuckle as she shifted on the bed. "Gordon, you haven't changed much, have you?"

Gordon winked at her. "Nope. And I don't inten..."

"GORDON COOPER TRACY!!!"

They all looked up, startled at Scott's bellow. "That's my cue! Later Mom!" Gordon scrambled to his feet, and bolted out the door.

A heartbeat later, Scott burst into the room, his face beet red in anger. "Where is he?" he growled. Without waiting for either of them to reply, he spun and around ran out the door in pursuit of his brother.

Dianne and Jeff stared at each other for a few moments in stunned silence. "Why do you think our eldest son just ran through here wearing nothing but a towel?"

Jeff took her hand and kissed it. "I have no idea, but if I had to guess, I'd say things are getting back to normal."

Post by lillehafrue on 1/11/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Saturday, August 11, 10:30 AM; Denver General Hospital (6:30 AM Sunday on Tracy Island)

Joy got out of the taxi, followed by her twins. They got their luggage from the trunk, and Matthew finished paying the driver, thanking him for his advice about nearby hotels. He joined the others as they walked into the hospital together, carrying their bags. At the front desk, they got Lena's room number (412), and the name of the doctor taking care of her, learning that he was currently on that floor.

They took the elevator up to the fourth floor and as she emerged, Joy took her brother's arm. He felt her shaking and looked at her, patting her hand. "Hang in there, sis. You know how tough Mom is. She'll be okay; I know it, and so do you."

"I do, Matthew," she replied quietly, "but we've rarely seen her when she's weak. In fact, I can only think of two times: when Dad died, and when she finally came home after being kidnapped. It tore me up to see her like that. I don't know if I can handle it, seeing her in the hospital bed."

"Of course you can; you have to. Besides, you're a lot like her; tough when it counts. And your kids are going to take their cue from you, so you have to buck up for them, if not for Mom."

Joy sighed. "I know. But I don't have to like it."

"That's the sister I know and love."

"Mom! Uncle Matthew! Here's her room!" Naomi exclaimed in urgent, but hushed tones.

"Well go ahead and knock," Joy replied.

Naomi did so, and heard a muffled "Come in", then pushed open the door. She went in and saw her grandmother with her left arm in a sling, and a bandage on her head. "Oh, Nyanya!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears and dropping her bag just inside the door. She rushed over to the bed.

"Be careful, Naomi," her uncle said sternly as he and the others put their bags with Naomi's. "Don't hurt her any worse than she already is."

Naomi stopped just in time, and took her grandmother's right hand which had been extended toward her. She held onto it tightly, and kissed it. "I was so afraid when I heard you'd been in a plane crash, Nyanya. We all were."

"I know, child. It's natural to be." Lena smiled as her son, then daughter leaned over and kissed her on the cheek, followed by her grandson. "But find some chairs and sit down. Naomi, please loosen your grip, before the nurses come in to find out why the heart monitor isn't working."

Naomi giggled, partly at her grandmother's words, but mostly from relief. She released the hand, and Lena reached out and drew her close, kissing her on the forehead. The girl reciprocated with a kiss on the cheek, then sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Mother, how do you feel?" Joy asked.

"Not bad, considering. Dis is a good hospital, wit a very caring staff. I am on pain medication, but don't feel too drowsy. De doctor says I can leave in two or tree days, if I continue to improve."

There was a sigh of relief all around, and Kevin asked, "What did he say were your worst injuries?"

"Dis broken collarbone, and a concussion, honey. I was knocked out for a little while, about ten minutes." She chuckled. "After de rescue teams got to de site, dere was one who, whenever I closed my eyes, would tell me not to go to sleep, to stay wit him. I finally told him I wasn't losing consciousness; I was trying to pray."

"So you were unconscious for only a short time?" asked Matthew. Lena nodded. "Then the concussion, though serious, isn't as bad as it could have been, thankfully," he continued. "Remember the time I fell off my bike and hit my head on the sidewalk? That doctor gave me more information about head injuries than I wanted or needed to know, including a scolding almost as bad as yours for not wearing my helmet. Has your doctor seen you yet today?"

"Yes; he left about half an hour before you all arrived."

Her son stood up. "I'm going go see if I can find him. I want to let him know that you now have family here with you." He headed for the door and opened it, then turned. "I won't be long."

Lena turned back to her daughter. "You look exhausted, and de twins don't look much better. Didn't you get any sleep last night?"

"Not really; I was worried about you. Once we leave here, we'll go to a hotel, and I'll sack out for a couple of hours. Then we'll come back for another visit."

Meanwhile, Matthew was successful in his search. "Doctor Sloan? I'm Matthew Matumbo, Lena's son."

"Ah, good," the other man replied. He was in his mid fifties, slightly taller than Matthew, with dark blond hair. "I expect you want to know her condition. Well, I haven't kept anything from her, so what she told you is pretty much it. The worst injuries were a broken collarbone and a grade four concussion. She was in obvious pain when they brought her in, but didn't complain. In fact, she kept trying to get us to take others before we checked her out. We finally told her no one else had worse injuries than she did, and it was her turn. She finally allowed us to look her over. Once we took care of her collarbone and head injuries, we gave her medication for the pain. It made her drowsy, and she said some interesting things -- about you and someone named 'Scott'."

"Really? What did she say?"

The doctor grinned at him. "Did you really convince your sister that it was okay to go trick-or-treating as Eve, before she ate the forbidden fruit?"



Matthew looked ruefully at the doctor. "Oh man! I thought I'd lived that down. It was when we were both eight years old. That's a lifetime ago." He paused, remembering, then said, "Scott is the son of the man who owns the company Mom works for. What did she say about him?"

"Nothing much. She just told him he had to get some sleep so he wouldn't land them in the ocean. Said it a couple of times. Also something about him being too sick to go anywhere."

"And she's better now?"

"Pretty much. We changed her pain medication, so the sleep she gets will be natural. I want to keep her another two or three days for observation, and to satisfy myself that she is well enough to travel. I understand you all live in Maryland."

"That's right."

"Well, she may have some qualms about flying again, so soon after being in a crash, even though she might not show it or say anything. Giving her a few days to rest up and heal is a good idea, but the emotional and psychological aftereffects will still be there for some time to come. I suggest you keep an eye on her."

"Thank you, doctor. We will."

Matthew headed back to his mother's room and opened the door just in time to see Lena suppress a yawn. "It looks to me like you need some rest, Mom. And I know we all do, as well as a meal. I suggest that we go get something to eat and rooms where we can sack out for a few hours. We'll be back later to visit again."

"Dat's a good idea, Mattew. You all look like you need rest more dan I do. And Joy told me dat you came straight here from de airport. You should have gotten rooms first."

"No, we wanted to see you first, as I already told you," replied Joy. "But I could use a meal, a hot bath and a long nap. And so could these two. I won't speak for my brother, though."

He grinned at his sister, the doctor's words still fresh in his mind. "We'll be back when we're more refreshed. You get some rest, too." He leaned over Lena and gave her another kiss on the cheek. "We're all glad to see you here instead of the morgue."

"Silly boy! Go on wit you. Get your sleep and food, and I'll see you again later." Lena winked and smiled at him, as he joined the others at the door. They picked up their bags and with calls of "Bye, Mom", "See you later", and "Bye, Nyanya", they left the room.

Post by Hobbeth On 1/11/2007 8:58 PM

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:20:44 GMT  
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Sunday, August 12, 9:30 AM; Tracy Island (3:30 PM Saturday in Denver)

Scott finished up his coffee, wiped his mouth and looked around. Everyone had finished and left, except his father and grandmother. "Thanks for the loan of some clothes, Dad. I really appreciate it. As soon as Gordon and Alan have removed the spaghetti, I'll change into my own things and have Kyrano clean yours."

"My pleasure, Scott. No hurry."

Scott smiled. "Well, I'm going to call the hospital where Lena is, and see if I can talk to her," he told them. "John was able to find out where they took the survivors of the crash, and let me know. He even got their phone number."

"Okay, son. Good idea," Jeff replied. "I'll join you as soon as I've checked on Dianne."

Emily added, "Give her my love and best wishes for a speedy recovery. I'll go check on your brothers' progress."

"I'll do that, Grandma. And thanks." He stood up and headed out of the room. He decided to use the vidphone at Jeff's desk and once there, he dialed the hospital, and learned that she was able to accept calls; they put him through. He heard three rings, then the phone at the other end was picked up.

"Hello?"

"Lena? It's Scott."

"Scott! Hold on; I'm going to switch de video on, too." He heard faint sounds in the background as she continued. "First time I've seen vidphones in a hospital. And dey're not too hard to operate, eiter."

As the picture came on, Scott's breath caught in his throat. I've seen both Dad and Mom with injuries this year, but I still can't get used to it when someone I personally know is hurt. He had to swallow hard before he could continue. "The picture is coming in just fine, Lena. Can you see me okay?"

Yes, I can. Don't look so worried. I'm doing fine. It looks worse dan it feels."

He shook his head, chuckling slightly. "Don't try to fool me, Lena. Remember, I've seen injuries, and been injured. I bet you are hurting right this minute."

"Only a little. Dey give me something for de pain every six hours, and I had my dose just a little while ago. So it's fading. How is everyone doing dere? I heard dat some of you had a rough time recently. Are you okay?"

"Pretty much," he replied, while thinking, John was right. She is amazing, thinking of us even while she's in pain and alone. "What about your family? Have you talked to them?"

"More dan talked," she replied, smiling. "Mattew, Joy, Naomi and Kevin showed up here dis morning. It's good to see dem, aldough de circumstances could have been better. Can you believe it? Dey came here before dey even found a hotel to stay in!"

"Of course they did! You come first with them; they love you. Wouldn't you have done the same thing if one of them had been in an accident?"

"You're right, of course," she said, her smile growing slightly bigger. "But dey were so tired; I don't tink any of dem got a wink of sleep last night. I hope dey are resting now. I expect to see dem again later on."

"That's good. I hope you've been treated well, both at the crash site and in the hospital."

"Yes, I have, Scott. In fact, you just reminded me of someting. One of de men who came to rescue us impressed me a great deal. He was caring, efficient, humorous when it was needed, and not afraid to speak up when he felt dere was a better way. Plus he had a dog who appeared to be trained in rescue scenarios. I wish dere was a way I could contact International Rescue and let dem know; he'd be a great addition to deir organization."

"Hmm. Maybe I could find a way; you know, a friend of a friend of a friend type of thing." He grinned at her. "I'll see what I can do. Do you know his name?"

"Luke Morel."

"That name sounds familiar. I think he put in an application for a post with Tracy Industries; I seem to remember seeing his name in that context."

She smiled at him. "Well, I tink he'd be an asset to eiter organization. He certainly impressed me."

Scott smiled back, then glanced to one side. "Dad's here. He wants to speak to you, too. Hold on." Lena watched as he stood up, then Jeff took his place, with his son behind him, but in view.

"Lena, I'm so sorry this happened to you. Don't take this wrong, but do you feel as bad as you look?"

She grinned. "Actually no. A concussion and broken collarbone are de worst injuries, and what's keeping me in de hospital for a few more days. As I told Scott, four members of my family are here, and we'll leave together." She paused to take a sip of water. "Oh, I heard about Dianne's accident in California. How is she?"

"She's doing much better. She was discharged from the hospital yesterday, and is resting at the moment. She sends you her best wishes for a speedy recovery. And her thanks for the brownies. Says they were delicious."

"Grandma sends her best wishes, too," Scott added.

"Tell Dianne I said de same, when you talk to her again, and tank your grandmother for me," Lena replied. She paused, and both men recognized the mischievous twinkle that appeared in her eyes.

They braced themselves for what she might say next. "You know, since meeting you and your family, working for Tracy Industries has become a very adventurous career choice, in more ways than one."

A startled laugh exploded out of Jeff. He hadn't quite expected that comment. Then he looked ruefully at her. "We never intended any of your adventures to happen; you know that, don't you?"

"Of course I do, Jeff. But I had to say dat." She chuckled, then looked puzzled. "Do you two get your close at de same place?"

Jeff was surprised at the question. "Why do you ask?"

"I feel sure I saw you wearing de same shirt Scott has on now, de last time I visited."

Jeff chuckled as Scott's face became a study in mixed reactions. "He is wearing my shirt, Lena. It seems things are getting back to normal, courtesy of Gordon and Alan." He related the latest practical joke, played on his eldest son, and was pleased to hear Lena chuckle.

A thought occurred to Scott. "Lena, do you know what hotel your family is staying at?"

"No, Scott. Dey didn't tell me. I tink it's one near de hospital, dough. Why?"

He grinned. "You'll find out later."

Jeff said soberly, "Lena, I'm sorry this happened. Maybe we should make sure a private jet is at your disposal when you take these trips."

"Now Jeff, don't you tink like dat. De chances of something like dat happening to me again are pretty slim. It was a lucky ting the jet wasn't full. I heard dat most of de passengers and crew survived."

"I can't believe your pilot flew into a storm like that. What was he thinking?"

"It wasn't his fault. I take it you haven't heard de news reports on de aftermat."

"No, I haven't. Why? What happened?"

"It seems dat de captain had been dating de sister of de air traffic controller who directed de jet into de storm's pat. De controller wasn't happy about de relationship. He deliberately set us on a course dat would ensure we ran into de storm."

"My God, Lena! Is he insane?"

"I don't know. From what I heard, he raised his sister after deir parents were killed. It sounded like he may be obsessed wit her."

"And everyone on that flight became victims of that obsession, including you. That's terrible!"

"Yes, it is." She smiled again. "But if I read de sister correctly, he'll be hearing from her, and probably tink dat whatever de law does to him, will be easier to endure."

"Good for her, then. I hope the pilot wasn't killed."

"No, but his injuries are such dat he won't be able to fly again." She paused, remembering the last news broadcasts. "But I tink he'll be okay; most of de news clips that had her in dem, she was wit him. And she looked like she really cared about him. I just hope he doesn't try to push her away. If not, dey'll be fine." She sighed.

"Lena, we've kept you on long enough. I think you need some more rest. But the next time we talk, I expect to hear that you're doing much better and either being discharged, or already out of the hospital and home, recuperating."

They grinned as they saw her almost say, "F-A-B", but she changed it immediately to, "Okay, Boss. I hear and obey." They both chuckled as the connection was terminated.

Jeff stood up and looked at his son. "I have some things to do elsewhere. I believe I know what you are planning to do, and I approve. You can go ahead and do it from here." He turned and left, as Scott took his place at the desk.

"What a lady," Scott said to himself as he began checking out the hotels in the area, to locate the one Lena's family was staying at. When he did, he told them that all their expenses would be paid for by Tracy Industries, and to make sure they received every courtesy. Then he placed a few other calls. When he left the lounge, he wore a smile of satisfaction.

Post by Hobbeth On 1/11/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:21:14 GMT

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Sunday, August 12, 10:30am Tracy Island (3:30 pm, the previous day, LA)

Jeff listened to the phone ringing. Just as he was about to hang up, someone picked it up.

"No, I'm sorry; I have no further comments about International Rescue."

"Well, I have several things to say about it but not over the phone. Still having problems with the media?"

"Jeff! Just a second." A picture of Drew, looking rather harried appeared. "That's actually an advantage. Everyone thinks I'm visiting you to get away from them. What's up? Is everything ok?"

"Not exactly. Dianne's fine but something else has happened. I need your advice."

"Go ahead."

"Cherie caught Tyler throwing up yesterday on the flight home. He didn't eat much last night despite having his favorites. I made sure he ate this morning, only..." Jeff hesitated, "I think he was throwing up again a couple of minutes ago. I didn't catch him at it, but his bathroom smelled like he had been."

"Damn. Dianne doesn't need this. And neither do you." Drew closed his eyes for a second. "I'm not going to be able to get there any sooner than Tuesday. And this isn't my specialty. How did Dianne's counselor search go; Lord, was it only two weeks ago?"

"She found one she wanted me to meet. But she's a specialist in trauma cases not children."

"This is a trauma case. Who is it?"

"Anna Hanson. Dianne said you recommended her."

"Yes. I only met her once but she seemed sensible. Not too caught up in psychobabble. I think you need to make an appointment to take Tyler to see her. Tell her what's been happening. You don't need to mention anything else. See if you feel ok with her or if she can recommend someone else."

"Would she recommend someone else if I didn't like her?"

Drew grimaced. "Counselors do that all the time. There are very good reasons why an otherwise great counselor won't work out for a person. Set up an appointment with you and Tyler. See if you feel she's more concerned about Tyler than anything else. If she doesn't work out, I'll help you find a different one when I get there."

"I'll give her a call right now."

"What time is it there?"

Jeff looked at the clock. "10:42. Why?"

"Wait a bit. If I remember correctly she's a lay minister in the Episcopal Church. She might be helping out at the service right now. Call this afternoon. Set up an appointment for tomorrow morning."

"I'll call after lunch. Thanks."

"I just hope it all works out ok. I'll see you in a couple days."

Post by susanmartha on 1/12/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:21:47 GMT

8/12/2068, Sunday afternoon, Tracy Island

Jeff sat at his desk, a picture of frustration and concern. He looked through his calendar until he found the canceled appointment with Anna Hanson. He still wasn't sure about trusting her but Tyler needed help and he needed it now. He couldn't afford to wait. I will have to be the one to take him and I don't want to leave Dianne right now. He punched in the number. A middle aged man answered the phone.

"I was trying to call the office of Anna Hanson. Is she there?"

The man smiled slightly and answered, "She doesn't have a separate line for her office. I'll get her. Who should I say is calling?"

"Jefferson Tracy. She talked to my wife last week."

"Oh yes, the interview. She's in the library. Just a sec." The man put down the video phone. A minute later a dark haired woman with white streaks in her hair picked it up.

"Mr. Tracy? I'm Anna Hanson. How can I help you?"

"Mrs. Hansen. I believe my wife mentioned a problem with our son, Tyler." When Anna nodded he went on. "She was badly injured a few days later, while visiting her uncle in the States. I believe you know him, Andrew Carmichael?"

"Yes, I met him during the clean up after the tsunami. We conferred about a couple of his patients before he left."

Jeff was surprised at this but went on. "Tyler refused to go see her in the hospital. He avoided her during the plane ride home." Jeff took a deep breath. "This afternoon one of his brothers found him throwing up after lunch. No one can remember him eating much recently and I suspect he hasn't been keeping down what he does eat. My wife is in no shape to deal with this and I'm at the end of my rope. Could you possibly talk to him? I know children are not your specialty but both Dianne and Drew like you..." His voice trailed off.

"Actually, I work with children all the time. I work with the families of trauma victims as well as the victims. You want me to see Tyler?"

"Yes, please. I can bring him to see you tomorrow." Jeff did not want to leave Dianne but Tyler needed his dad right now much more than Dianne needed him.

"Tyler has enough upset in his life right now. Why don't I come to you? Where can I catch a flight to the island you live on, Mr. Tracy?" She grabbed a note pad and pen and got ready to take notes.

"You don't. It's a private island with no commercial air service. I'll arrange for one of my boys to fly over and pick you up tomorrow morning. You might want to pack a bag, although we could get you back the same day if necessary. What's the nearest airport to you?"



"My husband flies out of the Lake Colendge airfield. I can meet someone there at 7:30 tomorrow morning."

"Fine. Someone will meet you at the terminal." Jeff hesitated. "I don't know how long you can stay. I hope at least one night, but could you stay longer if necessary?"

"I'll pack for a longer stay. I can stay up to a week if needed."

"Good. I'll meet you tomorrow then. If anything happens and you need to change arrangements or if your husband needs to contact you, you can reach me at this number."

Anna took down the number and repeated it back to Jeff. "I do have one question that needs to be answered now, Mr. Tracy. Have you talked to Dianne about this?"

Jeff had braced himself for questions about possible abuse of his wife and kids. That subject had been raised before. But this was unexpected. "No, I didn't want to worry her. She needs to concentrate on getting better."

"Tell her tonight. She is an intelligent woman and had probably already noticed the lack of visits from Tyler. She's probably worried about it and doesn't want to worry you. Telling her you are aware of the problem and have called me will relieve her mind about it. Tell her I'll talk to her about Tyler sometime tomorrow, after I've seen him. And I will want to spend some time talking to you before I see Tyler."

"Right. I'll see you tomorrow." Jeff hung up the phone. Anna sat at the desk for a moment then picked up the phone again.

"Hello, directory assistance? I need to find the number for someone in the Los Angeles area of California in the US. Dr. Andrew Carmichael. He works at Mercy Hospital in L.A. Home or office will do. Also I need the number of the L.A. office of Doctors without Borders."

Post by susanmartha on 1/12/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:22:14 GMT

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Jeff peered in as the door to the sick room opened, then smiled as he saw Dianne glance his way. She put down the note she was reading, and held out a hand to him.

"How are you doing, love?" he asked as he kissed her, and sat on the edge of the bed facing her.

"I'm okay. The leg is a bit sore today... more than usual. Looks a tad inflamed, too. I'll have Brains do a swab and see if we've got a bacterial infection or what." She shook her head slowly and indicated her leg with a hand. "This thing is ugly enough as it is. I don't need some big open wound to be cleaned and packed several times a day. I want to get back on my feet!"

"You will, Di," Maggie said as she came out of the restroom, drying her hands. She looked cheery in a pink flowered scrub top and coordinating solid pants. "Just wait until Drew gets here. Then he'll start putting you through the wringer with physical therapy!" She sighed contentedly. "I knew I should never have given up nursing full-time. But someone's got to keep the house together and the grandkids mollified."

"I'm glad you're here, Maggie," Jeff said. "I'm afraid to call on our nurses quite yet. I want to give them some more time to recover... in more ways than just physical." He hesitated, then sighed. "You might as well hear this, too, Maggie." Turning to Dianne, he said, "Tyler's been vomiting again."

Dianne sighed and sagged against the bed. "I should have known something was wrong."

"And exactly how should you have known?" Maggie said, hands on hips.

"He never came to see me in the hospital," Dianne replied softly. "I wondered why, but never pressed the issue." She turned to her husband. "I -- I can't deal with this now, Jeff."

"I know, love. I know." Jeff took her hand and squeezed it gently. "I called Drew; he'll leave Tuesday from Los Angeles and get here Wednesday. I asked him what to do, and he suggested that I call the counselor you'd interviewed, Mrs. Hanson. So I did. She'll be out here in the morning. I'll need to volunteer a couple of people to fly over and pick her up, then file a flight plan."

Dianne nodded. "Oh, thank you, love. That really takes a weight from my shoulders." She glanced down and pulled up her blanket a little. "We really need a counselor... all of us do." Looking up again, she asked, "What will you tell her about IR? She needs to know the whole picture."

"I'll know when I get a better idea whether or not she'll work out."

"Jeff," Dianne began to protest, but Jeff held up a hand.

"I trust your judgment, Dianne, I really do, but I have to feel sure for myself. Drew said that there are sometimes reasons why good counselors don't work out." He smiled a little. "I promise I won't wait six weeks. Once I meet her, and see that she'll be good for us, I'll tell her. Promise."

Dianne sighed again. "All right." Her face cleared and a sly smile crossed her face. "Y'know, you might want to volunteer Gordon for this little jaunt. I'm sure he'd appreciate getting out of Scott's line of fire."

Jeff nodded slowly, a smile beginning to spread across his face as well. "That's a very good idea. I think I'll go tell him right now that he's been volunteered, then file the flight plan." He stood, and leaned over to kiss Dianne once more. "I'll be back later."

"I'll look forward to it," Dianne said as she stroked a hand along his face. He took the hand, kissed the palm, and gently curled her fingers over the kiss. Then he turned and left, stopping at the door to give her a farewell wave.

Maggie sniffed a little chuckle. "Y'know something? I think Drew could take a few lessons from that man."

Post by Tikatu On 1/12/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:22:49 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Sunday, August 12th afternoon

Once again Kat was seated in the pilot's seat; she was feeling more confident this time. In a firm voice she asked, "Clear for takeoff?"

Alan's voice came over the radio. "You're clear for takeoff, Kat. Have a good lesson."

She taxied the little plane to the runway. Increasing power, she released the brake. The jet sped down the runway until it reached takeoff speed. Then she pulled back on the yoke, and the Ladybird rose up into the sky.

She visibly relaxed. Holding the plane steady, she began the circuit of the island.

"This time, Kat, we're going further," Tin-Tin said "I want you to head for the island of Moyla, circle over the island and then return to Tracy Island."

Setting a course for Moyla, the young mechanic settled at the controls. A bit of turbulence affected the plane and she had to compensate. But she didn't feel completely out of control, as she did several lessons ago. Spying Moyla ahead, she aimed for the island and sweeping round, headed once more back in the direction of Tracy Island.

Before she knew it, Tracy Island was ahead and she carefully landed the plane. Sitting back in her seat she let out a sigh of relief.

"That was so much better," Tin-Tin said.

The two young women got out of the plane. After thanking her instructor, Kat began work on the post-flight checks, whilst the young Malaysian headed for the Villa. When Tin-Tin entered the lounge, Jeff asked, "How did she do?"

Tin-Tin smiled. "She's improving, but she needs more lessons. I would like to give her a longer lesson. With your permission, I'd like to take her to Christchurch to give her the experience of landing and taking off from an airport."

"That shouldn't be a problem," Jeff replied. "Just let me know when you think she'll be ready."

"Thank you, Mr Tracy."

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:23:25 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Monday, 12th August, evening

Kat was sitting at her computer, reading through her emails. The first one was from Melanie, her brother's fiancée.

Hi Kat,

I'm having your bridesmaid's dress made by the same dressmaker who is making my wedding dress. Therefore, if you send me your measurements now, when you come for the wedding, we can have a fitting. Hopefully it shouldn't need too many alterations. The attachment shows you the design of the dress. Suzi is making Estelle's dress as she is only tiny, and the way kids grow, she will probably have outgrown the one that I would have had made for her.

Our barn conversion is really coming along and will be ready in good time for us to move in after the honeymoon. We're spending it in Thailand. I can hardly wait; I've always wanted to visit that country.

Anyway, I think that's all for now. Andy sends his love and says he can't wait to see you in November, and of course, neither can I.

Love Melly and Andy

p.s. Do you remember my cousin Toby? He says he can't wait to see you again either.

Kat sighed at that last sentence. Oh, yes, I remember Toby. A very intense young man a couple of years younger than she was. On the occasions that they had met, he was always asking if she would go out with him. But his idea of going out was to a museum or an art gallery. She may have been more willing if he had offered to take her to see a show or something slightly more interesting. Putting Toby to the back of her mind, she focused her attention back to the computer screen, and opened the attachment. The picture was of an empire style dress in pale aquamarine velvet, with a sweetheart neckline and long sleeves. The skirt was split down the front to reveal a white lacy underskirt. It looks lovely, she thought.

Kat began to write a reply.

Hi Melly,

Thanks for sending me a picture of the bridesmaid dress; it looks lovely. I agree that Estelle is growing so fast, but I expect she'll look cute. Tim says that being a bridesmaid is all that she talks about. I do hope that Suzi can make the wedding; it would be such a shame if she can't.

I'm glad that the your new home will be ready for you. That must be such a relief. I remember when we went to look at it on my birthday; you didn't think it would be ready in time. Lucky you, going to Thailand, you'll enjoy it. I went there a few years ago and absolutely adored it; I'd love to go again.

Yes, I do remember Toby, is he still wearing those glasses with heavy black frames?

I have some other emails to reply to this evening. Look forward to seeing you in November.

Love Kat

Kat then opened her most recent email from John, and smiling at the contents, she started to reply.

Dear John,

I'm glad you enjoyed our evening together. I wasn't too sure whether you would like a totally vegetarian meal. But as you remarked, they can be incredibly tasty.

I've finished the Secret of Atlantis. That was such an interesting book. There are so many myths and legends surrounding the lost city. But in this book it's so easy to visualise the people and their way of life, and the cataclysm that ended the civilisation. I would love to read the books you have on the Pharaohs and the Aztecs and will ask either Scott or Virgil when I want to borrow some more books. I enjoyed that evening we spent together when you were teaching me Spanish and I am trying to practice a little every day, so I hope you'll notice an improvement when you return.

I had another flying lesson this afternoon, and I certainly felt more confident this time. I was hoping that maybe you could give me a lesson when you are back at base, but Tin-Tin says that it's best to have just one instructor.

I've had an email from Melanie, my brother's fiancée. She sent me a picture of the bridesmaid's dress. It's really lovely. I'm sending it on for you to look at.

That's all my news for now. Look forward to hearing from you soon.

Love Kat

Satisfied that the message read okay, she pressed SEND.

Post by Tawnyangel22 On 1/13/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:23:57 GMT  
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Sunday Evening, August 12th, 2068. Tracy Island.

Virgil rubbed his hand as he walked towards the sick bay to visit Dianne. She'd arrived home Friday and although he'd wanted to see her, he knew Alex, Cherie and Tyler would want their mother to themselves for a while. He also wanted Dianne to get some rest before the other family members, including him, descended on her for a visit.

He winced as his hand throbbed again and he remembered why. He'd stopped in to see his Grandma on the way to visiting Dianne. He'd given her a hug and a kiss on the cheek and asked her how the new felines were doing.

While she'd been telling him, one of the fur balls had boldly walked up to Virgil. He'd hunkered down to pet the little thing and was laughing as the kitten playfully batted a paw at him. But as soon as Virgil's attention went back to his grandmother, the little monster attached itself to Virgil's hand with all of its sharp little claws and sank its teeth into his skin! Virgil had yelled in pain and it took Grandma some effort to extricate the little tiger and put him back with his mother!

After some fussing and first aid, Virgil left and made his way to the sick bay, firmly deciding that he would not be offering to adopt any of the kittens!

Dianne was awake when he gently knocked on the door. She smiled at Virgil as he entered.

"Hey, Mom."

Dianne held out her hand. "Virgil!"

He gently took her hand and sat on the edge of her bed. They talked for a while, each glad to see the other. He didn't stay long, noticing that she was tiring easily and gently hugged her telling her he'd be back later.

After closing the door behind him, he paused in thought for a few minutes, then, with a decision made, he went in search of his father.

Jeff had been in the lounge briefly going over some papers on his desk but was distracted thinking of Dianne and, putting them aside, he stood and began walking towards the sick bay.

"Dad! I was just on my way to see you."

Jeff smiled, acknowledging Virgil as they met. "Really? Well, what do you need, son?"

"Can we go to your study and talk? I need to ask you something."

Jeff looked puzzled. Virgil sounded serious and it wasn't often he needed to talk in private with 'dear old dad'. "Sure, Virgil. When do you want to have this talk?"

"Well, the sooner the better, I guess."

Brown eyes met blue and even though Jeff wanted to see Dianne at this moment, he could see the worry in his son's eyes. "How about now? Would that work?" Jeff asked.

"Sure, thanks." A sudden thought crossed Virgil's mind, "Unless you were on your way to see Mom, then I can...."

"I was, but I can see that something's on your mind. Virgil, if you need to talk, I'm here," Jeff smiled.

Virgil perched himself on the edge of the desk as his father made himself comfortable in his chair. "So what's this all about, Virgil?" Jeff asked, looking at his second son and thinking how different his questioning would have been if either Gordon or Alan had been sitting in front of him. He smiled slightly at the thought. "Okay, son, what have you done and how much is it going to cost me?" Thank goodness my sons are so different!

Virgil took a deep breath, knowing his father wasn't going to like what he had to say. "I want to cancel my birthday party at Paradise Peaks." The statement was short and straight to the point.

Jeff looked at his boy and merely said, "What?"

Oh boy, here it comes!

Virgil repeated himself and this time Jeff replied, "That's what I thought you'd said. May I ask why?"

Although he seemed calm on the outside, Virgil knew by the stern tone of his father's voice that all was not calm on the inside.

"I just don't think it's the right time for a party. After everything this family has just been through, I think the last thing people want to do is party."

Jeff digested this information and said, "Son, I think a chance to relax and enjoy themselves away from here is just what some of us need. Besides, I know a number of people are looking forward to it."

Virgil sighed. In a way, Jeff was right, but Virgil knew he couldn't go through with it. "Dad, listen, I see where you're coming from but I've also seen how much damage that last rescue did to our family as well as everything else it damaged. Grandma's putting on a brave front, but Dad, I was there at the farm. I saw her face. John did, too."

Jeff saw the sadness in Virgil's face and felt the same sadness when thinking how his mother must have felt standing in the rubble of what was once her home. His home too, for that matter.

Virgil continued on, "Plus, Mom's just got home and she's in no condition to party. To be honest, Dad, I want you both to be there."

"I know, son," Jeff said quietly; he wanted Dianne to be there, too.

"I really feel what we all need is some downtime away from the world and the press and just be here, at home, together. We can still celebrate my birthday, just keep it low key and relaxed."



Virgil looked at Jeff hopefully. The Tracy patriarch remained silent for a few moments then answered, "All right, son if this is what you really want I'll cancel the reservations at Paradise Peaks and we'll do this your way."

"Thanks, Dad!" Virgil said, hopping down of the desk corner.

"Wait just a second, son. You'll need to make arrangements for catering. Then there's the decorations and music and don't forget a photographer..."

"Dad! I'm on it. I'll enlist Kyrano's help with the caterers, Gordon can help rig up a sound system, and I'll find someone to take a few photos."

Jeff laughed a little at Virgil's enthusiasm. "Okay Virgil. I'll let everyone know by e-mail but don't be surprised if there's more than one unhappy person."

"I won't be, and I'll be happy to talk to them if they want." He winked at Jeff as he turned and left the room.

Jeff smiled, then sighed and turned on his computer. He had some e-mails to send.

Post by FrankieCTB2 On 1/13/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:24:27 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Sunday evening

A journal entry

[i]August 12

We are all finally all home and settling in again, but things will never go back to the way it was. And I don't know what to do about this empty space in my heart.

The farmhouse is gone.

The home where Grant and I spent our married life, and raised our son, the home that belonged to his parents, his grandparents, and great-grandparents --a tornado took it and left only bits and pieces. It was so hard to be there and see the aftermath.

I know I told John that I'd said goodbye to the place some time ago, and there was nothing left for me there, but seeing the place in that condition... there are no words. We brought back little -- a teddy bear, a leather jacket and hat -- also a cat and her kittens. I couldn't leave them behind. I don't know how they managed to survive the tornado that hit the place, although the barn they were in was mostly intact. I guess it's a miracle.

Tornadoes are unforgiving things. They also don't discriminate. My daughter-in-law is in the hospital because of them. My son is with her, and has been since he was able to get to her at the hospital in Los Angeles. Thank God she is recovering, but for a while we didn't know if she would. And the two nurses with her, they will be fine, too.

I'm so glad Lisa is here. And Maggie; it's good to be able to get to know some of Dianne's relatives better. I wish the circumstances were more pleasant, though.

That leads me to another worry. Poor Tyler, to have so many frightening things happening to people he cares about in his short life... He's feeling the effects of it all. And it seems that Jeff has decided to call in a counselor for him, a psychologist. In all my born days, I never thought any member of this family would need one. But, when I think about it, I suppose it was inevitable. With all the trauma the team encounters and endures, it was only a matter of time. And I can't fix everything.

I can't fix everything.

There! I've written it twice. I used to heal all those scrapes with Neosporin and a kiss, or a cold with medicine, or an upset stomach and so on, but I have to admit now that I can't heal everything they go through. I can only be there for them and love them, as I always have. And I know Jeff would tell me that it's enough. But I don't feel it is.

I'm getting old. But I refuse to become useless.

Post by Hobbeth On 1/13/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:24:55 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Sunday evening...

"I don't know how I let myself get talked into this," Alan grumbled.

"Hey, nobody held a gun to you head," Gordon retorted.

Alan glared, then sighed. "You'd think I would have learned by now!"

"Must be a blond thing." Gordon ducked as Alan threw the scraper at him. "Hey, watch it! You could put an eye out that way."

"Yeah, like I could be so lucky," Alan mumbled as he retrieved the scraper.

The two brothers were on the floor in Scott's room, attempting to unstick Scott's bureau drawers. Alan had a paint scraper that he was trying to pry between the wood, and Gordon was at the opposite end using a chisel.

Finally Gordon sat back and sighed. "This isn't working. We're going to have to use the steamer.

Alan looked up in horror. "We can't! If we use the steamer, all the paint'll come off and we'll have to refinish the thing too!"

"Let's not forget re-washing all his clothes..." Gordon sighed again.

Alan got up and stretched. "This had to be one of your dumber ideas, Gordon."

Gordon nodded in agreement, then smiled. "Yeah, but you got to admit, it was pretty good. You should have seen him running through the house in nothing but a towel. And when he got to the kitchen and ran into Grandma and dropped said towel...." Gordon dissolved into a fit of laughter.

Alan joined in a moment later. "Man, I wish we could have gotten pictures. Something to show his kids someday."

Gordon merely grinned. "Who said I didn't?"

Post by lillehafrue On 1/14/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:25:26 GMT

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Monday, August 13, 7:30am Christchurch, New Zealand

"Mrs. Hanson?" The red haired young man walked towards Anna. When Anna nodded, he went on. "I'm Gordon Tracy. Are these your bags?"

"Mr. Tracy," Anna held out her hand and Gordon shook it. "Your father said to pack for up to a week." There was a small bag and a medium sized suitcase at her feet. She had a computer case over her shoulder.

"Right. My co-pilot is doing the preflight checks right now. I'll load these and we should be ready to go. If you'll follow me." Gordon picked up both bags and headed towards one of the doors leading to the runway. Anna moved ahead of him and held the door open. "What's this, women's lib?"

Anna looked at him. "If I were carrying something heavy and you had something light I would assume you would open the door for me. There is nothing 'lib' about it, just common politeness. Now if neither of us was carrying anything, I would let you open the door for me." She grinned wryly. "I'm known as 'Anna the immensely practical' in some quarters. This just seems to me to be the most practical way to do things."

"So I don't get a lecture on how women can do things for themselves?" Gordon was amused in spite of himself.

"Why, do you need one? I can probably give you one if you want, but I can think of several things

I'd rather talk about." They had reached the plane by this time and Gordon quickly loaded the luggage. The steps were already lowered and he gestured for Anna to precede him.

Alan looked out from the cockpit. "Everything's ready to go."

"Great. Let's get this show on the road. Oh, Mrs. Hanson? This is my brother, Alan." He started to slip into the copilot's seat then looked back at Anna. "I understand you have a pilot's license. Would you like to fly part of the way? Or at least sit up front?" He grinned. "Common politeness says I should ask."

"No, thank you. I know how to fly but I don't enjoy it much." Anna kept her face perfectly straight. "Besides, I'd hate to deprive you of your fun. That wouldn't be polite." Her innocent look could match the best one Gordon could put on. But then her face grew thoughtful. "I would, however, like to talk to you after we've taken off. How long will we be in the air?"

"About 30 minutes. I'll be back in a minute." They had been taxiing toward the runway and they were next in line to take-off.

Anna unzipped her computer case and opened her laptop. She plugged in a mouse (she hated trackballs) and clicked on a file. She was still studying it when Gordon returned a few minutes later.

He looked down at an old newspaper article about his Dad and Dianne's marriage. "You're about to lose your internet connection. In fact, I'm surprised you still have it."

"This computer doesn't have a connection to the net." Anna closed the file and then the computer. "I got this article off the net at home last night and copied it to disc."

Gordon looked surprised. "I thought that model of computer had a built in wireless connection."

"It did. I had them disable it. In fact, I had them physically take the wireless card out."

Gordon's eyebrows went up at this. "Why?"

"Any computer, no matter how secure, can be hacked into. I knew too many people who got into 'impenetrable' systems in college. If a human wrote it, another human will find a way around it." Anna looked up at him. "Most of the people I worked with valued confidentiality. And in a child abuse or child custody case there can be a lot at stake. Not to mention defense attorneys trying to discredit a witness. Or civil wrongful death suits. My private files never go near the net. I have to update the city files in some cases, but that can be a summary of how I feel the patient is doing. But what goes on in my office, stays in my office."

"Please, sit down." She indicated the seat next to her. "What can you tell me about Tyler? I understand this has been a very upsetting year for him. Are you close to him?"

"We're close, but he's closer to John. Unfortunately, John now has a girlfriend and Tyler is not handling it very well." Gordon hesitated for a minute.

Anna broke in. "Gordon, it's very important that I know everything I can in order to help Tyler. But it is even more important for Tyler to have people he feels he can trust around him. If he told you something in confidence, don't tell me. If you think I should know something, tell Tyler that you think he should tell me. On the other hand, I am not going to pass anything about Tyler on that is told to me in confidence, unless I have to. So unless someone is hurting Tyler in any way, your secrets are safe here. If he has made any accusations though, I need to know."

"No nothing like that. Although he did accuse Kat of making 'goo-goo eyes' at John." Gordon seemed lost in thought for a minute. Anna waited patiently, knowing he would continue when he was ready.

"Right after my mom died my dad was, well, not doing very well."

Anna nodded. "That would be Lucy, his first wife."

Gordon went on. "Grandma came and took care of us. She took us in to see the pastor at our church, a couple of times. He helped us a lot and we told him how Dad was doing. Including the fact that Dad wasn't home much and that when he was, he was drinking a lot. We didn't find this out until much later, but he wasn't the one to complained to Child Protective Services. His secretary had been reading his notes and listening in on some of the sessions. She told a friend of hers who was a social worker. The friend called CPS. They investigated, and found no evidence of abuse. But the investigation was hard on Dad and then the press heard rumors about it and they started hounding us kids. We couldn't go out on the playground at school, we had to give up some extra activities, Dad finally had to hire security people for anything we wanted to do. I was still pretty young, but both Scott and Virgil almost had to give up Scouts. After about a year things settled down. That's when Dad decided to move us all back to Kansas."

Anna let out a breath. "So your father doesn't trust counselors much. He must be really worried about Tyler to have called me then."

"Yeah. This is scaring him. And me, too. Tyler has always been a picky eater but nothing like this. And now he's throwing up again. He was sick right after the tsunami, but we thought he was better. Dad just doesn't know where to start and neither do any of the rest of us."

"Gordon, what other changes have happened in Tyler's life recently?"

"A lot of new people have moved to the Island recently. That should be good though."

"Change, good or bad, can be upsetting. How did he handle your dad's accident? Did he go see him in the hospital?"

"Fairly well, I thought. All three of the younger kids saw dad as soon as the hospital permitted them to visit. We didn't really notice any problems until after the tsunami."

"You said 'the younger kids'. Do you feel like they are two separate families? And, more importantly, does Tyler?" The voice Anna used was so matter-of-fact that it was impossible for Gordon to resent the question.

"Dad adopted all three of Dianne's kids. We are one family. I won't say 'one big happy family' because we're human and have the normal problems. But, other than the 'you're older and get to do neat stuff' there's nothing major." Gordon thought for a second. "At least none that I know of. It's kind of neat to have a little sister and to no longer be one of the 'terrible two youngest'."

"Is there anything else you think I should know about? Even if it seems like no big deal?"

Gordon opened his mouth to answer but Alan's voice cut in before he could. "We're approaching Tracy Island and are clear to land. Fasten your seatbelts, everyone. And before you ask, no, I don't need you up here Gordon. What you were talking about back there was more important than help on a 30 minute flight." Gordon nodded and fastened his seat belt.

Post by susanmartha On 1/14/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:25:50 GMT  
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**\*\*Sunday, Aug 12, Opp, Alabama; 1 p.m. (Monday, Aug 13; 5 a.m. on Tracy Island)\*\***

Callie and her family entered their home after attending the church service and having lunch there. "That was a good sermon," said Lorraine.

"You're right," said Brian. "Hopefully we'll be able to apply it a lot this week, since we got Sis home for her birthday."

"Oh, stop it, Brian," Callie stated as her face started turning red. "You're embarrassing me."

Richard smiled at the fact his daughter was home. "I can't believe Tracy Industries allows people to visit family after being on the job for only six months. You've must've worked your way up the ranks fast."

"No, Dad. Some of the TI employees have family not that far away in Honolulu. Mr. Tracy believes that every employee should have a chance to spend quality time with loved ones. Besides, there's enough people in the engineering division there that it's no serious loss if I'm not there for a few days." Although she kept up a brave front, deep down she was shaking. I hope Doc's doing all right. It's hard for me to be here while she's still recovering. As for me, I'm just glad to be at home. I just hope they don't start asking too many questions.

Joseph shook his head. "I bet the toughest change for you is having to go backwards by about...what, seven hours?"

With a chuckle, she answered, "Oh, yeah. It's taken me the whole time I've been with TI to adjust my meal times. When I started back in February, people in Honolulu would have lunch at 12 noon, but my body was thinking, 'I should've already had dinner by now!'"

This caused everyone to laugh hard.

Lorraine asked, "Is there anything special you want to do before your birthday tomorrow, honey?"

"No, not really. I just want to take a nice shower, sit back, and relax."

"Oh, come on, Sis," said Brian. "Tomorrow's your birthday. You need to do something for yourself."

"Bri, I really want to relax today. With many of the stores closed on Sundays anyway, I don't have any reason to go out. I can wait until tomorrow."

"Brian," said Richard sternly, "leave Callie alone. She's barely had any time to herself since she got home. If she wants to relax, let her."

With a defeated sigh, Brian complied. "Yes, Dad. Sorry, Sis. I didn't mean to be so pushy."

"It's okay. I just need a little time to get adjusted here. Of course, heat and humidity aren't a problem, since it's the same in Honolulu."

After another hearty laugh, Callie added, "I'm gonna take myself a shower and slip into something more comfortable."

"Of course, dear," Lorraine said. "We'll let you have the rest of the day to yourself. I'll start cooking up the red beans and rice, along with some pork chops."

"Mmm, sounds good, Mom," said Joseph. "Lookin' forward to that."

Callie went into her bedroom and got undressed before going into the bathroom to take her shower. When she started the warm water, she immediately felt relaxed. Every drop across her body gave her a feeling of being massaged at a spa. Ah...this warm water feels so good right now. It's just what I needed to get some tension out of these muscles. I know Brian means well, but I really need some "me" time. I hope tomorrow I'll get to do something really fun, maybe fish at the nearby lake or go on a shopping spree at the mall in Andalusia.

Joseph knocked on her bedroom door. "Sis? Can I talk to you for a minute?" Not hearing her, he stepped into her room. "Oh, she must've gotten straight into the shower. I'll leave her alone--" He stopped mid-sentence because the sun reflected off something on the nightstand next to her bed. Walking up to the nightstand, he picked up the object. "What's this...a prescription...for sleeping pills? And it has Callie's name on it, too. Why on Earth does she need sleeping pills?" He noticed two other key pieces of information. "Dr. Dianne Tracy? Christchurch, New Zealand? What the heck's going on here?"

Getting out of the shower, she slipped into a comfortable t-shirt and knee-length capri pants. She stepped out of the bathroom and was surprised to find Joseph there. "Hey, Joe, what's going...on?" Upon seeing what he had in his hand, she tried to take it from him. "What are you doing with my prescription?"

He quickly stood up and held the prescription bottle tight. "Sis, you've got some serious explaining



to do. What's with these sleeping pills, why do they come from Dr. Dianne Tracy, and why do they come from New Zealand? Don't you work in Honolulu?"

"Of course I do," she answered. "I was in Christchurch on assignment for a week and was having trouble sleeping. Going there subtracted another three hours, screwing up my body clock. And I really don't want to go on about passing the International Date Line over and over again."

"Yeah, I guess all that time changing and going everywhere can mess around with you."

"Right. Dr. Dianne Tracy was also there at the time. She's Mr. Tracy's wife and the family doctor. When she noticed how tired I had been from the constant jet lag and time changes, she gave me a ten-day prescription to help me sleep better."

Joseph put the bottle back on the nightstand and slowly walked up to his sister. "Aw, Sis, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to jump to the wrong conclusion. The moment I found the prescription, I just thought something was wrong."

"I understand, Joe. No harm done." She hugged him tightly. "Sorry for worrying you like that." After letting him go, she said, "By the way, what did you want to see me about?"

"I just wanted to check in on you. You know, make sure you're okay. I mean, I haven't seen you in over six months."

Callie smiled. "I appreciate it, Joe. I really do, but I'm a big girl now. I'll be okay."

"All right. I just wish you could go to the Hall of Fame Game in Canton next weekend. Alabama's playing Penn State."

"What?" she gasped. "Aw, geez! Now I wish my birthday were next week instead of this week."

Joseph laughed. "Yeah, I know. When Mom was bringing you into the world, she actually wanted to hold off for a couple of weeks so you would be born at the beginning of football season."

"Sorry, but when nature says it's time...." She laughed. "Oh, well, I can't always be lucky in life."

"Yeah. Hey, that was all I wanted to tell you. I'll leave you alone, at least until it's dinner time."

"Thanks, Joe. I'll see you later." When he left the room, she breathed a sigh of relief. Whew, it's a good thing I practiced what to say if I ever got into this situation, but I didn't expect him to find the medication. I'd better hide my prescriptions in the nightstand drawer. She looked outside the window and sighed. I wish I didn't have to lie to my family about what really happened to me, but I'm still insecure. The last thing I need is a lot more questions. Maybe while I'm here I'll be able to have a more decent sleep and not have to take the pills. She then got into her bed and listened to a mini-disc of nature sounds, which helped her fall asleep after 20 minutes.

Post by TracyFan4Ever On 1/14/2007

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Sunday, August 12, late morning, Tracy Island

As she laid in her bed, the sunlight woke her. Somehow the color was different. It caused her to sit up. She got up, walking over to push the sheers aside and find a distant ocean in the background, a beach in the middle and a runway in the foreground. She pushed her hair out of her face, laughing to herself. "No, Heather Marie, you're no longer in Kansas."

Continuing to talk to herself, she replied, "No, this is quite the opposite. Instead of a dry plain, I've got water-water everywhere."

Flopping back in the bed, she looked at herself lying there in the wide vanity mirror that sat opposite of her bed, beginning to remember the early morning hours when she'd flown in with Tin-Tin - with whom she'd become fast friends - as her co-pilot

Sunday morning, August 12, 2:30 a.m.

After a very comfortable three and a half hour trip from the Tracy Industries Testing Grounds - where Heather could now be called a former test pilot - they arrived at Tracy Island with a smooth landing. The metallic scream of the engines died away as Heather parked the Blue Streak into its new berth.

"Well, here we are," Tin-Tin said with a smile. "Now that your plane is put to bed, I have a question to ask. Do you want to go to your apartment right away? Or would a guest room in the Round House be better?" She paused. "The guest room would only be until you got some rest."

Heather yawned inadvertently. "Well, I'm beat. I'd say let's go with the easiest move. What would be easiest for you?"

"I guess the apartment would," Tin-Tin replied. "We're closest to the Cliff House right now."

"Let's do that then. Are there others sleeping in here?"

"Yes, the others are probably asleep, but your neighbor, Brandon is away. We shouldn't disturb anyone. The apartments are well soundproofed."

"That works for me. What are you going to be doing tomorrow?"

Tin-Tin yawned and stretched. "I'm not sure yet. Depends on if I get some sleep. All this time zone hopping messes me up!" She gave Heather a smile. "Are you hungry? I know we can get something from the Villa kitchen. I don't think there'll be anything in your fridge just yet."

Heather smiled. "Sure. I'm tired, but more hungry than anything else."

"Okay, then. Let's get your luggage up to your apartment, and go raid the fridge!" Tin-Tin said with a grin.

As Tin-Tin led them to the nearest service elevator, Heather shook her head. "Maybe you really do need a family pilot!"

Tin-Tin laughed as she pulled the antigravity float behind her, piled with Heather's luggage. The service elevator brought them to a wide catwalk within the cavernous hangar. "We'll get to the lobby of your apartment quickest this way," she explained. "Then I can show you the elevator system. It's really unique."

They found themselves at a wide glass door that slid open to Tin-Tin's key card. Dragging the float in, she activated the elevator, pushed the float in, and beckoned Heather to join her. "This is a keypad locking system. I'll enter my code, then you can enter one for yourself. The door to your apartment will only open from the inside, or if you punch in your code."

Heather nodded, and reached over to enter her own code. The door slid open, giving them direct access to the apartment. The lights automatically turned on. Walking in, Heather's delighted eyes swung from one end of the condominium to the other. She had never seen such comfortable surroundings with its sumptuous living room, well thought out kitchen, and a lovely, elegant bedroom.

"What do you think? Tin-Tin asked with a self-satisfied grin. "Let's put your luggage in your room," she added, "then I'll show you the monorail."

"Lead on, McDuff," Heather replied.

"You read Shakespeare?" Tin-Tin asked with delight.

"Some of it. MacBeth, Othello, Midsummer's Night Dream..."

"I enjoy reading Shakespeare," Tin-Tin said, as she led Heather to the monorail. "If I hadn't been so wrapped up in the sciences, I might have studied drama." They stepped aboard the monorail car. "This is a direct branch line to the Villa elevators. You'll need to remember that for when you start working rescues."

Heather nodded. "So what's on the menu this early in the morning?"

Tin-Tin laughed. "Well, we'll see who is up and about... someone nearly always is, as you heard when you requested landing clearance. Then we'll see what's available. I make a mean omelet in record time, and we always have fixings for sandwiches. My father may have even left us portions of the evening meal; he knew I'd be home sometime today... yesterday..." She rolled her eyes and shook her head. "Whatever."

As Heather glanced down at the world that seemed to be moving underneath her, she said, "I've crossed time zones often, but not across the IDL. Everyone must really depend on you."

Tin-Tin smiled softly as the monorail came to a halt at the small elevator lobby. "We all depend on each other here." She gestured to Heather. "This will take us up to the Villa."

They walked into the elevator. "So how did you get caught up in all this? How did you find your way here?"

"Through my father. When Mr. Tracy needed to move to a city and away from Kansas because of his business, his mother stayed on the family farm. He needed someone to take care of the house and prepare meals, and called my father on the strength of their friendship. I came with him and grew up in the Tracy home. It was only natural that I become part of International Rescue." She sighed. "I could have taken my skills anywhere, but I knew they were most needed here. I haven't regretted it."

The elevator deposited them on the lower floor of the Villa. As they walked, Tin-Tin said, "Looks like it's dark in the sick room; there's no light under the door. It's a good sign, I guess."

"How's Dr. Tracy doing now? Does she better being home now? How are the kids doing in all this?"

"I'm not sure. I know she's home, but it's only been a day or so. I guess I'll find out later today." She lead Heather into the dining room with its long table and sideboards.

"After I get up and get my inner clock reset, I'd like to go see how she's doing. Would you like me to help set the table?"

"No, I can do it while the food is heating. Father left us portions of the meal. Won't take a moment to heat up," Tin-Tin said as she opened one of the huge double refrigerators. "Besides, it'd take longer for me to tell you where everything is than to do it myself." She smiled at Heather. "But thanks for the offer; I appreciate it."

"You're welcome." With that, Heather dropped tiredly into her seat. Tin-Tin brought both dishes over to the kitchen table and they ate quietly, saying little. Soon, their repast was finished, and Tin-Tin escorted Heather one more time to her new apartment. As soon as the door closed behind her, Heather searched her largest bag and found one of Andrea's choices of radical nightwear. She shed her daywear, slipped on the delicate piece of lingerie, and crawled into bed.

Now she looked at herself in the vanity mirror. She was dressed in clean, casual clothes, smelling of her favorite perfume. Her reverie had taken her all the way through her shower and getting dressed. "Now I'm ready to face the day... and whatever adventures this new place brings," she said to herself with a smile.

There was a chiming at the door, and Heather hastened to open it. Tin-Tin stood in the elevator, smiling widely. "Are you ready to go?"

"Lead on, MacDuff!" Heather smiled back. She was feeling a little bit more comfortable.

--Heather arrives for good by Amanda Tracy and Tikatu on 1/14/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Monday afternoon, August 13.

Anna had spent the morning talking to Jeff, Lisa, Maggie and the rest of the family about Tyler. After lunch she spent an hour talking to Dianne. She kept getting the feeling people were hiding something, but she was used to that. Most families had something they didn't want to talk about. She didn't feel any menace or that they were hiding anything bad, and she trusted her instincts on that. Now she decided it was time to see what Tyler felt. She found Jeff in his office. "I would like to meet Tyler now. This will be more of a 'get to know you' visit but I do want it in a formal setting. Where would be a good place? Would your office work or would it be too intimidating?"

"My study might be better. He's in and out of there all the time, and it's more private." Jeff thought for a moment. "The schoolroom might also work."

"No, not the schoolroom. I don't want to make him associate the school room with something upsetting. I don't want to use the sick room for the same reason. And if I use your wife's office, he might feel I was trying to take his mother's place. Your study might be best. Formal but not intimidating. Somewhere he feels safe."

"All right, I'll find him and bring him up here. But I will be staying with him for this."

"Good. I want you in here for my first talk with Tyler. This won't be keeping you from something important?"

"Right now Tyler is the most important thing."

He cares enough to put aside his company and anything else. Good. He really does see Tyler as his son, not a just stepson or an encumbrance. And he's not just doing this for Dianne's sake.

Jeff noticed Gordon in the lounge. "Gordon, can you find Tyler and bring him here? I think he's still in his bedroom."

"Sure, Dad." Gordon gave Anna a quick look. She nodded back at him. He headed towards the bedrooms.

"I also want to meet with John later."

"To ask him about quitting NASA?" Jeff sat down in one of the chairs in front of his desk.

Anna gave him a look, then grinned slightly. "Partly. But Gordon said John is the adult son closest to Tyler. I want his impressions of what's happening with Tyler, see if he's noticed anything we've missed. You say the problems started after the tsunami?"

"And John was home then." Jeff frowned. "How important is it that you meet him face to face? He's away on family business right now. I can set up a call, but it would take a couple of days to get him physically back here."

"Let's see how things go with Tyler first." Just then the door opened and Tyler walked through. Jeff gestured for him to sit in the chair next to him. "Tyler, I want you to meet Anna Hanson. She's a friend of your mom's."

"Are you a doctor too?" He looked at her, inquiringly.

"No, I'm a counselor. I talk to people who just had something bad happen to them and help them through it."

His face immediately clouded up. "Mom called a shrink about me." He scowled.

"Tyler! That is not polite!"

Anna waved Jeff to silence. "Considering some of the shrinks out there, I don't blame him. No, Tyler, I'm not actually here just about you. I'm here mostly for your mother."

"But you're not a doctor?"

"No, I work with firefighters and police who have been hurt while at work." Tyler darted a surprised look at his dad. Anna continued, "I'm here to see she doesn't need to worry about anything while she recovers. I'd like to talk to you and your dad about how to do that."

"Well, Dad's with her almost all the time. And Grandma Emily, Grandma Lisa and Kyrano are taking care of everything."

"Oh good. Someone other than your dad is doing the cooking. In my experience, dads usually aren't very good cooks when mom is sick. The kids tend to eat a lot of pizza and macaroni and cheese."

"I like macaroni and cheese," Tyler said indignantly. "It's my favorite!"

"I like it too. It's just not so good when you have it every night." Anna thought for a second and decided on a sideways approach. She turned toward Jeff. "What do the doctors say about her? Will she be ok?"

Jeff knew that Anna already knew what Dianne's prognosis was. He didn't know what she was up to but decided to play along. "She's going to be ok, but it will be a while before she's back to normal."

"Are you worried about her?" Anna's voice remained calm, as if she were only mildly interested in the answer.

"Yes, of course I'm worried about her. I know she'll be ok but..." He shrugged.

Anna turned back to Tyler. "Tyler, when your dad was sick last spring, how much did your mom worry about him?"

"A lot, I guess. She stayed in New York instead of coming back to get us. Scott and Grandma Lisa

flew us to New York."

"And how soon did you get to see him?"

"When they let him out of the ICU. He wanted to see us but they wouldn't let us in the ICU."

"They wouldn't let me see my dad when he was in the ICU either. Were you the very first people to get to see him?" Anna's matter-of-fact tone seemed to relax Tyler a bit.

"Mom, Scott and Grandma Emily saw him first."

"But they could be in the ICU." She turned toward Jeff. "Mr. Tracy, why did you want to see Tyler and your other kids as soon as you could?"

"Because I missed them." Jeff hesitated. "And because I was worried about them and wanted to be sure they were ok."

"Did seeing them help? Even if you were still scared?"

Tyler jumped up. "My Dad's not scared. He's the bravest man in the whole world! He'd never be scared!"

Jeff was beginning to see where she was going with all this. "Of course I was scared, Tyler. I was scared I would die; I was scared I might not be able to walk again." Jeff hesitated. "I was afraid your mom might not love me anymore." Well, that hadn't been it exactly, but he wasn't going to go into that right now. Anna's mouth twitched, as if she knew exactly what he had been afraid of.

He went on. "Tyler, a brave man isn't someone who is never scared. A brave man is someone who goes ahead even though he's scared. Ask Scott. I know he's been scared sometimes."

"Scott's never scared! He's always in charge!" Tyler started to add something then hesitated and looked at his dad. Did this lady know about IR? He wasn't sure.

Anna noticed the hesitation and spoke up. "Everybody is afraid when something like this happens. It's ok to be scared, Tyler. What I'm here to do is help your mom deal with the things she's scared of." She crouched forward in her chair a bit so she was looking into Tyler's eyes. "And the biggest thing she's scared of is that you might be angry at her. Or," Anna's voice became very gentle, "she's afraid you might not love her any more."

Tyler looked like he was in shock. "She thinks I don't love her? Is that why she's going to leave? Like Daddy did?" A tear started to run down his cheek.

Anna turned to Jeff. "You left?"

"I think he means his biological father. He died 5 years ago in the Greenville Customs office bombing."

"I was mad at him and I didn't give him a hug and he went away and didn't come back. He must've



thought I didn't love him either." Tyler was obviously trying not to cry.

"And last spring your second dad went away and got hurt and almost didn't come back. And now your mom went away and came back hurt." Tyler was shaking now. Anna continued, "And in a way, John is going away too. Everyone's leaving you and getting hurt."

Jeff went over and picked up his youngest son. Tyler buried his head in Jeff's chest and sobbed. Jeff held him close and stroked his hair. "Shh, shh, Tyler. I'm not going to leave you and neither is your mom." He rocked him gently and looked at Anna.

"Just let him cry. He needs that now. Is there somewhere I can get a damp washcloth and some water?"

"Ask Gordon. He's probably still out there." Jeff nodded toward the lounge.

Anna moved to the door and saw Gordon in the lounge reading a magazine. "Gordon." He looked up. "Could you get me a glass of water and a damp wash cloth?" He nodded and headed toward the kitchen. She came back to sit down next to Tyler and Jeff. "I didn't expect this to happen so soon. I didn't want to push him too hard."

"It's been a tough year for him. Maybe more than we realized."

Tyler's tears had wound down. Gordon came in with a damp washcloth and a bottle of water and handed both to Jeff. Jeff wiped Tyler's face then made him drink some water. Gordon leaned back against the wall but didn't leave. After a long drink, Tyler sagged against his father's chest.

"A young child, or for that matter any kid, thinks he is the center of the universe. Everything happens because of him. If someone dies or is hurt, it's his fault. Tyler, you have no idea how many firemen's kids have told me it was their fault the roof fell on their dad. Or policemen's kids who think the man who shot their parent did it because they were bad and God is mad at them. Sometimes even grown police officers feel that way. That's why they come and talk to me. I'll tell you what I tell them."

"The scariest thing in the world is watching when your parent, or anyone you love, is hurt. It's normal to feel it's your fault. But that's not true. Can you make a storm like the one that blew your dad's helijet down?"

"No."

"Can you blow up a building?"

Tyler blinked. "I could ask Brains how to."

"Were you driving the car when your mom had her accident?"

Headshake. "I'm too small to drive yet. 'Cept my bike."

"Is there anyone who is mad at you? Or do you think God is?"

"Kat's mad at me. I don't like her." Tyler snuggled a bit closer to his dad.

"Kat? Is she the one making goo-goo eyes at John?"

Tyler nodded. Jeff looked at Tyler in surprise but held his tongue. Anna continued, "Was she driving when your mom was hurt?"

Tyler looked at his dad again. "No. She was somewhere else."

"So, she couldn't have hurt your mom because of anything you did. Is anyone else mad at you?"

Tyler shook his head.

"Jeff, are you mad at Tyler?"

"Hmm, let me think. No, he hasn't pushed anyone in the pool recently. He's eating his vegetables, mostly. And his school work's been ok. No, I'm not mad at him right now. In fact, I hardly ever am." Jeff looked down at him and grinned.

"I don't think God is mad at you for anything. If you want, I can ask him about it." A snort came from Jeff at this. Tyler looked up at him.

Anna continued. "So your Mom's accident is not your fault. But it's ok to feel scared. It's even ok to be angry. What's not ok is to pretend you're ok when you're not." She looked at Jeff. "I'm surprised you didn't go through this after your first wife died."

Jeff sighed. "I think the boys did to a certain extent. I know I blamed myself. But I was pretty out of it for a while. I buried myself in my work. I don't think I let myself feel anything for a year. The boys' grandmother might have dealt with something like this. I know the pastor of our church spent a lot of time with her and the boys. She went to her own pastor for grief counseling after my dad died."

"Dad?"

"Yes, Tyler?"

"Did you blame yourself when your dad died?"

"I didn't blame myself for his death. I did blame myself for not spending more time with him. Come to think about it, I was angry at myself over that."

"Did you blame yourself when," Tyler hesitated, "John's first mom died?"

"For a long time I did. I don't anymore." He sighed. "But it took me a long time to stop feeling angry that she'd died."

After that, they both were quiet for a while. When she felt enough time had passed for both of

them to recover, Anna spoke up. "Tyler, do you remember what I said about your mom? How I was here to help her?"

"Yeah."

"She is really worried about you. I don't think right now is the best time to tell her about all this. We can tell her later. But right now we need to show her you are all right. Do you think you could go see her and tell her what you've been up to? Can you think of a funny thing that happened? Did you go swimming yesterday?" Tyler nodded. "Did you splash anyone?" Tyler gave a quick head shake. He was beginning to look more interested. "Hm, too bad. Swimming is no fun if you don't splash someone." Tyler grinned at this. So did Gordon, still watching from the doorway, unnoticed by Jeff and Tyler. "Did someone get a big surprise yesterday? Something exciting to tell your mom about?" Tyler shook his head again.

"Hmm, your mom already knows about Gordon's latest joke, so we can't tell your mom about that." Jeff looked down at his son thoughtfully.

"Should we ask him to play another one?" Tyler was beginning to look interested.

"I don't think I really want to give Gordon any encouragement. He gets into enough trouble without any help."

A "Rats!" came from the door. Gordon looked like he was pouting. "I never get to have any fun." He looked at Tyler and grinned. Tyler grinned back, a little uncertainly.

An unholy gleam came into Jeff's eyes. "You know Tyler, Mrs. Hanson wanted to know why John quit the space program. Why don't we show her?"

Tyler looked at him in surprise. "She doesn't know about...?"

"No, your mom didn't get a chance to tell her. So why don't we show her what I gave John to make him willing to leave NASA." A grin slowly grew on Tyler's face to match the one on his father's.

Anna looked at both of them quizzically. "You gave him something that made him quit?"

"Yeah. But he won't mind us showing you part of it." Tyler jumped out of his dad's lap and ran to the door. "Come on, follow me." He raced out the door.

Anna looked at Jeff, inquiringly. Jeff was trying to keep a straight face.

Gordon didn't even try. "I'll come with you."

Anna looked at both of them. She knew something was up but had no idea what. Jeff gestured for her to precede them down to the elevators where Tyler was waiting impatiently. To her surprise, Jeff pressed his hand against something she couldn't see and a second elevator appeared. They took it down a level to a monorail car. Tyler ran ahead, grinning.

"What is down here?" All three of the Tracys grinned. I don't feel any menace, but they are definitely up to something. They're more amused than anything.

"A short cut to the hangers," Jeff answered. "Also the waste treatment plant, the power plant, the water desalination equipment, the boat pen... and a few other things we've been working on."

"That young man is enjoying this entirely too much. And so are you two." Anna began to think she might be in trouble. "The last time my family looked like you three do, they'd planned a surprise party for my fiftieth birthday. Complete with black balloons and a male stripper."

Jeff tried to look innocent. He didn't manage it very well. "Oh, I don't think you need to worry about any balloons here," he said as he ushered her into the waiting car. "It's just a quick look at something we've been working on." He pressed the buttons to send the car on its way.

She looked at all three of them. "You all look entirely too innocent." She shook her head. "I don't trust any of you for a second." Gordon put on his best 'I am sweet and innocent' look and Tyler was practically bouncing in anticipation. Whatever this is, it's distracted him enough to calm him down.

The monorail car came out from a short tunnel. "Why don't you just turn around and see what we've got?" Jeff's tone was highly amused.

Anna looked at him and raised an eyebrow. She turned around to look out the window behind her.

There was something big and red in front of her. As the monorail car continued to move, she could see support struts going down to what looked like thrusters. And the big white letters spelling "Thunderbird 3" on the side.

"Oh." She stood there for a second. Then she took a deep breath and let it out. Then a second. And a third. "Yes, I think that would be a good excuse for leaving NASA."

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"Mom, you should have seen her. She looked like she couldn't move. She kept opening her mouth like a fish!" Tyler was sitting on his mother's bed. He was already in his pj's but wanted to tell her about his big surprise. "Then she looked at Dad and said, 'I hope it has a telescope.' Dad told her that it didn't, there was one on Thunderbird 5 for John. That's what he used to discover the Tracy Quasar!" Tyler was trying hard not to bounce in excitement. His grandma Lisa watched from the door. She'd already heard this, twice.

His mother laughed. "And what did she say then?"

Jeff answered. "She looked at me and said 'Company business, huh.'" He grinned. "I told her, 'No, this is family business. Tracy Industries just finances things.'"

"She was pretty quiet during dinner for some reason." Tyler smirked. "I can't wait to see how she looks when Thunderbird 1 launches through the swimming pool!"

Dianne laughed. "Hopefully, I'll be up by then. I want to watch her reaction, too. Now off to bed with you. I need my sleep even more than you right now. Can I get a good night hug?"

"Sure. Do you want me to tuck you in, too?" Tyler hugged his mom gently.

"No, I get to do that," Jeff interrupted. "Now shoo. I'll stop by and check on you later."

Tyler grabbed his Grandma Lisa's hand. "Okay. See you tomorrow." Lisa and he walked down toward his room.

Jeff sat down next to his wife. "You were right. She is just what we need."

"I gather the initial session went well? He likes her?"

"The initial session was hell. Tyler broke down. Apparently he's been hiding his feelings since his first dad died."

"What!!"

"Calm down, love. Anna was surprised it happened so fast. She told me later that he must have been close to breaking down. She wants to see him every day this week and once a week after that. Sometimes with you and me there. She also wants to him to talk with John about how he felt when Lucy died." Jeff paused for a second.

"She also wants to talk to Mom about how the boys handled it. I wasn't there for them much."

"Jefferson Tracy, don't you go feeling guilty. I have enough to worry about with Tyler." Dianne glared at him.

"I wouldn't dare. She said she'd talk both of us later about the other kids."

"My mom might know better than me." Dianne signed. "I sure missed it with Tyler."

"Now who's feeling guilty? Hypocrite." He hesitated. "I want to talk to her about Callie and Elise tomorrow. I need to fill her in, especially about the Hood."

"I don't want to just hand over my files on either of them. In fact, I can't tell her anything more than I already have without their permission. I can talk to her for a bit in the morning and give her some information. You can introduce her to Brains and Tin-Tin in the afternoon." She looked up at him coyly. "Now what was that about tucking me in?"

Post by susanmartha on 1/14/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:28:06 GMT

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Tracy Island, earlier that day...

"What's this I hear about you wanting to cancel Paradise Peaks?" As usual, Scott wasted no time in getting straight to the point.

Virgil continued opening the refrigerator while he answered, "I just didn't think the time was right, what with everything that's going on around here."

"Grab me a soda while you're in there."

Virgil kicked the door shut and carried two sodas to the kitchen table. "'Please' and 'thank you' go along way sometimes!" He smirked, handing Scott a soda and sitting down opposite him.

Scott ignored the remark, instead saying, "Yeah, I guess I can see your point, but I know some people were looking forward to the ski resort party."

"Now you sound just like Dad!"

Scott laughed.

"Seriously, Scott, you can see it too. Dad's worried about Mom and the younger kids and I know Grandma's devastated about the farmhouse. I've seen how tired some of the others look too, and I just..."

Scott held up a hand, cutting Virgil off and said, "Virgil, I do see it and I get it! It's your choice and I respect that. Let's hope the others see it your way, too." He gulped down some soda as Virgil wondered about some of the reactions to the e-mails Jeff had sent out.

"Hey, Brains, how's things going?" Elise asked the engineer as he fumbled about with something in TB2's lab. It still amazed Elise how a lab could be set up inside one of the pods and transported to wherever it was needed.

"Oh, hi, Elise. I'll be done here in just a few minutes if you need to start working on Two."

"Oh, no hurry; besides, it's not like we have to be rushing off anywhere in a day or so."

Brains stopped what he was doing and looked at Elise. "Oh, you must mean the e-mail from Mr. Tracy about Paradise Peaks being canceled."

"Yeah. Oh well, I guess I can see Mr. Tracy's point. This entire organization has had it rough recently. I don't blame Virgil for canceling." They both smiled slightly, a little down that there would be no trip, but understanding why it was canceled.

"Thanks, Kyrano, I don't know what we'd all do without you. Just let me know what else you need help with."

"It is my pleasure to help, Mr. Virgil." The retainer nodded gracefully.

"Father! You are so calm under all this stress!" Tin-Tin teased as she entered the kitchen.

"Daughter, your presence always calms me and I hope you will be able to help this old man to stay calm over the next few days!" Tin-Tin and Virgil laughed out loud.

"Virgil, I'm sorry you had to cancel your birthday party. I want you to know I do understand and want to help you with the preparations for having it here, at home." She smiled sweetly. She was like a sister to the Tracy boys and right that second, Virgil couldn't have wished for a finer one as he gave her a hug.

"Thanks, Tin-Tin."

"So, you and my father have made arrangements for the food?" Virgil filled her in on the details and explained that Kyrano was going to enlist the help of some of the ladies in residence with the preparations, as well as have some of it catered.

With that done, Virgil went to find Gordon. He didn't have to look far; Gordon was in Alan's room and the two of them didn't look happy.

"Dude! I can't believe you canceled your own birthday party!" Gordon started in before Virgil had fully entered the room.

"Yeah, what's with that? Feeling old or what?" Alan cheekily added.

Virgil shot him a warning look. "Look, guys, I had my reasons. Besides, you weren't even going to go, Gordon, were you?" Virgil had forgotten who'd arranged to stay and who was going to go.

"Yes, I was going to try and go! I was looking forward to seeing the other half of our team in dresses!"

"Well, just stick a dress on Alan and use your imagination!" Virgil replied, followed by, "Ow! Hey watch it!" as a pillow hit him square in the back of the head. "We're still going to have a party, just not on the scale it had originally been planned, which is why I came to ask you, Gordon, if you'd rig up a sound system to pipe music into the lounge?"

Gordon's demeanor changed and a smile appeared. "Sure, I'm on it! Hey squirt?" Gordon looked at Alan. "Wanna help?"

Alan merely rolled his eyes, which usually meant 'yes' to Gordon.

Virgil then had a second thought on the subject. "Do you two think you could hook up a camcorder of some sort, so we can video the whole thing?"

Gordon's grin got wider. "Not a problem, bro; leave it all to me!"

"Thanks guys!" Virgil walked out.

"Guess we'd better go find some electrical stuff!" Alan announced, then added as an afterthought, "Shame about those dresses I'd heard the girls were ordering."



"Yeah, now that's a real shame," Gordon stated.

Cherie had heard the news and was disappointed at first. She'd been so looking forward to wearing the dress she'd picked out, but then didn't want to wear it if her mother and father weren't going to be there. Now, she was worried about Tyler and so when Virgil came to talk to her about the party, she hugged him and told him she understood his reasons. Virgil was impressed at how mature his little sister was becoming. Cherie also told him that she was glad they were still going to celebrate with all the family there.

Well, overall, the reactions haven't been that bad, I'm glad I did the right thing, Virgil thought to himself as he set his mind to finding a photographer to take the still photos.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 1/15/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:28:35 GMT  
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Monday, August 13, 10pm

Jeff sat down at his desk with a sigh. It had been a long day. But there was one last chore he needed to do tonight. He pressed the button to activate Lady Penelope's picture. After a moment the painting disappeared to be replaced by the lady herself.

"Hello, Jeff," she said. "I see you made it home safely. Is everything all right? How is Dianne?"

"Dianne is fine. She just went to sleep. I'm about to do the same, but I wanted to talk to you first."

Penelope raised an elegant eyebrow. "Is anything wrong? Any security problems?"

"No, actually everything is beginning to be right. But I do have a security concern for you."

"Oh?"

"We have a new agent. I need you to do a background check."

"This person is already an agent and you want me to do a check after the fact?"

Jeff grimaced. "It kind of had to be this way. I don't know if Dianne talked to you about hiring a counselor before her 'accident'."

"No, she hadn't. A counselor for Callie?"

"Callie, Elise, Dom and," here Jeff hesitated for a second, "Tyler."

"Oh, dear. More trouble like after the tsunami?"

Jeff nodded. "We found him throwing up on the way home. He hadn't been eating all week. I was getting desperate. Dianne had interviewed Anna and liked her. She came out to the island to see Tyler today."

Penelope blinked in surprise. "She came to the island?"

"She felt it would upset Tyler less. And I agreed. I didn't tell her about International Rescue then, though."

"Then. She knows now?"

Jeff nodded and told her about Tyler's breakdown and the 'funny story' to tell his mom.

"You like her and trust her already." It was a statement, not a question.

"Yes," Jeff replied. "But I still want a background check on her and her husband. I don't expect any problems about her, but if there might be problems, I want to know about them. And anything about her husband. I haven't discussed becoming an agent with her, but I think she'd be a good one."

Penny looked thoughtful. "Give me the particulars and I'll get started. Have you considered putting Tracy Industries security on this also? It would be reasonable to check up on her since she will be working with your child and your employees."

"True. I'll put them on it." Jeff gave her all the information he had then seemed to change the subject. "When do you plan on visiting the island?"

"In a few days. I have a few things to do here first."

Jeff grinned again. He knew Penelope very well. "Anna will be here for a week, if you want to meet her."

"I do. In fact, I'm looking forward to it."

Post by susanmartha on 1/15/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:29:02 GMT  
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Monday, Aug 13, Opp, Alabama; 5:00 PM (9 AM the next morning on Tracy Island)

The Spencer family gathered around the dining room table and were prepared to have supper together. After Richard said a prayer, blessing both his family and the food, everyone took turns passing sweet potato pie, fried chicken, and collard greens.

"Mmm," said Callie after taking a bite of her chicken. "Mom, it's as good as ever. I need to come home more often."

Lorraine giggled. "I take it Honolulu doesn't really have that much on chicken, does it?"

"Checking stores out there, I do see the occasional chicken, but they take much bigger stock in pigs, since there are so many luaus. I think someone told me there can be as many as 20 different luaus per week."

"Wow!" said Richard excitedly. "Have you been to a luau yet, honey?"

The daughter shook her head. "No, not yet. I have heard there's supposed to be a big luau for everyone in the Honolulu office on Labor Day. That's gonna be a lot of fun." I'm not sure if that's really going to happen, she thought. Oh, well, maybe I can ask for a luau before I head back up to Thunderbird Five next month.

Brian said, "Sis, you really went all out in shopping at the Andalusia Mall. I haven't seen shopping bags that big in a long time!"

"What did you expect, Bri?" she said with a smirk. "It is my birthday after all."

"Got someone you like out there already?"

Callie put her fork down and stared straight at him. "Brian, that's not funny. You know I'm never comfortable with that subject."

"What's wrong with you?" asked Lorraine as she swatted Brian over the head. "Why shouldn't she be able to buy some new clothes just because she wants to?"

"Sorry, I just thought that--"

With a sigh, Callie said, "Brian, I understand, but since that awful relationship I had at Alabama, I'd rather stay single until I'm at least 40."

"Okay, Sis. I'll drop the matter. I shouldn't have brought that up. Can you forgive me?"

"Hey, I'm only gonna be here for three more days. I'd better forgive you now before I forget to do it."

Everyone laughed at her comment, and they went on to finish dinner.

Afterward, Lorraine went to the kitchen and returned with the birthday cake. "Happy birthday, dear."

"Oh, Mom, the cake's beautiful. I'm almost afraid to cut it."

"Well," said Joseph, "you've got to blow out the candles first."

Closing her eyes, she thought carefully about her wish and then blew out the candles. As her family applauded, she thought about the wish she had made. I wish my family safety and comfort, and I pray that I'll never have to respond to a rescue call for them. They're the most important people in my life, along with all the friends I've gained being a part of IR. I also hope I can either overcome or come to terms with my Hood encounter. Thank goodness being here has really helped me cast that creep from my mind and my soul, even if it's just temporary. "Okay, the candles are out. Let us eat cake!"

Her mother gave her the knife to cut the cake into slices. "Perfect," said Lorraine. "Just enough for all of us."

"Hey, Mom," Callie said. "Can I ask a favor?"

"Sure."

"Can we make another cake? Just for the employees in the front office?"

Richard nodded and smiled. "Honey, that's a wonderful idea. They'll be excited to know they'll get a cake from you. Why don't you come with Joe, Brian, and me in the morning and we'll deliver the cake."

"I'll be ready bright and early, Dad," she said with a giggle. "Of course, I could be up at 12 midnight because my body clock still hasn't adjusted that well yet."

"Do you need anything that'll help you sleep better?"

"No, Dad. I'm okay. I'm getting adjusted here with help from a nature sounds mini-disc. I'll be fine in the morning." Yeah, I will be fine in the morning, and every day to come as long as I've got my family's love and support on my side, no matter how far apart we are.

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 1/15/2007 6:10 PM

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:29:44 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 14, about 9:30am

"Dr. Tracy? Are you ready to talk to me?" Anna stood outside the sick room door and looked in.

"No. Until I can sit at my desk and get out of this stupid hospital bed, I don't want to talk to anyone. But come in anyway." Dianne pushed the bedside table away.

Anna pulled a chair closer to the bed. She opened her portable computer and looked up. "I assume Jeff told you about my first session with Tyler yesterday?"

"Tyler spent 15 minutes in here last night telling me all about showing you Thunderbird 3. I'm

afraid he's already planning to see if he can surprise you with anything else. Then Jeff spent some time telling me about your talk with Tyler."

"As long as he doesn't put a snake in my bed, he can plan all the surprises he wants. Right now he needs the outlet. I want to talk with you about him some more but that can wait until you're stronger. I've already talked to your mother and I'll be talking with Drew when he gets here. From what your mother said you seem to have moved on."

"Yes, but I wasn't very together the first two years after the bombing." Dianne grimaced.  
"Apparently, I didn't do too good of a job with the kids."

"I think you did an excellent job. All four of you are still alive, nobody is alcoholic or an addict, your kids seem fairly happy and not brats -- or at least not any more than any other kids their age." Anna looked up at her. "I do hope you realize this won't be a 'one hour soap opera' solution?"

"A what?"

"A 'one hour soap opera' solution," Anna grinned. "That's my name for it, at least. All the TV shows where something is bothering someone. We finally find out what it is in the last 15 minutes. Somehow this releases all the tension and solves all the problems. Whatever the problem was, it's never mentioned again."

Dianne snorted. "Do I look that stupid?"

"No. Neither does your husband. But you'd be amazed at the number of otherwise intelligent people who can't figure out why their kid isn't better within a couple of weeks. Apparently I'm supposed to have a magic wand. But that isn't what I came down here to talk to you about." Anna looked at something on her computer.

"According to your husband, you're worried about Callie and, let me see, Elise. Is that right?" said Anna, looking up from her computer.

"Yes. Also Dominic. Although, that may be simpler. He has arachnophobia and had a run in with a spider recently. A tarantula, to be exact. He freaked. And I think Scott and Alex may have made things worse." She told Anna what Alex had told her about Dom's initial run-in with the spider and his and Scott's later conversation with Dom about spiders.

"Hmm. That's not my specialty, but I should be able to help." She typed something else into the computer and looked up. "I made an appointment with Elise for this afternoon. I understand Callie is away right now. And that she was unsure about talking to me. Jeff said I should talk to Brains, Tin-Tin and Kyrano before I talked to her. Can you tell me why?"

Dianne took a deep breath. "Remember I asked you about 'odd religious beliefs'?" Anna nodded. "There is this character called 'The Hood'. He's wanted by Interpol for industrial espionage. He is also Kyrano's half-brother. Jeff arranged to see his Interpol file after he found out about him. The file talks about his 'glowing eyes' and 'strange hypnotic powers'. They don't seem to know quite what to make of him. Unfortunately, we do. He can get into your mind somehow and take it over. Both Tin-Tin and Brains have had encounters with him. So has Kyrano, much more frequently and

with greater depth. Last month so did Callie. She's pretty shook up, and I don't blame her. I also think she is blaming herself for not being able to resist him. Although, as far as I'm concerned, she did resist him. She didn't give him any of the information he wanted. At my suggestion she talked to Tin-Tin and Brains about their encounters with him. I do know she is still having nightmares about it. I have her on antidepressants and sleeping pills, but they don't seem to be helping and I'm in no condition to help her right now. And even if I was, I wouldn't know where to start." Dianne was clearly getting upset. "I tried to talk to the head of the psychiatric department at the Christchurch School of Medicine. He offered to have her committed as schizophrenic."

"I've meet the head of the psychiatric department. He's ok as long as a patient fits an established pattern. But it better be the pattern he's decided the patient fits into. He's actually very good at figuring out what medications to use and what dosage. I've worked with him a couple times. But forget about telling him about anything not in a medical textbook or journal." Anna stopped typing and looked thoughtful for a moment. "Have you talked to Callie about talking to me?"

"Yes, and I have her permission to talk to you about it."

"Good. How long has she been on the sleeping pills?"

"Longer than I like. Although I don't know if she's been taking them every night."

"I'll try to talk to Kyrano, Brains and Tin-Tin this afternoon or tomorrow. I'll catch Dominic and ask him if he wants help. How do you handle the prescriptions here?" Anna was staring at her computer screen.

"I keep a small supply of medications here. I can order anything from Christchurch and have it mailed if I'm running low."

"How big of a supply did you give Callie?"

Dianne thought for a moment.

"I gave her a week's worth of the sleeping pills and a months worth of antidepressants just before my accident. She asked Brains for a refill of the sleeping pills before she left to visit her family."

"I'll set up my first appointment with Callie just to ask her if the pills are helping." She entered something in her computer and looked up.

"You know, your uncle Drew is a terrific liar. He told me everything I needed to know and at the same time had me convinced you had actually had a car accident."

"You called him?"

Anna snorted. "I wasn't getting into a plane with two strangers going I don't know where without doing some checking. I also ran a police check for any citations, domestic violence reports or possible abuse reports. The police report came back pretty empty. One public drunkenness warning, one speeding ticket."

Dianne looked at her in surprise. Anna noticed the look. "I suppose that does sound a bit paranoid but in my old job I was one of the people who could take someone's kids away from them. I also know where some battered wives are currently living. I have had death threats before." Anna paused for a second. When she resumed talking her voice was a lot quieter. "And a colleague of mine was killed while helping a battered wife. I have some very good reasons to take precautions."

She closed her computer and stood up. "You look like you're about ready to fall back asleep. I'll talk to you again tomorrow. Right now, I have an appointment with Tyler. He wants to show me the gardens. Hopefully, he hasn't planted a snake or something there."

"No, he wouldn't. Now Gordon might. You have problems with snakes?"

"Only if I have to touch them." She smiled at Dianne and walked briskly from the room.

Post by susanmartha on 1/15/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:30:14 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 14, 2068, 10:30 a.m., Tracy Island

"Delta Zebra Zebra two-five-three-eight, to Tracy Island. Requesting permission to land."

"Andy!" Jeff cried as he headed to the radio. "This is Tracy Island. Permission granted, and welcome!" He turned to the intercom and flicked a switch. "Lisa? Maggie? Andy's here!" He glanced over at Virgil, who had a data pad in his hands, going over his birthday party plans again. "Come on, son. Let's go down and meet him!"

They met Maggie and Lisa coming from the kitchen, where they'd been helping Kyrano with some of the party preparations. "It's about time the man got here," Maggie said, irritably. "I love Dianne dearly, but she is not the best of patients!"

"Do you know a doctor who is?" Virgil asked good-humoredly.

They took the elevator down to the hangar level, and the monorail over to the Cliff House. Maggie shook her head in awe as they passed over Thunderbird Two. "I still can't believe it," she said, her voice sounding awed. "All of this... it's amazing."

Jeff gave a distracted, "Um hm," which had Virgil looking at him with a frown. He huffed out a breath through his nose, and turned to Maggie with a smile.

"So, Aunt Maggie, which Thunderbird impresses you the most?"

Lisa chuckled as Maggie raised an eyebrow. "Would you be terribly disappointed if I said Thunderbird Six?"



Virgil dramatically put both hands over his heart, throwing his head back. "Oh, you wound me!"

"You've been taking acting lessons from Gordon, I see," Lisa said dryly, shaking her head. "And I thought only Alex was becoming as big a ham."

"Oh, but he is, Grandma," Virgil said, as the monorail deposited them at the Cliff House and they started across the catwalk to the freight elevator. "You should have seen him at Scott's paintball party!"

The ride down to the hangar floor was quieter, and Jeff seemed lost in thought. He looked straight ahead as they passed the family jets and the newest addition, Heather's Blue Streak. He steadfastly refused to look to the right, but the others did, their faces sobering as they caught glimpses of the battered pieces of Thunderbird Seven in the pod vehicle repair bay. Then they reached the small aircraft door, built within Thunderbird Two's huge, camouflaged portal. "Virgil? Get the float, please?"

"Sure, Dad." Virgil strode off briskly to find one of the antigravity luggage carriers.

"Stand over there, ladies," Jeff said. He pulled noise reducing headphones from a chest, and passed them to the two women, then motioned them to one side as he picked up a pair for himself, and a couple of fluorescent sticks. He donned the headphones, activated the sticks, then pressed the button that opened the door. Little by little the gray light of the overcast day flowed in, the outline of Drew's jet briefly showing in shadow as the sun was uncovered and covered once again. Jeff used the lighted sticks to guide Drew into the hangar and motion him to an empty berth. Virgil stood well away; the backdraft of the barely-powered engines whipped his hair around, and made the women's clothes rustle and sway.

Finally the sleek jet was in position, and the engines powered down all the way. Maggie took off her headphones, sighed, and smiled. Virgil pulled the float along behind him, and offered to take the headphones from the women when they reached the plane. Jeff handed him the equipment he had used, and took over the float until Virgil returned. The side door swung down, revealing the stairs, and a rumpled Drew Carmichael descended. He shook hands with Jeff, gave Lisa a quick squeeze and a kiss on the cheek, then enveloped Maggie in his arms and kissed her long and hard.

"I have missed you, woman," he said when the kiss ended.

She pulled his head down toward her again for another kiss. "I've missed you, too."

When this one was over, Drew looked around. "I always wondered what your hangars looked like, Jeff. As I recall, you had just about everyone flown over from Christchurch and Wellington for the wedding." He saw Virgil pulling luggage from the cargo hold. "Oh, hey, Virgil! Thanks for getting that!"

"No problem, Uncle Drew," Virgil replied. "You don't have much."

Drew smiled, then his eyes were drawn to the open end of the hangar, where the nose and pods

of Thunderbird Two was just visible. "Wow." He shook his head. "I never thought I'd be involved in this."

"I'll give you the grand tour later, Andy," Jeff promised, clapping a hand on Drew's shoulder. "Right now, let's get you and your luggage upstairs. Dianne was sleeping last I looked, but I know she's looking forward to being allowed out of the sick room."

As they headed for the freight elevator, Drew and Jeff dropped back a little. "How did things go with Mrs. Hanson? Will you need someone else?"

"She's good. I like her and she's developed a rapport with Tyler already. And I've already let her in on the family secret." Jeff rubbed his neck. "As for whether or not we'll need another recommendation, I hope not. It all depends on what Penny finds on her background check." He shook his head. "I feel like we're doing this backwards in a way, but necessity demanded it."

"'Necessity is a mother'," Drew said with a small smile. "I'll talk to her, too. I need to apologize for a few fibs I told, if nothing else."

Post by Tikatu on 1/16/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:30:56 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 14, 11:15 a.m., Tracy Island

Brains slid his hands around the data pad he was clutching as he waited. I should have done this sooner, while their recollections were fresh, but... it didn't seem right. He was sitting in the lounge on the left hand side of the Cliff House apartments, waiting for Dom and Nikki to arrive. I hope talking to them together will help me get some of the answers I need.

Nikki came down first, still favoring her ankle. She gave him a slight, unsteady smile and a murmured "Good morning," as she sat down in one of the comfortable chairs.

Dom arrived a few moments later, a diaper bag over one shoulder, a basket of toys in the same hand, and clutching Josh's hand with the other. He no longer wore his cervical collar, but Brains's practiced eye could see that he was still feeling the physical effects of the whole situation. I'm glad Dr. Carmichael is here; his words will hold more clout than mine would.

Dom gave him a short nod, and said, "Mornin', Brains, Nikki." He moved gracefully to sit on the floor, assuming the lotus position, and handing a couple of blocks to his son. "So, what do you need to talk about?"

Brains looked down at his data pad. "First, thanks for coming. I know you've been feeling the repercussions of the... the crash for a bit now, and I probably should have come to you sooner, while the memories were fresher, but..." he shrugged, "it didn't seem like the right time."

Nikki moistened her lips with her tongue, and Dom nodded solemnly, so Brains continued. "I'm trying to figure out just how Thunderbird Seven separated. So... if you're comfortable with it, tell me what happened when the tornado... when the tornado picked you up."

The two nurses exchanged glances, and Dom nodded as if to say, "I'll go first." "Well," he said, thinking over his words, "Dr. Tracy was holding on hard, trying to keep us upright. Still, it wasn't but a few moments before the power failed on the magnetic couplings. I tried to reroute power, but it didn't work."

"The cabin was vibrating at first, then started shaking badly," Nikki added. "Then the two parts separated and we went tumbling about." She shuddered. "A big clump of... of something slammed up against the windscreen, but it just slid off..."

"Was this before the sections separated, or after?" Brains asked, taking notes.

"Definitely after," Nikki replied, twining her fingers together.

"Hmm." Brains paused for a long time. Joshua toddled up and pulled on the data pad; gamely, Brains showed him the notes.

"Wead!" the boy demanded, starting to climb into Brains's lap. Brains, at a loss, raised wide eyes to Dom, who untangled himself and reached across to his son.

"Ah, come on now, wee man. I have just the book for you over here," he said as he retrieved the boy and fished around in the toy basket to find a board book more to Josh's liking. The pair settled down, and Brains, relieved, went over his notes again. After a moment, he asked, "Was there anything else? Anything you saw, or heard, or felt?"

Dom paused in his reading, looked up, and shook his head slowly. "'Twas hard to hear anything above those winds," he said with a shrug. At Josh's loud insistence, he went back to reading the book, a story Josh knew well, judging by the toddler's delighted responses.

But Nikki sat up straighter. She cocked her head to one side, and said haltingly, "I think... I remember hearing a..." she turned toward Brains, "a scratching noise. It wasn't loud, but it was right over my head. Sort of like a... a branch, scratching on a window pane, or on the roof of a car. I didn't remember it before, but since you mentioned hearing..." Her voice trailed off, and she smiled sheepishly. "I don't know that it's of any help, though."

"Anything you tell me is of help," Brains said, looking up from his notes to flash a brief smile at her. "Did either of you hear when the magnets let go?"

Dom stopped reading again, and both nurses shook their heads. Dom said, "We could feel it, though. The shaking stopped very abruptly."

Brains tapped his stylus on his chin. "That means the failure wasn't catastrophic. Thunderbird Seven's electrical system was trying to reinitialize the magnets, but there was some sort of overload..." He realized he was theorizing aloud, and stopped. Smiling at the pair, he nodded. "Thank you both." He cleared his throat. "I'm sure this has been difficult for you. I wish it wasn't

necessary."

"I just hope it helps," Nikki said softly.

"I'm sure it will," Brains assured her. "If you remember anything else, even if you think it may be insignificant, please tell me."

"We will," Dom replied, glancing quickly up from the book.

"I need to get back to the lab," Brains said, rising. "I'll talk to you later. Have a good afternoon."

"You, too, Brains," Nikki said.

The scientist walked off, glancing back to give the nurses a wave. Nikki looked down at Dom and Josh, and smiled a little.

"What are you two doing for lunch?" she asked.

Post by Tikatu on 1/16/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:31:23 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 14, 2:30 p.m., Tracy Island

The lab door slid open, and Virgil leaned a raised forearm on the side of the doorway, pressing his forehead into the arm and letting out a sigh. Brains looked up from his computer screen and smiled a little. "Thanks for coming," he said.

"You're welcome," Virgil replied as he entered the room. "I need a break from all the party arrangements. You would not believe all the work that has to be done, especially since we're having it here and we have to do a lot of stuff ourselves. Fortunately, some of the food will be catered. I'm flying out with Kyrano in the morning to pick it up." He shook his head. "Gordon and Alan are threatening to set up the karaoke machine."

Brains shook his head. "Just as long as I don't have to sing," he commented. Beckoning to Virgil, he turned the computer screen around a little so that the other man could see the images on it.

"What are you looking for?" Virgil asked as he pulled up a lab stool.

"I've gone through the black box, and talked with Dom and Nikki. I suppose I should talk with Dianne, too, but I'm not sure how to broach the subject." Brains tapped the screen gently with his stylus. "All I can figure is that there was a power surge of some sort. It centered around the magnets, and though the failsafes tried to reinitialize them, they let loose." He shook his head. "I just can't see where the power surge came from!"

Virgil had picked up Brains's notes from the morning. "Hm. Nikki said there was a scratching noise." He looked up and nodded toward the screen. "Show me the footage."

Brains tapped a button or two, and the close-up footage of the tornado rolled. Virgil, even knowing what to expect, still winced when the two portions separated, but when the piece was over, he asked Brains to run it again. This time he got closer to the screen. "Is this the original distance for the film, or have you zoomed in?"

"I zoomed in quite a bit," Brains replied.

"Can you do it some more?"

Nodding, Brains complied. Now the picture was tight on Thunderbird Seven, its white hull partially obscured by the gray-brown of the cyclone. Virgil watched carefully, then called, "Freeze it!" There was a pause, then, "Now back it up, just a little."

The cyclone inched backwards, and Virgil said, "There!"

"Where?" Brains peered at the frozen picture.

"Here!" Virgil took the stylus, and pointed to two bright points. "And here!"

"Blue-white flashes." Brains glanced up at his companion. "What could they be?"

"I think I know," Virgil said. "Zoom out now, way out."

Frowning, the engineer did as Virgil asked, then sat back heavily in his chair. "Of course. That makes perfect sense." He shook his head. "High tension wires. The tornado tore them up, or Thunderbird Seven did when it was pushed into them. Why didn't I see it?"

"You were too close to it, in a way," Virgil told him, clapping a hand on the thin shoulder. "You weren't looking at the bigger picture." He glanced around the room, and spied the door to the pod vehicle repair bay. "I bet we can get further proof, too."

"Where?" Brains asked, frowning again.

"C'mon," Virgil said, already heading toward the door. Brains got up and followed him, clambering noisily down the metal stairs to the repair bay floor.

Virgil grabbed one of the motorized scaffolds, and guided it over to the side of Thunderbird Seven's cockpit. He climbed aboard, pulled Brains up onto the platform, and with the push of a button, sent it moving slowly into the air. They passed the roof of the cockpit, and gained enough height that they could see the whole roof at once.

"Hm. Maybe I'd better get down there with a cloth or something," Virgil said, thoughtful. "I'd forgotten there was so much dirt up here." He turned to Brains. "Let's lower this a bit and climb on the roof; it's stable enough, isn't it?"

Brains nodded. "It should be."

Virgil brought the scaffold down to just above the level of the roof, and leaped out onto the dirty, scraped cockpit. Brains followed, with Virgil catching his arm to keep him from falling backwards.

"Hm. Let's see. Nikki was sitting to Mom's left," Virgil murmured as he faced front. "That would put the scratching sound she heard over... here." He took a few steps, then squatted down to brush some of the dirt away and out of the scratched paint.

"I see it!" Brains cried as he squatted down beside Virgil. "There... and there! Scorch marks on the paint where the wire sort of dragged along the surface."

"And look," Virgil said, pointing off toward the medical cabin. "More marks there, It must have whipped along here, very likely in that direction, and gotten caught long enough to zap the magnets." He glanced at Brains, sober-faced. "Just think what might have happened if you hadn't built her so well and protected the cabins against this kind of thing." He put a hand on Brains's shoulder. "The magnets were a weak link, true, but if you hadn't been so meticulous in preparing Seven for possible electrical shock, things would have be a whole lot worse."

Brains sighed and nodded. "I guess you're right, Virgil. Still, I can't help but feel responsible..."

"You're responsible for Mom and Dom and Nikki being alive," Virgil told him firmly. "And now that you've seen the weak link, you can redesign things with this scenario in mind. And not only Seven, but you can look at the other vehicles and see what might happen if they were caught up in this situation." He smiled. "I'll give you a hand with it, Brains... after the party."

Post by Tikatu on 1/19/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:32:07 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 14, 2068, 4:30 p.m., Tracy Island

"Well, how's my celebrity patient?" Drew said as he followed Jeff into the sick room.

"Peevish," Maggie snapped as Lisa followed the men in.

"It's about time you got here," Dianne grumbled. "I want out."

Jeff snorted a laugh. "Well, now, the tables are turned, aren't they? A few months ago, I was the one who wanted out and who wouldn't let me?" He pointed a finger at Dianne, brushing it lightly across the tip of her nose. She pretended to snap at the finger with her teeth, and he drew it back hastily, shaking his hand. "My, my, you're not peevish, you're positively snappish!"

Dianne rolled her eyes, while Lisa groaned and shook her head. Drew chuckled. "Do you two do this all the time?"

"No," Dianne said emphatically, raising a haughty eyebrow.

"Just let me take a look at these charts," Drew said, taking the data pad that Maggie handed him. "Hm. Okay. You have a scanner. So let's get you in there and have a look-see."

Dianne sighed, and began to swing her legs over the side of the bed. Maggie stood by, ready to support her niece for the short hobble to the scanner room. However, her aid wasn't needed this time as Jeff came in on the other side and picked Dianne up bodily.

"Jeff!" she cried. "You're going to hurt yourself!"

"I'm lifting with my knees," Jeff said mildly. "But I do believe you're gaining weight, Mrs. Tracy."

He carefully took the dozen or so steps from Dianne's bed, past the office and storage room, and into the surgery, where he set his wife on the scanner. Stepping back, he rubbed his hands together, with an audible, "Whew!" It was then that he noticed his wife biting her lower lip and the first fat tear start coursing down her cheek.

"Oh, love, I didn't mean it!" he said, returning to the table and cupping her cheek with one hand. She leaned into him, sniffing mightily, trying not to break into sobs. He gently kissed her on the head, murmuring, "I'm sorry." She took his hand, and kissed his palm, then curled his fingers over it as her silent token of forgiveness.

"Are you ready?" Drew asked, smiling a little. Dianne sniffed and nodded. Maggie presented her with a tissue to wipe her eyes; Dianne did so, and blew her nose noisily, then Jeff helped ease her back onto the table. Drew adjusted the screen and other equipment to his liking, and the scan began.

Jeff slipped his fingers under Dianne's hand, and ran his thumb over her bare ring finger. "Drew?"

"Hm?" Drew was focused on the screen, a small frown creasing his forehead between the brows.

"Did you ever find Dianne's rings?"

"Jeff," Dianne said softly. "I left them in my locker, on... on Seven."

There was a moment of silence, then Jeff drew in a deep breath and let it out slowly. He smiled a little, and squeezed his wife's hand. "Then, I guess I'll have to go down and get them."

The scan took a good twenty minutes and Drew made a number of humming noises, but didn't say much. Finally, he sighed, and gave his niece permission to sit up.

"Well, you've definitely got some infection in that leg, but it seems to be clearing. Did you self-prescribe some antibiotic?"

Dianne nodded. "Yes. It's in the notes. Brains took a swab and looked at it; he concurred with my choice." She paused. "How's the muscle?"



"Healing, but you'll need therapy to stretch it out and get it working properly again. We can talk about who and how much once the infection has cleared up."

"The bruising? The lacerations? The ribs?"

"The bruising is well on its way out. I'd give it two or three more days. The lacerations look good, too." He huffed out a breath. "Dianne, I know you want out, but I'd like you here at least until the infection clears. Then you should be able to safely bear some weight on that leg. I don't want you on crutches because of your ribs... which are healing, but they're not strong enough yet for that and won't be for at least another two weeks."

"Can I at least have meals with the family? I feel so... isolated here."

Drew glanced up at Jeff, whose face was full of cautious hope, then back at Dianne, whose resigned-sounding plea was echoed in her weary face. He sighed heavily, then nodded. "But right back here afterward, understand?"

"Understood... Doctor."

"Well, now," Maggie said, moving in. "Let's get you back into the sick room. Lisa? Do you have those sheets changed?"

"Of course I have, Maggie. I'm not one to sit around and twiddle my thumbs," Lisa said, popping into the room with a smile. "C'mon, let's get our girl back to bed." Before Jeff could move in again, Lisa and Maggie were on either side of Dianne, supporting her as she hobbled back to bed. Jeff followed, while Drew stayed to transfer the scanner's results to Dianne's chart.

"All settled now?" Jeff asked as he moved in to tweak the blankets just that little bit.

"Yeah," Dianne said quietly. "I'm settled."

"In that case," Jeff told her, "I'm going downstairs to find your rings." He kissed her quickly on the forehead, and was gone before she could call him back.

Lisa and Maggie exchanged concerned glances with each other as they watched Dianne reach futilely for her husband, a cry of, "Jeff!" cut off by the closing door.

"Drew!" Maggie called, ducking her head into the surgery. Dianne's face went from fearful to hopeful in a blink as Drew came hustling out of the other room.

"What's wrong?"

"Jeff's gone down to Seven to get Dianne's rings," Lisa explained. "He hasn't been down there since we got home. In fact, he's been avoiding it."

"Please, Uncle Drew, go aftuh him," Dianne pleaded, beginning to cry again. "He's gonna need someone..."

"How do I get there?" Drew asked, heading for the door.

"Ah'll take you," Lisa said, slipping by her brother to guide him, "but he'll probably respond better t' you than t' me. C'mon."

Post by Tikatu on 1/19/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:32:32 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 14, 5:15 p.m., Tracy Island

On the way down in the elevator, Drew asked his sister, "How long have you known about all this?"

She waved a hand. "Ah snooped it out th' first or second time Ah came. You know how Ah am about findin' things out."

"I also know how you are about keeping secrets."

Lisa folded her arms and raised an eyebrow in challenge. "Well, Ah kept this one. In fact, they didn't even know Ah knew... until they decided t' bring me intuh the loop. Then Ah told 'em."

"I'm impressed," Drew said, and left it at that.

They had to wait for a monorail car as both main cars were elsewhere on the track. "So, where are we going?" Drew asked.

"T' the lab. The vehicle repair bay is off of it." Lisa sighed, and wrapped her arms around herself tightly. "Ah don' get down heah much, really no reason t' do so. But Ah remembuh where things are."

Drew looked at his watch. "Jeff's had a good head start."

Lisa nodded. "Ah know. But y'all still might be of some help."

Meanwhile, Jeff had entered the lab. "Brains?" he called. "Are you here?" When there was no answer, he checked his watch and shrugged. Must have called it quits for the day.

He opened the door leading to the repair bay. It was dark; only a safety light or two struggled against the natural blackness that the caverns usually held. He reached back into the lab and fumbled for the lights with one hand. At his touch, the room was illuminated, one portion at a time, until finally Jeff could see for himself what he'd come to face.

He thought he knew what to expect, but the reality of it drove all coherent thought from his mind.

He couldn't take his eyes from the vehicle until he found himself standing on the repair bay floor, his body having taken him down the stairs without his realizing. The dent in the medical cabin's rear corner was clearly visible and close to him; Seven's paint was scratched and scored by tornado-driven debris. He reached up hesitantly to run his hand along the side, swiping a slightly lighter path through the dirt, then looking blankly at what had accumulated on his fingers. He did the same to the dent, tracing the edges and exploring the depths of the indentation. Tiny flakes of paint came off; he ran a thumb over the gritty particles, then brushed his hands clear and continued around behind the medical cabin.

The rear door won't work; it's crumpled beyond opening. I'll have to try the side doors.

This other side was dirtier, and more scratched up from its landing in the field, but the doors stood open. There were signs that a power pry bar had been used. He climbed inside using the ladder rungs. The repair bay's bright overhead lights illuminated much of the cabin, but work lights had been strung up inside as well. Some of the biobeds were in the open position, dropped down as if ready to receive a patient. One of the antigravity stretchers hung from its mooring, another lay on the floor in the far corner. There was a strong smell of disinfectant, and Jeff noticed streaks on the decking where something had spilled. Probably from the rear storage compartments.

He moved toward the back, but found his way to the surgery blocked by the indentation. We'll have to take the storage cabinets out to get into the surgery... and all the meds in the refrigerator will be ruined. He shook his head. This is going to be a big job.

Peering back, he tried to see what storage was in the rear. Were the lockers back here? I don't remember... but I don't think so. And I know they weren't in the surgery. He closed his eyes and swallowed. Oh, God, I remember now. They're in the cockpit.

"So, this is the lab? Brains works here?" Drew asked as Lisa punched in a code to the lock.

"Uh huh," she said as she waited for the green light. "Ah've got Kyrano's code, which'll get us in." She rounded on her brother. "But Jeff's not t' know that Ah do." The light turned green and the door slid aside. "Ah'm sure he won't mind, with us gettin' married soon and all, but still, Ah'd rathuh be th' one t' tell him."

"All right, all right," he said, as they walked into the lab. "I get the picture." He stopped in his tracks and let out a low whistle. "Wow. I had no idea." He slowly turned in place. "What does all this stuff do?"

"Ah dunno!" Lisa replied irritably. "He pushes the buttons; the lights flash, the machines beep..." Pulling on her brother's arm, she dragged him over to the door to the repair bay. "Jeff's in there."

"Aren't you coming?" Drew asked, stopping just before he opened the door.

Lisa suddenly sobered. "Not yet. When Dianne goes. Ah'll come then."

Taking a deep breath, Drew let it out slowly and nodded. "Wish me luck." Then he was through the door and into the repair bay.

"Ah wish you a whole lot moah than that, Drew, 'cause yoah gonna need it," Lisa murmured.

Post by Tikatu on 1/19/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:33:10 GMT

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Bozeman, Montana, Monday, late afternoon, August 13th (Tuesday August 14th, Tracy Island)

Luke let out a sigh of relief as he pulled into his parent's driveway. He usually didn't mind the ten-hour drive, but this time he couldn't wait to get there. He opened the door and Rommel went scrambling over him to reach the outside. "Oof! Rom!" Luke groaned as the dog's foot crushed a sensitive part of his anatomy. He followed Rommel out of the jeep and stretched.

"Luke!" A tall, auburn haired woman, dressed casually in jeans and a plaid shirt, waved from the porch.

Luke broke into a grin and waved back. He turned back to the jeep, pulling out his duffel bag, then strode up the steps and enveloped his mother in a bear hug. "Mom, it's great to see you."

"It's been a long time." Melisa hooked her arm through his and led him into the house. Rommel trotted along in front of them. "I made Thai chicken for you."

Luke grinned. "My favorite. Thanks, Mom." Luke dropped his bag on the stairs and followed his mother into the kitchen. "Dad still at the store?"

Melisa was at the counter, busily chopping vegetables. "Yes. The hockey shipment got delayed."

Luke winced. Hockey practices started early in Bozeman, and the delay of equipment would not make anyone in town happy. "Does he need any help?"

"I'm not there, am I?" Melisa shot back, not looking up.

Luke laughed. He walked over to the refrigerator and pulled out a Guinness. "Wow, Thai chicken, good beer, I may never leave!" He leaned against the counter and snagged a carrot.

"As long as Rommel stays, you can. Sit. I have this." Melisa waved him away.

Luke sat down at the kitchen table, then looking around, sighed in contentment. Other than new curtains and a different shade of paint on the walls, the room looked no different than when he was young. Rommel flopped down at Melisa's feet and gazed up at her in adoration. "Rom, you're pathetic," Luke chuckled. The dog merely wagged his tail.

"Leave him alone." Melisa wiped her hands on her jeans and reached into a cupboard. Rommel's ears perked up and he sat up quickly. She knelt in front of him and handed him a cookie, then took his face in her hands and ruffled it. "That's my good boy. Want to come live with me? Do

you?" Rommel whined, nudging her for more pats. Melisa laughed.

"Mom, you spoil him," Luke told her with a grin.

"Grandmother's prerogative." She looked over at Luke. "Honey, why are you really here? Is it because of Barry?"

The smile faded from Luke's face and he became very interested in his beer can. Finally, he sighed. "Yeah, partly anyway. I've been feeling kind of... disjointed about things lately. Between Barry leaving, work being a nightmare... I just needed to get away for a while I guess."

Melisa came and sat down next to him. "What's going on at work?"

"You know my boss, Derek?" Melisa nodded. "Well, he suggested I take a few weeks' vacation. Apparently my conduct on the last rescue was inappropriate." Luke crushed the can in his hands. Melisa sat patiently, waiting for her son to continue. "I have a job interview in L.A. on Friday."

Melisa frowned. "Luke, what kind of job?"

"It's for Tracy Industries. They're looking for an Environmental Specialist," he replied.

"And what does that mean?"

Luke shrugged. "I'll be studying the environmental impact on some of their proposed projects, probably acting as liaison between the company and the towns involved, things like that."

"An office job?" Melisa arched an eyebrow up in surprise.

He shook his head. "Not really. I'll be in the office some, but mostly field work."

"I see." Melisa looked thoughtful. "And you'll be based in Los Angeles?"

"Yeah, I think so, but I'll be traveling a lot too."

Melisa got up and walked back to the counter. After a few moments, she put the knife down and turned to her son. "Luke, are you doing this because you want to, or because you're hoping it will bring Barry back into your life?" She held up her hand. "Don't answer yet, but think about it." She paused as they heard a truck pull up outside. "Your father's home. Go say hello and tell him dinner will be ready in twenty minutes." She turned back to her cooking.

Luke watched her for a minute, then, his thoughts troubled, went outside to greet his father.

Richard Morel stepped out of the pickup and broke into a broad grin at the sight of his son. "Luke! You're earlier than I thought you'd be."

"Traffic wasn't that bad once I got going." Luke gave his father a hug. "Good to see you, Dad."

"You too, son." Richard was a tad shorter than his son, but his eyes were the same bluish-gray.

"Where's Rommel?"

Luke rolled his eyes. "Where do you think?"

"I should have known." Richard looked closely at his son. "You look tired, Luke. Everything all right?"

Luke shrugged. "I'm fine. Did you get the hockey stuff all straightened out?"

"Yes, put the fear of God into that supplier, let me tell you." Richard led his way into the house. "Your mother making dinner?"

"Yeah, it'll be ready in about twenty minutes." Luke grabbed his bag off the steps and went up to his room. He flopped down on the bed, staring up at the ceiling. Was Mom right? Am I doing this to get Barry back? He frowned to himself. No, I'm not. At least, I don't think I am. He sighed. What am I even worrying about? I haven't even been on the interview yet. He lay there, listening to the murmur of his parent's voices downstairs. "OK, Morel, enough moping. Time to take charge of your life again." With that, Luke got up and went down to dinner.

Post by lillehafrue on 1/19/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:33:45 GMT

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Jeff climbed out of the medical cabin, backing up to see the whole thing as he reached the floor. Then his eyes turned toward the cockpit standing a few meters away, uncoupled from the larger section. The open doorway, framed by the wavy remainders of the door itself, looked like the portal to another place or time. He shivered despite himself, then squared his shoulders, took a deep breath, and climbed in.

The air was tinged with an odor both slightly sour and metallic. Jeff untangled one from the other, recognizing them as being the remaining scents of blood and vomit. There were only a couple of work lights in the cockpit, but both were turned off. Might as well see what I'm doing, he thought as he reached over to turn on the nearest one. He turned his head away from the sudden brightness, his eyes closing tight for a moment. They slowly adjusted... and he stopped in his tracks.

"Damn."

He stepped forward haltingly toward the pilot's seat. He took in the crumpled front end, the cracked and broken windshield, the splintered control panels, the dark stains on the ceiling, and the steering yoke, pushed far into the cabin, still too close to the reclined chair. He tried for a moment to imagine what it looked like that day; there was a brief, vivid flash, then his mind refused to go any farther. His hand caressed the back of the chair, feeling not just the slight pebbling of the faux leather surface, but spots of something crusty that turned to powder beneath his touch. He drew his fingers up to see the brownish-red dust; the metallic smell got stronger as

he examined the stuff... and it hit him like a sledgehammer.

"Oh, God!" He wiped his hands frantically on his slacks as he backpedaled, stumbling into the cooler, one elbow slamming into a locker door with a loud clang! He stared, wide-eyed, at the pilot's seat for a long moment, then he took in a deep, shuddery breath, letting it out slowly as he regained control.

The bang alerted Drew, who had walked slowly around the medical cabin much like Jeff had done. He moved over to the cockpit, but hesitated, deciding to listen before climbing inside.

Jeff rubbed his tingling elbow and grimaced. "Damn funny bone," he muttered. "Nothing funny about it." He turned to examine the lockers; tall, thin metal containers that looked like they'd be more at home in a high school hallway than a high-tech ambulance. The lockers were marked with name plates, plain metal rectangles carrying the names of the operatives. Jeff saw that Dom's was still marked as "Dak", and had already made a mental note to change it when he realized that it would probably be months before these were used again... If they ever are. He took a key card from his pocket; a master one that he always carried when at home, and slid it into the lock on the door marked "Doc".

A familiar fragrance wafted out, faint but still detectable by a nose that found it irresistible. Jeff reached in, pulling out first the parts of Dianne's uniform. Jacket, vest, deep crimson shirt, pants... he felt all the pockets before draping each piece over the back of the nearby copilot's chair. He reached in again; this time his hand encountered something soft and silky, light as gossamer. He drew it out, then held it to his nose, closing his eyes and sniffing deeply.

He sighed, murmuring, "I wonder if she'll ever want to wear this again," as he added her nightgown to the pile. One more foray into the locker, and her favorite dressing gown - the dark green one with the embroidered peacock that swept across the back, from shoulder to hem - came out in his hands. He stared at it, tracing the delicate, satiny stitching with a light fingertip. His eyes burned and he closed them tight, then wiped his fingers across them, removing the moisture. Carefully draping her prized possession over the other clothes, he leaned down to take out her slippers, which lay haphazardly on her boots, crammed into the bottom of the narrow locker. He tipped each boot up with a hand, the other cupped to catch anything that might fall out. But both were empty.

He glanced up at the locker's top shelf. Two blue, vacuum-packed bundles were piled there; clean scrubs, ready to wear at a moment's notice. Perched on them was her uniform hat, the deep red reminding him of blood now more than ever. He pulled out the hat... and scrambled to catch the velvet jeweler's box that fell from the shelf. It was the one he'd brought to her that evening in Paris, when he'd gotten down on one knee to ask her to marry him. Now as then, his hands shook when he opened the box, and he sighed audibly to find the rings inside, intact. He gazed at the rings; a large, Ascher-cut diamond, two sides of its octagonal outline flanked by emerald baguettes, set in platinum... and the plain platinum band that Dianne had insisted on. He traced the outline of the wedding band, then closed the box gently. One hand tightened convulsively on it, and he felt his throat constrict. His eyes burned again; he squeezed them shut, heaving in ragged gulps of air. The anger, the unfairness of it all, swelled up and he gritted his teeth, his breath hissing through them.



"Damn it all to hell!" he shouted, smashing his empty hand on the closed lockers, denting Nikki's slightly, then with a swipe of the same hand, slamming the door to Dianne's locker to. It didn't catch and sprang back open; he pushed it shut with a hard, savage shove, and kicked it for good measure. The tears he'd been trying to ignore began coursing down his cheeks. He angrily brushed them away with the back of his hand, then banged his hand against the lockers once more before leaning to put his forehead on the cold metal. "How the hell could I let this happen?"

"Let it happen?"

The voice startled Jeff and his head snapped up and around to find Drew sitting calmly in the other co-pilot's seat. "Andy?" Jeff asked, frowning deeply, his voice ragged. "What in God's name are you doing here?"

"Dianne sent me; she seemed to think you'd need mah help." Drew's slight drawl became noticeable, and he shrugged a little. He took a minute to glance around. "Sure is an awful mess, isn't it?" He nodded toward the center seat. "Ah was sittin' right heah and Dianne was sittin' theyah with her back t' me that day in Samoa." He shook his head and snorted air through his nose. "Little did Ah know what Ah was gettin' into."

"Well, thanks for coming down, but I'm fine," Jeff said as he tucked the box in his pocket and began to pick up Dianne's clothes, draping them over an arm.

"Not so fast, Jeff," Drew said, rising from his seat. "Dianne was right; you do need some help." When Jeff didn't respond, he continued, "Ah know what you're goin' through..."

"Do you?" Jeff said, turning to Drew, his eyes flashing and his voice low and rough. "I nearly lost my wife because of this... this..." he waved his free hand at the cockpit, "this dream of mine." He looked away now, opening the locker again to see if there was anything he'd missed. "And she's not the only one. All of my boys have been hurt, and some nearly killed for this. Even Brains and Tin-Tin. Now the new recruits, too." His hand dropped and he sighed. "I felt... I feel so helpless. And angry that I can't do anything about it."

"Ah know, Ah've been theyah." Drew's drawl got a little stronger. "Felt pretty helpless watchin' mah sistuh suffah while she was married t' that piece o' crap, Garrett. Felt pretty helpless when he beat on Dianne, an' latuh, when Rick died." His voice dropped and became softer. "Felt really helpless when Maggie discovered that lump in her breast..."

Jeff glanced back up at Drew, his face troubled. "Cancer?"

"Yep." A small, rueful smile appeared on Drew's face. "Here Ah was, a great and renowned surgeon, but unable t' keep mah wife from gettin' ill. Unable t' deal with the thought o' losin' her. Mah life came to a crashing halt, and suddenly, Ah was angry an' frustrated an' helpless as a baby. And too damn stubborn to admit it." He shook his head. "Got myself an ulcer, and began to drink." He chuckled. "You should have seen Lisa when she came out t' help aftuh Maggie's surgery. She snatched that glass out o' mah hand, poured the liquor down the drain, an' told me in no uncertain terms that she wasn't gonna let me go down that road."

Drew approached and put a hand on Jeff's shoulder. Jeff stiffened a little. "Lisa made me get help,

so I could vent my feelings and not destroy myself or my family. I didn't want to admit I needed it; I was supposed to be the rock, the support, the strong anchor. But for my family's sake -- for Maggie's sake -- I did. It made all the difference in the world." He dropped his hand. "We didn't know each other when Lucille died, but I'm sure you learned a few things... perhaps made some mistakes you'd rather not repeat..."

Jeff nodded slightly. "I did. I made a lot of mistakes. But the situation is different... no one has died."

"Somewhat different, yes," Drew admitted. "But you still have a lot of emotional trauma from this near miss. And the coping strategy is the same: don't bottle it up. It's okay to feel the way you do, and it's okay to express it."

"But I have to be strong... especially for Tyler."

"He'll learn more about how to deal with his own feelings if he sees you admitting to yours, and dealing with them appropriately," Drew said bluntly. He smiled a little. "And you're fortunate to have help close to hand."

Jeff made a face. "Mrs. Hanson?"

"Yes. Mrs. Hanson."

"I don't know, Andy," Jeff said, shaking his head. "I don't know if I can talk to a stranger."

Drew rolled his eyes. "Then talk to me, talk to Kyrano, talk to your mother... hell, talk to Lisa -- but in her case, be prepared to hear her dig up some things you didn't know she knew and you'd wish stayed buried!" He paused, and gave Jeff a very serious look. "And for the record..."

"Yes?"

"You didn't 'let' that tornado do what it did, any more than I 'let' Maggie have breast cancer. There wasn't a blessed thing either of us could have done to stop it."

"I could have stopped Dianne from going out on rescues in the first place."

Drew folded his arms and raised an eyebrow. "You really think so? Listen, bud, I've known your wife a lot longer than you have, and when she gets an idea in her head, she's nigh on impossible to stop." He paused, and a thoughtful look crossed his face. "Come to think of it, that's gotten her into a heap of trouble on occasion."

Jeff chuckled a little, and Drew smiled wryly. "Did you find the rings?"

"Yes. I did." Jeff pulled the velvet box from his trouser pocket and showed Drew.

"Then let's get out of here," Drew said, motioning with his head toward the doorway. "The womenfolk will be wondering and worrying and you do want to have dinner with your wife in the dining room, don't you?"

"Yeah," Jeff said with a sigh. He glanced around the cockpit once more. "I think this will have to be totally redesigned and rebuilt."

"And when you rebuild it, you will be adding airbags," Drew said firmly as he followed Jeff out.

Post by Tikatu on 1/19/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:34:19 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 14, 2:30 PM; Denver General Hospital (8:30 AM Wednesday on Tracy Island)

"Well, Mrs. Matumbo. Your latest scans show no signs of any further trouble, so I am signing your discharge papers. And I see you are already set to leave us."

Lena was dressed in a pantsuit that Joy'd had the foresight to pack. Although her overnight bag had been found, along with her laptop and purse, her things had been damaged. She was grateful for her daughter's thoughtfulness.

She and Naomi were sitting on the bed, while the others occupied the chairs in the room. She grinned. "Doctor Sloan, you've taken such good care of me, I knew dere could be no otter result. And, of course, I'm anxious to get back to de familiarity of my own home."

"I hope you have someone to be with you. You will need help, at least until your collarbone heals."

"After her first night home, she'll be staying with Matthew and his wife until her doctor in Maryland says she is well enough to live by herself again," Joy answered.

"Ah, good." Dr. Sloan held out a folder. "Here are all the medical records for him. I took the liberty of calling him and you have an appointment to see him on Thursday morning. He'll want to check you over himself." He turned as there was a noise in the doorway. "And here is the nurse with the wheelchair to take you to the entrance. I hope that if I meet any of you again, it'll be under better circumstances."

Lena had taken the folder and put it in her bag. She smiled at him as she got off the bed, and held her hand out. As the doctor shook it, she said, "Dat is my hope, too. Tank you for your excellent care."

The nurse brought the wheelchair closer and Lena sat down. Naomi asked to be able to push the chair, and the nurse looked over at the doctor. He nodded and, with a smile, she relinquished the chair to the young girl. They left the room and headed to the elevator, where the doctor bid them goodbye and continued on his rounds.

When they finally reached the lobby, they saw a limousine waiting outside, the driver standing by the rear door. Lena looked up at her son, who said, "I know. It seems that Mr. Tracy or someone

there paid our hotel bill, and put this limo at our disposal."

"And guess what, Nyanya," interrupted Naomi. "We're going home in one of the Tracy Industries private jets! It seems that he decided it would be more comfortable for you. Isn't that cool?"

"I would have called him if I could have and told him it was unnecessary to do all this, but I had no way to get in touch with him."

"He would have told you it was necessary. He's dat kind of man, Matthew. So we'll take him up on his generosity and tank him for it when we get home -- all of us," she answered, looking at the children in turn, as the chauffeur opened the door and she stood up to enter the vehicle. She paused to thank the nurse, who smiled and took the wheelchair back from Naomi, then headed back into the hospital. Lena got into the limo, followed by her family, and they soon were heading to the airport.

Post by Hobbeth on 1/20/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:34:43 GMT  
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Tuesday, August 14, 7:15 p.m., Tracy Island, just after dinner

"Hello, Dr. Carmichael"

"Hello, Ms. Hanson. How are you finding your retirement?"

"So far, it has been a lot more interesting than I expected. And call me Anna. We're not working."

"Then it's Drew. Interesting as in, 'may you live in interesting times'?"

"Yeah, that's it. " She grinned at him. "I'm sure Tyler will want to tell you all about his showing me Thunderbird Three."

"Actually, I may ask him for a tour. I haven't seen the sights yet."

Anna raised an eyebrow. "No one's given you a tour before? And you've been an agent for how long?"

"Since the tsunami. Dianne and I surprised each other when I went to coordinate with them."

"I bet Jeff freaked."

"To put it mildly, I hear." Drew hesitated. "A quick heads up. Jeff went down to tour Thunderbird Seven."

"He hadn't seen her since the accident?"

"No. And he handled it better than I expected. Among other things, I convinced him to talk to someone about it, not necessarily you."

"I would be very surprised if he talked to me about it first. He doesn't trust counselors. With good reason." Drew looked a question at her. She told him the story Gordon had told her about the pastor and the leak to CPS.

Drew gave a low whistle. Anna nodded. "Yeah. Between that and the normal military 'I can beat this if I have enough self discipline' mindset, I figure he must have been pretty desperate to call me at all. It's actually pretty impressive. He really does put family before everything."

Anna changed the subject. "So, you looked over Dianne, and she's well enough to eat dinner with the family. Do you think she's up to much strain yet? I want to talk to her about Tyler, but not until she has her strength back."

Drew thought for a second. "Give her at least another week before you drop any major problems or subject her to any major emotional upheaval. Her leg has a mild infection and she's stressed enough right now. Reassure her as much as you can about Tyler but add as little stress as possible."

"What about talking to her about other patients? There are at least two other people on the island she wanted me to see. It also might take her mind off of things to talk about them. And has anyone talked to the two other people that were in Thunderbird Seven? For that matter, are you planning on helping Dianne deal with her own reactions?"

Drew shook his head. "I can start but I won't be here long enough to handle it all. I will try to lay down a good foundation for you."

Post by susanmartha on 1/23/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:35:11 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Wednesday, August 15, 8:30 AM

Heather pressed the button that opened the door to the elevator and stepped inside. She was about to hit the "down" button when the door opened on the other side.

"Oh, hello. You must be Heather." A short, sandy brown haired woman smiled at her and held out her hand. "I'm Kat Williamson."

"Hi. Yes, I'm Heather Kennedy." She took Kat's hand and shook it. "I guess we're almost roommates then, huh?" Heather smiled.

"I suppose you could put it that way. There is no one above us except Brandon, but he is out of

town for the moment. He lives on the other side anyway." Kat pressed the button and the elevator started down.

"Kat, I heard that there's a party or something tonight," Heather began.

Kat nodded. "Yes, for Virgil. Mr. Tracy's second oldest son. It's his birthday. We're all of us going. It's going to be a fancy sort of party. The girls all have red dresses and the boys will be going in tuxedos."

Heather sighed. "That's what I heard. Do you mind if you and I go together? I have to fly to Christchurch today and won't really have the time to meet any of the others."

Kat smiled. "Of course, Heather. I would love to. And I shall make sure to introduce you to the others as well."

Heather let out a sigh of relief. "Thanks, Kat." The doors opened and both women stepped out. "I guess I'll catch you later then."

"Have a good flight." With a wave, they set off in their different directions.

Post by lillehafrue on 1/25/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:36:10 GMT

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Wednesday, August 15, 11:00 a.m., Tracy Island

Dianne sat back in the hospital bed. The sickroom was quiet; Maggie had just helped her to shower for the day and had gone off to see to her own needs -- and Drew's. Though Dianne had eaten breakfast with the family, she still felt isolated. The leg didn't hurt as much, unless she overused it; the infection was clearing up. She put down the data pad holding the book she'd been reading. Somehow a romance wasn't as much fun as usual. Normally, she could imagine herself and Jeff in the parts of hero and heroine, but at the moment, she couldn't.

There were plenty of other things to occupy her; the televid, a number of word puzzles that Tyler had brought for her, Cherie's handheld computer game, the newspaper which had been printed off fresh that morning in the lab. But none of them held her interest. What she wanted was conversation, and at the moment, there was no one around. She knew Penelope was due in that morning; Jeff had told her at breakfast before heading off to the study for a conference call. Her mother was busy helping Emily with party preparations, and the children were helping where possible.

"Wonder if I should wear that red dress tonight," she murmured aloud. "Probably not. It's not like I'm going to be dancing or anything." The thought made her even more depressed, and she sighed. Then she reached out for the data pad on the bedside table, and drew it to her. Saving her place on the story she'd been reading, she cleared the screen, and used her stylus to write.

I am bored.

Tremendously, utterly bored.

I've gone past the point where Jeff was when he got home. He had family in and out all the time, but with this party going on, everyone else's focus is elsewhere.

Not that I begrudge Virgil his fun. I don't, and I'm thankful he thought of the family - and of me - first. He deserves a special time, and the celebration will do us all a world of good. I'll be happy to be out there mingling as much as I can, though dancing is definitely out. Makes me a little sad, though. I love dancing, especially with Jeff. Rick and I never had the chance to do it much.

The family feels like it's in limbo, and not just because I'm here in the sickroom. We're missing two members of the extended family, and though you'd think it wouldn't matter, it does. On top of that, two others are sort of missing in action, so to speak. Drew is scheduled to see Dom and Nikki tomorrow and determine if they're fit to go back to duty. They probably need as much rest as I do, though how Dom's going to get it with Josh around is anyone's guess. Hopefully some of the gals -- and maybe even a couple of guys - have pulled together to give him some respite. We also have a few extra people floating around, and that always puts things off-kilter. Not always a bad thing, but still noticeable.

No one's talked to me much about the crash yet. I don't know if it's from fear of upsetting me or because they don't think I'm ready. Wise of them, really. I'm not ready. Jeff going down to see the wreck -- that scared me witless. I was so relieved when Drew followed him down. Ma told me they seemed to be okay when they came out. Jeff was a little red-eyed when they came back, she said, and he had a pile of my clothes with him. I still don't know if he found what he went down there for; Ma couldn't tell me either. I'd hate to lose the rings, but... they are replaceable. Not like my family.

My poor babies. I know they're hurting, especially Tyler. I wish I could kiss them and make things better, I really do. Just like sometimes I wish Ma -- or Jeff - could do for me. But there are no shortcuts. There's no magic that can make it go away. We can't go back, we can only go forward. God knows I learned that lesson the hard way and I'm still learning it. I can't ignore or pretend that the tornado didn't happen, any more than I can pretend the bombing didn't happen. None of us can. It happened. They happened. All I have to do is look at that bandage on my leg to know the one. All I have to do is look at my children, and my husband, to know the other.

I wish there was something I could do to reward Dom and Nikki. I owe them my life. Cutting me out, God, that must have been hard. I almost wish I couldn't remember everything so clearly; things didn't get hazy until I was on the way to the hospital. I owe Scott, too. He was the rock, for everyone. He kept it all together.

I'm not looking forward to facing Seven. I know I have to, just like Em had to see the house. God, the farmhouse. Jeff -- that was home to him, in some ways more than this place is. It's like Ma's place... which will be gone, too, soon. Someone else will be living in it. Someone else will call it home. And I'll mourn, too.



Seven. The lucky number. Not for us. Not that day. Maybe never again.

Sighing, she looked at what she'd written, contemplating dumping the text completely. No, I think I'd better save it. I need to remember. Touching a few buttons with her stylus, she saved the entry and put down her tools. Glancing at all the things she had to occupy her, she decided on the newspaper. It was a compilation of world news, selected especially by Tracy Industries as being of particular interest to the family. One of those particular interests was International Rescue, so any and all stories relating to them were added. Emily clipped and saved them in her scrapbooks.

Dianne folded the paper for easier scanning and her eyes skimmed over the front page headlines. Flipping the paper over, she scanned the stories there, but suddenly stopped at a particular headline.

"Orthopedist who worked on IR's doc accused of malpractice?" She read the article through once, then her hand scrabbled for the call buzzer, and she pressed it hard. "Maggie?" she said, her tone urgent. "I need to see Drew -- and Jeff -- as soon as possible!"

Post by Tikatu on 1/25/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:36:42 GMT  
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(Early Wednesday morning; August 15, 2068; Tracy Island)

Early that morning at breakfast, Virgil suggested that Heather come with him. "Kyrano and I are going to the mainland to check out the orders he's put in and bring them back. Why don't you come with us? That'll give you a chance to pick up some groceries and some things you need." Readily agreeing, Heather made out a considerable list. Maybe I should just get things I need right now and order by computer any other more non-essential items. Now I know why I dislike moving. There's so much to set up in the beginning, she mused.

Insisting on doing the piloting due to the fact she was hired as a family pilot in the first place, Virgil relented finally after Kyrano sighed and said in a strong, firm voice, "Mr. Virgil, the orders for your party await us. Please decide quickly between you who will fly."

Virgil suggested they first stop for the wines and liquor supplies first, while Kyrano checked his order with the vendor. Heather chose ten bottles of different local area sherries and wines, enjoying the prospect of sampling Australia's varieties. She treated herself to a 70-year-old sherry that had Virgil raising his eyebrows. "I'm coming over to try that, you know."

"My door is--almost--open anytime," she said, giving him the eye. She added a strong European cherry liquor to her basket to make non-virgin Sherry Temples.

"What we're going to do is when Kyrano's satisfied with the orders and they are sent to the plane to take back, your order will go with it," Virgil explained. "You won't have to carry it."

Next, the trio moved over to a local cheese shop and, while Virgil and Kyrano were making their choices for the party, odors of Gouda, feta, and Parmesan teased Heather's nose. She picked up small bricks of mozzarella, mild and sharp cheddars, and one spreadable cheddar with garlic and poppy seed that the portly vendor suggested was wonderful on toasted bagels. She bought a pound tub.

"You look like you're going to have a party of your own. Can I come?" Virgil asked as he peeked at the basket as she moved up to the counter.

"This is for when you come over to try that 70-year-old sherry."

"I'm looking forward to it. How do you like your apartment?" he asked as she finished paying the vendor who put her order in with Kyrano's to be sent to the plane.

"It's very beautiful," she answered with a rueful smile. "I'm still adjusting to my surroundings, but that will come with time."

"You must be adjusting to your whole life. You go to an interview you think will be a simple, boring--" His words caused a guilty look to mold her expression. "--family pilot job, and find out about the 'family business'. You go and lose your home, decide to join us here, and it's no wonder you're 'still adjusting'. You've got a lot of guts, lady." Taking her hand in brotherly fashion, he looked at her. "I'm really hoping my party tonight will help with that. Just relax and enjoy yourself."

With a chuckle and a mischievous glance aimed in his direction, she whispered loudly, "You must think you're utterly charming!"

The comment set Virgil back on his heels, but he recovered smoothly. "But of course! And you must think you're utterly immune to all male attempts to be charming!"

"But of course!" she answered back.

Unable to avoid the conversation between the kids, Kyrano just shook his head and smiled.

Their final stop was at the local General Food Service Center. While Kyrano made his last check of the day, sampling the exquisite hors d'oeuvre, Virgil walked with Heather as she examined the Australian selections of cake mixes, coffees and teas, fish, fruits and vegetables, much of it going into her basket. As they went through the canned goods aisle, she noticed a bottle that resembled tomatoes made into jam in a dark wine sauce. The label read Vegemite. "Virgil," she asked, not sure if she wanted to know. "What is this?"

Virgil looked at the raised eyebrow, reacting to the texture they could see through the clear glass bottle. "Do you like really salty things?" Long auburn hair swung across her back as she shook her head. "It's like a very salty, jellied fish spread. It's kind of a national joke. Don't want to try it?" Virgil asked, chuckling once again as she wrinkled her nose at the suggestion.

"Oh, I think I'll pass." They walked past a refrigerator full of trays of sushi. "Oh, this is wonderful!"

"I know Kyrano's ordered a platter of this, although most of the family will probably avoid it. We

had a recent incident involving some bad fish." There were packages of smaller amounts of sushi and she bought up six small trays for herself.

Kyrano walked over to them with a satisfied smile. "All is in readiness, Mr. Virgil. All we need to do is get Miss Heather's orders together to be sent to the plane." Quickly, they helped her take her groceries to be rung up, charged, and sent to accompany Kyrano's orders which were then sent to the airport. When they made their way back to the airport, the many orders of wines, champagnes, and several bottles of liquor, cheeses of all kinds, maraschino cherries, and club sodas arrived. Cold packages contained the kids' favorite ice creams, chocolate syrup, bananas, and peanuts. Some contained various snack crackers, olives and and fancy ribboned toothpicks. There were pounds of filet mignon and several well packed party trays that only needed to be put into the oven. Once the food was packed, the trio climbed into the jet and soared again for the trip home.

With Virgil piloting, they arrived back on Tracy Island. Antigrav floats were brought forward to deliver the party supplies to the cooler in the Villa's kitchen. Heather shook her head as she floated her groceries home. "That's enough food to feed at least two platoons of men. Whew! Hope everyone's going to be hungry tonight."

Post by AmandaTracy on 1/27/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:37:14 GMT

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Wednesday, August 15, 2068, 11:50 a.m., Tracy Island

"Dianne! What the hell are you doing?" Drew walked into the sick room to find his niece sitting with her calf drawn up toward her body, prodding at her leg wound with both thumbs and examining it minutely. The bandage was cast aside at her feet. Maggie, who followed him, hustled forward, tsking under her breath. She took the bandage off to dispose of it, then washed her hands and began pulling down gauze and other supplies.

"What the hell took you so long?! As t' what Ah'm doin'..." She looked up and glared at him, grabbing the newspaper on the bedside table. She turned it toward him and jabbed at the offending article with a finger. "What the hell is this all about?"

Drew took the paper from her hand, then turned as Jeff came in. "What's going on?" the latecomer asked.

"That's what Ah wanna know," Dianne said as she folded her arms belligerently. "Ah was readin' the papuh an' saw an article..."

"Here." Drew, who had finished reading, handed the paper over to Jeff and indicated the article. As Jeff read, Drew headed over to the wash basin, saying, "Di, there's nothing to worry about."

"Really?" Dianne's arms went from folded in belligerence to wrapped around herself in concern.

Drew dried his hands, then put on a pair of sterile gloves. "Ah'm afraid Ah'm havin' trouble believin' that."

"So am I, Drew," Jeff said as he dropped the paper back on the bedside table. "Why didn't you tell me about this?"

"Because it wasn't really any of your business," Drew said sharply without looking up from where he was bandaging Dianne's leg again. "It was hospital business. It was being dealt with, in-house. In fact," he paused to ask Maggie for another piece of gauze, "I'm surprised it's in the news. I guess the investigation turned up some other iffy cases." He finished the job, stripped off his gloves, and sat on the edge of the bed, his arms folded. "I was in the surgical suite the whole time, Di. Yes, Dr. Willis left some fragments of metal in your leg..."

"What!?" "No!" Jeff and Dianne's cries of incredulity and distress sounded out in unison, but before they could say anything more, Drew put up a hand.

"Yes, he left the metal in there, but -- and this is important -- he also left the closing to Dr. Singh, who found the other fragments and removed them. All of them." He dropped his arms and gently put a hand on Dianne's ankle. "We scanned the leg again before we left the theater. There were no fragments left. The scan I did the other day showed no fragments. I'll be happy to redo it, or bring you the results on a laptop if it'll make you feel better." He cocked his head to one side, and raised his eyebrows. "You know very well, Di, that I'd never, ever have let you out of surgery with even the tiniest detail unaccounted for."

Dianne's head drooped; her eyes were closed and she nodded slightly. Jeff glanced back and forth between doctor and patient, then picked up the paper. "So, this Willis... he's done this before? To other patients? Left himself an opening for more surgery?"

Drew sighed heavily and shrugged. "So it seems. Dianne's surgery was the first solid evidence of it we've had... though trying to prove that he does this on purpose will be the hard part."

"Where will IR fit in all this?" Maggie asked, looking up from the article. "I mean, Di's surgery is probably the most recent incident and it's the catalyst for investigating his other cases." She indicated the paper in her hand. "But IR can't exactly come out and sue him for malpractice."

"I know," Drew replied. "But even so, the incident can be entered into evidence... there were plenty of witnesses this time, myself included. However..." he sighed again, "this won't do the hospital any good. Though they can't confirm that it happened to Dianne due to patient confidentiality, the fact that he was announced as the one working on her will give the hospital a black eye." He glanced over at Jeff. "Unless IR was to issue a statement..."

Jeff rubbed at his chin. "What kind of statement?"

"A statement of confidence in the hospital's handling of their case," Drew said hopefully.

There was a long silence as Jeff mulled over the possibilities. "I'll see what I can do. Check with our legal people and try to figure out a way to make a statement that will stick." He sighed. "I wish I'd known about this sooner, though."

"As I said, it was hospital business," Drew repeated firmly. He glanced at Dianne, gently squeezed her ankle and said, "I'm sorry you learned about it through the news, Di, but I had no idea that they'd found other cases and the whole sorry story had been leaked. If I'd known..." He let his words trail off as he shrugged.

"Don't worry about it, Andy," Jeff said wearily. "What's done is done. We just have to go on from here." He turned to his wife taking her hand and squeezing it a bit. "Are you going to be all right, love?"

"I guess so," Dianne said quietly. She waved a hand in the direction of her freshly-bandaged calf. "I was just so... concerned about it. Especially with this infection. I had antibiotics in the hospital to stop infection, and I still got one. Thought that any fragments left inside might have caused it."

"Ah, I see," Drew replied, nodding. "I don't know where you picked up this infection, but it's not from the surgery. Please believe me; we got them all."

"Okay."

There was another long moment of silence, then Maggie glanced at her watch. "It's time for lunch. How about we get you out of here and down to the dining room. I think a change of scenery would do you good, Di."

"That sounds like a good idea," Dianne said, brightening a bit. "I was bored... before I read that damned article. Then I sort of... panicked."

"Then definitely a change of scenery is prescribed," Drew said, smiling. He stood. "I'll head down to the dining room and let you three deal with the details." Besides, I might be able to corner Mrs. Hanson and give her a heads up on this latest development.

"We'll see you in a few minutes," Maggie said. "C'mon, Jeff, let's get this woman out of bed."

Post by Tikatu on 1/28/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:37:40 GMT  
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[size=2] Wednesday Morning, August 15th, Tracy Island. 9:00 am.

Elise knocked on the French doors to Nikki's apartment, having come up the stairs leading to the second floor balcony.

"Do you have to be so loud?" Nikki stated, opening the door and motioning a smiling Elise inside.

"Yep!" the blonde replied, stepping inside. "So what's up?"

"I was just curious to know what you're planning on wearing tonight?"

To tell the truth, Elise hadn't give it much thought. As the trip to Paradise Peaks had been canceled, she'd assumed Virgil was just going to have an informal get together instead. "Umm, I guess casual attire. Dress jeans and a shirt?"

"What! You can't wear that."

"Why not?" Elise was offended.

Because, I'm wearing this, and I want your opinion on what shoes to wear." As they were talking, Elise had followed Nikki into her bedroom where the red dress that Nikki had ordered lay spread out on the bed. On the floor were three different pairs of dress shoes.

"You're seriously wearing your dress tonight?"

Now it was Nikki's turn to look offended. "Yes! Absolutely! I'm making sure I get my money's worth out of this outfit. Besides, I think it'll help me feel a little more chipper than I have been."

Elise knew Nikki was referring to the tornado crash. Sighing, she conceded. "Okay, if you're wearing yours, then I'll wear mine."

Nikki grinned. "Great! Let's call the others and then you can help me pick out shoes."

"Whatever!" Elise laughed. "I just hope the guys don't show up in jeans and polos!"

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 1/28/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:38:20 GMT  
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Tracy Island, August 15th. 2:00p.m.

"Well, I think that should do it," Tin-Tin announced, climbing down from the stepladder. She joined Cherie who was standing back admiring the handiwork.

"It looks great, Tin-Tin! I think we've done a really good job with decorating." Cherie smiled as Tin-Tin gave her a squeeze.

"Maybe when you're a little older we could start our own party co-coordinating/decorating business."

Cherie giggled as she helped clean up the decoration leftovers. "It may not be Paradise Peaks, but I think Virgil will like it."

"I'm sure he will, Cherie." They had not gone overboard with the party decorations, instead settling

for the 'less is more' theme. Tin-Tin had picked some exotic flowers from her fathers' garden and arranged them in vases on the buffet table as well as placing a couple of vases around the room.

Cherie had placed ivory linens on the buffet tables and carefully arranged ivory ribbon as a decorative edge around the table rims. "I hope these tables can hold all the food. I heard there is going to be an enormous amount," she said, carefully putting the last piece of ribbon in place.

"I think it will be okay. Besides, it won't last long, not with Gordon and Scott in here!" Tin-Tin replied. They both laughed as they took one last look at the room then sighed with satisfaction.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 1/28/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:42:34 GMT  
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Wednesday, August 15, 2:30

"Jeff, how good to see you again. I must say, you do look better without the beard."

"I feel better without it too." Jeff stood up and gave Penelope a kiss on the check. "I don't know how anyone can stand one of those things. You, of course, look lovely, as always." Jeff sat down behind his desk. Lady Penelope reached across the desk and gave him a data card.

"Here are the results of the background check of Mr. and Mrs. Hanson. You might want to read the summary. Then we can talk."

Jeff slid the card into place and started reading. About three minutes in, he looked up at Penny. "Breakdown in 2046?"

"I'm not sure. She took time off from work. She did nothing for 6 months, then went back to school and earned her second masters degree. She returned to her old job with Social Services but soon transferred to the Christchurch Police Department as a victim advocate and counselor, specializing in domestic violence. She worked her way up to working with uniformed officers who needed help. She took another year long sabbatical in '56 but that was planned well in advance."

"And the first one wasn't?"

Penelope crossed her legs. "I can find no reason for it in her personnel file -- or at least the ones I can find. There was no pre-approval by the department. The only reason given was 'medical'. She did apply for leave to go back to school after 4 months and it was approved without any problems. She even received a scholarship. But -- she was seeing a counselor herself during the period involved. The city was paying for it. And I was unable to get into part of her personnel file."

"Gordon said she was almost paranoid about computer security." Jeff skimmed the rest of the file. "So, can you find out anything more?"



"I have already started to. I should have the results back in a few days."

"Fair enough. What about her husband?"

"Ryan Hanson. He works for Boeing in the satellite division. He designs both civilian and military satellites, manned and unmanned. He has a medium high security clearance. He has turned down several chances to work in management. He has also turned down several promotions that would have required him to move to Boeing headquarters. Even figuring the difference in cost of living he could have doubled his salary. He has always been polite but his private comments about the intelligence level of anyone who thought he would move to Chicago, and about the stupidity of Boeing moving its headquarters from Seattle to Chicago have been, hmm, shall we say, extremely imaginative.

"They are both well liked, active in their church and in volunteering. He restores antique car and planes for a hobby. She practices archery and they both belong to a medieval reenactment group.

"She has been back to see her family in the States twice since her marriage. Her great aunt left her the library and several other items when she died. Anna and Ryan returned to the States to pack them up. And she returned for her father's funeral. She did not return for her mother's second marriage. No one in her family has made any effort to visit her. I have not found any specific reason for the rift.

"They have three children and one grandchild. The oldest son, Terry, is 31 and married with 1 child. The second son, David, is 25 and works with computers. He is gay and has a domestic partnership. They had a church wedding with Anna officiating."

Jeff looked surprised. "I didn't think she could do that."

"She can't, officially. The Church outside of the States still does not condone marriage between same sex couples. But it is fairly common for the couple to have a civil ceremony and then have a willing pastor do a church ceremony. In this case, Anna as a lay minister could not perform a legally binding ceremony but could give the blessing to the union. Her pastor approved and the bishop turned a blind eye to the proceedings. He often does in cases like this. Since the Father Seaman didn't perform the wedding, the bishop can ignore it. Anna has married several couples that way.

"The youngest, Mary, is starting her second year in Uni, and doing is well. She is going to school in town but prefers to live on campus. She is considering spending a year as a student in the States." Penny looked at Jeff. "The entire family comes up clean except for Anna's unexpected hiatus and her split with her family. I am checking into those more thoroughly, but this was all I could do in the limited time."

Jeff frowned. "Those are big holes, but..." he hesitated, "do you feel she is a security risk?"

"I am uneasy about the hiatus because it is unexplained. Every source I checked with spoke highly of her intelligence and discretion. She is both well-liked and respected. I could wish you had asked me about her before but I understand these last weeks have been a bit hectic. How bad was Tyler?"

"Bad." Jeff grimaced. "And it won't be a quick fix. Both Drew and Dianne like her. And I couldn't afford to wait, both for Tyler's sake and Dianne's. I would like you to talk with her and give me your impressions. I think I can trust her to do what's the best for Tyler. I want your opinion on how far I can trust her with the rest of International Rescue."

Post by susanmartha on 1/28/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:43:08 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Wednesday, August 15th, 4:30 PM

Alan peered around the doorway leading into the kitchen. Grandma, Lisa, Kyrano, even Maggie were running around trying to get all the food ready. They were so busy, Alan figured they'd never notice one canapé missing from the platter.

He thought wrong.

"Alan! Keep your hands away from those! They're for the party and you know it!" Grandma frowned at him.

Alan took one look at the wooden spoon in her hand and backed off. "I was just going to carry it out into the other room, Grandma."

"Humph, sure you were. Now, get out of here so we can finish up." She turned back to the stove. "And keep away from that cake too!"

Alan quickly pulled his finger away from the edge of the cake and wondered, not for the first time, if his grandmother had eyes in the back of her head. Muttering under his breath, he wandered back out into the hallway. I'm starving here. Why'd we have to do this all fancy anyway? I would have been happy with burgers on the grill.

"Hey, Al. What's up?" Gordon sauntered up to his brother, a grin on his face.

Alan took a step back. "What?"

"'What?' what?"

"Don't give me that innocent look. What are you up to?" Alan asked.

Gordon batted his eyes. "Me? Up to something?"

"Gordon," Alan said warningly.

"I need your help."

Alan shook his head. "No way. Look what happened the last time I 'helped' you." He held up his hands. "You're on your own this time."

"Alan, you wound me."

"Good."

Gordon chuckled. "Seriously; Virgil asked me to film the party. I could use an assistant."

"No funny business?" Alan asked doubtfully.

Gordon made an X across his chest. "I swear." Alan still looked dubious. "C'mon, Alan, please!!" Gordon pleaded.

"Please what?" Scott marched over to them. "What's going on? You'd better not be planning something. This is Virgil's birthday."

"I'm not planning anything, Scott." Gordon glared at his older brother. "I merely asked Alan for help filming tonight. Why do you always jump to conclusions?"

Scott arched one eyebrow. "Oh, I don't know, Gordon; you tell me." Then he broke into a grin. "By the way, Dad told me to order new furniture for my room."

Gordon looked confused. "And this concerns me, how?"

Scott grinned wolfishly. "Because I get to use your money." He laughed evilly at the stunned look on his brother's face. "Enjoy the party, Gords." He walked back down the hallway.

Gordon glared after him, then turned to Alan with a nasty smile of his own. "Alan, my friend, I think it's time we took matters into our own hands."

"No way! Not again!" Alan backed away in fear. "You do anything at this party and not only will Scott kill us, but there's Dad and Virgil, too!"

Gordon shook his head. "I didn't mean the party."

"Then what?"

"I still have those pictures of Scott. The ones from the other day." Gordon grinned. "Those'll knock him down a few pegs."

Alan burst out laughing. "That's for sure! Blackmail at its best."

"Right! So, are you going to help me tonight or what?" Gordon asked.

"Sure. Let's go get ready and grab the cameras." Together they set off down the hallway.

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:43:44 GMT  
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Wednesday, August 15, 5:15 p.m., Tracy Island

Virgil inhaled a deep breath in an effort to calm his nerves. He never got this nervous out on a rescue, but this party had him on edge. Maybe I should have had this at Paradise Peaks after all! he thought as he mentally tried to check off what had been done and if there was anything he'd missed.

Scott and he had brought up the bottles of wine and champagne from the cellar and storage area a few minutes ago, so that was taken care of. The food was almost done, despite the somewhat chaotic scene in the kitchen. Kyrano, Grandma and Grandma Lisa, along with Parker's help, had outdone themselves.

What next? Oh yeah, the 'squirts' He must have gone over things with Alan and Gordon one too many times, judging by the fed-up looks they had both given him when he'd made sure the camera, video and karaoke equipment were ready to go.

"Relax, will ya! We got it!" Gordon had all but yelled at him.

Surely they're going to behave themselves? Virgil questioned himself, then shook his head realizing what he was doing. Going to his closet he got out the tux, shoes and shirt and laid them out on his bed. He was sure he was forgetting something.

Decorations? No, Tin-Tin and Cherie took care of that. We brought back everything we needed this morning from the mainland; Dad's going to help get Mom ready... His train of thought changed suddenly when he started thinking of people getting ready. He'd heard a rumor from Gordon the other day that the women team members were going to all wear the same color dresses! This thought led to others of a more pleasing nature that brought a smile to his face!

Yep! This is going to be one night to remember! Satisfied he'd thought of everything, he pulled off his shirt and headed towards the shower.

--mental checklist by FrankieCTB2 on 1/28/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:44:14 GMT  
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Tracy Island, August 15th, 5:30pm

"Is there anything I can do to help?" Anna looked into the kitchen at the chaos surrounding the party preparations.

"No, I think we have it under control here," Emily replied. "Besides, you're company. You should be out enjoying yourself, with everyone else."

"I'm company who doesn't know people well yet and who doesn't have the appropriate clothing. I also don't dance. And I am a very experienced server at church suppers and wedding receptions. If nothing else I can put food on plates and watch the level of the punch bowls."

"Em, right now we need all the help we can get," Lisa commented. "Besides, we need to go get changed soon and we really can't get do much in the kitchen after we've changed."

"Let me help Parker - it is Parker, isn't it -- finish things up while you get ready. What else needs to be done?"

Kyrano smiled at her. "These need to be put on serving plates. I will get the plates out for you. Then the olives need to go in bowls, with a bowl on each table. The bowls are right here, next to the plates. The marinated vegetables need to be drained and have toothpicks inserted into them, then put on these serving platters," he added, getting out some smaller serving plates with slightly higher sides. "There are some hors d'oeuvres in the oven now; take them out when the timer rings. Let them cool for a moment, then move them to platters also. I should be back in time to put the other hot hors d'oeuvres in the oven. They came on cooking platters so when the platters start to run low, you can just slide another batch into the oven. Cooking instructions are here." He pointed to several sheets of paper sitting next to the oven.

"The other oven contains the 2 main dish trays. I will put them out when I get back. The heating racks for them are already out on the buffet table along with the side dishes. I will not start grilling the steaks until people have arrived. Everything else is on plates in the refrigerator already." He pointed at the large, walk in fridge.

Kyrano then turned toward Parker. "Mr. Parker, I believe you know where everything is. Can you finish setting up the buffet table?"

"Right, Mr. Kyrano. Forks only?"

"No, we shall have rolls, so we will require regular knives as well as steak knives. And butter at each table. The coffee and tea will require spoons."

Anna spoke up. "Serving spoons?"

"I knew I was forgetting something. In that drawer, along with the other serving silverware." Kyrano pointed toward a set of drawers.

"Is there any special food for the kids? Non-alcoholic punch?"

"All of the punch is non-alcoholic, in case there is a call out. The champagne is being chilled along with sparkling grape juice for the non-drinkers."

"All right, I think that's it. Now, shoo. Get ready, then come back and tell me what I did wrong. Shoo, scat, out." She waved her hands at the departing people, and the three ladies and Kyrano headed out the door.

"Let me go put the punch out, then I'll come back and help here." Parker picked up a large punch bowl from the counter.

"Fine," replied Anna as she looked into the fridge. "You may as well do the silverware and plates now, too. It looks like most everything is ready, so we can put out the cold food as soon as the buffet tables are ready. In the meantime, I'll fix everything that needs to go on individual tables, so we can get them set up before people start drifting in. Will we need sugar and creamer for each table? What about water pitchers?"

"I'll be refilling coffee and tea at the tables, so we'd better 'ave sugar and creamer 'at each table. The sugar and creamer sets are over there along with the butter dishes." Parker nodded toward the linen closet. "I'll need a pitcher for each table and water goblets."

"OK. I'll have them ready when you get back." Parker moved outside as Anna muttered to herself, "Now, if I were a slotted spoon where would I hide?"

Post by susanmartha on 1/28/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:44:39 GMT  
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Wednesday, August 15, 2068, 5:30 p.m.

"What's this?" Dianne sat up further on the bed as Jeff came in, a long garment bag draped over one arm, his tuxedo jacket over the other. "I didn't know you were going to dress up."

"We are going to dress up, love," Jeff said firmly. Cherie came in on Jeff's heels, wearing her red dress, her honey brown locks pulled back and curled in long strands.

Dianne smiled and clapped her hands together once as Cherie pirouetted, showing off her outfit. "Oh, Cherie, you look so grown up. Just beautiful!"

"Thanks, Mom! So will you," Cherie said, grinning. "Dad's brought your dress with all the essentials and I've got your shoes and jewelry." She gave her mother a pleading look. "All of us girls are wearing our dresses, and Dad and the boys are wearing their tuxedos and dressy clothes... you just can't be left out."

Jeff pulled the dress out of the bag with a flourish and laid it across the bed. The alternating strands of red velvet and satin gleamed even in the bright lights of the sick room. Dianne ran a hand gently over the velvet, then gazed up at her husband and daughter. "I... you really want me to wear this? Now?"

He reached over to cup her face. "We couldn't go to Paradise Peaks, love, so we're bringing a little taste of it to the island. You were going to wear it there, dear heart; please, wear it here." He leaned in and kissed her softly. "You'll be beautiful no matter what you wear, love, but... well... this will be the icing on the cake, so to speak."

Dianne stretched up a little to kiss him back. "All right. I'll wear it. But I'm going to need help in getting it on."

"That's what we're here for, Mom!" Cherie exclaimed. "Let's rock and roll!"

Post by Tikatu on 1/29/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:45:17 GMT  
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Wednesday, August 15, 2068, 5.30pm

"Right, little man, let's get ourselves ready for the party."

Joshua looked up from his toy cars for a moment, before returning to his play. Dominic sighed.

"Vvvroom... Vvvroom vvvroom..."

"Come on, Jak, we've got to dress up for the party."

Joshua's head shot up this time, and he abandoned the cars as he got to his feet.

"Dwess up?"

"Yeeeeess," Dominic said, grinning as he bent to pick the child up. "We've got to look extra nice for Virgil's birthday."

"Josh dwess up fireman!"

Dominic shook his head as he carried Joshua into the bathroom.

"No, not like a fireman, like a handsome young man. You want to look nice for the girls, don't you?"

"Fireman! Fireman! Fireman!"

Dominic began to run a bath for the toddler and sighed.

"You can go as a fireman dressed in nice clothes."



Joshua's face scrunched up for a moment, and Dominic lifted the child's glasses from his nose. After a few moments, the child brightened.

"Fireman! Fireman!"

"Okay then, fireman in nice clothes. And you have to be a clean fireman too."

"Fireman!"

Dominic tested the water's temperature, before undressing Joshua and placing him in the lukewarm bath.

"Fireman water! Fire water!"

"Jak, no!"

In a matter of seconds the majority of the water was no longer in the bath, but on the floor, and drenching a very tired daddy.

"Joshua! Sit still!"

"Fire water!"

"Sit still or there'll be no fireman and no party!"

Joshua quieted, before his bottom lip began to tremble, and he started wailing.

"Party fireman! Firemaaaaaaan!"

Dominic dropped his head for a moment, and took a deep breath. One of these days will be a good one... And he turned his attention back to his now red-faced child.

-- Toddler Trouble, a brief emergence from hiatus by ArtisticRainey on 1/30/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:45:53 GMT

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Elise pulled down her dress and fidgeted with it until she was satisfied it looked right. Taking a final look and a half twirl in the mirror, she smiled, satisfied with the outcome. She gave her hair one final fluff with her fingers, glad now that she had decided to leave it down instead of fussing with an up-do.

You look pretty good, Elise Collins! I hope the birthday boy appreciates the effort! She flicked off the lights, and grabbing up her purse from the sofa headed out the door to meet with Nikki.

The two of them had decided to make an entrance to the soiree together, hoping the dresses

would make more of an impact. Nikki had talked to Kat and Cherie, who was then supposed to tell Tin-Tin that she and Elise were wearing the gowns and it would be great if they could too.

"Wow! You look great!"

"You too!" They both laughed excitedly.

"I hope the others decided to wear their gowns," said Nikki.

"It would definitely be an impact, that's for sure!" laughed Elise.

"Well, are you ready to go and find out?"

Elise sighed nervously, "I guess."

"Are you nervous?"

"A little. I usually go out looking more casual. The last time I wore something this fancy I skated in it!"

"You skate?" Nikki's question led to an entirely different conversation as the pair headed towards the villa.

"For the tenth time, Virgil, you look fine." Scott flicked imaginary lint off his brother's collar and then turned to look at himself in the mirror to adjust his bow tie. "I still can't see why we couldn't have just worn casual dress pants and shirts to this thing."

Virgil looked into the mirror at his brother. "Because it's my party and I felt like dressing up! Besides, we don't get to dress like penguins much and it's makes Grandma happy!"

Scott smiled fondly at the mention of their grandmother. It was just like Virgil to be thinking of doing something for someone else. "Yeah, Grandma could use a smile right now."

"Then let's go give her one!" The two chuckled as they left Virgil's room.

--four get ready, by FrankieCTB2 on 2/3/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:47:07 GMT  
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Tracy Island, August 15th

Kat pirouetted, feeling the soft fabric swish against her knees. I wish I had a full-length mirror, she thought, as she stopped and slipped her feet into the low-heeled strappy shoes. Glancing one more time in the small mirror, and satisfied that her hair and make-up were okay, she picked up a small package wrapped in navy and gold paper, and left her apartment, intent on calling on

Heather.

When Heather opened the door, Kat remarked, "Hi there. Are you ready for the party?"

Heather nodded. "Yep, just about," and closing the door behind her, joined Kat in the elevator. Arriving down in the lobby, they then headed for the monorail to take them to the villa.

"You look nice," Kat commented.

"Thank you, so do you," Heather replied.

Arriving at the lounge the two young women were met by Gordon pointing a camcorder at them. "And just arriving are the delectable Miss Heather Kennedy and the lovely Miss Kat Williamson."

Kat rolled her eyes at Heather. "I'm sure you've already met Gordon, the clown prince of International Rescue. Oh, there's Lady Penelope. Will you excuse me?"

"You know her?" Heather commented.

"Oh yes, I was her mechanic before I joined International Rescue," Kat replied. "Shall I introduce you?"

But Heather shook her head. "Maybe later," she replied as she headed over to the bar to get herself a drink.

"Lady Penelope, how nice to see you again," Kat said, as she approached the other woman.

The young aristocrat turned and faced Kat. She was dressed in a long, slim fitting, halter style black dress with diamante beads scattered around the hem. Around her shoulders was a black pashmina. Her blonde hair was drawn back into a stylish chignon, with a few loose curls framing her face.

"Kat! It's lovely to see you again. That colour really suits you; you look very pretty."

"Thank you," Kat acknowledged, and then added shyly, "so do you." She then went on to explain. "When we girls were selecting our dresses, we knew that the men would be dressed in their black suits, so we decided to have one colour scheme, hence all the girls are dressed in red."

Lady Penelope laughed at this. "What a good idea. I did wonder why there were so many red dresses. I thought that maybe red was a new fashion colour."

"Oh, yes," Kat replied jokingly. "Red is this year's black on Tracy Island."

Virgil walked over to greet them. "Happy Birthday, Virgil," Lady Penelope said and kissed his cheek.

"Thank you," he replied.

"Happy Birthday, Virgil," Kat said, as she offered him the small package.

"Thanks, Kat," he said. "I'll put this with the others." Grinning, he remarked, "If you can get away from the movie maker over there," and he nodded to where Gordon was trying to film Elise and Cherie, "there is karaoke, and there will be dancing later on." He walked away to place his present with some others on a small table.

Kat and Lady Penelope nodded their heads, and headed towards the karaoke. "Are you going to sing?" Penelope asked Kat.

"Er, um, I don't know. I'm not very good at singing," she replied.

However, Gordon, tired of trying to film Elise and Cherie, noticed Kat by the karaoke, and headed towards her. "Are you going to sing?" he said looking hopefully at her, camcorder raised.

"Not if you're going to point that thing at me," she remarked.

"Aw, come on, Kat, it's only a bit of fun."

Kat sighed. "Oh, very well," and she began thumbing through the list of songs and decided on The Closest Thing to Crazy

Somehow she managed to get through the song without too many flat notes. Everyone cheered and laughed, and a very red faced Kat bowed to them as she finished.

I'm going to hide away, now, she thought. Aloud she remarked, "I'm never doing that again." And she headed to where Heather was standing chatting to Tin-Tin.

--Kat's entrance by TawnyAngel22 on 2/3/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:47:38 GMT  
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Gordon panned the camera around the room, pausing briefly on all of the faces. He was panning back the other way when he started to hear something in the distance. He swung the camera in the direction it was coming from as it got louder.

"Nee-naw, nee-naw, nee-naw!"

He laughed when Joshua ran into the room, dressed in a fireman's hat and coat, with a pair of bright yellow rain boots. He had brought along Horsey. The boy stopped and looked around, and grinned widely when he saw Gordon.

"Godon! Goooooodon! Fireman! Josh fireman!"

Gordon zoomed in on Joshua's beaming face, and the child began to giggle.

"And what does a fireman do, Josh?"

"Water fire! Fireman water fire!"

Joshua began demonstrating, using Horsey as a hose, and Gordon zoomed out again.

"There's a future fire and rescue expert if ever I saw one," he commented. "And here is his clearly negligent father, having let him arrive at a party thoroughly unescorted, Nurse Dominic Kelly, who is also clearly negligent in the fashion department." He walked over to the dark-haired man, who had rolled his eyes at the cheeky comment. "Did the lights blow in your apartment, man? And have you gone back in time to your teens or something?"

He took a full length shot of Dom, who had folded his arms. Joshua looked up, then over at Gordon, and began to laugh again. Dominic was wearing a pair of black canvas trousers and a black blazer. Underneath was a purple t-shirt with a smiley face on it. He also had a black silk tie loose around his neck, and a pair of basketball shoes. His nose, lip and ears were all adorned with simple silver jewellery.

"Least I don't look like I escaped from the zoo," he commented.

Gordon gasped in fake shock.

"How rude!" He said, and whipped the camera away.

A hand appeared on the lens, and after a brief struggle, Gordon found himself on the receiving end of the filming. Joshua was doubled over in laughter. Horsey looked as if he could easily pop his seams.

"See? Looks like a penguin," Dom said in a dead-pan voice.

Gordon crossed his eyes and began doing an impression of the animal, before snatching at the camera, and reclaiming control of it. Dominic chuckled, and reached one hand down to Joshua.

"Want to go get some food, Jak?"

Joshua promptly shook his head and ran off in the direction a few of the ladies. Dominic glanced sideways at the camera, and gave Gordon a stern look.

"He shot you down, bang-bang..." Gordon sang.

Dominic shook his head, and went after his wayward son. Gordon shook the camera from side to side, and watched as Dominic tried to catch Joshua.

"Clueless," he said. "Utterly clueless. I'm just kiddin' folks. And now, to pester the Birthday Boy some more..."

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:48:05 GMT

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A half hour before Virgil's party was to commence, Heather put on the dark red ruby necklace that came with her dress. Other than the diamond necklace she'd rescued from basement of her home, it was all she had. Looking in the mirror in her bedroom, she mused that if it had been a party put on by her mother or one of her mother's high society friends, she'd be dripping in diamonds from her ears, her neck, and on her wrist and fingers. Martha had told her over and over how the women of her circle would judge her by the wealth she wore. It was one of the things that had pushed Heather to leave her mother's influence, but it still seemed strange to wear so little when she was used to wearing so much. Surely this was going to be an entirely upscale party. Well, they'll have to simply accept me as I come. I don't think they would judge me by what I wore anyway, she thought to herself.

Heather recognized Jeff Tracy talking with a woman with perfectly coiffed, platinum blonde hair. Fascinated, Heather appreciated the black satiny floor length dress with a black pashmina wrap around her shoulders. Kat identified her as Lady Penelope. So she's Lady Penelope. What a beautiful wrap. They're so hard to get, and they're so soft and warm. I'm envious! Heather sighed to herself. First chance I get I'm ordering at least two of those. Perhaps Lady Penelope will tell me what store she purchased that from. Even with the windows closed, she felt chilled all the same.

After Kat excused herself to talk to the exquisitely dressed woman with the pashmina and Gordon continued on with his video reporting, Heather was left on her own. Looking around carefully, she eyed the wet bar. Walking over to it, passing pockets of happy partygoers, Heather met an odd looking gentleman, dressed in a tuxedo with tails.

"M' name is Parker, Miss," he said in a thick English accent. "What's your pleasure?"

"My name is Heather, Parker, and I'd like a seltzer with lemon and a little bit of sugar."

Parker bowed politely and went to put the ingredients in a tall empty glass. "Ice, Miss Heather?"

"Yes, please," she answered. As Parker put all the ingredients in a shaker, she took a few moments to study the loosely gathered pockets of people. Accepting the glass, she walked outside to the balcony to observe the rest of the party out on the patio. Gordon was slipping in and out of the small groups while firing his camcorder. He was easy to follow from her vantage point.

As she heard Kat's voice singing a tune, the bubbly aquanaut aimed the camera first at Virgil whose thick brown waves rippled in the breeze. He waved at the camera with practiced grace. "Oh, come on, Virgil! Do something--spontaneous!"

Virgil shook his head, saying something that had everyone laughing. Gordon continued on until Scott became his next target. Scott stood straight and tall with a strong, confident stance. His arms were folded and his gaze was intent on the speaker.

He looks pretty darn good in that tuxedo, too. Then again, they all do. As one of the guests that Heather didn't know left Scott's side, he suddenly turned and looked her way. When their eyes met, he smiled at her which warmed her. She raised her glass to him. He waved for her to come down. Mindful of her dress, she stepped onto the stairway with glass in one hand and her other hand on the railing.

Looking up at her, he became nervous of her tripping and Scott moved quickly to the stairway, taking the steps two at a time until he reached her. Taking her drink in his right hand, he took her hand in his left and supported her down the steps until they reached the patio. With an inward sigh, he gave her the glass back.

"I saw that alarmed look on your face. Honestly, if men didn't insist on women dressing to the nines, we wouldn't have this problem." Heather laughed.

"But then we wouldn't have any desire to come to your rescue. You ladies have to understand that we men need to feel needed."

Having taken all the pictures Gordon felt he wanted at the moment, he walked over to where Scott and Heather stood. "Mind if I cut in?" he asked. "Hi, Heather."

"Hi, Gordon," said Heather. Excusing himself, Scott went off to talk to someone else, while Gordon took over.

"You look mau-ve-lous!" he said, giving her an appreciative look. She had a strange urge to search for a pair of shears as his free hand slipped into his ginger colored hair to comb it off his face. "I love the dress!"

"I love your tux!" she responded with her most winning smile.

"Marry me!"

"Give me a call, and we'll set the date."

"I'm buying an island," he replied.

"I'm buying a bikini!"

As Gordon began to realize he had discovered a friend with a temperament much like his own, or someone who at least understood him, Tin-Tin appeared.

"Heather! I'm so glad you decided to come. I wasn't sure you would since you haven't been here that long." Tin-Tin wore an intense red dress with what looked like the brush work of Chinese calligraphy down the right side. "What is it you're drinking? It looks good."

Laughing, she answered, "Nothing but a seltzered lemonade. It looks flashy, makes everyone I'm talking to comfortable, and I don't get drunk. I save the real drinking for near the end of the party."



"Shall I take you around for introductions?"

"Right with you."

Post by AmandaTracy on 2/5/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:48:30 GMT  
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After spending some time conversing with Elise, Nikki politely excused herself from her company when she spotted Alan talking with Gordon.

Nikki's smile grew as she approached Alan. She felt like she was a teenager again attending a dance event back at school.

Alan paused his conversation with Gordon when he noticed Nikki walking towards him.

The ginger haired Tracy nudged his younger brother to remind him that he was still there. He gave a slight laugh. "Here comes one of the Cinderellas. Now remember, play it cool."

Alan gave his brother a look as if to say, 'what are you talking about?'

Gordon, picking up on the look, laughed again. "I'll leave you to it." He was about to walk away when he added, "And don't mess up." He lifted the camera in his hand and smiled at Nikki when she arrived. "I'm liking the red idea you ladies have got going on tonight. I'll be looking forward to my birthday since you all did this for Virgil's. Mermaids come to mind."

"Mermaids? Keep on dreaming," Nikki said as she shook her head.

"Don't worry, I will." With that, Gordon walked off to film and mingle with the others.

Alan's mouth opened and then closed before he found the words he wanted to say. "Nikki, you look great. I mean you all do, but..."

"Thanks. You're looking pretty good yourself," Nikki replied.

"How's the ankle?"

"Not 100%, but it's getting there."

"Well, hopefully you'll able to have at least one dance."

"Maybe. It depends."

"On what?"

"Are you asking?" Nikki gave a sly smile.

Alan matched it. "Maybe." He guided Nikki to a seat.

Post by Nikki-browneyes1 on 2/5/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:48:56 GMT

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Emily took one last look at herself in her full-length mirror before she left, and patted a wayward strand of hair into place. I'm so glad I decided to have Lisa cut my hair short. I was getting tired of having to put that long hair up every day, and this is so easy to maintain. It amused her that neither her son, nor her grandsons had noticed yet. Dianne and Cherie had, almost immediately, when she'd visited her daughter-in-law in the sickroom, and found her granddaughter with her. They both exclaimed over it in approval.

She turned to check her lace over nylon tunic top and velveteen A-line skirt. They still fitted her well, even though she'd had them for several years. The pearl necklace and earrings that Grant had given her on their tenth anniversary were the perfect accessories, and she was satisfied with the ensemble.

She left her room and checked to see how things were going in the kitchen. She was reassured by Anna and Parker (on his way out with more champagne bottles), who seemed to be working very well together, and headed up to the lounge. She looked around in approval as she entered, thinking, Tin-Tin and Cherie did a wonderful job. The room looks lovely.

As she moved further into the room, she saw Scott approach her. "Grandma, you look lovely. I like that outfit. What do you call that color, anyway?" he said as he kissed her on her cheek.

"Eggplant. Why they had to name any colors after edibles, I'll never know." She smiled up at him. "And you look very handsome in your tuxedo. But then all you boys do; you take after your father that way."

"Thank you very much, ma'am," he replied, with a bow as the music changed to a ballad. "And now, may I have this dance?"

Post by Hobbeth on 2/6/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:49:19 GMT

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Dianne looked around with pride at the beautifully decorated lounge. She smiled to see Scott dancing with Emily, and Alan dancing with Nikki. Even Cherie had picked up Joshua and was

"dancing" with him. Maggie sat beside her, a glass of wine in her hand. Jeff and Drew had gotten Penny's attention after Kat had spoken with the aristocrat briefly. The birthday boy was nowhere in sight, but the cameraman was, filming Cherie and Joshua.

"Mom?"

Dianne glanced up at the whiny voice at her elbow. "Yes, Tyler?"

"I'm bored." The boy's demeanor was one of resigned endurance.

"And I'm hungry." Alex said. "When's the cake and ice cream?"

"Hm. I'm hungry, too. How about we eat something more or less nutritious before gorging on the desserts?" Dianne suggested.

Maggie took a sip of her wine, then handed the glass to Alex. "Here. You can carry this for me and I'll push your mom out of here. We'll head for the dining room and get some dinner, okay, boys?"

"Okay," Alex said, nodding, holding the half-full goblet carefully.

"Go tell your father where we're going," Dianne told Tyler. "We'll wait for you in the elevator."

"Yes, ma'am." Tyler hurried over to Jeff as Maggie pushed the wheelchair toward the study. They'd gotten up the steps to the smaller room when Jeff came over.

"Would you like me to come with you, love?" he offered, leaning over to give Dianne a kiss.

"Only if you're hungry," she replied, reaching up to draw her fingers over his smooth, freshly-shaven cheek.

"Andy and I were in the middle of a discussion with Penny about making a press release about that surgeon. I'd kind of like to finish it."

"Then go ahead," Dianne said softly, giving him a slight smile. "We'll be back soon."

"All right." He kissed her again. "Enjoy the food." He glanced up at his sons, one of whom -- Alex -- was waiting impatiently by the door to the hall. "Help your mom before you help yourselves."

"Yes, sir," Alex said with a nod.

"Tell Drew that I've gone with Dianne, would you?" Maggie asked.

"I will. See you all in a bit." One last kiss, and Jeff strode back to his conversation while Dianne and Maggie made their way to the elevator.

xxxx

"Alex, do you have to be so sloppy when you eat?" Dianne asked, shaking her head at her son.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Mom," the boy replied sheepishly. He wiped at the stains on his dressy vest with an already soiled napkin. "Maybe I should change my clothes when we're done eating."

"Maybe we should buy a big bib for you," Maggie said tartly. "Just like I threatened to when you were staying with me." She turned to her niece. "Is he always this way?"

Dianne sighed. "Unfortunately, yes. Especially when we eat out or there's a formal occasion. Though he'll get a stain or two on his shirt during a regular dinner time at least twice a week." She pointed to her face as she spoke to her son. "You have sauce... here."

"Thanks, Mom," Alex said as he wiped the stain off, smearing it across his cheek before managing to remove it.

"Tyler, aren't you hungry?" Maggie asked of the younger boy, who was pushing some of his food around on his plate.

"A little, I guess," Tyler replied, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't like these hot cracker things."

"Then don't eat them," Dianne said. "Get some more of the things you do like. It'll be awhile before we have dessert."

"Okay, Mom," Tyler said. He pushed his plate into the middle of the small, café-style table, and went off to the buffets again.

Dianne took a sip of her tea, watching him, then reached out to take a few of the uneaten canapés from his abandoned plate.

"At least you have a good appetite tonight," Maggie commented.

"Yes. The food is lovely and I'm enjoying it," Dianne said with a smile. "Just wish I could get some exercise dancing to burn the calories."

"You'll be out there dancing again soon enough, Dianne. Just focus on getting better first."

"I will, Maggie. I will."

Post by Tikatu On 2/6/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:50:09 GMT

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During the party, Heather put her empty glass on a rapidly filling service cart. Tin-Tin and Kat followed her, and Tin-Tin, realizing, realizing Heather's dark red dress asked, "By the way, how did you find out that we were all wearing red dresses tonight? Did someone tell you about the party?"

"I found out about the party when I was shopping with Virgil and Kyrano on the mainland. I had no idea that all the women were wearing red. When I was at the Regis in Wichita, my girlfriend Andrea talked me into buying some gowns. At the time, I didn't think I was going to have any use for them--"

"Oh, there'll be need for them," Tin-Tin sighed with a grin. "Trust me!"

"So," Heather continued. "She picked out two of them for me, and I chose this one. It just looked comfortable, and flattering."

"Sure gives you some curves," Kat sighed. "All the men will be following you everywhere."

"Believe me when I tell you that is so not happening," Heather assured the gifted mechanic. To Tin-Tin she said, "It just happened to work out that my dress fits the color scheme quite nicely."

Why can't that happen to me? Kat thought to herself.

"It looks very nice, and I know Lady Penelope is going to really like it. That's a Lemaire design, isn't it?" Tin-Tin asked as she led the two women back over to where Jeff and Penelope were discussing something amusing. They were both laughing when Tin-Tin brought Heather up to Lady Penelope, introducing the redhead.

When the three young women walked up to them, Jeff smiled and drew Heather up closer. "Thank you for bringing her, Tin-Tin and Kat. Lady Penelope, I'd like to introduce you to our up-and-coming secondary Thunderbird 1 pilot. Let's see if I remember your bioscan correctly. She was born in Richmond, Virginia. Her father is James Kennedy and the finest architect I've ever seen. Her mother is Martha Kennedy and is active in high society. Heather's a former U.S. Navy Blue Angel pilot. How am I doing, Heather?"

With a delighted smile, Heather answered, "Very concise, Mr. Tracy."

"She moved to Wichita to be one of my finest test pilots only to lose her home to the tornadoes that hurt Dianne and my nurses as well as critically damaging Thunderbird 7."

Adjusting her pashmina, Lady Penelope took Heather's reaching hand, holding it with a comforting touch. Her ladyship's voice was rich with the cultured dialect of her English home. "I'm so sorry to hear this, Miss Kennedy. How very distressing."

Penelope lead her by the hand, much like an older sister might do, to a set of comfortable chairs where they felt more at ease. The boys' photos graced the back wall in front of Jeff's command chair. Heather longed to steal a look at them when they walked in, but it wouldn't have been polite. "I cannot imagine such a thing happening. Were you trying to decide whether or not to join International Rescue during that time?" asked Penelope, leaning forward.

Listening to the young woman intently, Penelope made rapid mental notes about her. Heather has breeding and knows what styles suit her. She has to have nerves of steel if she's been a test pilot for Tracy Industries and Jeff seems to truly like her.

"Yes," Heather answered. "I was. After the house was destroyed I went to the Regis Hotel in Wichita and made my decision there. I feel it might have been ill-timed."

"Ill-timed?" asked a surprised Penelope. "Why ever would you think that?"

Enjoying the way Lady Penelope's diamond earrings twinkled, Heather smiled. "I say ill-timed because I called to give Mr. Tracy my decision when Mrs. Tracy, Dr. Dianne, was injured so badly and had been airlifted to the hospital."

Standing close enough to hear, Jeff moved over to the three women. "We've had a rough time of it with Dianne's injuries and our nurses, but your answer couldn't have come at a better time, Heather. You are not to worry about it at all. I know Scott felt a lot better hearing from you."

"Yes, now you are not to worry about a thing," Penelope urged, looking up at Jeff. "You must allow her to come to the Creighton-Ward estates sometime, Jeff. I would love to have you, Heather. And I must say that your dress is especially becoming. It's a Lemaire design."

"Penny happens to know the designer personally and has modeled for him, too," Jeff replied to Heather's wide eyed looks.

"The color suits you very well. François will be most pleased when I tell him that you wore it."

"Now, if I can tear Heather away from you, Penelope, I need to ask Dianne if I can ask Heather to dance with me." His words had both women giggling.

"And I am going to go down see what wonderful selections there are at the buffet. Have a good time, Heather, and if you should lose his attention, tread on his toes firmly." With a smile, Heather received a kiss on the cheek and watched Jeff give Penelope his arm to help her out of her chair.

Laughing to herself, Heather mused, I told myself I would never allow anyone to charm me, and I've already blown it tonight. Lord have mercy!

Jeff offered his hand to Heather who accepted it. As she got up out of her chair, she asked, "How is Dr. Tracy doing?"

"Why don't you ask her yourself?" He leaned over and gave his wife a kiss, which she responded to. Then Dianne looked up and smiled Heather.

"Have a seat, Heather," she said, patting the empty chair beside her.

"Hi, Mrs. Tracy. It's nice to see you again. How are you feeling?"

"Oh, I'm doing better than I was," Dianne replied, glancing up to see Scott dancing by with Cherie in his arms. "I'm enjoying the party and being out and about again. Are you enjoying yourself?"

Dianne's softened accent was drawing out Heather's cultural blend of Virginian and Kansan accent. "Oh, yes. Ah haven't been to a good party in quite a while."

"Good! For a quickly thrown together event, it's turned out well," Dianne said firmly, nodding.  
"Have you met everyone here?"

"Not yet, but I'm making the rounds as I go," she answered as she got comfortable in her seat.

"Who have you met?" Dianne asked.

Trying hard to remember all the names, she wondered aloud, "Oh, all the boys save Gordon and Scott. I've been seeing Gordon a lot lately. I've seen the kids. I met Parker. He's such a wonderful character. I've seen Tin-Tin and Kat."

"Have you met Lady Penelope?"

Jeff answered her. "Just now."

"Ah, good. How about my nurses, Nikki and Dom? I know they haven't been out and about much."

"No, not yet," Heather thought out loud.

Jeff chimed in. "And have you met Elise, my personal pilot? You'll be picking up the flying duties of Thunderbird One from her, leaving her to concentrate on Thunderbird Two." He caught a glimpse of Brains fetching Tin-Tin a drink. "And Brains, our chief engineer? Have you met him?"

"No, I haven't."

Dianne turned to him and shook her head. "Love, don't talk business tonight, please? And please make sure Heather meets Brains, Dom, Nikki, Elise, and Joshua." She turned back to Heather.  
"Two of our members are home on leave. You'll get to meet them when they come back."

"All right, Dianne. I won't talk shop, and I'll see that she meets everyone--provided I can remember everyone you haven't met, Heather," Jeff laughed.

Making a mental list of all the names she'd heard, she said with a wry grin, "I'm beginning to think I should have brought some kind of PDA. You have a very large support staff."

"There aren't that many here on the island. You'll be seeing them around, training with them, and you'll get to know them pretty quickly."

"It will come in time," said Heather. It took awhile to learn everyone at the testing grounds. I wonder what they're all doing?

There was a moment of quiet between them, then Dianne asked, "Have you settled into your apartment? Perhaps ordered things for your décor? You do get a decorating allowance."

Heather woke up when Dianne touched her hand. "No, I haven't had much of a chance to do that and there's not much to add to it really. I really enjoy the computer system and the plasma TV. It's



nicer than what I had at home."

Dianne smiled. "I'm glad you like it. Kyrano, my mother-in-law, and my mother all had a hand in choosing furniture and the basic décor. If there's something you don't like, let us know."

Heather smiled again. "The bedroom is so comfortable. I'm not quite sure exactly how you did it. I've never slept better, although I had a bit of a start the first morning I woke up."

"Why was that?" Dianne asked, curious.

"Well, I forgot where I was at. I expected to be in my suite in the Regis Hotel. The sunlight there in the prairies is different than the sunlight here. That was the first thing I noticed. Then the sounds were different. Instead of screeching cars and horns blaring, all I heard was the wind and ocean. I woke up with a start and ran to the window thinking I was dreaming."

"You realized you weren't in Kansas anymore?" Dianne asked, a mischievous smile on her lips.

Heather laughed. "I did! My girlfriend, Andrea, has started to call me Dorothy."

Tyler chose that moment to come running up. "Mom, when is Virgil going to cut the birthday cake?"

"Soon, son. Very soon," Dianne assured him. She fixed him with one eye and scolded gently, "You did interrupt our conversation."

He looked down at his shoes. "I'm sorry, Mom."

"There's someone else you need to apologize to."

Looking up at Heather, giving her a bashful smile, he said, "I'm sorry, Miss Kennedy."

"You are forgiven," Heather said with a grin. "I'd like a bite of that cake, too."

"Have you had a chance to get something to eat?" Dianne asked after hearing a rumbling coming from the younger girl's stomach.

"Not yet."

"Neither have I, for that matter," Jeff said. "Why don't we both mosey on down to the buffet and get something?"

"Sounds good to me," Heather agreed.

He stood up, and turned to Dianne. "Can I get you anything, love?"

"Some of those chocolate cherries would be nice," she said and then giving Heather a wink, she added, "Though after tonight, I'll have to work extra hard in the gym when I'm finally cleared for normal activity."

"You and me both," said Heather.

"Come along, Heather," Jeff said, offering an arm. "The buffets await."

With a smile, Heather nodded. "I couldn't have a more handsome escort."

Post by AmandaTracy on 2/11/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:50:45 GMT

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"Gordon! Stop it already! You need to put that camera down!" Elise tried to sound serious as she pushed playfully at Gordon and the camera, but all she managed to do was laugh.

"Oh, you love it!" Gordon replied, still filming and getting a close up again. "Here we have our lovely back-up pilot dressed to kill!"

"Back-up? I'll give you back up! Back-up right into the pool, pal!" Elise gave him a shove and Gordon got the message. "Okay, lady, you win!" With an overly dramatic bow he departed, going in search of another victim.

The patio had come alive with people and Elise couldn't remember ever going to such an extravagant affair. Not counting New Year's at a hotel, of course.

"I should never have told him he could be the cameraman!" Elise turned and laughed as Virgil came to stand beside her, shaking his head.

"He's definitely in his element, that's for sure!" she said.

"Are you enjoying yourself?" he asked.

"Yes, it's wonderful. I wasn't sure if we girls would be overdressed, but I don't think that's a problem!" Elise answered, giving Virgil an admiring glance. He gave her one of his winning smiles and she swore for a moment her knees felt like Jell-O.

"Champagne?" he asked.

"I'd love some!" she replied as he gently guided her towards the beverages. "Does your family always celebrate birthdays this way?"

"No, not all the time. Alan once celebrated his while driving in a racing competition. We were all there and when he won it was an added bonus to celebrate a little harder than we were already doing!" He gave her a wink as he handed a champagne flute to her.

"Uh-huh, a drunken binge you mean."

"Yeah, something like that!" They both laughed and continued talking, feeling totally at ease with each other. A little while later, Scott walked over.

"Hey, birthday boy, I think Dad's wanting to gather everyone in the lounge. Something about a toast." Virgil rolled his eyes.

Elise looked confused. "You don't want your Dad to wish you Happy Birthday?"

"Yes and no."

Scott started laughing at Virgil's answer. "Elise, wait until you see it, then you'll know what we mean." He started to turn away then added, "By the way, Elise, you look gorgeous tonight."

The way that Scott casually threw out the compliment and then walked away had Elise totally stunned! "Thanks," she managed to mumble, secretly smiling inside. A compliment from Scott Tracy! Wow!

It took her a few moments to realize they hadn't moved. She started to say something then stopped at the look on Virgil's face. She frowned, a little puzzled. "What?" Virgil asked. "He only said out loud what I was already thinking."

Elise grinned. Twice in one night! "Why, thank you, Mr. Tracy!"

"You're welcome, ma'am!" They both laughed and headed toward the lounge. Inside, people were gathering around in various groups. Some were carrying plates of food, which still seemed to be in endless supply, and others had drinks in their hands. Parker had busied himself with a tray of champagne flutes and was offering glasses to those who didn't have one. Alex, Tyler and Maggie pushed Dianne towards the center of the lounge so that she could see better. Emily came over and made sure the younger Tracys, along with their mother, all had a glass of sparkling white grape juice ready to toast Virgil.

Jeff, noticing the gathering crowd, excused himself from Lady Penelope and walked over to his wife. Bending down to give her a small but loving kiss, he whispered something in her ear and then with drink in hand he called forth his second son. "Virgil, come here, son." Virgil stepped forward.

"You'd better have that camera rolling!" Alan loudly whispered to his brother.

"Relax, will ya! It's on. I ain't gonna miss a thing!" Gordon answered.

Jeff placed an arm around Virgil's shoulder and gave him a fatherly squeeze. "Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention, please." The room became quiet as Jeff continued. "I had planned for us to celebrate this evening at Paradise Peaks, but my son had other ideas!" He smiled lovingly at Virgil. "Because of his unselfishness and consideration of others, we are here tonight celebrating at home. Son, I say this every year, but I'm prouder of you now than I have ever been. But every year I mean it more. Happy Birthday, Virgil!"

As Jeff raised his glass, everyone else followed and a chorus of "Happy Birthday, Virgil!" rang out.

So far, Elise hadn't seen anything out of the ordinary; and then it happened. In the midst of the well-wishing, Grandma Tracy rushed forward and gave her grandson a huge hug and planted a big grandma kiss on one cheek, while tweaking the other with her fingers as if he were 6 years old. "Happy Birthday, sweetie!" Virgil graciously put on a smile and bore the onslaught of his grandmother's affections!

"She does it to each and every one of us, every year," Gordon said as he appeared at Elise's shoulder with the camera, busy filming.

Elise looked back at Virgil and his grandmother and father. So that's what Scott was talking about! Suddenly, she felt a pang of sadness. Most of her birthdays had been simple and she suddenly wished she'd had more family. She turned to leave and accidentally bumped into Gordon. "Sorry."

"You okay, Elise?" he asked, noticing the mood change.

"Yeah, I just need some air." She excused herself and walked toward the balcony.

Across the room, Virgil noticed her leaving and realized that it bothered him. Unable to excuse himself from his guests at the moment, he decided he'd ask her about it later.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 2/13/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:51:15 GMT

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"Did I ever mention how much I adore industrial dishwashers?" Anna turned from the sink where she had just loaded the last of the cooking utensils onto a tray. She slid it over toward the dishwasher.

"You shouldn't be doing this. We can handle most of the clean up tomorrow." Maggie brought a load of dirty dishes over. "Let me just put these in the sink. Then you get to come out and party with everyone else."

Ann chuckled and looked around the kitchen. "Everything is pretty much done. I can just check the food levels every ten minutes or so and slip in here to get some prepared trays when they're needed." She took off her apron and hung it from a hook.

"First you better go change." Maggie looked at Anna. She was wearing a heavy t-shirt and jeans. Both had large wet spots down the front.

"Way ahead of you. I brought a different outfit over when I came. It's hanging in Dianne's dressing room. I'll be out in a sec."

When she came out to the patio ten minutes later, she was wearing a blue silk shirt and a black skirt with black sandals. A silver necklace and matching earrings completed the outfit. She was carrying a plate of food from the buffet. She set her plate down on an unoccupied table and went upstairs to ask Parker for a drink.

"What will you have, Mrs. Hanson?" Despite her request while they were working in the kitchen together, Parker refused to call her Anna.

"White wine and a large glass of diet soda. Whatever flavor you have that's diet."

Parker poured her some wine and handed her a glass. "The soda is over by the punch bowl. Go sit down and I'll bring some to your table. You look all in."

"Thanks. I'll be fine once I've eaten something and relaxed for a bit." She went back to her seat and started to eat, watching everyone talking and dancing.

Alan went to refill his glass of punch. Nikki was over talking to Kat and Elise about something and he was considering getting some dinner for himself. He met Parker at the drink table.

"Who's that for?" he asked as Parker poured a can of diet cola into a glass already filled with ice.

"Mrs. Hanson." replied Parker. "She finally came out of the kitchen for dinner."

"Let me take it over to her." Alan had wanted to meet this lady. He knew both Gordon and Tyler liked her and that Tyler had started eating again. All of the older brothers knew what had happened with Tyler and Alan wanted to see what she was like.

"Parker sent this over. "

Anna looked up and smiled. "Thanks. Which of the boys are you?"

"I'm Alan. Up until two years ago, I was the baby of the family."

"Sit down, if you like. But I warn you, I'm in recovery mode right now. I may bite your head off for no reason, at least until I get more food in me, and about ten minutes sitting down."

"I have four older brothers and we go into high stress situations. I know all about low blood sugar and snapping at people. We all learned not to talk until we've eaten. Biting someone's head off tends to leave a bad taste in your mouth."

Anna grinned then attacked her steak. "I've been snacking on hors d'oeuvres but I need something more substantial. I tend to forget how long I've been working." They were both quiet for a few minutes while Anna ate.

Finally she paused long enough to ask a question. "Alan, who exactly is Parker? Family friend, servant or what? I can't place him."

"He's Lady Penelope's chauffeur, butler and all around anything she needs. He's been with her for

as long as I've known her."

Anna put her fork and knife down and leaned back in her chair. "He wouldn't call me Anna. It was always Mrs. Hanson."

"Yeah. He's pretty old school about a lot of things. He'd be welcome to the party on his own but he wouldn't come. Normally Kyrano is the same way. Never join the party, always serve. But with Lisa here, he's staying with her a lot."

"Lisa? Your step-grandmother? What does she have to do with it?"

"They're engaged."

"Ah. Young love is always so romantic." Alan snorted. Anna took another sip of wine. "Does everyone here know about your 'family business'?"

"Tonight, yes. Very few people who don't know actually come here. If someone who doesn't know is on the island we do 'Operation Cover Up'. Among other things, the portraits in Dad's study will change."

"Thanks for the warning. Are all of your older brothers involved?"

"Yeah. I usually fly Thunderbird 3 and relieve John on Thunderbird 5. Scott flies Thunderbird 1 and is in charge at the danger zone. Virgil flies 2. Gordon pilots 4, that's our submarine. He and I go along whenever they need an extra hand."

"Does Tyler want to be part of International Rescue? For that matter, what about Alex and Cherie?"

Alan looked surprised. "I never thought about that. We were in it with Dad from the beginning. I never thought about the kids joining. We realized just this past year we needed more help with rescues."

"So all the new people have been here for less than a year?"

"Most of them joined us in February or March. Elise came here to recover after the crash and wound up joining. Heather, that's her with the red hair, just came yesterday."

"Are you still bringing in new people?"

"If we can find them. We still would like a few more. People with specialties we don't currently have."

"Isn't that dangerous? From a security standpoint?" Anna could hear someone using the karaoke machine above them.

"We usually have people pretty well checked out before they come here. By both Tracy Industries and by Penny."

"Penny handles your backgrounds checks? Why her?" Laughter and clapping came from upstairs as the song finished.

"She handles all our security. She was an agent in the Federal Agents Bureau in England. And Parker was the best safe cracker in Europe."

Anna raised her eyebrows. "Interesting. I'm going to have to meet her."

"I'll introduce you. Come on."

"Thanks, but maybe later. I just want to sit and unwind for a bit longer. At least until my feet stop hurting."

Post by susanmartha on 2/13/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:51:49 GMT  
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\*\*\*\*\*Wednesday, August 15, 2068; Tracy Island; 7:25 p.m.\*\*\*\*\*

Sporting her own beautiful red dress, Lisa entered the party with Kyrano. "Ah, what a great party this is," she said happily. "It's nice to see everyone in high spirits."

"I agree," said Kyrano as he adjusted the blue silk cuffs in his native clothing. "I have not experienced this kind of atmosphere in quite a long time."

"Ah, if only Callie and Brandon were here, but they're both home with their families."

"Yes, they would have enjoyed this party."

Lisa looked at him and said, "Don't worry about them, love. They'll be fine. Let's not worry about anything right now. I feel like partyin' and gettin' down."

Finding himself in a strange position, he said, "There is something I must admit. I have never danced like this before."

"Well, don't worry, honey. I'll lead, and you follow." Lowering her voice, she added, "I'll show you step-by-sweet-step."

She put her arms out and asked him to take her hands.

Watching carefully, Kyrano followed her movements and soon started dancing during a slow song. "I hope you do not think I have...I believe the expression is 'two left feet'?"

"You're doing fine. At the rate you're learning, you'll be a master dancer by the end of the



evening."

As the slow song continued playing, Tin-Tin sat down in a chair and noticed her father and Lisa dancing. "I don't believe it," she happily said to Brains, who settled down next to her. "Father is actually dancing. I never expected him to do so well."

Kyrano started feeling the music, but suddenly he swung Lisa around and caught her with one arm. "How is this?"

Lisa was surprised at this move. "Where did you learn--?"

"I watched a classic movie last week, with a pair of dancers named Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. I studied their movements carefully so I could try this."

Lisa blushed. "That's great, but this isn't the right kind of song to do it with."

"Is it not?" he asked, a surprised look on his face. "Oh, um, I did not realize this was the case."

Filming the scene, Gordon smiled. "Oh, wow! This is definitely going to be a party to remember! Kyrano doing a dance with his fiancée a la Fred Astaire is so cool!"

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 2/14/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:52:38 GMT

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John glanced over at the video feed from the camera Gordon was toting around. The music that was playing filled the control room, and he smiled as he watched Kyrano and Lisa dancing. There was no conversation going on, just the video and the music; because the signal still wasn't secure, and people would be using real names, not code names, it had been decided to mute the microphone as much as possible. He was looking forward to the upload from Gordon; it would have a lot more conversation in it.

He could, however, hear the karaoke, and applauded when each and every performer finished their attempt at singing. It pleased him that Kat took a turn; from what he could see, she was having a good time without him. He sighed a little when he thought of it. She's entitled to have a good time. I do wish I could share it with her, but... I think I miss sharing the good time with Virgil and the rest of the family more.

The thought made him frown. He tapped a stylus on his chin as he thought about the idea, and squirmed a little in his chair. I like being around Kat and visiting with her. I've enjoyed talking with her about books and such... but somehow, this isn't going the way I'd envisioned it. There's been so much drama involved. So many misunderstandings. I don't really know what I feel about her anymore. I know I've always wanted friendship first, but she seems to want more... He ran a hand through his hair. "Stop it, Tracy. You're over analyzing things again."

The picture shifted, and he sat up. "Hey! There's Ty! He's waving... and he has a piece of cake!" He laughed as Alex stuck his head in and made a silly face. "Look at those two, frosting all over! Mom's not going to be happy about their dress clothes, that's for sure! But at least Ty's having a good time, too."

John settled back as Gordon passed the camera over to Alan, who immediately began filming the former photographer, then panned slowly across the room to take in the people, finally settling on Nikki, who rolled her eyes at him and made as if to bat him away. The music stopped, changed, and Virgil came up beside Nikki. John could tell he was asking the nurse to dance with him. She smiled, nodded while speaking, and waved at the camera, then blew a sassy kiss... one that he was sure wasn't exactly meant for him.

"Looks like she's feeling better," he murmured as he turned up the volume, letting the sound of the classic dance music wash over him.

Post by Tikatu on 2/16/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:53:01 GMT  
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Gordon checked out the tables in the dining room. He thought about sitting next to Virgil and harassing him some more, but then he noticed Anna sitting alone outside on the patio.

"It's getting chilly out here."

Anna smiled up at him. "I was just thinking of going in to get a sweater."

"Would you care to warm up by getting some exercise instead? May I have this dance, milady?" Gordon bowed and held out his hand.

"Certainly sir. I would be honored." Anna stood up and curtsied back at him. "I had better warn you though; I am not the world's best dancer."

"Two left feet?" asked Gordon as he escorted her down to the poolside.

"Sometimes it feels like I have three, none of which are obeying my commands."

Gordon grinned as he whirled her out onto the dance floor.

Post by susanmartha on 2/21/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:53:38 GMT  
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Together, Jeff and Heather walked into the dining room where there were several long tables dressed in egg white linen, bearing the food Heather had seen earlier that morning. Lady Penelope was filling her tray rather daintily. The smell of the filet mignon caught Heather's nose. They both made their way to the tables with the entrees. "Are you as hungry as I am?" asked Jeff as he picked up a white oak tray and placed a dish on it.

"Yes, I am. Especially looking at all this," answered Heather.

Heather decided the sushi looked so good that she made a separate plate for them, sprinkling a soy sauce on them. A small glass vase held chop sticks for the sushi. One set went on Heather's tray, along with a green salad with cherry tomatoes, grated cheese, and ranch dressing made with crumbly bits of feta cheese. "It all looks so good. This is really nice."

"I'll have to let the kitchen crew know. That would be Kyrano, Maggie and Anna. I thought I saw Kyrano and Lisa dancing. They did a very impressive job," agreed Jeff.

After filling their plates and picking up Dianne's candy, they walked back upstairs. When they sat down with Dianne at her table, Heather didn't wait for Jeff to start up a polite conversation. "Now that I have you in a comfortable position, I always wanted to ask you something," she began.

"All right. Shoot," Jeff answered. It was obvious what she was going to ask about. Everyone asked the same questions. What gave him the idea to create International Rescue? Which ship was his favorite? How did he find the island and how did he manage to keep it so exclusive for so long? Heather's question surprised him.

"Mr. Tracy, what was it like to land on the moon? What did it feel like when you stepped on it?"

Both women studied him with grins, ready to listen. "I'll be honest. I didn't think I'd get those questions," the Commander teased. Heather liked his steel blue eyes that seemed to be prominent in most of his sons.

"Well, it was long, long ago, and no, I'm not going to tell you how old I am!"

Raising her hands, Heather shook her head. "Wouldn't think of it."

"Right! Sure you weren't!"

Laughing with Dr. Tracy, Heather remarked, "He's as bad as my dad back in Virginia."

"How old is he?" Jeff asked, laughing.

Heather interrupted their mirth. "He's fifty-four."

The grin on her face instantly made Jeff think how old he was and he decided to go back to answering her earlier question. "Let's see, the moon is definitely not made of--"

"That is so old, Jeff," Dianne interrupted.

"Anyway, when I stepped out of the newly designed shuttle and found myself in world that nothing could have prepared me for. The ground, if you want to call it that, was covered with a fine dust. My boots sank down a couple inches. The low gravity made it so easy to travel. Our spacesuits were designed to allow us to spend more time on the moon's surface and after I had all the scientists' experiments completed for that day, I decided to go exploring."

Both ladies listened eagerly. "I couldn't believe how reflective the surface was. The boulders nearby were the size of twenty story buildings. Plateaus were vast. What little water is up there is frozen as you know. There's no protection from the solar radiation that protects the earth's surface. Walking into it, I was amazed at its stark and cold beauty, but at the same time, I thought how lonely it felt. Neil Armstrong came to mind while I was there. The astronauts of the 20th century were far braver than myself or the men that followed in my footsteps. Those early astronauts were professionals and lucky. Millions of things can go wrong."

"Did you drive a golf ball across the surface?" Heather asked with a grin. The story of Alan Shepard bringing out a golf ball and a driver while exploring the moon himself was her favorite. She watched as Alan came up the stairway carrying the movie camera. What is it with those two and that movie camera? she wondered as she clutched a round piece of sushi in the tips of her chopsticks. What is that changes a person when you put a camera in their hand?

"No, but I'm sure you heard about me throwing a frisbee on the moon. Well, I had to one up Shepard somehow. What I've always wondered is why he didn't call a hole-in-one when he did it."

The observation had both Dianne and Heather looking at each other thoughtfully. "I get it!" sighed Dianne, echoing Heather's groan. "Jeff, that's terrible."

"I read that you were entered into the Guinness Book of Records for the longest distance covered using a frisbee. I heard it was an old glow-in-the-dark frisbee."

"Uh, no. It wasn't a glow-in-the-dark frisbee. It did cross my mind though." Jeff laughed.

Hearing the dance music starting up, Jeff asked Dianne, "Do you mind if I ask Heather to dance with me, dear heart?"

"Of course not, love. Have fun." Dianne answered with an inward sigh, wishing she was well enough to claim all his dances.

As Jeff slipped Heather into a lively, upbeat dance tune, he gave a stern look at his fifth son which Alan read perfectly. The focus of the camera aimed at Cherie instead. "Smile, Cherie! You're on candid digital camera--"

Cherie gave Alan's request a dirty look that had Scott chuckling to himself. "Just ignore him, sweetheart."

"I will, Scott. I can't wait till we go on vacation!"

Her face radiated a glow as she talked about it. She's really looking forward to this. I wonder if she realizes that Mom isn't going to be up to that sort of thing, mused Scott.

"We'll be going horseback riding," Cherie said excitedly. "And Stephanie is coming. I haven't seen her in a long time. This will be the last chance I have to see her before she moves away from Greenville."

"Her father is being transferred out of state, isn't he?" Scott asked her. This is getting worse and worse. She won't be seeing Stephanie before her family moves. I don't envy anyone's task of telling her she won't be going if Mother and Dad decide that Mom isn't well enough to make the trip.

"Cherie," Scott began cautiously. "What if Mom isn't well enough to go on the trip? She was hurt pretty badly back in Kansas when Thunderbird 7 got caught up with that tornado. We were lucky to get her out in one piece."

"Well, she wouldn't have to join us in anything. She could sit back at the lodge and just rest." Cherie pouted slightly. "Mom's not that bad. Alan! Get out of here!" With that, Cherie let Scott go, swatted Alan in the arm and ran out of the lounge.

Observing her daughter's behavior, Dianne called out, "Cherie! No running!"

"Yes, Mom!"

Without a dance partner, Scott looked around as Alan walked up to him, lens pointed towards the floor. "Looks like she flew," Alan remarked with only a little sympathy.

"Alan, what is it with you and Gordon? I know Virgil assigned the camera to you, but you've been a bit of a nuisance to everyone. Why don't you let up a little? I'm sure there'll be lots to edit."

Chuckling, Alan agreed with a shrug. "You know how Dad always says if we do something, we should do it to the very best of our ability."

"Not to the point of being a pest at the party and making people run every time they see you," Scott admonished while he watched his father dancing with Heather. He found himself fascinated with the hem of Heather's dress as it flowed like water as Jeff caught her in a sweeping step. Might be fun to cut in on Dad. Turning his attention on his mother, Scott saw the tiny lines around her eyes crinkling from fatigue. Yup, maybe I should cut in. Mom's getting tired. "Gotta go, Alan."

Walking over to Jeff and Heather, Scott tapped Jeff's left shoulder. "May I cut in?" Scott asked.

With a mock look of surprise, Jeff looked at Heather for her opinion. "Well, how do you like that?" he said. "Heather?"

Nodding her permission, she eyed Scott. "Why not?"

With grace, Jeff gave Heather's hand to Scott, and the younger pair slipped smoothly into the music together. Walking back to Dianne's table, he remarked to her, "They move well together."

"They do, don't they?" Dianne said with a grin. "Why don't you take a rest with me?"

"Sounds delightful. I'm getting old, I think," said Jeff, sitting down in his chair, continuing to watch the couple performing a smooth waltz.

From the moment Heather slipped into Scott's arms, she felt a tingling in her fingertips. What the heck is wrong with me? she thought as he led her around the dance floor with ease.

"You dance divinely," Scott spoke with a sparkle in his eye.

"As do you," she replied with a twinkle of her own. "Come here often?"

"Oh, on occasion, yes," he answered. Their steps became smoother as they grew used to each other.

"You're easy to follow. You're the first dance partner I've met where I didn't have to actually think of where I was at."

"It's natural for you to lead which is what you've been trained to do, of course," he said thoughtfully. And she is telling me on another level that she trusts me. I couldn't do it.

"Scott, when I talked with you back in Kansas, what was going on?"

With a sigh, Scott answered her, "When you rang up, Dad and I were waiting for news about Mother. The doctor came out to give us the news, and he gave me the phone. Rescuing others is normal and what I've been trained to do, but when it's your own mother, father, or family, that's a different situation altogether. It's the worst when you've just rescued so many people, you're absolutely exhausted and then you turn around and find out your mother and her nurses need rescuing. That's too much. I never want that situation again."

"I hope not either. From the looks of Mrs. Tracy, she's getting tired already, and the night is still young as it were."

"That's why I cut in," he agreed. She gave him a wide-eyed look that put him on the defense. "But I wanted to dance with you, too." Fell right into that one, Tracy! Scott thought to himself when he saw the corners of Heather's mouth curl.

"Uh huh," Heather teased. "Sure you did." Heather, one. Scott, zero! This is gonna be fun! she decided. What else can I do to whittle down that cool reserve of yours, Sugar?

Post by AmandaTracy on 2/22/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:54:13 GMT  
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Maggie came to sit by Jeff and Dianne between dance numbers. "Whew! You sure know how to throw a party! I haven't had this much fun since New Year's... and I threw that one!"

Jeff chuckled and Dianne smiled. "Where's Drew?" she asked, looking around.

"He's going to dance the next one with Lisa," Maggie explained. She shifted a little, and said hesitantly, "I would have asked Kyrano, but... well... he's so reserved. I got to know him some while he was staying at our place, but I just didn't know how he'd respond to me." She shrugged. "Besides, he ducked out and headed downstairs before I could catch him. I think he wanted to check on the food."

"I think he'll find himself in a position where he'll have to be more outgoing," Jeff said. "God knows he'll need it with your family."

Maggie and Dianne exchanged glances, and shook heads in unison. Dianne rolled her eyes.

"Well, I'm going to be forward and outgoing, and ask you to dance, Jeff, since my husband is otherwise occupied." Maggie winked at Dianne, who chuckled.

"Go ahead, ask," Jeff replied, an eyebrow raised, and his arms folded.

Maggie huffed out a frustrated breath. "All right. Jeff, would you dance with me?"

Jeff glanced over at Dianne, who gave him a little push. "Go," she said. "Go dance with my aunt."

He got up, kissed her on the forehead and the lips, then offered his arm to Maggie. Dianne watched as the two of them moved out onto the balcony. She sighed, a noise born of frustration and longing.

Alan came along with the vid camera. "Here's Mom, enjoying the party... or so I hope."

"Yes, Alan, I'm enjoying myself. Hi, John!" she said waving at the camera and smiling. She blew a kiss at the lens, and both signed and said, "Love you!"

On Thunderbird Five, John saw the wave and the smile, and read her signing and her lips. He drew in a sharp, quick breath, then swallowed against the lump in his throat. "Damn, I wish I could reply. She looks so much better, yet so tired. A bit melancholy, too. I'll have to do something. Maybe something silly in an email would cheer her up." He nodded to himself and set about composing one to send.

The balcony wasn't as crowded as the lounge, but Jeff took Maggie down to the poolside, just to be safe. As they danced, she asked, "Are you still planning on going to the ranch?"

Jeff snorted a laugh. "Where'd you hear about that?"

"Cherie," Maggie explained. "She was talking about it at our place -- once she'd seen Dianne, that is. She's really looking forward to this last fling with Stephanie."

Jeff sighed. "I may have to disappoint her," he said, a rueful expression on his face. "I think Dianne's just not up to the trip."



"As her nurse, I have to agree," Maggie replied. "I'm sure she'd want to go; she's bored stiff in the infirmary. But she's being a good patient and not complaining too much. This infection -- and the news about Dr. Willis -- threw her for a loop."

"I know. That's another thing I need to deal with: support for the hospital with the revelation about Willis."

"Don't think about it now, Jeff. Just dance and have fun."

He smiled wryly. "Not as much fun when I can't dance with my wife. Not that present company isn't acceptable, but..."

"I know," Maggie replied softly. "Don't think I didn't know your ulterior motive for coming down here to dance, instead of in the lounge where she could see." She cocked her head. "Why don't you pick her up and swing her around a little?"

Jeff shook his head. "No. She'd be afraid I'd hurt myself, and I do want to spare her ribs. I think her little meltdown of the other day was as much due to pain as to my poorly-timed joking." He smiled. "I've got plans ticking away in my head for when she's released. We'll do plenty of dancing then."

"What about her rings? Did you find them? She's been worried about them."

He nodded. "Yes, I found them, but don't tell her that. I want them checked over thoroughly by a jeweler and cleaned before she wears them again. Haven't had a chance to do that yet." The smile turned sly. "Besides, I have plans regarding them, too."

"All right, mystery man, I'll keep quiet," Maggie said in an exasperated tone. "Just don't wait too long, okay?"

"I won't."

The music ended, and the dancing couple stopped. They clapped for the music, out of habit, then Jeff offered his arm. "How about we get something to drink, then I'll return you to Andy. I should check the buffet anyway to make sure Alex isn't making a pig of himself."

"Good idea. I noticed that he tends to use food to deal with stress."

Jeff grimaced, and the pair moved up to the dining room together.

Post by Tikatu on 2/23/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:54:38 GMT  
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Later that evening, Kat was standing beside the disco, watching the others dancing and enjoying themselves, when Virgil approached her. "Care to dance, Kat?" he asked, offering his arm.

"I saw you dancing with Elise and Lady Penelope earlier," she said, as they began to dance.

"Yeah, I'm dancing with all my female guests," he replied.

Kat grinned at him. "You'll have a pair of aching feet tomorrow," she remarked and he nodded.

"We haven't danced together since Alan's birthday," he said.

"We haven't had the occasion to. It certainly would have been a little difficult at Scott's birthday do," she replied.

"You're looking very nice," he commented.

"You don't scrub up too badly yourself," she replied cheekily.

He smiled at that, and commented that there weren't many dressy occasions.

"I bet you'll have some fun watching this on video. Gordon and Alan have been very busy."

"Yeah, maybe we can have a movie night, so we all can watch it," he replied.

Kat smiled at his remark, and they continued dancing and chatting, until the music came to an end. Thanking her for the dance, he walked her back to where Lady Penelope was seated talking to Cherie and Tin-Tin. Then he headed to where Nikki and Heather were chatting.

"Your singing was fine," Cherie remarked.

"Oh, I was rubbish," Kat replied. "Singing is not my forte."

"Well, you did far better than I could," Lady Penelope said.

At that moment Tyler and Alex joined them. "Are you two going to sing for us?" Kat asked.

"Yeah," Alex replied and smiled. "And I bet I'll do better than Cherie."

Tyler just shook his head and said, "Excuse me," before he walked away.

"Perhaps he's a little shy," Kat commented.

"Perhaps," Cherie murmured.

After listening to Cherie and Alex, Kat went back to her apartment. Once there, she realised that she had enjoyed the party, even though John hadn't been there. She'd sung at the karaoke and thought she'd made a right fool of herself, as well as dancing with Virgil, and the other men. Slipping off her shoes, she felt some sympathy with Virgil, as her feet, too, were beginning to

ache.

But now suddenly she was feeling guilty at having enjoyed herself without John. She began to feel that she had done something behind his back. She decided to email him and tell him about the party. Getting out of her dress and putting on her nightclothes, she sat down at her computer, and began to write.

--First to leave by TawnyAngel22 on 2/23/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:55:09 GMT  
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"Mom?"

Dianne looked up to see her three children standing by her, hopeful expressions on their faces.

"Mom?" Cherie asked again. "Can we stay up until the party is over?"

Dianne looked for Jeff, but he wasn't in the room. She didn't feel like fighting, but she knew that if the children didn't get enough sleep, they'd be hard to deal with in the morning. "Honey, I..."

"It's time you boys were in bed." Emily came up, holding a sleeping Joshua in her arms. "I told Dom I'd take him and put him down in my suite," she explained. "I can wait up until he's ready to leave."

"You said 'the boys'," Cherie piped up, sounding hopeful. "Does that mean I can stay up later?"

Dianne nodded wearily. "Yes, you can stay up."

Cherie clapped her hands a little, and bounced just a bit, making a small squeeking noise. She was about to run off, when Dianne reached out and grabbed her arm, keeping her there.

"How come we have to go to bed and not Cherie?" Alex said, pouting.

"Because Cherie's older and doesn't get so cranky in the morning. Still," Dianne added, giving her daughter a stern look. "There's no telling when this party will end, so your curfew is 1 a.m. If I hear you're up later than that, you'll hear from me and go to bed before your brothers all next week! Understand, girl?"

Cherie nodded eagerly. "Yes, Mom! I understand."

"Okay, you can go." Cherie spun and took off. Dianne reached out to stroke Alex's cheek, then ruffle Tyler's hair. "Y'know, I think I'm going to head for bed right now, too. And since I don't see your father to ask him to tuck me in, how about the two of you do it tonight?"

"Can we?" Tyler asked, his expression one of surprise and delight.

"Yes," both Dianne and Emily said in unison. "I'll just put Joshua down, then come and help your mother get ready for bed, then you two can tuck her in. But," Emily added, "you need to get into your pajamas while I help her into hers, okay?"

"Yes, ma'am," Alex said. He tugged on his brother's sleeve. "Let's go now and get ready."

"Right! We'll be down soon," Tyler said as the two boys hurried off.

"I'd better go now," Emily said apologetically, shifting her sleeping burden in her arms.

"I'll get Scott to help me out. He can keep an eye on Cherie for me, too."

Emily nodded, and left, while Dianne rolled her wheelchair over to where Scott was getting a drink from Parker. "Scott, could you help me back to the sickroom? I think I'm going to call it quits for the night."

"Sure, Mom," he said. Glancing around, he asked, "Where's Dad? Wouldn't he want to do this?"

"I'm not sure where he is and I don't want to disturb him. Just get me up to the study..."

Her instructions were interrupted by Jeff, who joined them. "Cherie told me you had sent the boys to bed and said that she could stay up until 1." He made it a vocal statement, but they all knew it was actually a question.

Dianne nodded. "Yes, I told her that. The boys have gone to get dressed for bed; they're going to tuck me in. I've asked Scott to help me down to the sick room."

"I'll do that, Scott," Jeff said, nodding. "If you could keep an eye on Cherie, I'd appreciate it. I'll be back after I see this lady off to dreamland."

Scott's head had gone back and forth between his father and step-mother as if he were watching a tennis match. "Cherie? Sure. I'll see what she's up to. Do you need any help?"

"You could help me get Dianne up the steps into the study, son," Jeff said as he began to wheel his wife toward far end of the lounge. Dianne began to call her goodnights as she passed people, and Jeff found he had to stop as kisses or hugs were exchanged.

"Hey, Mom," Virgil said as he came up to her, smiling. "Thanks for the gift. You, too, Dad. That week in Paris will be just what I need to get the creative juices flowing." He leaned down to hug her gently and kiss her on the cheek. "I'm sorry we didn't get to dance tonight. I'm trying to dance with all the ladies."

"I'm sorry, too, Virgil," was all Dianne could say on the subject. "I'm glad you like your gift and happy birthday, son."

"Thanks again, Mom. Goodnight."

Scott and Jeff finally got Dianne and her chair up the steps to the study. "You hitting the hay, too, Dad?"

Jeff shook his head. "No, I'll be back soon."

"F-A-B," Scott said with a wink. He embraced Dianne gently and kissed her on the cheek. "Goodnight, Mom. See you in the morning."

"Goodnight, Scott, and thanks."

They passed through the study door, and Scott turned back to the lounge just in time to hear Gordon call, "Okay, who's next? Come on, folks, we need some more talent up here!"

Post by Tikatu on 2/23/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:55:42 GMT  
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Searching the lounge, Gordon had to find someone to take over the karaoke, because if he couldn't, he'd have to do the singing. The last time that happened, he was pushed into the pool. Tin-Tin passed not far from him. She went to sit at a large circular table with Nikki, Maggie, Lisa, and Lady Penelope who were all leaning in to hear what Heather was saying.

Tin-Tin watched Heather slip off her black kitten heeled pumps and wiggle her toes. "I think a wonderful way for all of us to get to know each other is to hold a Langtry lingerie party--!" Heather suggested.

"That is a lovely idea, Heather," said Tin-Tin, looking for a chair to sit down in. From his post at the wet bar, Parker found one and helped her sit down at the table.

"Thank you, Parker," Lady Penelope said with a nod.

"Milady," he responded simply with a bow. "May I bring something to you, Miss Tin-Tin? Miss Heather?"

"Yes, thank you," said Tin-Tin. "I'll have hot tea for myself--"

"I'd like a tall glass of iced tea, Parker," Heather said. Turning smartly on his patent leather shoes, Parker went to the wet bar to fulfill their orders. To her table mates, Heather sighed. "First, I'm cold, and then next, I'm hot."

Nikki frowned slightly. "I hope you're not coming down with anything. Maybe you should stop by the aide station."

"You might be just trying acclimate to the tropical weather," Maggie suggested.

Gordon smiled as he spied Heather. "There's my next singer. I know she hasn't been asked yet." As Parker entered the wet bar to look for a tea cup, Gordon walked up and stood at the corner, furthest away from the table of giggling females. "Parker, when women laugh and giggle like that, you know they're up to something nefarious."

"Indeed, sir?" intoned Penelope's manservant.

Unaware of Gordon's intentions, Heather moaned, "Oh my feet hurt. I'm afraid I haven't gone to too many parties in the past few years, unless you count county fairs, hoedowns and the like."

"Don't look now, but Gordon's got the mike and he's hunting for a victim," Lisa whispered to the circle.

"Come on, Gordon. Who's the lucky gal?" Maggie said with more volume. Caught in the act, he walked over, combing his hair off his face.

"Gordon, so help me I'm going to come over there and whack that hair off!" Lisa warned him.

"I'd do it," says Heather, "but I left my Bowie knife at home--" Realizing what she said, Heather sighed. Tin-Tin held her friend's hand sympathetically.

"There's one lady here I would like to hear sing," said Lady Penelope.

"Who's that?" asked Maggie, hoping it wasn't her.

"Gordon, give the mike to Heather," said Penelope.

"Me?" Heather replied as the mike was placed into her hands.

"Yes. There is a musical quality to your voice. You've had some vocal training, I believe."

"Well," Heather shrugged. "Yes, I did--"

Showered with claps and cheers, Heather accepted the mike good naturedly. "Whatever happened to the solidarity of women?" This was met with laughter as she had Gordon show her where the karaoke machine sat.

Gordon led her to the balcony outside and to the machine. "Here you go," he said with a grin. "Do you want me to set the song for you?"

"No, I can manage." She made a quick study of the electronic equipment and found the small keyboard where she could search for the song she had in mind. As she hit the search key, she asked with a wry grin. "Tell me; am I going through some kind of initiation? I get the feelin' you're after me."

"What could possibly make you think such that? Other than the fact that I've been picking on you all night," Gordon chuckled.

A series of beeps told them both that the song couldn't be found. With determination, Heather tapped the keyboard again and threatened the machine. "All right. Cough it up, or I'll turn you into a food processor!" Tapping the enter key again, Heather looked confidently at Gordon.

"If it beeps like that, it doesn't have the song in its mem--" In three seconds there was a small ping announcing that it had found the song. Heather beamed at a surprised Gordon.

"Give it up, Gordon." Picking up the karaoke machine remote and making sure she had the mike, Heather walked back into the lounge with Gordon next to her. She saw Virgil at the wet bar getting a Black Russian before he sat down in the lounge to listen to the next singer. He was surprised to see Heather and Gordon walking in, noticing the mike in the her hand.

"Aren't you going to need to see the words, Heather?" asked Cherie as Heather faced the party goers. The ladies at the table became silent as Heather aimed the global remote towards the air, causing the background music to begin. Knowing that the song she was about to sing had a long introduction with lush orchestration and background singers, Heather shook her head without further explanation.

"Virgil?" she warned him, causing the audience to laugh. "Don't get too comfortable."

As the intro continued, Heather began her explanation, timing it perfectly to the beginning of the song. "This was written back in the year 2007 by a would-be author, Dena. She wrote the song in about an hour, and gave it to a friend in music publishing. A few months later, it made No. 1." At the swell of the music, Heather began to sing softly, giving Gordon a wink. During the first verse, she moved over to Virgil and demurely sat in his lap singing to him in the guise of a disappointed lover.

TELL ME YOU LOVE  
by Dena Lawless (2007)

Please, Please tell me you love me  
Please, Please tell me you love me, baby  
Please, Please tell me you love me  
Or you'll be walkin' out the door.  
I never looked at another man.  
I have done all that I can.  
I wish you'd try to understand--  
what this means to me!  
All you do is walk on by,  
And I just can't seem to cry,  
I knew this day would finally come,  
Just go on out my door!  
Please don't tell me you love me,  
Please don't tell me you love me, baby.  
Please don't tell me you love me!  
Cuz' I'm walking out the door!"

Virgil laughed when, at the second verse, she pushed him back, got up and walked away. Getting



into the act, Virgil began to follow her, pretending to beg her to stay. She kept pushing him back and shaking her head, while she sang the last chorus three times, varying the melody, making it more interesting.

At the end of the song, she gave Virgil a kiss. "Happy Birthday, Virgil." The pair was met with laughter and hand claps. As the next dance number's first few measures played, Virgil took the mike from Heather and handed it to Gordon who'd walked up to retrieve it.

"Heather, would you like to-," Gordon started to ask, but Virgil slipped his hand around Heather's velvet covered waist and whisked her off to the balcony. Gordon was left standing with the mike in his hand, watching a strong breeze fan her long hair. The chief aquanaut was no longer in a jovial mood.

Post by AmandaTracy on 2/25/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:56:05 GMT  
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Jeff Tracy was ready to call it quits for the night. He would tell Virgil 'Happy Birthday' one more time, then head to bed. Dianne had already left, looking happy but tired. Cherie had asked to stay up later and they had agreed to let her stay up until 1. She was currently dancing with Dominic, who had the major attraction of not being one of her brothers.

Dianne asked for more women, but Dom and Brandon are the only new men we've added, if you don't count Christopher. I'd better start thinking about finding a firefighter/hazardous materials specialist. And about another person to help with building the vehicles. Someone who knows how to build the whole thing from the ground up. Luke Morel is due out here on Friday. We'll see how that works out.

He noticed Virgil talking to Elise by the piano and walked over to them. "Son, this old man has had it for the night. I'm turning in. Happy Birthday."

Post by susanmartha on 2/25/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:56:33 GMT  
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"Goodnight, Dad." "Goodnight." Virgil and Elise replied in unison. They watched Jeff leave and returned to their conversation.

"A week in Paris, huh? You'll enjoy that."

"Yeah, I'm looking forward to some R & R and it's been a while since I've been to Paris." He went

on to tell her about the evening he and his brothers spent with Lady Penelope in Paris, and enjoyed the way Elise was enjoying listening to him.

"Listen, I'm sorry I missed you cutting your cake earlier," Elise said a little while later, "I went out for a little air, and..."

"No need to explain, I understand," he said, softly. "I felt like joining you once my grandmother started in on me!"

Elise smiled in sympathy.

"I swear she still thinks we're six, and Dad lets her do it every year!" Virgil chuckled. "By the way, I heard you earlier on the karaoke, while I was dancing with Nikki, or was it Kat? "

He shook his head, laughing, he'd lost track of where and when and who he been dancing with at the time. "You sounded really good."

"Oh, stop! I wasn't that good!"

"Yeah, you were!" He was referring to her singing the song "Just Breathe" an old country ballad originally sung by Faith Hill, many years ago. "I enjoyed listening to it. You have a natural talent for singing."

Elise could only look at him, and reply, "Yes! In the shower!" They both laughed out loud.

"OOWWW!" The protest echoed around the room.

"Sorry, guys, I didn't mean for it to screech like that," Alan offered as an apology, holding up the microphone of the karaoke machine. "So, now that some of the tamer bunch have headed for bed..."

"Alan!"

Laughter ensued to the remarks made and all Alan did was wink and flash a grin. "Why don't we have some real fun with this?" He waved the microphone for emphasis.

"Whatchya got in mind, bro?" shouted Gordon from his comfy spot on the sofa. Alan looked around the room and spied Elise and Virgil.

Alan turned the mike on. "I think it's time we had the ladies back up here singing some of that country music they promised us earlier!"

Various hoots and howls followed the announcement. Out of the corner of his eye, Alan noticed that Elise had turned away from Virgil and was now looking at him. Nikki was too.

Interesting! This is going to be good!

"Who's first?" He offered the mike out to the group.

"C'mon, Elise! Go for it!"

"Shut up, Gordon!" She laughed.

"Aw, c'mon, relax will ya! It's a party, we want to hear you sing some more country, girl!"

Elise glanced back at Virgil, silently pleading for help. None was forthcoming. Instead, he simply threw his hands up and laughed, "You're on your own with this one!"

"Thanks!"

"You've got a good voice; you'll have no problems."

"Uh-huh." He winked and she tingled slightly. "Fine!"

"Woo-Hoo!" Gordon and Alan both started clapping as Elise walked up to the makeshift stage. After a few moments conferring with Alan she was ready.

"Okay, guys. This is one from a while back. It's been re-recorded over the years, but I kinda like the original version, so, er, here it goes!"

The music came on and Elise put her mind into the song. Her voice was different from earlier, this time she became more sultry and sexier, with raspiness to some of the words as she sang.

{i}Right now he's probably slow dancing with a bleach-blonde tramp, and she's probably getting frisky.

Right now, he's probably buying her some fruity little drink 'cause she can't shoot whiskey.

Right now he's probably up behind her with a pool stick, showing her how to shoot a combo....

And he don't know..

That I dug my keys into the side of his pretty little souped-up four-wheel drive, carved my name into his leather seats....

I took a Louisville slugger to both headlights, slashed a hole in all four tires... And maybe next time he'll think before he cheats.[/i]

As she swayed and kept in rhythm with the beat, she captured the attention of the room. Virgil sat back on his piano bench; thankful he was somewhat away from the rest of the room because he knew he was pretty close to drooling!

Whatever it was Elise was doing, she was doing it right! Her voice didn't miss a single change in notes.

He'd been impressed earlier that evening when she'd sang, but this was so much more passionate; it resonated throughout his whole being. He'd had no idea she was so musically talented. His gaze continued as she went into the second verse.

[i]Right now she's probably up singing some white trash version of Shania karaoke.

Right now, she's probably saying 'I'm drunk' and he's a 'thinking that he's gonna get lucky.

Right now, he's probably dabbing on three dollars worth of that bathroom Polo.  
Oh, but he don't know.... That I dug my key...{/i}

The chorus continued and Gordon's grin got wider. He was lapping this performance up like a cat that got into the cream!

Alan had parked himself close to Nikki and was enjoying her reaction to her friend's singing.

Scott was leaning back against the wall, legs crossed in front of him. A grin was on his face as he shook his head in almost disbelief. 'Almost' because he knew, when given a dare or challenge, Frankie Collins usually didn't disappoint.

"This is one of your pilots?" Scott turned to the red-haired who'd appeared at his side. He had to laugh at the look on Heather's face.

"Yes, ma'am, I'm afraid it is!" They both looked back toward Elise who was near the end of the song.

I might have saved a little trouble for the next girl, 'cause the next time that he cheats...  
Oh you know it won't be on me....  
Ohh, no, not on me....

The applause was instant, along with catcalls and whistles, courtesy of a certain red-head Tracy son. Elise took a mock bow, thanked her 'fans' and handed the microphone to Nikki. "Your turn!"

Nikki's expression was priceless.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 2/26/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:57:02 GMT  
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"Oh, no, you don't," Nikki said, trying to hand the microphone back to a retreating Elise. Elise just grinned and stepped quickly out of range, taking refuge behind the piano.

"I am not singing again," Nikki stated flatly. "I've done my turn." And she had earlier, singing a pop number made famous by Cass Carnaby and his band. She gave Elise a glare, then her eyes drifted over to Virgil and a soft, sly smile crossed her face. "I've just realized; the birthday boy hasn't done his bit this evening." Turning to the rest of the room, she asked, "Well? Who else wants to hear Virgil play and sing?"

There was a general round of laughter and clapping, and Gordon shouted, "Play, but not sing!" Alan and Scott both added, "Hear, hear!" to that comment and the laughter rolled around again.

"All right, all right!" Virgil put up his hands. "I get the message!" He put out his hand and took the microphone from Nikki, turning it off. "We won't need this." Glancing around, he spied Maggie.

"Aunt Maggie, you're a special guest tonight. What would you like to hear? I can't guarantee that I know it, but tell me, and I'll try."

Maggie had sat up in delight. "Me? I get to choose?" Her face turned thoughtful. "Hmm. Let me see. Something to give you a real workout." Her expression brightened. "I know! Linus and Lucy by Vince Guaraldi."

"Oooh, that is a tricky one," Virgil said. He locked his fingers together and stretched his arms, the palms of his hands outward. He ran a quick scale while people quieted, then began to play.

Unlike most pieces, the melody was a chord on the middle to upper ranges of the keyboard, while a rhythmic fingering in the lower keys kept a steady beat. At one point, the lower notes all but disappeared as his fingers danced over the high notes in what sounded like a jazz improvisation. Finally the bass rhythm returned, and the piece continued until it quieted down to a single low note.

The room erupted into applause, and cries of "Bravo!" Virgil stood, took a bow, and Gordon moved over to take up the microphone, and went to the sound system.

"Now, in honor of all the lovely ladies tonight, a very special number."

Post by Tikatu on 2/26/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:57:33 GMT  
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As Gordon moved toward the podium, the clock on the study wall caught Scott's eye. "Uh oh," he muttered. "Time to be the stern big brother."

He sidled around the outskirts of the dance floor until he caught up with Cherie, who was moodily sitting next to Lisa. Dom had left, saying he would pick up Josh and head back to his apartment. Alan was waiting to give Gordon the camera again as the latter tried to find the song he wanted. Nikki sat nearby, discreetly covering a yawn with her hand. Heather was chatting with Penelope, exchanging notes on François' latest designs, Scott supposed. Brains was talking to Tin-Tin, and Kyrano was sitting on Lisa's other side, murmuring in her ear. Maggie's head was resting on Drew's shoulder. Elise was standing by Virgil, waiting for this special number.

Scott eased behind his sister's chair and murmured in her ear, "Cherie, it's nearly one. It's time to say goodnight."

"I want to stay for the special number," she whined.

Scott knew that whine; it meant she was at the juncture of becoming stubborn for no reason whatsoever. He sighed, and slipped into the chair beside her.

"I know you want to stay up later, but you remember what Mom said. One a.m." He smiled a little.

"I may risk my life doing dangerous things on a regular basis, but I am neither brave enough nor stupid enough to risk Mom's wrath."

Cherie sighed heavily, and her shoulders slumped. "Okay. I'll go. Just let me say goodnight to John, okay?"

Scott glanced over at Gordon, and turned back to her. "Deal."

They stood, and approached Gordon, who said, "Ah hah!" just as they came up.

"Gords? Take this please?" Alan said with some urgency. "I'd like to have this dance..."

"With me?" Gordon quipped.

Alan rolled his eyes, and Gordon said, "Okay, okay. I've almost got the music... there. It'll queue up in a moment or two."

"Good." Alan handed him the camera. Gordon immediately began to pan the room with it.

"Gords? Cherie wants to say goodnight to John," Scott said.

"Oh, okay." He stopped the camera at Cherie's face. "Go ahead. He can't hear you, but say something anyway."

"All right." Cherie put on a tired smile and waved a little. "Goodnight, John. Love you and wish you were here." She blew him a kiss, and waved again.

"Okay, now," Scott said. "Time for bed."

"Aw, do I have to?" Gordon whined. He winked at Cherie.

It was Scott's turn to roll his eyes. "C'mon, sis. Let's get you to bed."

"G'night, Gordon," she said, smiling wearily.

"G'night, hon. See you in the a.m."

Scott guided the teenager across the room and up the steps to the study. "Heading for bed, Scott?" Drew asked as they passed.

"I'm not, but Cherie is," was his reply.

"Then I think that's our cue to head on out, too," Maggie said. Drew rose from his seat and helped her from hers. They began to say their good nights as Scott and Cherie continued on.

The door to the study opened, and Anna walked in. She glanced at the teenager, then the young man, and said, "Bedtime, huh?"

"For one of us, anyway," Scott told her.

"Goodnight, then," Anna replied, passing by with a slight wave. The Tracys duo heard her greet the Carmichaels as they passed each other.

"Wonder what song Gordon was going to play," Cherie said with a sigh. The sigh turned into a wide yawn that she didn't bother to hide.

"Don't know, but you'll find out in the morning." Scott walked his sister to her room, which was situated next to his. He opened the door for her, then took her by the shoulders and kissed her on the forehead. "You looked really pretty tonight, Cherie, and very grown up."

"Thanks, Scott." She gave him a hug, which he returned. "Goodnight."

"Sweet dreams, sis."

The door closed, and Scott turned back. He met Maggie and Drew on his way back to the party. "Goodnight, Aunt Maggie, Uncle Drew. See you in the morning."

"It is morning," Drew quipped.

"Oh, Drew," Maggie replied in an exasperated tone. She turned to Scott. "Don't mind him. Goodnight, Scott. We'll see you later."

"Right. See you later."

They parted, and Scott headed back to the party, hand in his pockets. Hm. Who can I ask to dance this time?

Post by Tikatu on 3/2/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:58:00 GMT

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John kept an ear on the jumbled background noise that made up his job, and kept an eye on the vid feed from his family. Virgil's piano number had him tapping his feet in time with the jazzy piece, and he was looking forward to the "special number" that Gordon had announced.

"Hm," he murmured. "Where's Kat? I don't see her in the lounge." The camera, held by Gordon, was panning slowly across the room again. Cherie's tired face suddenly appeared and she waved, mouthing words at him, then blowing him a kiss. He smiled, and watched Scott guide her out from the room, heading up the few stairs into the study. They were followed by the Carmichaels, saying their good nights, Drew's hand resting on the small of Maggie's back. A dark-haired woman passed by them, greeting them soundlessly, then stepping down into the lounge. She sat down beside Lisa, who turned briefly from Kyrano to speak with her. "Who's that? The counselor?" he wondered, frowning a little. "I still don't see Kat," he said again, his frown deepening. "Where



could she be?"

A soft chime to his right, signaled an incoming email. He craned his neck over, and saw the address pop up on his computer screen. "Kat?" He rolled his chair over, and opened up the missive. A soft dance tune that John didn't recognize started up in the background.

Dear John,

I suppose you are puzzled as to why I am writing now, when Virgil's party is very likely still in full swing. It's not that I wasn't enjoying myself; I was, very much so. But I have never been one for dressing up in glad rags or wearing heels, and my feet were beginning to ache, most likely from my new shoes. I wanted nothing more than to put them up and have a quiet moment or two to myself. Also, I found myself missing you. As much fun as the party was, I would have found it far more enjoyable had we been together.

In any case, I thought I would write and tell you all about it. I went over to the party with Heather Kennedy, our newest recruit. She and I share the elevator between us, and she needed someone to guide her to the fête. She wore a lovely red velvet gown and a ruby necklace. I was quite pleased with my own frock, though it was not a full-length gown as hers was. I hope you were able to see me in it.

The buffet was full of delicious food, some of it catered and brought in from Christchurch. Parker was pressed into service as barkeep and server. Kyrano, Lisa, Mrs. Carmichael and Mrs. Tracy were assisted by Mrs. Anna Hanson. I have heard she is a counselor and is here to help those involved in Thunderbird Seven's crash.

Lady Penelope was there, of course, looking very chic in black. She was quite taken with the fact that we girls all wore red; I made a joke that, on Tracy Island, red was this year's black. I wish I could have spoken longer with her, but we are to have tea tomorrow and a good long chat to each other.

Gordon was quite the nuisance at times with the vid camera, and Alan only less so. Both were very busy filming and making silly comments about this and that. I am sure the recording will be very funny; Virgil suggested that we might have a movie night and view it. I shall ask him to wait until you are back on earth so you can view it, too.

I sang at the karaoke, and felt very foolish doing so, though I had many kind compliments about my singing. I chose the song, "The Closest Thing To Crazy". It was interesting to hear each of the other singers. I noticed that your brothers shied away from the karaoke, except for Alex, who, I am sorry to say, does not sing well. Cherie also took a turn, but does not have a good voice. Perhaps as they grow older, their musical talents will develop. Tyler did not sing, but I believe Joshua tried to. Oh, he was so adorable in his little fireman's suit! Dom told me that when Josh heard the words, "Dress up," he took it to mean a costume, and would not settle for anything else.

Your father made a lovely toast to Virgil, and your grandmother insisted on pinching his cheeks! He took it well, and later on, we danced together. He said he was dancing with all of his lady guests, and I told him his feet would ache at the end of the night. I managed to dance with nearly all the gentlemen, save your father and Dr. Carmichael. I even danced with Brains! However, had

you been there, I should have saved all my dances for you. Well, perhaps I would have let the birthday boy cut in.

I hope enjoyed what you saw and heard of the party. I miss you, and hope to hear from you again soon.

Love,  
Kat

John shot a look at the vid screen. A slow dance was going on, and for not the first time, he wished he were there with his family. Still, it was nice that Kat missed him. He listened to the music as he replied to her email.

Dear Kat,

Thanks for telling me about the party. I'll have to admit that the vid feed and music are better than nothing, but it makes me want to be there, too. I did see you in your dress; you looked very pretty, and the dress was very flattering. I'm sorry to hear that your feet ached so much, but you did do a lot of dancing, and perhaps had your toes stepped on once or twice. If it was Gordon, believe me, he does it to annoy and not because he can't dance! He'll be uploading the vid to me later on, so I can hear the conversation as well as see what else I missed. Too bad he can't upload some of the food; just hearing you talk about it made my mouth water!

I have been able to hear the karaoke piped up here. You did very well with your song and have nothing to be ashamed of. I'm afraid that you're right about Alex and Cherie, and the same goes for me and all of my brothers. We are not singers! Only Tyler can carry a tune. I'm surprised Mom didn't try and get him to sing. I was surprised that she didn't sing either, but I suppose that singing would be a bit painful still. Grandma P sure belted out a song though, didn't she? And watching her dance with Kyrano! Wish I knew where he learned that move! That is not like him at all!

I take it that Mrs. Hanson was that dark-haired lady I saw. I got the email about her coming on board. You're right about Josh, he sure was a bundle of firefighting energy. I'll have to ask Dom where he got his suit. I might try something like that for our next formal event... of course, Grandma would have my hide if I did. As far as the "pinching cheeks" business is concerned, she does that to all of us, every year, just as if we were six again. Tyler makes the funniest face when she does it and he's still young enough for it to be sort of permissible. He and Alex sure got smeared with cake and frosting. Mom is not going to be happy about that.

Well, I'd better get back to work. Thanks again for telling me about the party. I'm sorry to have missed it, but... well, I feel good knowing that Callie's had a birthday celebration with her family, too. Looking forward to seeing you again.

Regards,  
John

He checked his spelling -- being an author, he was particular about that -- and sent the missive off. Then he rolled his chair back over to where he could see what was happening on Tracy

Island.

Post by Tikatu on 3/2/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:58:39 GMT  
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The soft music drifted out and Virgil held out his hand to Elise, offering, "Would you do me the honor of dancing with me again?"

Elise smiled and placed her hand in his. "I'd love to."

They walked to the dance floor and she slipped into his arms with an ease that looked as though they'd been dancing together for years. He gently pulled her closer as they moved in time to the lyrics of "Lady in Red".

..."Never seen you looking so lovely as you did tonight, never seen your eyes so bright, you were amazing..."

--Lady in Red, by FrankieTB2 on 3/2/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:59:01 GMT  
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The song, "Lady in Red" began to play. As she watched Virgil and Elise dancing, Tin-Tin was startled to feel a hand on her shoulder. She turned and looked up to see Brains standing behind her. He smiled down at her.

"Since you went to the trouble of making sure I was appropriately dressed for this party, as well as getting me here, I wondered if you might be brave enough to dance with me, too."

She giggled and began to rise from her seat. "Bravery has nothing to do with it, Brains. I'd be delighted to dance with you, even if it meant just moving a little."

He took her hand and led her onto the dance floor in the lounge. "It's a good thing this is a slow song. I'm not good when it comes to dancing to a fast beat. Besides, I enjoy holding you in my arms."

She looked at him in surprise. "That's one of the nicest things anyone has ever said to me. Thank you."

He didn't reply; he just held her slightly closer. She relaxed even more as they moved slowly from side to side.

Kyrano was dancing with Lisa again and they both noticed the younger couple. "They are cute together," she said to him. "Are they a pair?"

"They may become so," he replied. "They are good friends, and I know he wishes to become much closer. But he is an honorable man and I trust him as I do my daughter. She is unsure of herself, though, due to some unhappy experiences with men. So if anything develops, it will take time."

"Well, they have several interests in common. If their feelings for each other do grow stronger, they will be happy together, I'm sure."

"As will we, my love."

Post by Hobbeth on 3/2/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 19:59:34 GMT

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Surveying the lounge for potential problems, Scott made sure that Virgil was having fun at his birthday party. Having everyone showing up in their best dress turned out to be a great idea, Scott reflected as couples danced slowly. Virgil displayed a satisfied smile as he danced with Elise. He really deserves a good time, Scott reflected. Please, Lord, let's not have any rescue calls right now, thank you.

Brains held Tin-Tin in his arms, while Nikki had her head on Alan's shoulder as they danced. I hope you're happier now, Tin-Tin. Don't think I haven't noticed that Mona Lisa smile when Brains looks at you. Scott smiled himself.

Over at the wet bar, Parker poured a rich looking red wine into a short glass with shaved ice and took it to Heather who was rubbing her toes again. Must be new shoes. She must have rushed to buy clothes for herself before she flew here with Tin-Tin. Scott thought. Walking over to where Heather was sitting, the thought reminded him that he meant to discuss Heather's situation with the Malaysian engineer to see if there was more they could do for their new supplemental pilot. To his surprise, Heather didn't seem to recognize him right away and appeared lost in thought. "Hello, again," Scott greeted her with a warmer smile. As he sat down, Parker brought along Scott's favorite drink on a tray and set it down on the table front of him. "Thank you, Parker."

"Hi Scott," Heather said when the glass hit the table, waking her up.

"New shoes I take it," he remarked. "Your feet must really be sore."

Shaking her head, she confirmed his thoughts. "Fraid so. I picked up my shoes on my concentrated shopping trip in Wichita, but I haven't had time to break them in. I'm good for one more dance in them, and after that, I'm going barefoot, and I don't care if it's breaking the rules of polite society," she said. "Oooo!" The comment had Scott laughing. There had been at least a

couple times where he had had the same situation. Only in her case it was worse, because she wore heels.

"Hey, Heather. I know this will sound a bit strange, but would you sing one more song?" 'Lady In Red' was slowing down to a fade out and the dancing couples were reluctantly separating.

Heather threw him a curious look, thought for a moment and then smiled. "I think I've got just the one. It's that number one song on the country charts."

"Hmm," Scott said thoughtfully. "You mean the song 'Let's Stop For Awhile'?"

"That's the one. Care to help me on it?"

"Oh, not me! You should have heard me a couple Christmases ago when Dad told us to 'harmonize' for Lady Penelope. I told him 'that's the first time and the last time!' I'll scrub Thunderbird 1 by hand before I do it again."

Heather laughed. "Well, I'm not a whole lot better. I'll see what I can do for you, though. Maybe I could rope Virgil into this."

Studying his younger brother from a distance, Scott shook his head. "Definitely, don't count on that one," he warned her.

With an exaggerated sigh, Heather sang, "'Alone again, naturally!'"

Not to be outdone, Scott responded, "'Save the last dance for me'."

Slipping her shoes back on, Heather made her way to the karaoke machine, tapped the keys again and looked for the mike. Unable to find it, she found a spare inside the little cupboard. Knowing that few were paying her any attention, she thought it appropriate. I really should have done this song first. At the same time, they need a little waking up, anyway.

"Doing an encore?" asked Gordon as she made her way to the front, carrying a tall chair to sit on so she wouldn't be on her feet.

"Yup--I mean, yes," Heather answered. "Someone requested a song."

Holding the primary mike Heather had been looking for, Gordon asked puzzled, "Who was that?"

"Scott," she answered, looking puzzled herself.

Looking over to where Scott was sitting, Gordon saw his eldest brother giving him a sharp wave. While Heather tapped the key on the aerial remote, Gordon felt slightly miffed at Scott's expression. Oh, tryin' to bug me, huh? Just wait, Scotty--

The air filled with an electric slide guitar, a rhythm guitar, a violin, and banjos. Gordon warmed to the song right away. The song's intro barely gave time for Gordon to yell, "Cut loose!" before Heather dove into the first note, startling everyone. Brains sighed as Tin-Tin hurried to find a chair

as the music galloped into the beginning chorus. A surprised Penelope joined the group and laughed at the verses as Heather sang. Standing cool and aloof behind the wet bar, Parker's right foot began to tap the floor in a rough rhythm.

## LET'S STOP FOR AWHILE

D. Lawless

(Chorus-Woman)

Let's stop for awhile,  
and think this whole thing through.  
Let's stop for awhile,  
and give a gal her due.  
Don't wanna be all left alone  
But I don't wanna be left holdin' the phone.  
Let's stop for awhile,  
and think this whole thing through.

I need a man who will love me anytime of day  
whenever I feel blue.  
I need a man who's gonna comfort me,  
when the baby's comin' due!  
He's gotta be nice; He'll have to shave  
and I expect him to behave.  
That's what I expect of you if you wanna be with me!

(Chorus-Man centered)

Let's stop for awhile  
and talk this whole thing through.  
Let's stop for awhile,  
Now give a man his due.  
Don't wanna be sloppin' hogs and pitchin' hay,  
If you won't let me have my say!  
Let's stop for awhile  
and talk this whole thing through!

I need a woman to give me a hug at night  
whenever I'm home from work.  
I need a woman who will coo and lavish me  
with love all through the night.  
She's gotta be cute; she's gotta be sweet  
and smoother than my whiskey neat.

(Chorus)

And you need a woman to give you a hug at night,  
whenever you come home from work.

You need a woman who will coo and lavish you  
with love all through the night.  
I know I'm cute; and I'll be sweet,  
but I'm not as smooth as your whiskey neat.

You need a man who will love ya anytime of day  
whenever you feel blue.  
You need a man who's gonna comfort you  
when the baby's comin' due.  
Ah know ah'm nice; okay, I'll shave,  
and I guess I'll go ahead and behave,  
Cuz' that's what you expect of me  
if I wanna be with you.

(Chorus)

Let's stop for awhile  
and think this whole thing through!  
Let's stop for awhile  
and think this whole thing through.  
We don't wanna be all left alone  
Don't wanna be left holdin' the phone.  
Let's stop for awhile  
and think this whole thing through!

At the end of the song, Heather took a deep breath, sharing a grin with Gordon. Okay. That's all I'm doing from now on, she promised herself while the party goers clapped enthusiastically.

"That was wonderful!" Tin-Tin said brightly. "I wish Grandma Tracy could have heard that. She would have enjoyed it immensely."

Heather nodded, watching as Gordon got a few slaps on the back. "She would have. So would my Aunt Jenny. In fact, Mrs. Tracy and Jenny would have really gotten along well together if they ever met. They're quite alike in some ways, although Aunt Jenny has a lot of pepper in her."

"You miss her?" Tin-Tin asked as she saw Scott talking with Gordon about his rendition of the man's part in the song.

"Yes, I do. She's always been such a help, and makes the meanest, sweetest pecan pie," Heather confessed as Scott passed the girls and walked over to the bar where Gordon ordered another whiskey and soda.

"I have to say I'm impressed, Gords," Scott complimented his younger brother. "You really did a great job."

Appreciating Scott's compliment, Gordon responded, "Thanks, Scott. You could have gone up there yourself. You're not that bad."



Scott had a ready answer for that comment. "You remember a couple Christmases ago? The first year we opened International Rescue for business? Lady Penelope and Parker were there and that family portrait was done? If you remember, Dad had us singing behind Virgil."

Thinking for a moment, the uncomfortable memory had Gordon turning up his nose, groaning. "Oh, you would have to remind me of that. I heard the recording and almost turned the CD into dust and ashes."

The insightful remark had Scott laughing heartily. "Now you know why I won't go up there."

"Well, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to ask Heather for a dance with me. Pardon moi!" With that, Gordon gave Scott a friendly wave. "Bye!"

Scott felt a rare feeling of jealousy as Gordon took Heather around the room and out to the balcony, but shook his head. Here I am acting as if I were a jealous lover. Gordon, you've got me acting like there's something to win here. I'm not going to treat Heather like an object to be won. With that mindset, Scott went over to talk with Virgil who had gone back to giving the women his attentions.

Post by AmandaTracy on 3/8/2007 7:28 PM

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 20:00:03 GMT

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The night was winding down at last, and he had to admit it. He'd had a wonderful time. Lots of dancing, good music (and some bad). Great food, nice gifts, and his family around him. Yes, Virgil had to admit, this was the best birthday in a long time.

He also had to admit he'd had a bit too much to drink. Just a bit. Enough to make him act silly, as it always did.

"Thank you ever so much for coming to my party, your Ladyship," Virgil said, smiling. He bowed elaborately over Penelope's hand, then lifted it to his lips, giving her a wink.

Penny's eyebrow went up, and she tried hard to smother a smile. "Thank you ever so much for inviting me, dear boy," she replied, trying to sound even more posh than usual. Behind her, Tin-Tin giggled a little.

Virgil dropped Penny's hand, his attention captured by the little giggle. "Ah, my dear Tin-Tin! I hope you've had a wonnnnnnderful time at my party!" He grasped both of her hands, and kissed each in turn.

"Of course I did, silly," Tin-Tin replied, giggling again.

"I am sooo very gratified to hear it." He pulled her closer, and putting his mouth right next to her ear, whispered the word, "Kumquat."

She laughed aloud, and Virgil put a finger to his lips. "Shhhhhh! Don't want Brains getting jealous now, do we?"

Brains, who had come up behind Tin-Tin, shook his head. "Personally, I don't see anyone here to be jealous of."

"Ooooh!" Virgil wasn't the only one who uttered that syllable. Elise and Nikki joined in, which brought Virgil's attention to Nikki, as Brains and Tin-Tin said their goodnights, and the engineers began to leave.

"Parker?" Penelope said. "Please bring the cart up, and inquire whether Mrs. Hanson would like a lift."

"Mr. Kyrano h'already took care 'o that, Milady," Parker said as he headed for the door. "'E drove 'er t- th' Round 'ouse h'earlier, before 'e an' Mrs. Parkhurst said goodnight."

"Excellent." Penny turned to the others. "Goodnight to you all. And, again, happy birthday, Virgil."

"Thank you, Penelope." Penny's goodnight wishes were echoed through the small crowd. As the rest watched the aristocrat leave, Virgil reached out grasped one of Nikki's hands in both of his, and she obligingly allowed him.

"My dear, dear Nicole," he said dramatically, pulling her hand up to his chest, clasped in his. "Please, tell me that tonight was the most exciting night of your life!"

She gave him an incredulous, slightly suspicious look. "I've had a wonderful time, Virgil, but I don't know I'd go quite that far."

"I am wounded!" Virgil said dramatically. "Well, then, perhaps I can change your mind." He kissed her hand, then her wrist, then began up her forearm.

"Okay, okay," Alan said briskly, moving to take Nikki's hand from his brother's and put himself between the two. "We've had enough of that."

The others laughed at the exchange, and Alan turned to Nikki. "Can I escort you to the elevator?"

"Sure," Nikki replied, smiling. "Goodnight everyone!"

The few who remained responded with their own goodnights, then Virgil turned to Heather. "Oh, Heather, darling! You sang such a wonderful song this evening! Let me return that heavenly kiss!" He grasped her hand and kissed it, withdrawing quickly when Heather retaliated with a quick swat.

"You seem to be a card or two short of a deck, sugar," she told him, an amused look on her face.

Gordon hooted with laughter, as Virgil shook his injured hand and exclaimed, "Yow! Dangerous woman!"

"So right, Virge." Gordon said, grinning. "And that's the way I like 'em, tall and sassy!" He turned to Heather and offered his arm. "May I escort you to the elevator, ma'am?"

"Certainly, sir!" Heather took his arm. "I've had a wonderful time, Virgil. Happy Birthday!"

The two strolled out of the lounge, Heather carrying her shoes and going barefoot. Scott was fixing himself something at the bar, when Virgil turned to Elise.

"Saved the best for last," he murmured, taking her hand. She laughed as he bowed over it, just as ornately as he had Penelope's.

"Are you always this silly when you're drunk?" she asked, grinning as he straightened up, her hand still in his.

"Drunk? Drunk? I'll have you know, mademoiselle, that I am most indubitably not drunk. I'm merely a tad tipsy," he replied with a false haughtiness. His raised eyebrow and mock affronted look made her giggle. Perhaps she'd had a bit too much, too; she wasn't quite sure.

"Right, Virgil, sure," she replied. "Can you put your finger on your nose?"

"Why don't I put your finger on my nose instead?" Taking her hand in both of his, he gently extended her forefinger and tried to put her fingertip on his nose.

She helped out a little, and when he finally managed to accomplish his goal, she ran her finger lightly down the ridge of his nose. He let go with one hand and gathered in her loose finger with his thumb, then kissed her knuckle. His brown eyes met her green ones, and he drew in a sharp, quiet breath. In an instant, something had changed between them. He let the breath out slowly, knowing what it was that had happened. His mind was suddenly cold sober, and all he wanted to do was keep gazing into those green eyes. He considered kissing her on the lips... but a small voice inside him said, "Not yet. Too soon. She may not feel the same."

Instead, he put his free hand to her cheek, and with his other hand, put hers to his face. His fingers toyed briefly with a lock of blonde hair before he slid his palm down and away. Turning his head toward her hand, he kissed her palm, then took the hand away, curling her fingers over it. "Something to dream on," he whispered.

Elise looked down, breaking their gaze. Her fingers still tingled from brushing over the slight stubble on his face. She glanced up again, and smiled softly, murmuring, "Thank you."

They stood there, neither knowing what to say next, when Scott came up. "Virge, you look all in. Why don't I escort Elise down to the elevator while you head for bed? You were up pretty early this morning."

Virgil swallowed, and moistened his lips. The feeling of confusion was growing on him, as well as a bone weary feeling. He was coming down off the buzz, and was soon going to crash, something that Scott could see from across the room.

Nodding, Virgil said, "Sure, Scott." He still held Elise's hand, and he lightly squeezed it. "Thanks

for coming."

"Thanks for inviting me," she said softly. "I had a good time."

"I'm glad."

Scott herded Elise toward the study with his arm, but she looked back at Virgil standing there, looking different than he ever had before. More mysterious, more alluring, more confusing. She raised a hand and said, "Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Elise."

She gazed over her shoulder at him until she reached the steps and had to pay attention to where she was going. Then she and Scott entered the study and were gone.

With the room now empty, Virgil made his way to a chair and sat down heavily in it. He swept his hands back through his hair and sighed heavily. With his elbows on his thighs and his hands dangling in the open space between them, he shook his head. "Why now?" Turning his head to glance at the study, he asked the air, "Why her? Not that I'm complaining or anything; she's a great lady. But I certainly didn't expect it. And it's hit me like a ton of bricks." He snorted a laugh. "And I asked Scott who'd be next. Never thought it would be me."

He got up, stretched and yawned noisily. Then, feeling more exhausted by the minute, he shuffled off to bed.

Post by Tikatu on 3/8/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 20:00:34 GMT

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Thursday, August 16, 2068, 3:10 a.m., Tracy Island

Scott yawned widely and stretched as he headed back to the stairs. He'd met his brothers on their way back from escorting Heather and Nikki, and they'd said a last goodnight to each other. Elise had responded to him in monosyllables on the way to the elevator, and he'd thought briefly about accompanying her all the way back to her apartment. But when the elevator door opened, she stopped long enough to say, "Goodnight, Scott," then stepped inside and was gone.

Before he could turn the first corner, he was surprised to see his father at the door to the sick room, dressed in pajamas and robe, pillow in hand. Jeff was using his master key to open the door.

"Hey, Dad."

Jeff looked up, startled. "Oh, hey there, Scott. Party over yet?"

"Yeah, we've just wrapped it up." Scott gave his father a puzzled frown. "What's up with you?"

Jeff sighed. "I couldn't sleep. Thought I'd come down here and keep Dianne company for the rest of the night." He smiled a little. "We may not be able to actually sleep in the same bed, but her presence is still soothing. She did it for me when I was stuck down here."

"Oh. I didn't know that."

The door slid open. A dull glow lit the interior of the room; a low light shone so Dianne could see if she needed to. A soft, rhythmic beeping could be heard. "I'd better go, son. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Dad. Sleep well."

"You too, Scott."

Jeff disappeared inside the sick room, and Scott shrugged, then continued on his way. He intended to check on Virgil first, then get to bed himself.

Once inside, Jeff moved to the empty bed. He put his pillow on it, and removed the pillow that was already there. Then, he put down the rails on one side of Dianne's bed, and on both sides of his. He pushed the empty bed next to hers, and climbed in. It was awkward leaning over to kiss her; her healing ribs required her to sleep reclined instead of supine. But he bussed her forehead and her cheek. She sighed slightly and turned her head toward him. He smiled, pulled his blankets up, then reached out to take her hand in his before closing his eyes and drifting off.

Post by Tikatu on 3/8/2007

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Subject: Re: Regrouping and Recouperation  
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 20:00:40 GMT  
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And with that we end Chapter Nine: Regrouping and Recuperation!

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