
Subject: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:43:28 GMT

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Healing from the tornadoes is almost at an end. The pieces have been gathered and are being glued back into place, but instead of making the team and its members weaker, they will be the stronger for it. Rebuilding proceeds, and plans long put on hold will be brought out and dusted off. Two recruits have left, but two new members stand waiting in the wings for their chance to add to the team. The temporary stop that our heroes have faced is over, and the momentum builds once again as they look forward to the future.

Posted by Tikatu on August 12, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:44:19 GMT

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Wednesday, September 12, Around 1:00 p.m. locally (Thursday, September 13, around 5:00 a.m. Tracy Island)

As she jogged the streets of New York, Cassie tried to decide what she was going to do about the Thornville offer. The deadline was tomorrow, and she still hadn't made up her mind what to tell them. It wasn't like she didn't want the job. She could probably be happy there and setting up the new fire company would be a challenge. What about after that though? Once the company was started, would it turn into the same thing as working in the city only slower? Was that what she really wanted?

The job at Tracy Industries offered something new. She wouldn't be going out on calls but instead instructing others in fire safety and protocols. Teaching others interested her and would be a change of pace. The chance to travel was appealing, too. It was something she had always wanted to do. There were two drawbacks to the job that she could see right now. One, though nothing had been confirmed, she was still assuming she would be based out of Wichita seeing as that where the application was sent. The one point to this job hunt was to get out of the city, not move from one city to another. The other drawback was not being actively involved in the calls. How long until she missed it? She enjoyed helping people.

She had twenty-four hours to make a decision. Did she take the Thornville job or not? What if the Tracy Industries job didn't pan out? She could very well be passing up a good job for nothing. Yet, was the Thornville job the job she was looking for?

Cassie had asked Mark for his advice. He hadn't been much help, telling her to follow her heart. She had a feeling her brother didn't really want her to leave though he hadn't told her that and he never would. He'd never ask her to stay just for him.

Wanting some more constructive advice, Cassie had emailed both Dr. Lindon and Luke. She was waiting for their replies. Maybe she'd have time to check before going to work this afternoon.

A block from the apartment, Cassie slowed to a walk. She switched her watch from stopwatch mode to time. She'd still have time to check her email before heading in to work. She should have been off today but Frank had asked her to cover a paramedic shift last night. She had agreed, seeing as she had taken the next four days off.

When she reached the apartment, she took a quick shower and changed into her work uniform. After blow drying and braiding her hair, she headed for the computer. It didn't take long for the, "You have mail", message to appear on the screen. She clicked the box and was taken to her inbox. She had two unopened messages - one from Dr. Lindon and one from Luke. She opened the former first.

Cassie,

It's great that you have found such good reception with your applications. Sounds like your hunt is going positively. Remember what I said - don't go rushing into anything. There is no rush to find a new job. Make sure the job you choose is the one you want. Unless the job up in Thornville is something that you really want to do, then go ahead and pass it up. If the second interview with Tracy Industries doesn't work out, there are other opportunities out there. From your email, it sounds as if you're really interested in the position at Tracy Industries. I think you owe it to yourself to continue exploring that avenue even if it means passing up the offer in Thornville.

If you want to talk more, feel free to give me a call. Let me know what you decide.

Sincerely,

Ellen

Having read that email, Cassie opened the one from Luke.

Hey Cass,

It's no surprise to me that so many people are interested in you. They'd be crazy not too! The first offer sounds good, but from what you wrote, sounds to me you're interested in the job at Tracy Industries. If that's the case, go for the interview. If that means passing up the other offer, then so be it. If for some reason you blow the second interview, I'm sure another opportunity will come your way. Just don't go juggling desk items from Mr. Tracy's desk. Not sure that trick will impress a big shot like him!

I'm settling into my job okay and enjoying it. Rommel's getting used to it, too. He sends a doggie kiss your way for the hug! Stay safe, girl, and let me know how things go!

Luke

Cassie signed out and shut down the computer. It was about time to head for the station. She was hoping for a slow shift so she could ponder her decision some more, now with the advice of two of the people she trusted the most.

Posted by starrynebula on August 12, 2007

Wednesday, September 12, 2 PM; LJ Auto and Boat Repair and Body Shop, San Francisco (9AM the next day on Tracy Island)

"Will, you've got to come out and see this!"

Manager Will Abbott looked up from his computer as Jessie Feldman, who worked at one of the front desks, burst into his office. "What's up, Jess?"

"There's a parade of classic cars going by, and one of them just pulled up to our door!"

He saved what he'd been doing, and hurried out of his office. It had been a slow day, so three of his mechanics, as well as everyone in the lobby - staff and customers both - were outside, surrounding the car. Very little of it could be seen through the mass of humanity, so he joined them.

The object of everyone's attention was a white convertible. One of the customers asked, "How old is this baby?"

"It's a 1969 Pontiac Firebird," Will breathed. "Now that's impressive. Nearly a hundred years old, and still in mint condition." He looked around for the owner, and saw a man about forty-five, who smiled at him and nodded.

"You know your classic cars, sir," he said. "But as for mint condition, I'm not so sure. About half a mile from here, it sounded like the timing was off. I know you work mostly on newer cars, but I heard that you recently added a small division that could handle older models. Can you help me?"

"Pop the hood and let's have a look."

Seconds later, the owner, Will and two mechanics were gazing at the inner workings of the vehicle. "Beautiful," said Mike, the older of the mechanics. "And I see the problem. Hang on." He went into one of the repair bays, and returned with a couple of tools. "Art," he said to the other mechanic, "give me a hand here."

As Will, the car owner, and a few of the customers watched (the others had either gone back to work, or inside to complete their transactions), the two men bent over the engine, and some noises and mutterings were heard. A couple of minutes later, they stood up and Mike asked the owner to start the car. He complied, and a moment later the engine turned over, and was humming contentedly.

"Thanks," said the owner as he shut it off again and got out. "I'd probably have been able to take care of it myself at the grounds, but I didn't want to drive it that far, possibly causing more trouble or damage. Also," he grinned sheepishly at Will, "I heard about you from a friend, and wanted to see for myself just how good you guys are. But I promise I didn't tamper with it deliberately. It was just serendipity."

Will laughed. "Okay, no problem. I presume we passed the test?"

"With flying colors," the other man replied with a grin. "How much do I owe you?"

"Nothing. You paid us by coming in here and allowing us to take a look at this beautiful car. We don't get many in as of yet, and none this old and well preserved."

"Well thank you; I appreciate that. My name is Jerry Hampton." He held out his hand.

Will took it and they shook. "Will Abbott. Good to meet you. I presume you're here for the show."

"At Monster Park, yes. The Forty Niners have an away game this weekend. Hey, I've got an idea." Jerry went back to his car, and pulled a briefcase out from the back seat. He opened it, and took out an envelope. "Here're ten tickets to the show. Perhaps some of your staff might like to attend, as well as yourself. They're open dated, so you can show up for any of the four days we're here."

"Thank you, sir. We all appreciate it." Will grinned. "And don't be surprised if you hear Art and Mike at the show, braggin' about how they worked on your car."

Jerry laughed as he put his briefcase back, and got in. "I'll look forward to it. But I'd better get going, before they assign my spot to someone else." He restarted the engine and put it in gear. "Thanks again," he said and, with a wave, pulled out of the parking lot.

Ten minutes later, Will was back in his office, trying once again to look at the information on his computer screen. But his mind was on that car. I sure would have like to have been the one to work on it. It's been too long since I got to do any hands-on work - on any car. I miss it. He shook himself mentally, and got back to his office work. But the seed of an idea had planted itself in the back of his mind, and was beginning to take root.

Posted by hobbeth on August 12, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:44:55 GMT

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Tracy Island, Thursday, September 13th, 1:45 pm...

It was an uncharacteristically rainy day on Tracy Island. A minor tropical storm had moved in during the night, drenching the area with rain. Gordon was forced to stay inside and out of his beloved pool.

Gordon was bored stiff.

A bored Gordon is a dangerous thing.

He had already spiked the sugar bowl with salt; hidden all of Alan's underwear; and convinced Tyler that if the rain continued at this rate, the island would be torn off of its artificial mountings

and float away.

He had finally been instructed with a stern, "Find something productive to do," from his father.

So, Gordon was sitting at his desk in his room, surfing the internet. He'd already checked eBay for any new prank materials, not finding anything of interest. He then moved on to another website where he placed a large order of colored shampoo and skin dyes. Making a mental note to be on hand when the supply plane brought it in a few weeks, he settled his account and grinned in anticipation.

He then decided to do a quick check on International Rescue before he shut down. After the last few anti-IR articles had been published, Jeff had asked them all to keep an eye out for any new information. He typed "International Rescue" into a search engine and waited to see what would come up. Almost instantly he received information on a number of pages. Gordon scanned through them, not really finding anything new. He was about to close down when a page caught his eye. Frowning, he clicked on it and waited for the page to load. When it came up, he burst out laughing.

The title of the page read: "International Rescue, Our Tryikalican Brethren".

"This is great!" He quickly surveyed the navigation page. "Oh, God! They have names for us! Let me see....Jhutu... Lightning bird, that has to be Scott...Qiophana... Mighty Green one--Virge!!" By now Gordon had tears running down his face. "Oh man, this is priceless! I gotta see what else they have." He found yet another page with their humble beginnings, starting with a sign from "Undlieek" and how they were sent to earth to become "Jestreethzi n'Hildrathuk", the Savivors. There was more on the alien technology of the ships, even a few fuzzy pictures with brightly colored blobs, assuring the viewer that these were "authentic photos of the mighty craft".

"I have to do something; this is too good an opportunity to pass up!" Gordon quickly composed an email. There was no fear of it being traced back to him or the island; the security features were too strong to crack. "I knew those pictures of Scott would come in handy." He pulled up the photos and did a few modifications; deleting Scott's head, blurring the scene enough that one could tell it was a scantily clothed man, but all identifying features were distorted; taking out the background and creating a new one. He also added a few names of his own to their list, adding that he was a member of the Jestreethzi n'Hildrathuk's inner sanctum. He also signed himself up for the Brethren's newsletter.

Hitting "send", Gordon sat back with a contented sigh. He had a feeling life was going to get a lot more interesting.

Posted by lillehafrue on August 14, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:45:11 GMT
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Tracy Island, Thursday, September 13 8pm

Tropical Storm Ludmilla had finally passed by. The clouds were drifting off to the east, showing little glimpses of the stars that had begun to appear.

Scott walked onto the balcony, and leaned his forearms the railing. The railing still dripped from the day-long rain, but Scott didn't care. He was looking straight ahead but he wasn't really seeing anything. In reality he was lost in thought. He and Elise would be leaving soon to pick up Cassandra Kishi at LAX and bring her to the island. It was a task that he wasn't happy to have been given.

We're making a mistake picking Cassandra Kishi from the applicants that were given us, he mused. Dad wants someone with fire fighting experience to help with the rescues involving fire and what does he do? He chooses the applicant with the least amount of experience. Sure, she has the paramedic skills, which are a plus, but we already have Dom and Nikki to help in the field. Not to mention Luke is just missing a few courses to be a paramedic. We could do without a paramedic. What we need is someone to keep the near disaster that had almost happened in Australia from really happening on a future rescue. Is five years really enough experience for that?

The sound of a bird made him look to his right. He caught sight of a colorful bird taking flight. His gaze followed it until it disappeared into the darkness. He stood up a little straighter and rested his hands on the railing.

Oh, sure, Virgil's arguments against my choices were sound. Still, maybe we should've just kept looking. We could've asked HR to send us some more applicants. Maybe that's what I should've asked Dad to do instead of agreeing to interview Ms. Kishi. Scott sighed. Well, things are set up now. She's scheduled to come out to the island and it isn't practical to change things now. Still, just because she's coming out here doesn't mean we have to go with her. There's nothing saying we need to divulge IR to her.

Then there's the question about why she's looking for a new job. Luke avoided the question. Does that mean he's protecting her? Was he keeping something from us that might affect her getting the job? After all, she is his friend. I'm sure he knows something he's not telling us. Is she having problems at work? Are they forcing her to look for a position elsewhere? People just don't go looking for new jobs unless they're unhappy where they're at or aren't fitting in well. There's something there, and I'm going to find it. I'm not going to let something slip by that could be detrimental to the team.

A beep from his communicator interrupted broke through his musings. "Elise to Scott."

"What's up, Elise?" Scott asked her.

"We should probably get ready to leave. You ready?"

"Yeah. I'll meet you at Tracy One."

"Okay, see you in a few. Elise out."

Scott took one more look out across the island and then turned to head inside, so he could join

Elise on Tracy One.

Posted by starrynebula on August 15, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:45:27 GMT

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Thursday, September 13, 2068 almost 7 a.m. NYC (11 p.m. same day Tracy Island)

"Mark, have you seen ..." Cassie broke off as her brother held out her wallet to her. It had been sitting on the coffee table. "Thanks," she told him with a smile. She was usually much more organized than this but the upcoming flight to who knew where was starting to make her nervous.

"A little nervous?"

"You could say that," she replied as she shouldered the one travel bag she was taking with her.

"I don't think you mentioned where you're heading," Mark said.

"All I know is that the interview is at the Tracys' home," Cassie said as she headed toward the apartment door. "I won't know the exact destination until I get my ticket."

"What do you mean you don't know where they're flying you to?" Mark asked. Grabbing his keys, and following her. "Sounds kind of suspicious to me."

Cassie couldn't help it. She had to laugh at her brother's last remark. Sometimes he could be way too suspicious. "Relax, will you? Tracy Industries is a well known company. I'm sure it's fine."

"I'm just trying to look out for you," he told her.

"I thought I was the older sibling. Aren't I supposed to look out for you?" Cassie asked as they stepped into the elevator.

"I'm not amused," Mark told her.

The two were silent as the elevator made its way to the ground floor. The two walked outside to find a cab waiting out front of the apartment building. The cabbie was waiting beside the cab.

"Ms. Cassandra Kishi?" the cab driver asked, as he opened the door for her.

"That's me. I guess that makes you my ride to the airport?"

"Sure does, miss. Bernie Levine, atcha service." He made a motion toward her bag. "Wouldja like that in th' trunk?"

"I don't like the looks of him, Cass," Mark said softly to his sister as she handed the cabbie her

bag. He kept his eyes on Bernie.

Bernie shoved back his leather cap. "Well, I know I gotta face only a mudder could love, but I'm honest." He motioned toward Mark. "Since yer so concerned over the lady's well-bein', why dontcha ride along? No extra charge."

"I think I will," Mark responded, not taking his eyes off the cabbie as the three got into the cab.

Mark was quiet for about five minutes into the trip to the airport. Trying to keep his voice down, he addressed Cassie. "I still thinks he looks suspicious. They won't tell you where they're flying you to. Why don't you just forget this and take the job in Thornville. At least it doesn't sound as if they're trying to kidnap you!"

"The Tracy's ain't in the business of kidnappin'," Bernie remarked from the driver's seat, glancing at them through the rear view mirror.

Cassie laughed as Mark glared at the cabbie. "You'll have to forgive him Bernie. He's a police officer. Being suspicious comes with the job."

"Oh, a cop! Well then! Never argue wit' a member of New York's finest, I always say. They tend ta increase yer fine... if ya know what I mean?" Bernie grinned at Mark, his gold front tooth shining in the mirrors. "So, this ya first time outta the city, miss?"

"No not the first time. Flew out to California a few years back and I went to Japan once as a kid. I have a couple of brothers who live up in Connecticut too now. Other than trips to the Catskills and field trips that's about the extent of my excursions out of the city."

"That's interesin'. Got family in Japan or just went for the culture?"

"On my mother's side," Cassie replied, nodding. "It was nice getting to see that side of my family. Other than my grandfather and uncle, none of them have left Japan."

"Musta been nice ta see 'em them."

They chatted the rest of the way to JFK Airport. After awhile even Mark quit sulking and joined in on the conversation. At the airport, Bernie got Cassie's bag out of the trunk for her.

"Now, I'm ta remind ya that yer ticket's waiting at the Delta counter." He handed her bag to a sky cap, then tipped his hat. "Have a safe trip, miss, an' tell ol' Mr. Tracy that Bernie sends his regards."

"Thank-you."

He motioned toward Mark. "You need a ride back seein' as ya know I didn't kidnap the lady?"

"No, I'm going to walk Cassie inside. I'll call someone to pick me up."

"Well, if that's whatchya want. G'bye now." He gave a jaunty salute, got in his cab, and started off again.

As Bernie drove away, Cassie and Mark headed into the airport. Cassie went to the Delta Airlines ticket window and got her ticket. Her destination was LAX and there was a short note with it saying she'd receive further instructions once there.

"Don't even say anything," Cassie told her brother as she headed toward the security gate. She could tell by his expression that the note made him like the whole idea even less.

"Well, at least call, when you get to wherever they're taking you," Mark said, admitting defeat. He could see that he wasn't going to change his sister's mind.

"I will," she said, coming to a stop right before the lines that were forming to go through security. "Thanks for coming this far with me," she told him.

"It's no problem, Cass," he told her, wrapping her in a hug. "Have a safe flight," he told her as she stepped away.

"Thanks."

Cassie got into one of the lines, and started waiting for her turn to pass through security. Turning back toward the airport entrance, Mark took out his cell phone. He figured he'd give Mercy a call. His partner wasn't going to enjoy hearing from him at this time of the morning, but he knew if he threatened to call out this evening, she'd give in and come get him.

Posted by starrynebula on August 15, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:45:41 GMT

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Thursday, September 13, 7 a.m. Los Angeles (Friday, September 14, 3 a.m. Tracy Island)

"I'm sorry to hear you're turning down our offer," Mr. Marshall, Thornville's head councilman, replied. "Are you sure there isn't anything we could offer to make you change your mind?"

"It's not the offer that I don't like," Cassie told him. She was in a small, private terminal in LAX waiting for her contact from Tracy Industries to arrive. She had never felt so isolated in an airport before. A little part of her was wondering if Mark's kidnapping theories weren't so far-fetched after all. "I've just got other offers that I want to explore more and it's not fair to keep you all waiting. I'm sure you'll find the right person to help you out. I just don't think I'm that person," she told him, as she saw a woman and man, both around her age, walk from the jetway bridge and into the terminal. It looked as if her contacts had arrived.

"I understand. We wish you the best in whatever you do."

"Thank you, Mr. Marshall. Good luck in your search."

"Thanks. Have a good day."

"Bye," Cassie said, before ending the call. Flipping the phone closed, Cassie turned her attention to the two people who had entered the terminal.

"Cassandra Kishi?" the woman asked cheerfully, holding out her hand. The man was following closely behind her.

"That's me," Cassie replied, as she took her hand.

"Elise Collins. I'm the Tracys' pilot," she said introducing herself. "This is Scott Tracy, the eldest of Mr. Tracy's sons."

"Hello, Ms Kishi," Scott said crisply.

"Nice to meet you," Cassie said. Elise seemed friendly enough. Cassie wasn't sure what to make of Scott Tracy, though. He seemed the polar opposite of Elise.

"Ending a call with a concerned family member?" Scott asked, nodding to the phone that Cassie still held in her left hand.

"No. Turning down a job offer actually. Met with them last week and they wanted an answer by this afternoon. I wasn't ready to commit to anything with this interview scheduled."

"What if you don't get this job?"

"Then I guess I go back to looking," Cassie replied. Scott nodded again.

"How was your flight?" Elise asked.

"It was fine, or at least the part of the trip I was awake for. First class definitely beats coach."

"Wait until you see Tracy 1," Elise replied with a smile and a nod over her shoulder to the plane waiting outside for them.

"Ms. Kishi, do you have any other luggage?" Scott asked.

"No, this is my only bag," she said, indicating the bag she had over her shoulder.

"Then if you ladies are done chatting, may I suggest we board the plane? We've got a six-hour flight ahead of us."

"Let me take that for you," Elise said, reaching for Cassie's bag. Cassie handed it over. "As for Grumpy up there," Elise said as they followed Scott toward the jetway bridge, "don't hold him against the rest of his family. The rest of the Tracys are much more charming."

Cassie suppressed the urge to smile, as Scott shot a look back at Elise. He had evidently heard her comment. No matter how she felt about him personally, Scott Tracy was still her potential employer's son. Etiquette dictated that she at least be civil to him.

"Wow!" Cassie exclaimed as she stepped on board the jet. This flight to Los Angeles had been the first time she had even flown first class. This jet way outdid even first class.

"Make yourself comfortable, Ms. Kishi. If you need anything, just use the intercom," Elise said showing Cassie how to use it.

"Thank-you, Ms. Collins."

"Call me Elise, please."

Cassie nodded. "And you can call me Cassie," she told her.

"Well, Cassie, I'll try to make this a smooth flight for you," Elise said as she headed toward the cockpit.

xxxx

The flight so far had been silent. The weather was clear and the flight routine so far, making talk unnecessary between pilot and copilot. As for idle conversation, Scott was in no mood to talk to Elise after her comment back in the airport. How dare she say something like that to a potential employee? he thought.

"I'm going to get a drink. You want something?" Scott asked Elise, finally breaking the silence in the cockpit.

"A Sprite would be nice, thank-you," Elise replied, not looking at him. She could tell he was still unhappy about her "Grumpy" comment.

Undoing his seatbelt, Scott stood up and headed out of the cockpit.

"You doing okay?" Scott asked their passenger as he entered the cabin.

Cassie looked up from the book she was reading.

"I'm fine, Mr. Tracy. Thank-you," Cassie replied.

"Can I get you something to drink?"

"Water will be fine."

Scott nodded and then went and got the drinks. He came back and handed Cassie a bottle of water. Setting Elise's Sprite off to the side, he sat down in the seat next to Cassie. He opened his bottle of Coca-Cola.

"Did you work yesterday?" Scott asked trying to start a conversation with their passenger.

"I worked the evening shift," Cassie said nodding. "I should've been off yesterday but they were short a paramedic so I filled in. Figured it was the right thing to do seeing as they gave me four days off to do this interview."

"Get along with everyone at work?" Scott asked, trying to sound casual even though he was searching for information.

"We're close," Cassie told him, starting to feel on edge. Informal or not, this was definitely starting to feel like an interview.

xxxx

In the cockpit, Elise changed her mind about her drink. Maybe she could catch Scott before he came back with it. Flipping the switch she opened the intercom.

"Then why the job change?" she heard Scott asking. He had to be talking to Cassie.

"My personal life has been more downs than ups lately. My son was killed in a car accident three months ago; my divorce was finalized a little over a month ago and my father never did want me to be a firefighter. Thinks it's too dangerous for his 'little girl'. I feel like I need to get out of the city. Find a place where I can make a new start. Make my life feel more like my own again."

Nice going, Scott, Elsie thought to herself. You're managing to make a great first impression.

Not wanting to give him a chance to ask any more insensitive questions, Elise spoke. "Hey Scott, can you bring me back a ginger ale instead of the Sprite?" she asked.

"Yeah, sure. I'll be right up with it," came his reply.

Elise turned off the intercom system. It wasn't too long before Scott came back into the cockpit and handed her the soda. She took it from him and watched as he sat back down in the copilot's seat.

"Can you stuff that foot in any further, Tracy?" she asked. The remark earned her a glare from Scott before he shifted his gaze and looked out the windshield in front of him.

Posted by starrynebula on August 16, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:45:55 GMT

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Friday, September 14, 2068, 9 a.m., Tracy Island

Jeff read over Kat's resignation again, and sighed. There's no way we can do without a mechanic of some kind. Brains's plate is far too full, and so is Tin-Tin's. And though some of the new recruits are helping with post rescue maintenance, we still need someone for the vehicles we use every day. He put the letter aside. I'll alert Human Resources to this and request that we advertise for a replacement for Kat right away. Let's see; what exactly do we need in a new mechanic? Now that I've seen the scope of what the job entails, I should have a better idea.

A few moments later, he had list of needs and qualifications written in his data pad. "Someone with a background in working with aircraft, marine craft, and automobiles. Body work and fabrication experience a must. Heavy duty equipment experience a plus." He tapped his stylus against his chin. "I hadn't intended for Kat to go on rescues, and there weren't too many rescues where her skills were actually needed. I would expect that for her replacement, but... it wouldn't be a bad idea to have them look for military or volunteer rescue experience as well. Whoever we recruit would then be better prepared to go on rescues if necessary. It's not something I want to actually advertise for, though. People would wonder..."

He looked over the list again, then toggled the switch to the lab. "Brains?"

"Yes, Mr. Tracy?"

"Do you and Tin-Tin have a minute? I have something I'd like you to look over."

"Sure, Mr. Tracy. We'll be right up."

"No need. I'll email this to you." Jeff closed the file, attached it to an email, and sent it to both of his engineers. "Incoming."

Jeff sat back, sighing again, then taking a sip of his cooling coffee. We can't be too long about this; we need Seven back online as soon as possible.

Finally, Brains replied again. "That looks good, Mr. Tracy."

"Yes," Tin-Tin added, "it does." She paused, then said, "Perhaps you could put in as an aside that we need someone taller... with a longer reach..."

"And without a blood sugar problem," Brains amended.

"We can weed that out on this end," Jeff assured them. "Thanks for your input, Tin-Tin, Brains. I'll see you at lunch."

Their conversation closed off, and Jeff shook his head. "Taking Lady Penelope's advice on Kat looked like a good idea at the time. But I wish she -- or Kat herself -- had mentioned the blood sugar thing before we hired. Then again, we didn't hire her for rescues." He glanced down at the list he'd made, and began composing an email to Human Resources. "I'll just attach this to the email, and let them take care of the rest."

His attention was diverted when the radio behind him crackled to life. "Tracy One to Tracy Island," Elise's voice called. "Requesting permission to land."

Jeff smiled, and turned to the radio, toggling the switch that opened communications. "Tracy Island here. Permission granted, Tracy One. Welcome home."

Posted by Tikatu on August 16, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:46:31 GMT

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Friday, September 14, 9:30 a.m. Tracy Island

Cassie had dozed off when Elise's voice over the intercom woke her up. "Cassie, we're on final approach. Please make sure your seat belt is fastened."

"Ok," Cassie replied, sitting up a little straighter in her seat. She hadn't taken her seatbelt off, so she didn't have to worry about that. Curious about their destination, Cassie glanced out her window. They were approaching an island. She had made the remark numerous times about running away to her own private island. Looks like this family has made that saying a reality, she mused. Mark's words about them trying to kidnap her went through her head. Get a grip, girl, Cassie thought, they wouldn't go through all this trouble to kidnap a firefighter from New York City.

Cassie watched out the window, as the island got closer. She was hoping she hadn't already ruined her chances of getting the job before she had even met Mr. Tracy. She couldn't shake the feeling that his oldest son had been looking for something wrong when he started asking her questions. Not to mention he hadn't been all that friendly at the airport. Did he have something against her? If he did, why had she even been asked to come for this interview?

She tried to put the questions out of her mind as she felt the wheels of the plane touch down. The plane soon came to a stop. Cassie undid her seatbelt and then stood up and stretched. It wasn't long before Scott came out of the cockpit.

"Elise's running post flight checks," he told Cassie. "If you'll follow me, my father is waiting to meet you."

Taking a deep breath, Cassie followed Scott off the plane. She saw two figures off to the side of the airstrip. Scott headed in their direction.

"Cassie, I'd like you to meet my father, Jeff Tracy," Scott began as they reached them. Cassie shook hands with Jeff as Scott continued with introductions. "And this is my brother Virgil," Scott said indicating the younger of the two men. Cassie shook Virgil's proffered hand. "Dad, Virgil, Ms. Kishi."

"Welcome to Tracy Island, Ms. Kishi," Jeff said with a smile. He definitely does seem friendlier than Scott, Cassie thought.

"Thank-you for inviting me, Mr. Tracy."

"Did you have a good flight?"

"Yes, sir, I did. Slept most of the way from New York to LA though. Tracy 1 is amazing!"

Jeff smiled. "Glad you enjoyed your trip. I thought we'd wait and have the interview this afternoon, say around three o'clock. That will give you a chance to settle in, and get something to eat. Maybe see a little bit of the place."

"That would be fine."

"Great. Virgil here will show you to your room and then show you around if you'd like. I'll see you at three."

"Okay. Again, Mr. Tracy, it's a pleasure to meet you," Cassie said, offering Jeff her hand again. They shook hands and then Cassie followed Virgil as he headed toward the villa. Cassie took the time to look around. The island was amazing. She couldn't imagine what it would be like to live in a place like this.

"Pretty amazing, huh?" Virgil remarked, watching Cassie taking in everything around her.

"You can say that again. It's so quiet compared to the city."

"Yeah, well, enjoy the quiet while you can. I've got five younger brothers and a younger sister not to mention some of the staff. We get up toward the house and it can get kind of noisy at times," Virgil told her. "Do you have any siblings.?"

"I've got three older brothers and a younger brother. Speaking of which, is there a way I can call my brother, Mark? I'd told him I'd call when I got here and tell him I was safe."

"Yeah, sure. You can use my satellite phone," Virgil said, taking it out of his pocket and handing it to her. "Just try to stay vague about where you are."

"Middle of nowhere vague enough?" Cassie asked as she took the phone from Virgil. Virgil laughed.

Off to the side, Cassie thought she saw a black something disappearing behind some vegetation. "What was that?" she asked.

Virgil followed her gaze. He spotted Rommel in the bushes and knew Luke wasn't far away. "Huh? I don't see anything. Don't worry about it," he told her and started walking again.

As the two of them continued to the house, Cassie dialed her brother's cell number. As she expected, his voice mail picked up. "Hey Mark, it's Cass. Just wanted to let you know I arrived at my destination safely. Everything is fine. I'll get in touch with you later in the weekend. Love you."

She ended the call and handed the phone back to Virgil. "Thank-you, Mr. Tracy."

"Call me Virgil, please," he said putting his phone back in his pocket. "May I call you Cassandra?"

"Either Cassie or Cass, please. People start using my first name and I start thinking I'm in trouble."

"Not a problem," Virgil said, smiling. "Mark one of your older brothers?" he asked. He thought about how protective Scott could be sometimes.

"My younger brother actually. My older brothers are triplets. They've always been close which meant that when Mark came along, I was happy to have someone to help even the odds. When Mark told us all he was gay six years ago the rest of the family kind of turned their backs on him while I chose to stand by him. I'm closer to Mark than the rest of my family these days."

Virgil nodded. He couldn't imagine ever turning his back on his other siblings no matter what.

"Speaking of younger brothers, here's one of mine now," Virgil told her as he noticed Gordon walking in their direction.

xxxx

Cassie stood just inside the door to the bedroom portion of the guest suite. She hadn't expected something so big, although after seeing Tracy 1 maybe she should have. She walked slowly over to the doors leading out to the balcony. Even without going outside the view was pretty. Definitely better than tall buildings and honking horns, Cassie thought to herself.

Turning from the balcony doors, Cassie walked over to the bed and placed her bag on top of it. Continuing her exploration, she headed toward what she figured was the bathroom. Opening the door, she found that it indeed was. Like the rest of the room, the bathroom was more spacious than what she was used to.

"This whole place is amazing," Cassie said to herself as she turned and headed back out into the bedroom. She glanced over at her bag. I'll unpack later, she thought to herself. Right now, I'm looking forward to seeing more of this island.

Cassie walked back into the living area of the suite, where Virgil was waiting for her.

"I feel like I'm at a fancy hotel," Cassie commented as she entered the room.

"I take it everything is satisfactory then," Virgil said, smiling.

"Definitely."

"Are you hungry?" Virgil asked thinking about the time difference. Though it wasn't quite lunch time for them, in New York it would be around dinner time. At Cassie's nod Virgil suggested, "Then why don't we head down to the kitchen and get you something to eat before I show you around."

Posted by starrynebula on August 16, 2007

Friday, September 14, 2pm Tracy Island

Cassie followed Virgil as he led her to the second floor of the villa. He had spent the last few hours showing her around and introducing her to people they had met on the way. Cassie wasn't sure she'd be able to keep their names straight. Though she had lived in the city all her life, the island was overwhelming. She hoped she didn't get lost. Maybe it was all the open space?

Jeff and Scott were already in the lounge as the two of them walked in. Jeff stood up as Virgil and Cassie walked toward his desk.

"Ms. Kishi, I hoped you enjoyed your tour."

"Yes, Mr. Tracy. Virgil has been a wonderful tour guide. Your home is quite impressive," Cassie replied.

"Thank-you," Jeff replied. "Why don't we all have a seat," he said indicating a group of four chairs that he had set off to the side of his desk in somewhat of a circle.

Cassie sat down in one of the chairs and Virgil sat down to her right. Not wanting to sit next to Cassie, Scott sat in the chair on Virgil's right leaving the chair to Cassie's left open for his father.

"So, Ms. Kishi," Jeff said as he took the remaining seat. "I've looked over your credentials, and I'm impressed at your drive. You've been working toward your goal very systematically." He put the data pad he'd been looking at down on the small table beside him. "Tell me, which do you prefer: taking action, or teaching others? Because this is, for all intents and purposes, a teaching position."

"I do realize that, Mr. Tracy. While I do enjoy being out in the field and a part of things, I do realize the importance of teaching others. My squad members and I are continuously learning from one another. I've also had some experience in a training position. I've trained two rookies in the past year. One was on the paramedic squad when one of the regulars had to take a leave of absence and I filled in for them. The other one was on the fire squad. We were training him for another precinct as they already had another rookie on the squad at the time."

Jeff nodded slowly. "I see. So teaching others isn't a problem."

Virgil half-raised his hand. "Do you see yourself as a leader? Would you be willing to take the lead in a situation if necessary?"

Cassie considered the question. "I'm not the kind of person that has to be in the lead. I believe in team work. If the situation I'm in calls for me to step up and take the lead, then I'll do so."

"That's good," Virgil remarked. He glanced quickly to his right, then cleared his throat. "You seem to have quite a bit going for you where you are, it seems. We spoke to Luke, and he told us we weren't your only job application. Why are you out there looking? Why now in your life?"

Scott sagged a bit, and looked away. He hadn't had the opportunity to tell Virgil what he'd learned earlier. Still, he was glad that it was who Virgil had brought it up; it meant that even Virge knew it was an important question.

Cassie had known the question was going to be asked again. Still, she was careful not to look in Scott's direction. Evidently, he hadn't mentioned their earlier conversation with his father and brother. She wasn't about to be the one to bring that up. She knew it put her in a tense situation with Scott Tracy, her potential boss's son and evidently a important person in the decision of hiring her as he was at the interview.

"To be honest with you, I'm looking for a way to reclaim my life in a way. My husband, Alex, and our little boy were in a car accident two months ago. My son, Nathan didn't make it. His death put more pressure on an already strained marriage. Alex and I mutually agreed to go our separate ways. I grew up in the city and had been with Alex since high school. It's hard to put things behind me and move on when I'm constantly reminded about it everyday. That's why I decided to go looking for a job that got me away from NYC."

"That's a valid enough reason," Jeff said, smiling slightly. "I know of quite a few people who want to put tragedy behind them."

"I'm sorry about your loss," Virgil said, his voice sounding sincere. Scott muttered something that could have been something similar. Jeff gave his eldest an odd look.

"Scott?" he asked. "Do you have any questions to ask?"

"Uh, no, not really," Scott replied. He made a gesture toward Virgil. "Virgil's already asked my main question."

Jeff picked up the data pad, and looked at it again. "All right." He caught Cassie's gaze in his own. "How do you feel about travel, Ms. Kishi?"

Cassie chanced a look over at Scott, before answering. His main question. Wonder if he would have had the nerve to ask that again, Cassie thought to herself even as she started answering Mr. Tracy.

"Haven't had much chance to travel, but I'm willing to do it. Mr. Marley already informed me that my position would require traveling." Cassie hoped she didn't sound to eager. She didn't want Mr. Tracy to think she was more interested in the chance to travel than in doing the job.

"Even to countries that might have different standards than ours? Where you might have to cover your head, or wear a long skirt?" Not that this was going to be an issue if they brought her on board for IR, but Jeff knew that even Dianne sometimes had problems with the local customs when out on a rescue.

"My mother's native country is Japan, Mr. Tracy. Even though I don't care for dresses and skirts, I wore a kimono when I was over there as that is part of my family's tradition. A long skirt shouldn't be a problem."

"That must have been a ceremonial event," Virgil said off-handedly. "I've only heard of kimonos being worn during ceremonies nowadays." He sat up straighter, interested. "What kind of ceremony was it?"

"Virgil, you can discuss that a little later," Jeff said, holding up his hand. He glanced at the pad again. "How would your family feel about you moving some distance away. perhaps even out of the U.S.?" He remembered Jim Kennedy and how concerned he'd been about exactly where his daughter was.

"I don't have the closest relationship with my parents as it is. As long as my parents heard from me on a regular basis, they wouldn't say too much about it. Two of my older brothers no longer live in the city. The only one who might have a problem with me leaving is my younger brother but he won't stand in my way if I decide to do it. I'm closer to Mark than any of my other family members."

"Hm, yes. " Jeff glanced at his sons. "Any other questions? Scott? Virgil?"

"I can't think of anything at the moment," Virgil said. Scott merely shook his head.

Jeff's eyes narrowed a bit. Is Scott's behavior because Cassandra isn't his first pick? If so, it's rather childish of him. I'd better speak with him a little later.

"Well, if there are no other questions from us, perhaps Ms. Kishi has a few questions of her own to ask." He swept a hand toward her.

Cassie took a calming breath, trying not to be obvious about it. She always hated this point of an interview. She knew she should at least ask one question.

"I was actually wondering where I would be based," Cassie asked. His question about how her family would react to her moving out of the US had her even more curious about that. "Personally, I don't really want to move from one city just to live in another city."

Jeff smiled, an expression with just a hint of mischievousness to it. Virgil actually grinned, and Scott passed his hand over his mouth as if to wipe the smile from his face.

"Don't worry, Ms. Kishi, if we hire you for this job, you won't be moving from one city to another."

Cassie hadn't missed the expressions that had crossed their faces. What had they found so amusing about her question? Was there something they weren't telling her?

Cassie nodded. "I can't think of any other questions right now, Mr. Tracy."

"Well, then," Jeff said, as he rose to his feet. "I guess we're through here." He held his hand out to Cassie and they shook hands. "If you have any more questions, feel free to ask me. In the meantime," he took a quick look at his watch, "we have a few hours until dinner. Scott? Why don't you escort Ms. Kishi to her room, then I'd like to speak to you and Virgil when you get back."

Scott had also risen, as had Virgil. "Yes, sir," he said.

"Thank-you for your time, Mr. Tracy," Cassie said politely.

"You've got the run of the facilities while you're here. Please feel free to use the pool, the hot tub... just be careful on the beach. There's a fierce riptide this time of year. Scott?"

Scott stepped forward. "If you'll come with me, I'll walk you to your room."

--Cassie's Interview by starrynebula and Tikatu on August 17, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:47:53 GMT

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"So," Jeff began, leaning back in his desk chair. "What do you think?" He gave each of his sons, who sat on the other side of the desk, a pointed look. "Virgil?"

"Well, she has experience in teaching others," Virgil replied. "That's a point in her favor. She's also a team player."

"She'd have to be, as a firefighter," Scott commented. He shook his head. "I still don't think she has enough experience, even with the paramedic skills."

"At least now you know her reasons for looking for a new job," Virgil responded, his voice a little acerbic. "I'd say they're pretty legit, wouldn't you?"

Jeff frowned. "What's the problem here, Scott?" he asked. "You weren't exactly friendly at the interview."

Scott looked down. "I know...," he said in a low voice. "I guess I'm leery about bringing her on board."

"Because she doesn't have what it takes, or because she's not your first choice?" Jeff knew his sons well, particularly his eldest.

I hate it when he cuts to the chase like that, Scott thought gloomily. He glanced up again to look his father in the face. "All right. I'll admit it. She's not my choice," he grumbled. "And I know it's my own ego talking." He stood up, throwing out his arms. "I realize she has all the qualifications we need, plus a few more. It's obvious to me that you both favor her and want to hire her." Turning to point a finger at first Virgil, then his father. "I do want to go on record that I think we need someone with more experience."

Virgil and Jeff glanced at each other. "So noted," Jeff said. "I still think she's our top candidate. Her drive, the way she's systematically gone about reaching her goals, her experience in fighting fires outside the city and her willingness to teach are what recommends her to me." He raised an eyebrow as he regarded his eldest. "I hope you can put your ego aside and work with her, Scott."

"Yes, sir," Scott said crisply, suddenly standing at attention. "I can... and I will."

Jeff nodded. "Virgil?"

Virgil nodded. "I'll have no problem with her, Dad."

"Good." Jeff took in a deep breath, and let it out. "One more hurdle: telling her about IR. We'll do that after dinner, then see where we stand." He gave Scott a nod. "It may be that she doesn't take the job, Scott, and we'll be back to square one."

Posted by Tikatu on August 17, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:48:18 GMT

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Friday, September 14, right before dinner on Tracy Island

Scott made his way up to the guest bedroom. With the decision to reveal IR to Ms. Kishi made, Scott knew he had to clear the air between them, especially after his conversation with his father. Other than what had been necessary for polite conversation, Cassandra hadn't talked to him since the flight to the island.

Elise had surprised him earlier by apologizing to him herself. Said she had been sorry for embarrassing him in front of a potential employee, even though she still felt his questions were out of line. He couldn't believe he was thinking this, but perhaps this was one time he needed to follow her example. As for the questions being out of line, she had a point there too.

If Scott was honest with himself, he knew he hadn't asked those questions out of curiosity. Cassandra Kishi hadn't been his first choice and no matter how hard he tried to deny it, that fact didn't sit well with him. He didn't like losing to anyone, and in this case, Scott felt like he had lost to Virgil in picking a candidate. Cassandra Kishi had been Virgil's pick. His reasoning had been sound but still ... Scott hated not being right. Not feeling in control.

Taking a deep breath, Scott knocked on the door to the guest suite. He wanted to get the apology out of the way before they joined the others for dinner. As for Elise's earlier question - he really didn't think he could stick his foot in any further.

"Mr. Tracy," Cassie said politely as she opened the door to the suite.

"I came to get you for dinner," Scott told her. "However, before we go downstairs, I'd like an opportunity to speak with you about something."

Cassie nodded as she stepped aside to let him come into the room. As the door closed behind him, Scott spoke up.

"Ms. Kishi, about my attitude at the airport and the questions I asked on the flight here, I'm sorry. I was out of line. Our first meeting wasn't the time or place to be asking about your reasons for looking for a new job. I also could have used a little more tact. I hope you'll accept my apology."

Cassie looked at him, trying to hide her surprise and suspicions. Had he been put up to apologizing or was it a sincere apology? She didn't know him well, but she got the feeling he wasn't comfortable with making apologies. Meeting his gaze, she could see the sincerity in his eyes.

"Apology accepted, Mr. Tracy," she said holding out her hand. "After all, you had no way of knowing about my personal life and the question is a valid one for a potential employer though probably badly timed."

Scott smiled as he took her hand, glad she wasn't going to hold his bad first impression against him.

"Please, call me Scott. I hear 'Mr. Tracy' and I start looking for my father."

"Okay, Scott. You can call me Cassie or Cass. Like I told Virgil earlier, I hear my full name and I start thinking I'm in trouble."

"Very well. I think we should probably head downstairs before the others get tired of waiting for us and eat all the food," Scott told her.

Posted by starrynebula on August 17, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:48:30 GMT

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Cassie took another bite of the veal on the plate in front of her. She was sure it tasted good, but in reality she wasn't really aware of the taste of any of the food in front of her because of her nerves. I just want this meal to be over with, she thought, trying to keep her eyes on the plate in front of her.

Beside her, Virgil looked over at their guest. I wonder what's up with her, he thought, as he had noticed a change in her. Before, she had been very open and friendly. Since the start of dinner he had noticed she had gotten very quiet and very interested in the plate in front of her. She answered the questions that were asked of her but hadn't volunteered very much. Virgil had seen his Mom and Dad exchange glances, and knew they had noticed it, too. She's been polite, just very quiet. Maybe it's just meeting so many new people, Virgil thought.

John had been asking her questions about her family. She had quietly answered his questions though hadn't seemed too enthusiastic. After a while, John had stopped unsure of how to continue the almost one-sided conversation.

Virgil decided to take a stab at getting her talking himself. Remembering the line of conversation

his father had put an end to during the interview, "So, Cassie, you mentioned wearing a kimono once. Was it during a ceremony?"

Cassie nodded. "I spent two months there with my mother, though most of the first month was spent taking care of my grandmother who was ill. My grandmother was bound and determined to get well for Obon though. The Bon dance, part of the Obon festival is when I wore the kimono," she told him in a low voice. Across the table though, John had heard and was listening intently, as was Cherie who was sitting on the other side of Cassie.

"Obon, that's the festival celebrating the spirit's of one's ancestors, right?" John asked from across the table.

Cassie nodded.

"Sounds spooky," Cherie commented.

"It's not. It's quite beautiful actually and it's a special time for families to be together," Cassie told her, getting caught up in the memory of the one she had shared with her grandparents and other family members in Japan. "In some parts of Japan, it's held in July; where my family is from we celebrate it in August, from the thirteenth to the sixteenth to be exact. On the thirteenth, the home and our ancestor's graves are cleaned and offerings made. The mukaebi, or welcoming fire, is lit. The Bon dance takes during Obon, at night. Different regions have different traditional dances. It's celebrated as a reminder that one should feel toward our ancestors. On the last evening of Obon, small paper lanterns with lit candles are floated on a river to light the way for the spirits as they depart."

"I bet the lanterns looked pretty out on the river at night," Cherie commented, trying to picture the sight.

"It's a very beautiful sight."

John said something in Japanese. Cassie looked at him slightly surprised and then responded in Japanese. The two exchanged a few more remarks in Japanese before Tyler spoke up from beside John.

"Hey, no fair! We don't know what you're saying," he complained, not liking being left out.

"Okay, no more, I promise," John said, looking at Tyler.

Cassie covered her mouth as she felt a yawn coming on. She had lost track of what time it would be in New York but she was sure it was late.

"I think the jet lag is starting to catch up with me," Cassie said, glancing down the table at Mr. and Mrs. Tracy. "I hope you don't mind if I retire early."

"Of course not," Dianne answered. "I forgot all about the time difference. You must be exhausted."

Cassie nodded. "Dinner was delicious," she told Kyrano as she stood up.

"Thank you, Ms. Kishi," Kyrano replied.

"I'm done. Let me walk you to your room," Virgil said standing up. He wanted to ask her a few more questions about her time in Japan on the way.

"Thank, you," she replied. Cassie and Virgil left the dining room.

"She seems nice enough, though a little on the quiet side," Dianne commented, when the two were out of sight.

"She was more at ease and talkative earlier," Jeff commented. "Perhaps she was just tired tonight."

"Or maybe it was just being with so many people she doesn't really know," John commented. "Are you going to tell her about IR, Dad?" he asked.

"Yes. Virgil and I were going to take her down to see Thunderbird 2 after dinner but I had forgotten about the time difference myself. We'll take her down after breakfast tomorrow."

Posted by starrynebula on August 17, 2007[/color

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:48:46 GMT

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Saturday, September 15th, 2068 Breakfast time on Tracy Island

Cassie listened to the chatter going on around her as she finished her breakfast. The noise level wasn't much more than what she had been used to growing up, after all four boys tended to make a lot of noise. Still, they weren't her family and large groups still made her feel uneasy. At least no one really seems to be looking at me this morning, she thought to herself as she glanced around the table. Those who actually appeared awake were engaged in conversation together.

As Cassie put her fork down on her now empty plate, Jeff addressed her. "Cassie, if you're done, I'd like to discuss something with you."

"Of course, Mr. Tracy," Cassie replied with a nod. Excusing herself from the table, Cassie stood up and followed Mr. Tracy out of the dining room. She noticed that Virgil had followed them, too.

Cassie suddenly felt butterflies in her stomach. She had a feeling this was to do with the job offer. Had she answered the questions okay? Did Mr. Tracy feel she was qualified for the position? Had she passed up the other job for no reason?

Where is he taking me? Cassie thought to herself, when Jeff led them down the corridor instead of upstairs. She followed him silently though, sure that he would reveal his intentions soon.

The three walked around the lower level of the villa. Up ahead, Cassie saw the doors heading outside. Why would he be taking me outside? she asked herself. She was even more surprised when Jeff stopped in the hallway before they reached the doors.

"I'm sure you're wondering what's going on," Jeff said, looking at Cassie, who nodded. "We've talked it over and we'd like to offer you the job. However, there's more to the job than what we've advertised. The position at Tracy Industries is a cover for the real reason we're interested in your skills."

Jeff nodded to Virgil, who placed his hand up to the wall. Cassie gasped as a panel slid back. Virgil placed his hand on another panel, which scanned his palm and then he entered a code. Before her eyes an elevator door appeared. Mark's words about kidnapping crossed through her mind again. Get a grip, she told herself silently.

Jeff motioned toward the elevator, and Cassie entered it. Jeff and Virgil joined her and soon the elevator was descending into the ground. When it came to a stop, Cassie found herself in a room cut out of the rock. Jeff headed toward a monorail car and Cassie followed him.

"How safe is that thing?" she asked, hesitating as Jeff boarded the car.

"Perfectly safe. Don't worry," Virgil assured her from behind.

Curious as to what they were going to show her, Cassie stepped aboard the car. When the car came to a stop, Virgil got out first and led the group down a corridor which led into a well-lit huge room. Cassie gasped at the sight before her.

There in the center of the room was a large green craft. The words "Thunderbird Two" told her without a doubt what she was looking at. "You guys are International Rescue?" she asked, still trying to grasp the whole idea. "I followed you guys rescuing the pandas on TV," she told them.

Jeff smiled. "Yes, you're at the base of International Rescue," he told her. "We'd like you to join the team. Some problems at a rescue involving a sugar cane fire a little while back made us realize we really could use someone with more expertise in fire fighting the next time we have to deal with a fire. Your paramedic skills would be useful during other rescues in helping the victims, as well as if one of our own people gets hurt in the field. Though officially, you would be a Tracy Industries employee based at our Wichita offices, in reality you'd be living here on the island. You'd have your own apartment up at the Cliff House."

Cassie, who had been listening to Jeff, as well as still taking in the sight before her, didn't reply. Her eyes had drifted away from the craft itself to a familiar figure standing near the craft.

"Luke?" Cassie said in disbelief. He had been the last person she had expected to meet here on the island. "So, this is your new job you've been so vague about."

Luke ran a hand through his hair. "Um ...Yeah. Small world isn't it?" he added with a shrug.

"I don't believe it," Cassie said slowly, staring at her friend whom she hadn't seen since Nathan's funeral. Part of her was mad at him for keeping this from her, though the rational part understood

why he had done so. Still, she wondered how long he had laughed when he got her email asking for advice about whether or not to pass up the other offer to do this interview.

"Don't I get a hug?" Luke asked, holding out his arms. Cassie hurried over to him and hugged him. "I'm sorry to hear things didn't work out with you and Alex," he told her softly.

"It was a long time coming," Cassie told him. "You know we had our problems before Nathan's death."

"Yeah," he said letting her out of the hug. "Still, I know how hard you tried to make it work."

Jeff cleared his throat to remind them that he and Virgil were still there.

Cassie turned around. "Sorry," she said, realizing their little reunion probably didn't look too professional.

"It's no problem. I'm sure finding out Luke was here is just as much a shock as seeing Thunderbird Two. I realize that this is probably overwhelming for you and please keep in mind that I don't expect an answer from you right away. Joining International Rescue is a big decision and one that you didn't realize you would be making. I want you to be sure of what you're getting yourself into before making the commitment. For now though, why don't I let Virgil and Luke show you around a little more? I'll be happy to answer any questions that may come up."

"Of course, Mr. Tracy," Cassie told him, as Jeff turned and headed back through the door they had entered.

Beside Luke, Rommel barked. Cassie looked down to see the dog looking up at her expectantly, his tail wagging. Reaching out a hand, Cassie scratched him behind the ears.

"You ready to see the inside of Thunderbird 2?" Virgil asked her, eager to show off his baby.

"Yes," Cassie replied, eager to see the inside of the craft. She fell in step beside Luke as they followed Virgil onto the craft. "Just what have you told them about me, Morel?" she asked quietly.

Trying to sound nonchalant, Luke shrugged and waved his hand as he told her, "Ah ... nothing good."

Luke looked toward Cassie to see her reaction. He saw a trace of shock which turned into anger. Though he tried, he couldn't keep a straight face, and he put on a wicked grin. He saw the anger in his friend's eyes change to annoyance as she realized he had been teasing her.

"Liar," she muttered as she hit him playfully on the arm.

Posted by starrynebula on August 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Saturday, September 15, 2068, 10 a.m., Tracy Island

"Where are we going?" Tyler asked as he helped carry the shipping boxes into the Cliff House elevator.

"We're going to pack up someone's things," Lisa explained as she brought along the luggage float. "They've left, and aren't coming back, and asked us to do this."

"Who's not coming back?" Cherie asked, frowning a little. She shifted her bag of packing materials from one arm to the other. "Miss Kennedy?"

Emily sighed. "We're not quite sure about Heather, Cherie. It may be that, after a bit of grieving, she'll come back and be part of the team again. Today, we're packing up Kat's things." She pressed the button for "2", and the elevator began to rise.

Tyler's eyes grew wide. "You mean, Kat's not coming back? Ever?"

"Yes, Ty, that's what I mean. Kat's not coming back."

The boy broke out in a wide grin, and pumped his fist with a hiss of "Yes!"

Both of the older women glanced at each other, Emily frowning, Lisa's eyes wide in disbelief. Then in unison, they cried in disapproval and shock, "Tyler!"

Tyler started; he hadn't expected such a vehement response from both his grandmothers at once. "Yes, Grandma, Grammy?"

"Tyler Tracy, what on earth is wrong with you?" Emily snapped. "Why are you so gol-durned happy about this?"

"We just lost a very valuable employee, and a nice young lady," Lisa added, sounding stern. "And John has lost a good friend."

The boy wilted under the combined stares of his grandmothers for a long moment. The elevator stopped and Emily keyed in the code to enter. The door slid open and the foursome stepped inside.

"Well, she left it neat enough," Emily said, hands on her hips. "That'll make it easier to pack."

"Cherie and I will start in the kitchen," Lisa said, picking up a box.

Emily nodded. "Tyler and I will start in here." She glanced around, and her eyes fell on the bookcase. "With the books."

As they began to pull the books from the shelves, Emily asked, "Tyler, why are you so happy that Kat's gone?"

Tyler's face grew sullen and stubborn. "'Cause I didn't like her," he grumbled.

Emily stopped for a moment and gave her grandson a long, hard look. "Why? Why didn't you like her?"

Ty knew that no-nonsense tone of voice and realized he couldn't skirt the subject. "'Cause she was making goo-goo eyes at John."

Emily chewed on this for a moment, then asked, "Does this mean John can't have girls make goo-goo eyes at him? Is that it?"

The boy sat down with a thump, and scowled. "No. That's not it. It's just that it was all she did. All she wanted to do was run around doing stuff with him, even when John and me were supposed to do stuff together. And she didn't want to be my friend... except because of him. All the other new people have been friendly to me. She wasn't until she wanted to know where he was."

"I see." Emily nodded slowly. She glanced down at the book she was holding, and frowned, the conversation set aside. "This looks familiar." She opened the cover and saw an inscription: "To John, continue to keep your eyes on the stars," and the author's autograph. "I wonder where she got this."

"That's John's!" Tyler exclaimed. "She probably stole it from him."

Emily sighed. "I doubt she stole it, Tyler, but she may have borrowed it." Glancing at the books, she said, "I wonder how many others are his, and if he has any of hers. I'd better call him down here. He can help us pack things up." She fixed Tyler with a baleful eye. "Don't think we're finished talking about this, young man. You're entitled to choose who you like, but that outburst in the elevator was rude."

Tyler looked down and said nothing. Emily levered herself off the floor with a groan and headed for the kitchen. "Cherie? Will you please call John down here? I think we're going to need his help."

Posted by Tikatu on August 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:49:58 GMT

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Friday September 14th, 2068. 4.55pm. Wichita, Kansas, U.S.A. (Saturday 15th, 10.55am, Tracy Island.)

It had been a long day. Mike Lavender stretched out his six foot four frame in his chair, and felt his jaw pop as he yawned. Since nine am he had been barraged with phone calls, visitors, and what seemed like every issue under the sun in the realm of family law. I'm looking forward to getting home to my own family -- couch and TV, here I come!

He stood up, yawning again, and brushed down his still-pristine grey suit with his large, dark hands. He swept a glance across his desk to see that everything was in order -- outward mail in the outbox, in-tray cleared, no pens out of place. He muttered his approval to himself, and lifted his briefcase... just as his assistant burst into the room.

"Mr. Lavender!" She gasped.

"Ellie, are you all right?" Mike asked, his brow twisted.

"This just came -- priority mail!" the young woman panted.

She held out a large white envelope with one pudgy hand, before bending over to catch her breath.

"Did you run all the way to get this?" He joked, turning the envelope over in his hands.

"The courier said that it was" gasp "...priority one important'."

Mike frowned and looked at his watch. It had already gone five pm. With a sigh, he set his briefcase back on the floor, and opened the letter. He was suddenly glad he did.

"Ellie, get me the Kelly-Houston custody files! Damn it...!"

It had just gone eleven am on Tracy Island, and Dominic was grumpy. Damn ironing! I hate ironing! Why must things be ironed? They only get wrinkly again anyway! He had set up shop in the partition between kitchen and living area, with Joshua safe inside his playpen. Ducky and Horsey appeared to be having a fight.

"Tell me what you're doing," Dominic said as he ran the iron over a pair of his jeans.

"Ukie hurted Horsey. Horsey mad 'n fiten 'im."

"Now, now, I don't think he should be fighting Ducky. Did Ducky do it on purpose?"

"Yeah, Ukie mean."

"So does Daddy need to take Ducky away for a time-out?"

Joshua thought for a moment, before separating his toys from their fight-to-the-death and cuddling Ducky tightly.

"Nope. Ukie didn't hurted Horsey on porpoise."

Dominic shook his head and laughed. Porpoise. Oi.

"Okay then."

The satellite phone began to ring, and Dominic set the iron upright as Joshua started shouting, "Phone-phone-phone-phone!" Dom crossed the room to pick it up, and answered promptly.

"Dominic Kelly speaking, may I ask who's calling?"

"Dominic, it's Mike Lavender here."

"Hello, Mike."

"I've just received mail from your ex-wife's lawyers. They neglected to send it on time and it just arrived here today as I was about to leave. They've scheduled the custody hearing for Monday. That's the seventeenth."

"What?! Don't I get some kind of say in that?"

"It says here you agreed, but I have no records of it, and I assume you didn't."

"You're damn right I didn't."

"This whole thing smells as fishy as the inside of a mackerel," Mike said, shaking his head. "Will you be able to make it on Monday? I know it's last minute, but the sooner the better, I say. It won't get beyond this stage."

"Well, I'll just have to be able to make it. Tell you what, if you don't hear from me, then I'm coming. I'll let you know if I can't."

"Okay. I'll give you my cell number in case--"

In the mean while, Joshua, Ducky, and Horsey were singing and dancing to the off-tune of Joshua's latest creation: the phone song. Dominic had to ask Mike to confirm the number several times.

"Is that the little guy I can hear in the background?" Mike asked.

"Is indeed," Dom said. "A rascal, as ever."

"Well, I hope you're looking forward to many more years of him, because if I have my way -- which I will -- you're not going to lose him."

"Thanks, Mr. Lavender. Hopefully I won't be speaking to you again until Monday, if you catch my drift."

Mike laughed.

"I understand. I'll email you a break-down of everything you'll need to be prepared for. Nothing difficult, just questions you need to be able to answer."

"Thanks."

"No problem. Goodbye now."

Mike hung up, and Dominic set the phone receiver back down. He glanced over at Joshua, feeling a now-rare genuine smile creep onto his face. He watched his son for a moment, before activating his communicator to explain the situation to Jeff.

Posted by ArtisticRainey on August 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:51:15 GMT

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Saturday, September 15, 2068, 3:30 p.m., Tracy Island

"So, are all of Kat's things packed up?" Dianne asked as Cherie joined her on the settee in the sitting room of her suite.

Cherie sighed. "Yeah, pretty much. Things went faster when John got there. She sure had a lot of stuff."

Dianne chuckled, then sighed. "I'm sorry we're losing her, but this life isn't for everyone." Straightening in her seat, she poured cola into two tall glasses sitting in a tray on the wide ottoman before her. She offered one to her daughter, then took one for herself. After a long sip, she put the glass down and said, "All right. What's this about some homework that Anna gave you?"

Cherie took out a data pad from the bag where she kept her sketching supplies. It had gotten so that wherever Cherie went, the bag went with her, full of sketch pads, pencils and pens for whenever the teenager was struck with inspiration. She sat close to her mother so that the two of them could look at the pad together.

"Well, I was complaining to Anna one day about how much I missed my friends and how unfair it was that I couldn't see them more often." She glanced up to see her mother's slight frown. "This was after I came back from my week in Los Angeles with Steph. I'd gotten some emails and they had news about school back... back in Greenville, and I just missed it so much!"

Dianne nodded slowly. "I hope you understand why we decided against leaving you in Greenville."

"Yeah, I do. Grammy was scared, and I can understand how she wouldn't want to stay around with her ex-husband stalking her. Anna told me that the way he went about trying to meet with her just proved that he didn't really want to make peace. I figure she knows what she's talking about." Cherie sighed. "In any case, she told me that there were ways for me to meet new people and make new friends, and gave me the homework of finding out what they were. Then we went over them together, and cut the list down to these four things. I wanted to show them to you and ask if

there's any way I can do at least one of them."

She gave Dianne a pleading look. "I really want to make some new friends, friends that aren't halfway around the world from me. People I can see every week, and have fun with."

Dianne nodded once again. "I understand that. You're at an age where being sociable is important." She straightened up. "Let's see what you've got."

The two bent their heads over the data pad. "Well, there's an art class for teens at the community center in Christchurch. It meets on Thursday evenings. Then there's this anime and manga club at the Christchurch library on Wednesday nights. The Children's Theater in Wellington is looking for people to help paint scenery and stuff; I'm not much for acting, but I think it'd be cool to work behind the scenes. They're having sign ups for that next week. And there's a stable outside of Christchurch that's offering Western-style horseback riding lessons." Cherie looked at her mother with a grin. "You know how much I love riding."

"Mm-hmm," Dianne hummed. She looked over the list once more then asked, "Which of these is your number one pick?"

Cherie pointed a painted fingernail at an entry. "That one: the art class. Don't get me wrong; Virgil's a great teacher. But I know there are things I can learn from other people. And it would be fun to meet some artists my own age and see how they do things." She paused, then touched the screen with a stylus. "There. Now the items are numbered according to how much I want to do them."

"That puts the anime and manga club second, horse riding third, and the theater fourth." Dianne smiled at her daughter. "Do you mind if I take this and talk it over with your father? We'll have to make arrangements to fly you over and back..."

"Maybe the boys can take turns, and use the time that I'm at the class for shopping or something," Cherie added, sounding eager and helpful.

"That's a fine idea, Cherry. I'll bring that up to your father." Dianne put an arm around Cherie's shoulders and hugged her close. "There may be some security issues, but I think we can work them out. I'll talk with Dad and see what he thinks, okay?"

Cherie nodded, and smiled. "Okay. But please don't take too long. I'm really excited about this."

"I'll talk to him today, promise." Dianne put the data pad on the ottoman and picked up her drink. "Now, maybe you can help me come up with something for the boys to do. After all, once they see you going out and having fun, they'll want to, too."

Posted by Tikatu on August 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:51:43 GMT

Saturday, September 15, 2068, 8:30 pm Tracy Island

Cassie was relieved when dinner had come to an end. Once again, she had felt nervous all the way through it, though she had tried to be a little bit more sociable than the evening before. Having Luke there with her had helped a little. Still, she was glad to be able to escape the dining room table.

"So, Cass, you haven't made any plans for this evening, have you?" Luke asked, with a smile.

"Actually, I have a date with a good book," she told him.

"Well, can the book wait? We haven't really had a chance to catch up yet. I was thinking we could go back to my place. You can see what the apartments are like... if you want to take the job that is," he added quickly, not wanting her to think he was pressuring her to join IR.

"Yeah, I think the book will wait for me. Lead away."

Luke guided her back to where Jeff and Virgil had taken her earlier. "Isn't this place something?" he asked as they arrived at the elevator terminus. He let the hand scanner do its thing and punched in a code. "I was totally floored at how big the complex was."

"It is pretty amazing," Cassie said as she followed Luke. "You would think I'd be used to complexity coming from New York City, but some of this stuff could give the city a run for its money. The fact that there is no smog, beeping car horns or people yelling profanity at you from their cars is a nice change of pace, too."

Luke laughed as they entered the monorail car. "I have to admit, though, the humidity is something else. Even though we're coming out of winter into their spring, it takes some getting used to "

"Can't take a little heat, Morel?" Cassie joked, as the monorail car started moving. She looked out the window as the car moved through the underground facilities of the island. "Now this I don't mind. I feel right at home - or, well, on the city subway going home. Less crowded though."

Luke laughed again. "You know me, Kishi, just a mountain boy at heart. Although," he gave her a wink, "I wouldn't mind climbing to the summit of this one. Never climbed an extinct volcano before."

They continued bantering with each other until they got to the platform at the Cliff House. "Here we are, home sweet home," he said as they left the car. "My side of the building's over here." He led her to the glass door on the right. "The elevator's interesting, too," he explained. "Transport and front door all in one."

"I was assigned to one of the one bedrooms on the third floor," he continued as they rode up the lift. "Great view! Ask Rom; he lounges out on the balcony all day watching the birds."

Cassie laughed at his comment. Not many apartment buildings allowed dogs in them in the city. It

was the reason she had never had one herself.

The elevator reached the third floor and came to a stop. The door opened and Luke led her off the lift and into his apartment. Cassie looked around the area they had stepped into. Like her room at the villa, the apartment was bigger than she had expected.

Luke looked at her face and grinned. "Bigger than you expected?" he asked.

"You could say that," Cassie replied looking at her friend. "I suppose there isn't any chance of finding any mice or roaches either," she said, thinking of the one bedroom apartment she had lived in while going to NYU. "Not that I miss those guys, mind you."

"Not a one," Luke assured her. "But I've had a gecko or two find their way inside. Kinda startling to find one in the bathroom while you're showering."

Rom finally eased himself off the couch to greet Cassie as Luke went into the kitchen. "Want something to drink?" he asked.

"Water will be fine," Cassie told him, as she reached out to scratch Rom behind the ear. The dog looked up at her with a grateful doggie expression. "You're just a big lovable mutt, aren't you?" Cassie said affectionately to the dog. She had seen pictures of Rom before, but this morning had been the first time she had met the German Shepherd. Luke had left him with his parents when he had visited her in the city.

"You know my brother, Mark, was worried the Tracys were trying to kidnap me," Cassie said, Luke rejoined her. She took the glass of water from him. "Wanted me to take the job in Thornville and not even come. He'd really freak if he knew where I was at right now."

"Yeah, he'd freak " Luke said, thinking of her younger brother Mark. He was the only one Luke knew who could be more suspicious than himself at times. Guinness in hand, he sat down on the sofa. "My parents would do the same if they knew. They think I'm in Los Angeles..." His voice trailed off.

Cassie sat down next to Luke. His sofa taken up, Rommel settled himself on the floor near Luke's feet. "Yeah, and my family would think I'm in Wichita if I came here," she said. She took a sip of the water. "I'm really not sure what I want to do. I mean, I started this job hunt to start over. Get out of the city and away from the memories. Do you know how many times I've been just jogging or running errands and I think - 'Alex and I did this here' or 'Alex kissed me here'? I haven't even ventured anywhere near Central Park since I moved out of our apartment. Not only are there too many memories of Nathan haunting it but that's where..."

Though she let her sentence trail off, Luke didn't need her to finish it. He knew what she had been going to say. Cassie had told him about Alex proposing to her on the carousel in Central Park.

Cassie dabbed at the tears starting to leak from her eyes. "I guess this isn't exactly what you had in mind when you mentioned catching up, huh?" she said giving a nervous laugh, and trying to will the tears away.

"Hey, it's okay," Luke said softly, putting an arm around her. "I've got the same problem in a way. I'm nowhere over Barry yet, but... the pain will lessen in time." He swept his arm in an arc, indicating the apartment, and what lay beyond it. "Coming here, taking up this challenge... it's helping. Though, at first, I did have to do some soul searching about my motives, especially when I thought I'd be based in LA."

He smiled. "I can hardly wait to get out in the field and start putting my skills to work... though I'm not too excited at the prospect of learning how to fly."

Cassie nodded, glad for the comforting arm around her shoulders. "Flying could be fun," she admitted. "Although I have a feeling Thunderbird 2 might handle worse than the fire engine in rush hour traffic."

Luke laughed again, long and loud. "You are so right about that, Cass. Better watch out though, I get the feeling that Virgil's none too happy when people insult his Thunderbird!" Taking his arm from around her shoulders, he glanced at her with a twinkle in his eye. "You should see how these beasts launch! It's mind-boggling. I've seen Thunderbirds One and Two so far... well, let's just say you've got to see it to believe it." He paused and continued in a quieter, less excited tone. "God, it's good to see you. I don't want to influence your decision, but if you ask my opinion, you'd do well here. Could probably teach these veterans a thing or three."

"Maybe," Cassie said thoughtfully. Her thoughts drifted to Scott. Yes, he had apologized but she still got the feeling he wasn't completely happy with the thought of hiring her. "However, I think I'm going to have to prove to Scott that I should be here, more so than any of the others. I got the impression he wasn't thrilled about the prospect of bringing me on board. Gives me pause about taking the job."

"Oh sure, anywhere I go, I'm going to have to prove myself to some extent. It would be like when I started out as a paramedic and again on the fire squad. The veterans are always a little leery of the rookies and it's understandable. They don't know you. Don't know what you're capable of. Still, there's a difference between wariness and not being wanted on the team."

Luke turned thoughtful for a moment. "Did Mr. Tracy tell you why they wanted to hire you?"

Cassie nodded. "Said they had some problems on rescues involving fires. He wanted someone on the team that knew more about how they behave and how to fight them."

"From what I've seen, Mr. Tracy knows his team well. So, if that's the reason he wants you on it, that means there's something that even Scott can learn from you if you join up." Luke took a swig of his Guinness, and put the glass back down. "Obviously, HE thinks you're worth it, or he wouldn't have told you about IR in the first place. Scott will just have to deal."

Cassie smiled at Luke's last comment. He had a point though. Ultimately, it was Mr. Tracy in charge of IR. It was his confidence she needed, not Scott's, and she apparently had that. Though if she took the job she certainly planned on trying to earn Scott's confidence in her abilities.

Besides, she had never backed away from anything in her life just because someone had said she couldn't do it or she shouldn't do it. If she had, she certainly wouldn't be here right now. How

many times had her father told her not to pursue being a firefighter? "It's too hard and dangerous for my little girl." Sure, he was only trying to look out for her. Protect his only daughter. Still, that had only made her want to do it more. I never backed down from my father; why should I back down from Scott Tracy? she thought to herself.

The thought of her father brought a small smile to her face. "You know, I'll feel a little weird about lying to Mark and the rest of my family, but there's something to be said for telling my father that I'm taking a nice, easy consultant job, off of the streets. He's been on my back ever since I told him I planned on joining FDNY, more so since his accident. Taking this job would give him peace of mind if nothing else."

"Don't make that your reason for taking it though," Luke warned her. He sighed. "The lying is hard. I have been told that I'll spend some time in the office, actually earning my keep with Tracy Industries, but I'm not sure how that works yet. A couple of people here actually work for the family, so they're covered, but I don't see how I'm going to be able to do this consultant thing and still be available for rescues." He shrugged. "I suppose that means you'd be going out to do the instruction as well."

"Yeah, supposedly I'd be making sure fire codes and safety protocols are up to date and being put in place correctly at the different sites. That in itself could be interesting work. Definitely something different than what I've been doing. Don't get me wrong; I love my job, but it can get monotonous after awhile and some days you're sitting around the station thinking of what you could be doing at home if you weren't stuck waiting for a call to come in."

Cassie paused briefly, realizing how what she had just said probably sounded. "Argh, that sounded horrible. It's not that I actually want some accident or fire to happen but ... forget it, I don't think I can actually put into words what I mean."

"Still, it's helping those in trouble that means the most to me. Like the traffic accident I was at last week, there was this little girl trapped in a car. We had to use the jaws of life to cut her out, and all I did was hold her hand and talk to her, but I know that made a difference. That's what I like about the job, and that's why I never wanted to take a desk job or instructor position in the city like my father wanted. I wouldn't mind doing that but I don't want to lose the feeling of actually making a difference in someone's life. This job would actually allow me to do both."

"That's the way I feel about it, too," he admitted. "Working with the best ... God, who wouldn't want to work with IR?" He brought himself up short, and gave Cassie a lopsided grin. "Oops. And here I said I didn't want to influence you."

Cassie smiled. "Too late for that, Morel," she said jokingly. "But seriously, if I'm going to take the job, I need to do it for myself. If I'm honest with myself, I started this job search to get away from the city. To start new. I can definitely do that here, while still doing the job I love."

"And you get to hang out with me and Rommel, too," he replied with a grin. "Not a bad perk, I'd say."

"Well, hanging out with Rommel would be a perk," Cassie said with a sly grin. "Hanging out with you, that may be considered one of the hazards of the job."

She tried to slide out of his way, as he batted at her for her comment.

-- Written by starrynebula and Tikatu with input from Lillehafrue on August 21, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:52:03 GMT

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Tracy, Island, Sunday, September 16th, 5:45 AM

Luke ran along the edge of the water. The sun had risen a short time ago, but the beach was still in shade. He knew from experience that that wouldn't last, so he tried to get his run out of the way before it got too hot. He paused to watch a pair of dolphins playing beyond the surf line and smiled. Who'd have thought a few months ago I'd be living in paradise.

"Luke! Hey!"

He looked up to see John jogging towards him and waved. John reached him and leaned over, hands resting on his knees. "You're up early."

Luke nodded. "It's too hot later."

"That's for sure. Where's Rommel?" John asked, looking around.

"I left him at the apartment. Snoring away. He's not a morning dog."

John laughed. "Sounds like Virgil."

"Besides, he got into the pool again yesterday and I had to wash all the chlorine out. I don't feel like doing it again with salt water," Luke told him. The dolphins jumped again, catching both of their attention. "I'll have to remember to tell Gordon about them."

"Tyler and Alex, too," John added.

They stood there watching quietly until the dolphins disappeared. Luke turned to John and grinned. "Race ya to the rocks."

John narrowed his eyes. "You're on!"

The two men raced across the beach, sand flying. They reached the rocks at the same time, both panting. "Call it...a tie?" John gasped.

"Deal." Luke pulled a water bottle from his belt and took a long drink. John did the same. They sat down on the rocks. Luke glanced over at John. He was looking out at the sea, his thoughts seeming to be a million miles away. Luke didn't want to get caught staring and put his bottle back on his belt.

Finally John spoke up. "Do you remember Kat? She's our mechanic."

Luke nodded. "Yes, tiny thing. I flew out with her. Why?"

John turned to gaze back out at the water. "I got a phone call from her the other night."

Luke caught the edge in John's voice. "Everything all right there?"

John shook his head. "No, not really." He tossed a stone into the sea. "She's not coming back. The girls packed up all her stuff yesterday."

"John, I'm sorry."

John shrugged. "I thought, for a while, that we might have something special together. But lately she had become more of a little sister than a girlfriend, if that makes sense."

Luke nodded thoughtfully. "I know what you mean. I was in a relationship for almost five years. Figured this was it, the 'one', you know?"

John nodded. "Yeah. What happened?"

"I was spending two to three weeks at a time at the SAR cabin; we only spent a few days together. Then when Barry got transferred to L.A., that kind of put the cap on it." John looked startled a moment, but Luke went on. "I thought maybe we could make it work, but..." his voice trailed off. "Long distance relationships suck. At least we ended things when we were still friends, so he's still a part of my life. Not the way I had thought he would be, but he's still there."

John was quiet for a long time. "She thought we had something, and I didn't feel the same. When she called the other night, I think she was expecting me to act differently than I did." He threw another stone. "You know, it's probably better in the long run. I mean, this life doesn't really allow a lot of time for relationships." He picked up another stone and sent it skipping. "I can see now why Alan broke things off with Tin-Tin."

They sat there in silence a few minutes before Luke clapped a friendly hand on John's shoulder. "Listen to us, moping about our love lives. I say we get the rest of the guys together and see if your father will let us go to the mainland for a day. Hit some bars, hang out. Guy things. This hanging by the pool is going to kill me! What do you say?"

John's eyebrows furrowed in thought. "You know, that's a great idea. I'll ask my brothers, you handle Dom and Brandon. Then I'll send Scott in to tackle Dad."

Luke laughed. "Good, it's settled." Luke got to his feet and stretched. "I've got another mile to do. Want to join me?"

"Sure." Together they started along the beach. John pulled out in front of Luke, and Luke found himself gazing at John's physique. Dammit, Morel, he's not interested!

Yes, another voice whispered into his head, but you can still appreciate God's work when it's right there in front of you.

Luke shook his head and, smiling, increased his pace and together he and John continued down the beach.

Posted by lillehafrue on August 21, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:52:33 GMT

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Sunday, September 16, 3:15 p.m. Tracy Island

Cassie looked down at her watch. She had switched it to the time on the island so she could keep track of things like meals. Being late would not make a good impression on her potential employers. Of course right now she wished she'd never switched it as she wanted to call Mark. What time is it in New York anyway? Cassie thought. Maybe I should have paid more attention to the time differences Mr. Tracy was telling me about when he was informing me of the arrangements he had made for me to get home. After a few minutes of trying to figure it out, she gave up and headed for one of the vid phones that had been pointed out to her. She'd just take the chance and give him a call. He usually turned his cell phone off when he was sleeping anyway, so if it was too late, she wouldn't disturb him.

Cassie punched in the number and listened to it ring. Looks like I'm going to get his voice mail, she thought to herself. She was about hang up and try again later when she heard her brother's voice.

"Hello?"

Cassie smiled. It was nice hearing a familiar voice even if her brother was being his usual suspicious self.

"Hey, Mark. It's Cassie."

"Cass! Are you okay? How's the interview going? When are you coming home?"

"I'm fine. The interview went well and I'll be home soon. My flight should be coming into JFK at nine o'clock Monday morning there. Can you pick me up?" she asked her brother. She could hear voices in the background and wondered where he was at.

"Yeah, sure. I'll be there."

"What time is it there anyway?" she asked, her curiosity getting the better of her.

"A little after eleven. I just got off work," Mark told her, which explained why he had taken so long to answer the phone. "Why, the guys too loud for you?"

"Well, I can hear them in the background. Mostly, I was just hoping I hadn't called you at a bad time. You know I was never good with time zones."

"Exactly, what time zone are you in?"

"A different one than you," Cassie replied, easily. She couldn't really blame him for trying to get her to tell him where she was at. In his place, she'd probably want to know. "The Tracys would like me to keep the location of their home secret. You can't really blame them. We've seen some of the media circuses they've had to deal with when they've been in the city."

"Fair enough. So what's up with the job?" Mark asked. Cassie heard the voices fading away in the background and figured her brother was leaving the locker room.

Cassie took a deep breath. Here it goes. Except for silly things when we were kids, this will be the first time I've ever lied to him but it's for a good reason, she thought to herself. "Well, I've been offered the position. It would mean relocating to Wichita, Kansas as I'd be based at the Tracy Industries branch there. The job would entail making sure fire safety protocols are up to date and upheld in all their branches, even those overseas. The traveling should be fun and it would be a change from what I'm doing."

"You always did want to travel," Mark commented, trying to sound upbeat. He didn't want his sister moving halfway across the country but he also wasn't going to stand in her way. He wanted her to be happy. "Aren't you going to miss the actual firefighting part of the job?"

I won't be missing out on that entirely, Cassie thought, recalling some of the rescues she had followed that IR had already carried out. "Yeah, I'll miss it some but maybe it's time for a change. What I'll be doing would be important in its own way and probably less stressful. Besides, I haven't said I'm going to take the job yet. Mr. Tracy has given me some time to think it over."

"Maybe you're fooling yourself, Cass, but not me. I can hear it in your voice. You really want to take this offer."

"I haven't made up my mind yet," she insisted.

"Yeah, sure. Whatever you say."

"Well, I guess I should be going. I'll see you when I get back to New York."

"I'll be waiting. Stay safe."

"You too. Bye, Mark," Cassie said, hanging up the phone.

She felt slightly guilty about not being able to tell him the real nature of the job. Still, she understood the Tracys need for secrecy. She rarely kept anything from Mark. Keeping things from him would be the hardest part about taking the job with IR. There were, however, a lot of positive things about the job. I just need to decide if the sacrifices I'm going to have to make are worth taking the job, she said as she headed out of the villa. Maybe a jog on the beach will help me

think things through.

Posted by starrynebula on August 22, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:52:54 GMT

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Sunday, September 16, 5 p.m., El Dorado, Kansas (10 a.m., Monday, September 17, Tracy Island)

"You sure you want to go through with this, Heather-girl?" Jenny asked. She busied herself setting the dining room table. Donny carefully carried the forks to the table, counting to himself as he put the forks on the right hand side of the plates. His aunt sighed slightly and bit her lip to keep from correcting the young man.

"Yes, Aunt Jenny, I'm sure," Heather said with a sigh. She fingered the curled end of her French braid. "I hate it; I've never broken an agreement before in my life, but..." She watched Donny as he finished with the forks and went to the flatware drawer for the spoons. "...my family needs me more now," she murmured. Straightening, she smiled a little, a sad expression. "I'll make the call from my room."

"When you're done, tell your father that dinner's almost ready," Jenny instructed. She clucked her tongue. "With as much time as he's spendin' redesignin' that house of yours, it'll be a mansion before he's done."

"I'll tell him," Heather said as she left the dining room, heading for her own bedroom. The past few weeks had been hard, almost too hard to bear. Once the reality of Martha and Amy's deaths had set in, James Kennedy had walked around with an air of stunned disbelief. The funeral hadn't helped; he was still in that fog for at least two weeks. Then, as if a switch had been thrown, he'd dived into his work -- making the redesign and rebuilding of Heather's old home a priority. Jenny had watched from the sidelines a little, then decreed that the family was moving out with her for a time, for a change of scene and perhaps a respite from the media circus that had developed.

The investigation into the cause of the pile up was still ongoing, but from the first there had been rumors that Martha had contributed to it. They were suppressed to an extent when the coroner's report was made public and had revealed that Martha hadn't been under the influence. Still, the rumors had hurt, and James had become more and more morose -- and reclusive -- every day. The move to Kansas allowed him and Heather to disappear for a while and hopefully regain some measure of peace.

Donny missed his mother, but missed Amy more, and was still having trouble with the concept of her not coming home from her dance lesson. Jenny loved her nephew, but it was up to Heather to deal with him on a daily basis. The bond between the siblings had deepened, and Heather knew that a move to Tracy Island would be devastating to him. So, she and Jim had made the decision to relocate to Kansas permanently. Rosy was watching the family home in Virginia, and would join them as soon as the new house was finished.

Now Heather was ready to say goodbye to a life that might have been. She sat on her bed, staring at her phone, then opened it, picked up the card that had the number Jeff had given her, and dialed.

If my calculations are right, it's Monday morning on the island, she thought. Hope it's not too early.

Jeff had gotten down to business this morning. He'd sent out a priority request to the security office in Christchurch for background information on the various teachers and leaders involved in Cherie's choices of extra-curricular activities. He'd deputized Tin-Tin and Virgil to head to Wellington and pick up some groceries his mother had requested for Kyrano's birthday dinner -- as well as a special bottle of fine cognac and a set of gold-etched goblets that he'd ordered as a gift. The folks in New York were still enjoying their Sunday, so he waited to discover if there were any responses to the ad they'd placed for a new mechanic, but he did check some of the major newspapers online to read the ad and make sure it was correct. He was just settling back with a fresh cup of coffee when the private line buzzed. A quick glance at the caller ID made him frown. Heather Kennedy? Don't tell me she's ready to come back... Reaching over, he tapped the buttons for "Voice and Picture".

"Hello, Heather." The young woman before him looked weary, vulnerable, and younger in a way. Very likely the hair, Jeff mused. "How are you? To what do I owe the pleasure of this call?"

Heather mustered up a smile for her personal hero. "Hello, Mr. Tracy. I'm... doing as well as can be expected, I guess, under the circumstances."

"I am truly sorry for your loss, Heather." Jeff looked sober and sympathetic. "How is your father handling things?"

"He's... coping. He's thrown himself into his work, in particular the rebuilding of the house I lost during those tornadoes." She paused, then asked, "Speaking of the tornadoes, how is Dr. Tracy?"

Jeff smiled. "She's doing very well, physically. Walking with only a slight limp, nearly finished with her physical therapy. She's got a little ways yet to go emotionally, but she's getting there." He paused, sobering again. "Why do I have the feeling you didn't call just to inquire after Dianne?"

Heather lowered her eyes for a moment, then had a half smile when she looked up again. "Because I didn't... though that was important." She paused, looking away from his gaze. "This is hard for me, sir. I've never broken an agreement in my life before now." Straightening, she looked him in the eye, took a deep breath and said firmly, "I'm calling to tender my resignation as your family pilot... and all of its attendant duties."

Jeff nodded; he read between the lines and realized that she was referencing IR. "Resignation accepted, Heather. I understand from experience that your family needs you at this time."

"Thank you, sir." Heather's soft voice held so many emotions: sadness, disappointment, regret, grief, and even a touch of relief.

He gazed at her picture, his own heart aching a bit for this young woman, so quickly a

mother-figure and main support for her father. "What are your plans? I gather since your father is working on getting your house rebuilt you'll be staying in Kansas."

"Yes, sir." She brightened a bit. "We're staying with my aunt Jennifer at the moment. She felt we needed to get away from... things. When the house is built, my father, Donny and I will be living there. Dad can work from anywhere he likes. Our housekeeper, Rosy, will be helping to take care of Donny; she's very good with him." She sighed. "As for me, well, I'll find an airport to work from and continue the organ donor flights. My partner will be glad I'm back. He told me he hadn't had time to find another pilot, never mind break her in."

They laughed a little, and Jeff, who had been surreptitiously checking the Human Resources boards, asked, "What do you think about returning to Tracy Industries in your former capacity, as a test pilot? I see that they haven't filled your slot quite yet."

Heather blinked, startled. "They haven't?"

"No, they haven't, if what I'm looking at is up-to-date." He gave her an encouraging nod. "I'll see to it... if you want the job. It's not like you really left Tracy Industries, after all."

"Oh!" She took a moment to think. "I... I'd like that, Mr. Tracy. I worked with a good group of people there, salt of the earth, and I'd love to return there."

"Then it's settled. I'll send an email right now, informing Human Resources of your transfer back to your old position." Jeff smiled widely. "I'll also remind them that you are on compassionate leave... with pay. You take your time getting back to work, Heather."

She laughed a little. "My supervisor did say I had a lot of vacation time accrued."

"This is different," he insisted. "But you just tell Blake when you're ready."

"I will, sir." Heather paused, and smiled. "It's been a pleasure meeting you and your family, Mr. Tracy. You've been one of my personal heroes for a long time and... where a lot of men would disappoint, you haven't. You're still my hero... after my dad, of course. Now more than ever."

"Thank you, Heather. I appreciate your faith in me. I'll do my best to see it's not misplaced." He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "So. Is there anything else?"

Heather thought a moment, then nodded. "I didn't pack up all my things when I left. Could you...?"

"We'll see to it." Seem to be doing a lot of this lately. "Just let me know where we should have it shipped."

"Could I give the address to Tin-Tin? I really need to talk with her and tell her what's happening."

"That'll be fine. Right now she's off on an errand; her father's birthday is today. But you could email her or leave a message for her. I'm sure she'll get back to you as soon as possible."

"All right, I will. Thank you again, Mr. Tracy." Heather suddenly looked away. "I should go. Aunt

Jenny says dinner's ready."

"Then goodbye, Heather. I hope we'll run into each other again."

"I hope so, too. Goodbye."

Heather disconnected the call, and shouted, "Coming, Aunt Jenny!" Then she left the phone on her dresser and went off to drag her father from his little office.

Jeff, who had already been composing a transfer request, sent it off to Human Resources. She's too good a pilot to lose, and I really think she needs the boost right now. She would have made one helluva Thunderbird One pilot; it's too bad that we can't see that come about. He sighed. "Back to the other applications to look for another 'family pilot'. And I'd better let the other team members know what happened." With that, he turned back to his computer and composed another email.

"As of today, September 17, 2068, Heather Kennedy is no longer an IR operative..."

Posted by Tikatu on August 23, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:53:20 GMT

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Jeff had finished composing his email, and had sent it island-wide. When I started looking for new recruits, I guess I never thought about personal problems. Still, it's not crippling to us, though I prefer a full compliment over anything else. It's just unfortunate. There was a knock on the door, and Jeff turned to it, and granted entry.

"Hey, Dad."

Gordon sauntered into the study with a mail carrying bag slung over one shoulder, and a pile of letters in one hand.

"Hi, son," Jeff said. "You're delivering the mail today?"

"Well, Cherie's in school. Plus, I was thinking of leaving the bag for her, filled with fake snakes, and maybe a rubber chicken."

Jeff shook his head, keeping his lips pressed together to stop himself smiling.

"Gordon," he said warningly.

"I said I was thinking about it," Gordon said. "I could also fill it with Silly Putty."

"May I have my mail?" Jeff asked, holding out his hand.

"Oh, yeah."

Gordon handed over the pile of letters, and Jeff began to sift through them.

"There's one letter that all of us seem to have gotten. Looks like it might be from the dentist."

"I wonder what that's about. We've kept up with our appointments."

"Who knows? Well, I must do my mail carrying duty. Onwards! Bye, Dad."

"Goodbye son. And Gordon? Don't rile your sister."

"Yes sir," Gordon said with mock disappointment, before sauntering back out the door.

Jeff watched as the door slid shut again, and shook his head, before sifting through the letters to find the one Gordon had been talking about. He had been right; it was from the dentist.

Dear Mr Tracy,

I am writing to inform you that the dental practice you are registered with, Crane Dental Surgery, has been bought over by myself, Ms Izarra Soto Fernandez, due to its previous owner Mr Edmund McCann's retirement.

Services will remain the same and all other dentists at the surgery are still practicing here. I hope that you will continue as our patient. Any queries you may have are welcome, and may be directed to the telephone number given below.

Yours sincerely,

Izarra Soto Fernandez, GDP

Jeff re-read the letter, before setting it down on his desk. That's a shame about Ed, he thought. I'd better get background checks rolling on this lady -- just in case. He began dialling a number into the vidphone, and waited as it began to ring out.

Posted by ArtisticRainey on August 23, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:53:38 GMT

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Sunday, September 16, San Francisco, 5:30 PM (12:30 PM the next day on Tracy Island)

Will walked into his apartment and heard his vid-phone ringing. He hurried over and answered it, to see his father. "Hi, Dad. I was going to call you a little later, but you beat me to it. How is everyone?"

"We're all fine, Will. I wanted to talk to you, however, about business. I'm thinking about opening another shop, in Santa Barbara. I'm going to need a manager. You said something once about how you could easily turn the shop you manage over to one or two different people working there. Do you think either one of them would be interesting in moving south?"

"Hmm, I don't know, Dad. I think one of them might, but I'm not sure. But that brings up somethin' I've been considerin' for the last few days."

His father looked intently at him, then said, "Go ahead, Will."

"Dad, I don't want to disappoint you, but I've been feelin' that somethin's been missing. And the other day, I realized what it was. I miss the hands-on part of this business. Here, I'm only on the computer or checking paperwork. When I was headin' the teams in the Navy, I worked alongside them, and got my hands dirty, too. I want to be able to do that again, and I don't seem to be able to at L.J."

"What happened the other day?"

"There was a parade of classic cars, headin' to Monster Park for a show. One of them developed a problem and pulled in to have it checked out. It was a simple fix. Two of our mechanics took care of it, the older one allowin' the younger one to help, for the experience. That's when I realized how much I missed being part of that. The only time I get to do anythin' like that is on Saturdays, if I can get over to the airfield. And that doesn't happen too often any more, at least not often enough for me."

"I see. So you want to turn over the manager position to one of the people already there - and do what?"

Will sighed. "I don't know yet, Dad. But if I find somethin' that I believe would suit me, I'd like your okay to go ahead and try it. I love you, Dad, and I don't want to go against your wishes, but I have to do whatever is right for me."

"I know you do, Will," Leonard replied with a smile. "and I'm glad you felt you could talk to me about this. You've never disappointed me, and I doubt you could. If you find something you feel is right for you, even if it means leaving the family business, you have my approval. Just make sure the turnover is smooth."

"Thanks, Dad."

"By the way, what kind of car was it?"

Will grinned. "A white 1969 Pontiac Firebird with a red interior. It was in perfect condition."

His father let out a long, low whistle. "I am impressed. It took a car that old to solidify your misgivings? I'll bet it was a beauty."

"It was, and so were the other cars at the show. The owner of the Pontiac left us ten tickets. I snagged one and let the rest of the employees decide who wanted the others. I went today, and

just got back when you called."

"Ah. That explains why you didn't answer when I called earlier. Lucky you. I..."

"Will!" His mother suddenly interrupted his father. "Move over, Leonard. I want to talk to our son, too. He should get all the news, and if I know you, you've only talked to him about the business and cars. Am I right?"

"Well, Joanna, I might have talked to him about other things if you hadn't interrupted," Leonard replied with a cheeky grin and a squeeze as he pulled her on his lap. "But then what would you have to tell him if I did?"

"Oh you!" she exclaimed as he kissed her on the cheek. "Will, guess what. Mitchell has a lady friend. Her name is Helena, and she's a lovely girl, and so good for him. I hope this relationship develops into something more permanent."

"That's great, Mom. How long..."

"And that reminds me. It's about time you settled down. Have you found anyone yet?"

Will smiled. His mother had a one track mind when it came to her sons. "No, Mom. I haven't found anyone as good as you; but I'm still looking."

"Silly boy. You don't want to marry your mother. You had to live with me for the first seventeen years of your life. Didn't that teach you anything?"

"It taught me that I at least need to find someone who can cook like you do. Even your casseroles are delicious. I'm gettin' hungry just thinkin' about them."

"Now you're just teasing me." But she looked pleased. "So, when are you coming home for a visit?"

"I'm not sure, Mom. I'll let you know when I can."

"Will," his father said, "we'll let you go, so you can relax. Let me know if one of your staff is interested in that position in Santa Barbara as soon as you can, okay?"

"I will, Dad."

"And you keep in touch, son," added Joanna.

"Of course, Mom. Love you both."

"We love you too, dear. Bye."

The connection terminated and he sighed in relief, then went over to his computer. Now that his father had said it was okay with him if Will looked elsewhere for what he wanted, he decided to get started. He decided to do a search, thought about what he wanted to look for, and finally typed

in "Want ads - mechanics". He was surprised at the number of ads that popped up, and began looking at them. Some he passed up quickly, due to location, or it being for a rival company to his father's. Then he noticed one that looked like it might be right up his alley:

Help Wanted -- Mechanic. Experienced in engine and electrical maintenance for a variety of personal jets, pleasure boats, small water craft, and American outfitted automobiles. Machinist or body work experience a plus. English fluency, flexibility and willingness to relocate essential. Apply Human Resources office, Tracy Industries, Sydney, Australia.

"Hmm. Tracy Industries; that's a good company to work for, from what I've heard. Australia, huh? I've never been there; the McCain never sailed to that area when I served on her. It'd be nice to see that part of the world." Machinist and body work experience? Well, I can't say that I really have any, but I do learn fast. So I'd have to put that in. Oh, man! I need to write a résumé.

He paused, then chuckled. "I guess I'm goin' to go for it. And no time like the present." He pulled up Wordpad. "Let's see; what do I need to include? Hmm. My education. My naval training and service. My work with Dad, and for him." He typed as he mentioned each item. "What else? Man, I've never had to write one of these things. What's required? Maybe I should do some research."

Rumbling from the area of his stomach interrupted him. "I guess I'd better get something to eat first," he said to himself. "Then, I'll get a résumé written up and sent."

Posted by hobbeth on August 23, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:55:42 GMT
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Monday, September 17th, 5:15 p.m., Tracy Island

"Thanks for looking after him while I'm away."

Dominic clicked the last leg into place on the fold-down crib, and began to place Joshua's bedding inside of it.

"It's no trouble at all."

Emily had one hand on the post of her own bed, and one eye watching Joshua's every move. The small child was standing quite still in the middle of Emily's suite, alternating between eying some trinket or other, and looking to see if anyone was watching him.

Dom finished with the bed, and glanced around to see if he had forgotten anything. He had a fluttering sensation in his stomach, and his throat was dry.

"I've brought the bed, clothes, diaper bag, clothes, a few toys -- Joshua, do not touch that -- a story book, his blankie. Have I forgotten anything? I probably have if I can't remember what I've forgotten..."

"Dominic, stop all this worrying," Emily said firmly. "If I need something that you haven't brought, I can get it from your apartment. Joshua is in safe hands. You just need to concentrate on showing that judge the man who's single-handedly raised this boy from birth."

Dominic quieted and gently nodded his head.

"You're right." He met her eyes, and his shoulders sank. "What...what if I lose him?"

"Now that's just silly talk," Emily said. "You know that you've done your best for your baby. He's got everything he needs, and most importantly, he's got love." Emily stepped forward and placed a hand on Dominic's arm. "The child's welfare is what these people care about the most. They'll see Joshua is well looked-after, and close the case."

"You're right, again." Dom drew himself up, and Emily could tell he was getting his thoughts together. "Well, I'd best get going."

He walked over to his son, and picked him up for a cuddle.

"I won't be gone long, Jak," he said.

"Da gone?" Joshua said, his little brow contorting.

"Yes, Daddy's going away for a day, but I'll be back before you know it. You'll be a good boy for Gamma, right?"

"Da no go!"

"I have to, son,"

"Da no go!!"

Joshua buried his head into his father's shoulder, and after a deadly two-second silence, began to wail.

"No! No go! Jossa Da!"

"I'll be back soon, Jak."

Joshua threw his head back and started writhing and jerking, his face bright red and scrunched tightly. Dominic felt as though his heart was in his mouth.

"Give him here, Dominic," Emily said, "and get going. This won't get easier for him."

Dominic was still for a moment, before turning to give the screaming child over to Emily.

"Goodbye, Joshua. Emily, thanks again. And, sorry about this."

"It's no trouble at all," Emily said over the sound of Joshua's cries. "Now skedaddle."

Dominic took once last look at his son, before leaving Emily's suite and closing the door behind him. Joshua's wailing echoed in his ears all the way to the hangar.

XXXX

"Can you hand me that book?" Cassie asked Luke, who was standing near the shelf where the book had last been placed. He had come up to say good-bye and escort his friend down to the airstrip.

Luke grabbed it and walked over to the bed. He handed it to Cassie, who tucked it away in her bag. "I think that's it," she said, looking around the room. She didn't see anything else laying about.

"It was good seeing you, Cass," he said as they left. "Hopefully, it won't be too long before I see you again."

"In other words, you're wondering if I'm going to take the job or not," Cassie said, looking over at her friend.

"Yeah," he admitted, with a smile.

Cassie thought of her meeting with Mr. Tracy only a few hours ago.

Flashback

"I hope you've enjoyed your visit, Ms. Kishi," Jeff Tracy said.

"Yes, very much so," she told him. She took a deep, calming breath. She knew her next words were going to drastically change her life. "About the job offer, Mr. Tracy. I've thought it through and I want to take it."

"I have to admit, I didn't expect such a quick answer. Are you sure?"

"Yes. I started this job search as a way to start over. This opportunity gives me the chance to do just that. The thing I love most about my job is being able to help people. Make a difference. Being a part of International Rescue will still allow me to do that."

"Then welcome aboard," Jeff told her, holding out his hand. Cassie shook it.

"I'll talk to Chief Calloway when I get back to work and tender my resignation."

"Very well. Give me a call after you talk to him and we'll figure out the details of getting you settled in," he told her, handing a card. "You can reach me at that number."

end flashback

Cassie smiled. "I gave Mr. Tracy my answer earlier today. I'm taking the job."

"That's great!" Luke said, pausing long enough to give her a hug.

-- Dom and Cassie leaving Tracy island Part 1 -by ArtisticRainey and starrynebula on August 24, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:56:44 GMT

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Monday, September 17th, 5:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Dominic huffed out a heavy breath as he reached Tracy One. Elise was already there, talking to the woman he recognized as the newest potential operative, Cassie. Elise gave him a wave as he approached the plane, and Cassie smiled slightly.

"Hullo, all," Dom said, letting his carryall fall onto the floor with a thump. He reached out a long fingered hand to Cassie. "I don't believe we've had the pleasure. Dominic Kelly. Nice to make your acquaintance."

Cassie accepted the handshake.

"Cassandra Kishi. Likewise."

"I'll go stow this," Dom said, hefting his bag back onto his shoulder. "Anything else to go in?"

The ladies answered that there was not, so Dominic headed for the hold. When he came back, Elise and Cassie were already climbing into the plane. He followed.

"Was Joshua okay?" Elise asked. "Poor little guy."

"He just didn't want me to go. I hope he'll be good for Emily. These terrible twos, I'm tellin' ya, not fun."

He didn't notice Cassie still for a moment.

I know that feeling, Cassie thought, thinking of her little boy. Nathan sure could throw a tantrum when he wasn't getting his way.

Trying to put the thoughts of her son out of her mind, Cassie got herself settled in one of the seats, as Dom and Elise headed toward the cockpit. She glanced out the window. Soon, I'll be calling this place home, she thought as she took in the view. Not long ago, I would've told anyone that said I'd be living outside the city that they were crazy. Now, not only am I moving out of the city but I'm moving to paradise.

Cassie stared blankly at the book she had opened in front of her. She couldn't concentrate on it. Her thoughts kept drifting to things she would have to do to before she could leave the city. There was of course putting in her resignation but she also had to tell her family she was taking a job with Tracy Industries. She knew telling the rest of her family about her job in 'Wichita' was going to be easier than telling Mark had. Then there was the task of packing for the move, although some stuff was still packed from when she had moved in with her brother. I should probably also go see Philip and Lisa before leaving, she mused, thinking of her older brother and sister-in-law who lived in Connecticut.

"Good book?"

Cassie looked up to see Dominic sitting down in a seat nearby. She put the bookmark in the it and closed the cover. "Probably would be if I could concentrate on it," she replied. "I've got a lot of other things on my mind right now."

"Elise said you had taken the job. Welcome to the team."

"Thank-you."

"I can empathize with you on the lack of concentration bit. I'm on my way to a hearing to decide who gets custody for my little boy. Me, who's looked after him from birth, or his mother, who abandoned us? Didn't even care about the precious little life she brought into the world."

Dominic began to clench and unclench his fists.

"It was so special. He was so tiny and precious... I don't know what I'd do without him."

Cassie sat up abruptly.

"Excuse me."

She exited the passenger area abruptly, leaving a thoroughly confused Dominic alone, staring at the now-closed door she had disappeared through.

"What did I say?"

Cassie closed the door to the bathroom on the plane and then leaned her hands on the sink. She could feel the tears welling up in her eyes and she tried to will them away. Now was not the time to fall apart.

"I don't know what I'd do without him."

She heard Dominic's words repeating in her head. How many times have I said that myself and yet now here I am going on without Nathan? Doesn't he realize how lucky he is that his son is still alive?

She felt a few teardrops start to roll down her cheek. Reaching up, she wiped them away and took a couple of deep breaths.

Stop feeling sorry for yourself, she scolded herself. Things are how they are, and you just have to get on with your life.

She stood there at the sink, not wanting to go back out and face Dominic again. She was hoping that if she put it off long enough he would get tired of waiting for her to come back and go back up to the cockpit.

xxxx

Dominic was, however, still waiting in the passenger area. He hadn't known whether he should follow Cassie or not, but didn't want to walk away as if nothing had happened? Did I offend her? He was reaching back through his thoughts, but for the life of him, he couldn't find what it might have been.

Eventually, the woman returned. She kept her gaze steady and impassive as she saw that Dominic was still there, but he could tell that she was still upset.

"Cassie," he said, standing up. "I'm sorry if I upset you somehow there. But, I can't figure out why. Did...did I say something to offend you?"

"No, no, it's just..." Cassie sighed and slipped back into her chair. She sighed heavily, and placed her hands in her lap. "It was just when you were talking about Joshua. I had a son, just about his age. He was killed."

She reached for her book, and began flicking through the pages, not even looking at the words. Dominic felt as though his heart had sank into his belly. His hands began to clench again.

"I'm so sorry, Cassie. I...I didn't know. Otherwise I'd have kept my big mouth shut."

Cassie shook her head.

"You couldn't have known," she said. "But, I'd appreciate a little time to myself about now."

"Okay, no problem."

Dominic walked over to the door. As he opened it, he looked back and opened his mouth as if to say something, but clamped it shut, and disappeared from Cassie's sight.

--Dom and Cassie leaving Tracy island Part 2 -by ArtisticRainey and starrynebula on August 24, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Monday, September 17, 2068, 5:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Tin-Tin's eyes followed the trail of Tracy One as it lifted into the azure sky. When it had banked out of sight, heading for the United States, she turned her attention to the pumice sand path that led into the heart of her father's garden. Everything was neat; not a weed or stalk grew out of place, all a mute testimony to the care her father lavished on his garden, his sanctuary. Just as he lavishes care and love on all of us in his daily routine, she mused, smiling a little. "Father?" she called, not sure where he was in the garden.

"Here, my daughter." His voice carried from the left, and she followed it. She found him with small pruning shears and garden gloves, wearing an old set of cotton clothes, and a wide woven hat. A small wheelbarrow held the cuttings he'd made as he prepared his garden for the oncoming spring and summer. He glanced at her as she came into view and smiled gently.

"I was told you were here," she said as she approached, picking up a stray twig to drop in the barrow.

"I am here only because I have been banished from the kitchen," he said, his tone a trifle piqued.

"Father, it's your birthday!" she exclaimed. "You know that Lisa and Grandma want to prepare dinner, and spare you working today."

He sighed. "I understand, but I am always uneasy when this happens. The kitchen is..." He paused, and sighed again. "I cannot say it is mine, because I do share it with Mrs. Tracy. But in a way, I feel..."

"Supplanted?" Tin-Tin ventured, putting a hand on Kyrano's forearm.

"Yes," he admitted sheepishly. He turned back to the plant he was working on. "I hope the food is edible."

Tin-Tin laughed, a merry sound. "Father, you know very well it will be! Grandma and Lisa may not be of your caliber when it comes to some types of cooking, but they surpass you in others. And they are more than capable of following a recipe and fixing it to taste." She leaned in and murmured, as if imparting a secret, "And I know they have chosen not to make French food for this meal."

Kyrano's bushy eyebrows rose in surprise. "Not French? Then what have they chosen?"

She shook her head. "No, Father, it is a surprise." She stepped back and looked him up and down in a meaningful way. "Now, I think you should leave the garden to itself for a while and clean up for dinner. It will be an excellent meal and a festive time with family."

He smiled, and nodded. "I will come along shortly." Motioning to the bush he was pruning, he added, "I will finish this, then prepare myself."

"As you like, Father." Tin-Tin leaned in and kissed him on the cheek. "I will see you at dinner."

Kyrano's birthday, part 1

Posted by Tikatu on August 25, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:57:13 GMT

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Monday, September 17, 2068, 6:30 p.m., Tracy Island

The table sparkled with cut crystal, fine china and polished gold on a pristine white surface. The Tracy family, both natural and extended, gathered around, dressed semi-formally for this special dinner. Kyrano, resplendent in dark blue silks, had the place of honor at Jeff's left, displacing Scott, who usually sat there. There was a place reserved at Kyrano's side for Lisa, but at the moment, she, Emily, Dianne and Cherie were busy bringing out steaming dishes to place up and down the table. A garden salad was being dished out, and baskets of warm, fat, crusty breadsticks were being passed up and down the table. Bottles of wine, both red and white, were opened and poured for those who wanted -- and were old enough -- to drink them. Iced tea or water sufficed for the rest.

"I see you chose Italian as the theme for this evening," Kyrano said with a smile as Emily placed a serving bowl full of shrimp scampi mixed with angel hair pasta before him.

"I most certainly wasn't going to go with French," she replied, returning the smile. "And you've told me on more than one occasion that my Italian dishes were on par with your favorite restaurant."

"Indeed, they are," he said, taking a portion of the dish. "And I do enjoy the garlic."

"Then you'll enjoy the meal," Emily responded before moving back down the table.

At last the food was distributed, and the ladies joined the rest of the family. Veal marsala, shrimp scampi, fettucine alfredo, and chicken cacciatore -- with Emily's homemade sauce -- quieted the diners as the first bites were taken and savored. Then came the sounds and comments of appreciation.

Jeff took a sip of wine to clear his mouth of veal and pasta. "You ladies must have worked all day on this meal."

"Yes, we did," Lisa said. She put a gentle hand on her fiancé's arm. "But he's worth it."

"I am honored by the meal and the effort you put into it, Lisa, Mrs. Tracy. You have truly outdone yourselves this evening. Thank you." Kyrano leaned over and kissed Lisa lightly on the cheek, provoking a smattering of "oohs" from the younger set, and a wolf-whistle from Gordon.

The meal concluded with a rich chocolate cheesecake, and a toast from Jeff. "To Kyrano, man of

many talents, who keeps our bodies and souls together. Life begins at sixty-five," this got a laugh from those around the table, "and may your sixty-fifth year be better than you could ever dream. Happy birthday!"

The others around the table lifted their glasses, and echoed, "Happy Birthday!" And while the others drank, Tyler piped up and said, "Time for presents!"

Kyrano's birthday, part 2

Posted by Tikatu on August 27, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:57:29 GMT

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The presents had been put on a cart kept in one corner of the room. After glancing at their mother for permission - and getting it - Alex and Tyler went over to it, and pushed it to the corner of the table, between Kyrano and Jeff. There were several gifts of various sizes and shapes, including two taller ones. Tyler indicated one of these. "Open this one first, please."

Kyrano first looked at the card. "From both Alex and Tyler. Thank you, boys. I know I will enjoy it, whatever it is." He opened it, and his eyes gleamed when he saw what they had gotten him. "A beautiful bonsai."

"It's a Fukien Tea plant. Tin-Tin told us that you didn't have one of these," said Alex.

"So we decided you should have one, " added Tyler.

"And you were right. Thank you again. It is the perfect gift." The two boys beamed.

Kyrano picked up an envelope and opened it. "A trip to Paris, from Mr. and Mrs. Tracy. This is a thoughtful gift; thank you."

Jeff said, "We thought you would like to take one last bachelor trip, but if you'd rather your next vacation there is with your fiancée, we can arrange that, too."

Kyrano looked at Lisa. "Actually, I have been thinking I should go there by myself, to take care of a few things. I hope you don't mind, my love. I would rather take you there as my wife."

She gazed into his eyes for a moment before replying. "I don't mind - as long as you come back to me."

"Of course." He leaned over and kissed her once more. Then he turned back to the cart. "And what is this?" He opened a large box, after reading the card that told him it was from Jeff. "You didn't need to get me another gift, Mr. Tracy."

"I know, but I wanted to."

"Ah." Kyrano had looked inside and seen what the box contained. He pulled out the bottle of cognac and looked at the label. "A fine year." He then reach inside once more and brought the cups into view. There were several gasps of admiration as he turned to Lisa and said, "We will drink our first toast as husband and wife with these."

"How wonderful. They are absolutely gorgeous."

"Yes, they are. Thank you, Mr. Tracy."

"You're more than welcome."

The next gift he picked up was a flat square box. When he opened it, he found it was a disc, with the recording of the Beatles' When I'm Sixty-Four.

"I can tell without looking at the card that this is from Gordon," he quipped.

"When I'm Sixty-Four? Hey Gordon. Kyrano is sixty-five today," exclaimed Virgil.

"I know that, Virge. I couldn't find the recording last year."

As the chuckles went around the table, Kyrano opened the second tall gift. It was an orchid from John. "How beautiful," he said, as there were oohs and ahs from a few people at the table. "Thank you, John. This will make a wonderful addition to my garden."

"I'm glad you like it."

Slowly the pile of gifts still unopened diminished, until there were only two left. They were the ones from the two women he cared about most.

"And I know what Tin-Tin's gift is."

"Perhaps, Father; but I think it might surprise you nonetheless," she replied.

xxxx

A week earlier, Lisa had gone to see Tin-Tin. "Your father's birthday is coming up very soon, and I don't know what to give him. I'm hoping you can give me some suggestions."

"Oh, goodness," the younger woman had exclaimed. "With all that's been going on here, I forgot about it. I give him a picture of myself each year on his birthday. He's kept an album of me since the day I was born, and there's one more spot for this year's. I usually go and have a portrait done by a professional, but I can't now. I'm not going to have another chance to go to the mainland." She looked distressed.

"Don't worry about it. Why not have your picture taken here, instead? Sometimes they are better, more cherished than professional shots."

Tin-Tin took Lisa's hand and squeezed it gratefully. "That's kind of you to say. And it gives me an idea. Perhaps you could get my father a new album, to record your life with him. And you could start it with a picture of the two of us."

Lisa removed her hand, but only to hug her future stepdaughter. "What a wonderful idea! Thank you!" Then she released her and asked, "But who can we get to take the pictures?"

"Hmm. That's a good question." Tin-Tin thought for a few moments. Then she brightened. "I think I know. And there's no time like the present to do it. What do you say we meet in my father's garden in half an hour?"

"That sounds fine. It'll give me time to freshen up a bit."

xxxx

The picture Tin-Tin gave her father would become his favorite in the years to come. "Daughter, this is beautiful. It was taken in my garden?" His daughter nodded, pleased at his reaction. "But who was the photographer?"

"It was Brains."

She'd coaxed Brains to be the photographer, and he had done a wonderful job. He'd had her sit on the bench, turned so her right arm was over the back. She was gazing, not at the camera, but slightly to its left, out into the garden. The light was soft in that area, the look on her face was perfect, and Kyrano thought he could see the photographer's love for his daughter.

He stood up and went over to where she was sitting. When she rose, he hugged her, then said, "You should have him take your picture every year, if the results are always like this. It is a perfect last picture for the album." He smiled at the engineer sitting next to his daughter. Brains blushed, but met his gaze and smiled back at him.

As he returned to his seat, he added, "I suppose that I'll have to get a new album, in which to put the next pictures."

"Not necessarily," said his fiancée.

He was delighted to receive the new photo album from Lisa, and when he opened it, his happiness at what he saw was obvious to everyone. Once again, Brains had shown an almost genius talent in the way he posed Lisa and Tin-Tin together. They were on the bench, looking at each other. The smiles on their faces were loving, and slightly shy. It brought a tear to more than one person's eye, when he showed it to the others. He hugged her, and kissed her yet again.

"Thank you, everyone. This has been a wonderful birthday, and you have been most generous to me."

"I believe I speak for everyone when I say that it was our privilege and our pleasure to do this for you," said Jeff, and murmurs of agreement went around the table.

"And now, Lisa, why don't you and Kyrano go for a walk in his garden, while the boys and I take care of cleaning up. And don't you even think of lifting a finger to help, Kyrano. It's still your birthday."

"Yes, Mrs. Tracy. I will first take these gifts to my quarters, then we will do as you suggest." He stood and pulled Lisa's chair back. "Perhaps you and I can also discuss the best place for my new plants while we are out there," he told her as they left with the cart.

"Now boys, Cherie, let's get this table cleared - and I'm talking to all of you. Jeff, not you; you and Dianne go do whatever." Emily looked at each Tracy son as they murmured, "Yes, Grandma." They picked up some tableware and followed the younger children, who had already picked up their plates and glasses, and headed for the kitchen.

Posted by hobbeth on August 27, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:58:41 GMT

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Monday, September 17th 6:30 am, Kansas (11:30 pm Tracy Island, same day)

"Hey, Cassie," Dom said, shaking his traveling companion gently. Cassie had fallen asleep after he had left the cabin area.

"What?" Cassie asked sleepily, opening her eyes. She found Dom leaning over her.

"Elise sent me back to let you know we're about ready to land."

"Okay," Cassie said, sitting up straighter in the seat. As Dom disappeared back up front, Cassie looked out the window. The ground below was starting to get closer as the plane descended.

Moments later the plane made a smooth landing on the runway. Cassie watched the scenes passing by outside the plane as it made its way toward the gate. It wasn't long before Cassie, Dom and Elise were all making their way down the steps. After retrieving their bags from the hold, the three made their way into the airport.

"I think I'll grab a cup of coffee," Elise said she looked toward Cassie. "You have a half hour until your flight to NY, right. Want to join me?"

"Sure, I just want to pick up my boarding pass and figure out where the gate is first."

"No, problem," Elise said. She turned to Dom. "Have time to join us?"

"No, I should probably get going. I want to make sure I'm on time for the trial at noon."

"Okay. Hope everything goes well," Elise told him.

"Thank-you," Dom replied. He looked toward Cassie. "Nice meeting you. Guess I'll be seeing you when you make it back to the island," he said, holding out his hand.

Cassie took it. "Likewise," she told him. She paused and then said, "I hope everything goes well at the trial."

"Thank you," Dom said with a grim smile. "I do, too."

As Dom headed toward the exit, Cassie and Elise headed to a kiosk so Cassie could get her ticket for her flight home.

Dominic walked slowly, the worry about the oncoming trial and the weariness of the flight seeming like lead weights on his shoulders. As he made it outside into the heat and sunlight, he shaded his eyes, but squinted as a familiar figure stopped nearby to light a cigar. Dominic willed his legs to start moving faster, but they came to a complete stop as the man huffed out his first drag. He looked around, but did a double take when he saw Dominic standing just outside the exit, staring at him.

"Dominic?" He asked, removing the cigar from his mouth.

"Matthew."

Matt Hawkins strode over to his son, his face a wrinkled picture of confusion.

"It's six-thirty in the blessed a.m., what are you doing... wait, what are you doing in Kansas? You're certainly the last person I expected to see as I saw Tom off on his way to New York."

Dominic couldn't help himself. He found himself alone, with no place to go, no one to share the burden with. Much as he bore so much bad feeling towards this non-father, he was better than nothing.

"It's... it's Joshua."

Matthew's face dropped and every one of his muscles seemed to tense.

"What's wrong with him? Dominic..."

"No, it's... my ex-wife. She's... she's trying to sue for custody of him. I'm here for a preliminary hearing."

Matt's face went bright red within a second, and he sucked heavily on his cigar, directing the outflow of smoke away from his son's face.

"That's outrageous! Well then, you're coming with me. We'll get you rested up and well prepared. No one's going to take my grandchild away from me, or to destroy my son's life..."

Dominic felt hatred and rage on many levels: the irony of Matt's reaction, of all of his words... But... he still followed the man to his shining, red, top-of-the-range sports car, and allowed himself

to be driven back to the large Hawkins Estate.

--Arrival in Kansas by ArtisticRainey and starrynebula on August 29, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Mon, 23 Jul 2012 23:59:57 GMT

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"Come on in, son."

Dominic's eye twitched when Matthew used that word, but he nodded and entered the grand house. Matthew Hawkins had made himself a millionaire through business, shrewdness, and by being the best aeronautics designer outside of Tracy Industries. Dominic glanced upwards at the sweeping winged staircase and the large diamond chandelier that hung above it. The stairs descended into a large, square hallway, to which all of the rooms on the lower floor were connected.

Matthew took Dominic's bag and set it beside the staircase, before smiling at his son -- though it was a smile that could sense the bad feelings between them -- and holding out a hand to point to the kitchen.

"I'll make you some breakfast, and we'll talk about this situation."

Dominic wanted to say no, he didn't want food (especially food cooked by his fake father), but he nodded and walked where he was told, his head ever-so-slightly hung. Matthew pulled out a chair at the central kitchen table for Dominic, and immediately shrugged off his jacket, rolled up his sleeves, and started cooking. Dominic watched his every move. For a heavyset, six foot tall man, he was surprisingly fluid in his movements. Matthew reached into the large double fridge for a packet of bacon, before setting it down again and opening one of the drawers near the bottom. He took out a variety of foodstuffs that Dominic recognized immediately -- vegetarian alternatives. His lips flattened together. Neither Matthew nor his wife -- nor anyone in his immediate family, as far as I'm aware, is vegetarian... When his father set a huge plate of vegetarian bacon, sausages, eggs and toast in front of him, Dominic found himself ravenous, and nodded his thanks before digging in.

Matthew smiled, poured two cups of coffee, and sat down opposite his son. He watched Dom wolf down the food as if he hadn't eaten in days, before smiling wider as his son found something particularly to his tastes.

"Potato bread?" Dom asked incredulously. "Where did you get it? I've never been able to find it over here."

"I made it."

Dom's jaw dropped, but quickly clamped shut again when he realized there was half-chewed food inside his mouth.

"What? Why?"

"Well, you sang its praises when you were here last, so I looked up a recipe. Took a few times to get it to turn out the way it looked in the picture. I've developed a taste for it. Which is probably a bad thing, considering..." Matthew slapped his rotund stomach for effect.

Dominic chuckled, but suddenly found his appetite had left him. He set down his knife and fork, and sat still for several seconds.

"Dominic?" Matthew asked.

"I'm tired," Dom said. "I'd...like to get a few hours of sleep before the hearing."

"Oh, oh of course," Matthew said, suddenly feeling a thick sheet of ice separate he and his son. "Any of the guest rooms you like. When is it?"

"Noon."

"I'll wake you around eleven, and give you a ride there."

"That's unnecessary..."

"But it's happening."

Dominic sat again for a few moments, before rising from the table and leaving the room. He picked up his bag on the way upstairs, and let himself in to the nearest bedroom. He threw his carryall on the floor, and flopped down onto the bed with his head in his hands. I cannot deal with this right now. But all he could think about was the vegetarian food, the potato bread, his father's unfailing kindness, and the sick feeling that the past and the present clashing were creating in his stomach

"I do not need this right now..."

Posted by ArtisticRainey on August 30, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:04:33 GMT

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"This initial hearing for the custody of Joshua Aaron Kelly is hereby called to order. You may sit."

The white-haired, elegant judge sank gracefully into her seat, and the two parties followed her lead -- Dominic and Mike Lavender on one side of the gleaming dark wood table, and Margaret and her lawyer, a Mister Todd, on the other. Dominic felt as though his throat was closing in, and dearly wanted to unbutton the collar of his pristine, starched white shirt. It felt wrong to be sitting with a straight back in a fancy office, wearing a suit otherwise reserved for weddings and funerals, facing off against his ex-wife, with his abandoner father waiting outside. He gulped as discretely

as possible; there was no room for nerves.

He glanced across the table to Margaret as the judge was sifting through her papers. She looked older than he remembered from their very brief meeting in February; years older, in fact. But his examination ceased as the judge cleared her throat.

"Let's get started. Parties assembled are Dominic Aidan Kelly, the child in question's current guardian, and his lawyer, Michael Samuel Lavender; and Margaret Allison Houston, the petitioner, and her lawyer, Ernest Mitchell Todd. Firstly, let's have a run-down on the situation. Mr Kelly, you have had sole custody of the child since the fifteenth of December 2065, is that correct?"

"Yes ma'am," Dominic replied. He was glad his voice hadn't cracked.

"And Ms Houston, you have had no contact with the child since the day of his birth, that being the same day as Mr Kelly became sole custodian, correct?"

Margaret paused for a moment, before answering, "That is correct, ma'am."

"And you are now suing for sole custody of the child, correct?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Okay. Now, first of all, I'm going to ask Mr Kelly to describe to us the situation that Joshua is in currently. I'm going to ask you a few questions, Mr Kelly, and you need to answer as truthfully as possible, otherwise if on further investigation by the court you are found to be lying, your case may be damaged. Understood?"

"Yes, ma'am." Dominic's heart was beating in his throat, and he gulped again.

"All right. Mr Kelly, could you describe to us the characteristics of your home, including location, access to amenities and so forth."

"Well, your honour, myself and my son live off shore on an island owned by my employer, Mr Jeff Tracy, owner of Tracy Industries. I'm a nurse registered at the practice there -- it's a small community. I guess that means it's not particularly close to a lot of amenities, but the island is fully kitted out for those of us who live there."

The judge's face remained impartial, and she was taking notes down in a data padd.

"Elaborate, please."

"Well, there's a school room and satellite links to schools in New Zealand for the kids who're living there, so education won't be a problem. The medical suite is capable of handling everything from in-grown toenails to appendectomies -- with a highly qualified doctor and surgeon working there, as well as myself and another nurse. We live in a new, modern apartment; Joshua has his own room and plenty of space to explore. There are beaches and gardens, even a swimming pool, plus plenty of people to interact with. There are a few lovely ladies who baby-sit him while I'm working, and, well, he's pretty much loved by everyone."

"I see. Does he have any companions of his own age?"

"Well, no, your honour. He's the youngest child on the island. But he's never stuck for company. As I said, there are children there, though they are a little older, but he has plenty of 'uncles' and 'aunties' to play with."

"Okay, thank you, Mr Kelly. Now," the judge continued, "can you tell us of any new significant relationships you might have, and how they effect Joshua's life?"

"Well, uh," Dominic felt himself colour slightly, but didn't really know why, "there hasn't been anyone at all since Joshua was born. It's just been he and I."

"All right. Now, third question: how would you say that the child is doing in his current home?"

"Oh, Joshua's doing just great." Dom felt a smile try to creep onto him face, but he restrained it. "He's twelve kilos in weight, around eighty centimetres in height, and he's just...happy. He loves the sunshine, and all the people he can play with. He's been taken to explore rock pools, for walks on the beach, quiet time on the shore. He is, as I said, happy."

"Okay. Now for my last question: you said that the child was cared for when you're at work. How does he react to this?"

"Well, he's always happy to go, and he never seems upset. The ladies tell me how he's gotten on every day, how he's been feeding and such. As far as I'm aware, he likes it just fine."

"Okay, thank you, Mr Kelly."

Dom glanced at Mike, who was sitting on his right side, and the man smiled almost imperceptibly at him. The lawyer's eyes seemed to congratulate him. Dominic relaxed a little.

"Now that we've heard from the child's current guardian, I'd like to hear from the petitioner. Ms Houston, I'm going to ask you to answer the same questions about how you would be able to provide for Joshua. As I said to Mr Kelly, if your answers are later found to be incorrect, your case may be damaged. Firstly, a description of your home and how the child would be housed."

Margaret raised her left hand to clear her throat behind, and Dominic's eyes were immediately drawn to her ring finger -- or rather, her lack-of-ring finger. The huge engagement ring she was wearing was gone. He kept his face impassive, but couldn't help wondering why it wasn't there.

"I live with my parents in their spacious house here in Wichita. He would have his own room and a huge garden to play in. We live in a suburb, and the school systems are excellent, some of the best in the state. We're not too far from several hospitals, including the Tracy Airbase Hospital -- which isn't solely for the company -- where I currently work. We're close to parks, pools, playgrounds, day care centres, everything he could want."

"Okay. Thank you. Now, what about any significant relationships you might have, Ms Houston?"

"Well, I've recently split from my former fiancée, but there is no one else right now. I'm fully committed to building up a relationship with my son, rather than someone else."

"All right. Final question for you: how would you describe your working hours or a typical day in your life?"

"Well, your honour, as I said I work at the Tracy Airbase Hospital just outside of Wichita. I'm training to be an ophthalmic surgeon. My hours are rather long, but they're regular. Any time not working, I'd be dedicating to my son."

"Okay."

The judge was typing up a few more notes, and Dominic didn't feel as if he could even look at Margaret. What a pile of you-know-what. Dedicated to Joshua? She certainly didn't feel that way when he was born!

"Now that we've heard from both parties, I'd like to give my opinion on the situation regarding Joshua Kelly from what you've both told me. After that -- and only after -- you may raise any questions or comments that you have on my take. Understood?"

There was a general murmur of "yes, ma'am," from around the table.

"It is my understanding that the child in question is thriving in his current home with Mr Kelly. He is healthy, happy, and well-cared for, with adequate social and recreational facilities, though there is an issue of not having any peers. From what Ms Houston has told me, the same could be said of the situation she could provide for Joshua. You are both medical professionals with working lives, but also with apparent facilities for the care of the child whilst at work. Ms Houston may have the benefit of being closer to playmates of the same age for Joshua, but he does not appear to be suffering in his current situation."

Dominic's fingers clenched together tightly as the judge briefly paused in her rhetoric.

"My recommendation is that the home of each party is investigated by a social worker of this court to confirm or deny any of the information given in this hearing, and that we will reconvene in seven days' time in order to discuss the results, and further this custody appeal. Any questions?"

Mike Lavender sat forward in his chair.

"Your honour, is an investigation strictly necessary? My client has been one-hundred percent truthful in his answers."

"I would not have suggested it if I didn't deem it necessary, Mr Lavender," she said tartly. "We have no evidence of the situation from either party, but both are deemed suitable. The investigation will further my understanding of this case, and allow me to make a decision based on what is best for the child's welfare -- which is paramount to this court. Anything else?"

"My client has no questions at this time, your honour," Ernest Todd said simply, before lapsing into silence again.

"All right, you'll both be receiving further communication from this court as to the visits, and to confirm the next custody hearing. I call this meeting to a close. Good afternoon."

All around the table rose as the judge did, and she quietly swept out of the room.

Mr Todd stood and pulled Margaret's chair out for her, and she rose gracefully. Ernest motioned for her to leave in front of him, and Margaret inclined her head in thanks. Just before she crossed the threshold, she stopped and turned to lay her green eyes on Dominic with contempt.

"I will get my baby back. And he won't leave me, and he will love me."

After that she was gone, Ernest trotting after her. Mike laid a strong hand on Dominic's shoulder. He could feel the man shaking with rage.

"She's full of it," he said. "There's no way she'll get sole custody. No way."

Dominic swung around and glared up at his lawyer.

"You also said it wouldn't get any further than this. Now I have to prove to some snobby social worker that I'm a fit parent, when I already know I am?"

Dominic stalked out of the room and back down to the ground floor waiting area. On seeing his son's livid face, Matthew stood, his face lined with worry.

"Dominic, what happened?"

"You!" Dom bellowed. "You're no better than her, no better! You think that you can waltz back into my life after years of busting my arse to try and care for the woman you abandoned! You left me! You didn't care! And now you try to make up for it with your money, and your -- your stupid food! Well you know what? That's not what I want from you!"

Dominic strode from the building in a rage, but a little voice in the back of his head was already berating him for what he had done. It wasn't Mike's fault the case didn't go your way... Matthew's trying to make up for things... You're just a punk-ass little brat... As the voice got louder, Dominic found his energy depleting, and eventually he stopped. Matthew lumbered up behind him. There was silence for close to a minute, before Matthew spoke.

"You don't know how much it's haunted me, leaving you and your mother. It was the dumbest thing I've ever done. And I'm sorry for it every day of my life."

"Took you long enough to try and get back into my life," Dom said coldly.

"And I'm sorry for it."

Dom swung around with his eyes blazing.

"My mother killed herself because of you!"

Matthew's mouth opened and closed several times, but no sound came out.

"Yes, that's right. She took a whole bunch of pills and hung herself, because she was alone, and she was in pain, and all of her dreams had been shattered by you, who left her alone, when you knew she had no money, and that she wasn't ready, that she couldn't do it alone!"

"I thought...it was the cancer."

"The cancer was the final straw." Dominic's heart was beating wildly; he could feel it in his wrists, throat, and chest. "Do you know what it was like, having to sacrifice any semblance of a childhood, to have to work two jobs, go to school, go find your half-cut mother on a street corner and try to bring her home to sober up so she could try to get a job the next day? And then, once life is finally looking up, to hear she has cancer, and then one day to go back to her house and find her dead? No, you don't. You used my mother, and then came back here and built up a fancy-schmancy life for yourself and your own family, and left us to rot."

"I'm...trying to make amends for that. I'm not proud of what I've done. I wish I could go back and change everything."

"Well, you can't. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go get my stuff, and leave."

"Would you like a lift?"

"No, no. The bus is good enough for me. Goodbye."

Dominic walked off and jammed his hands into his suit pockets. Every step brought his anger down another notch, revealing the raw pain underneath. By the time he reached the nearest relevant bus-stop, his head was hung, and all he wanted to do was cry. He reached into his pocket for his cell-phone, and dialled Elise's number to say that he was on his way.

Posted by ArtisticRainey on August 30, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:05:28 GMT

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Tuesday, September 18, 10 AM; Tracy Island.

"Mr. Tracy, have you received any responses to your ad for a mechanic yet?" Brains said as he walked into the lounge. "It's been a week since you received the resignation from Kat, and the work is cutting into everyone's other duties. We need to find another mechanic, and soon."

Jeff looked up from his computer. "I put the ad in only four days ago, and decided to wait a while before I checked. Sit down while I do."

The engineer complied. "If I'm ever going to get Seven rebuilt, and Eight off the design board, I'll

need someone who can take over the maintenance quickly."

"I know, Brains. Ah, the responses are coming up now."

"Great!" Brains got up and walked around the desk as Jeff pulled up the ad, to see if anyone had replied. I hope we can find a replacement soon. There's a lot to work on, and I need help if I'm going to get the other things done."

"Interesting. We've had only five responses so far. I'd hoped for more; it would have given us a broader range to select from. I suppose that having to send an application to our Sydney HR office might have put some people off."

"Who's responded?"

"Let's see. Jeanine Laroche, Henry Drake, Sally Miller, Sammy Kyung and William Abbott. One from France - no, she's French, but living in Australia - a," Jeff looked closer at one of the applications, "Korean-Australian, an Australian, and two Americans, one in Mississippi and one in San Francisco."

"Let's see the résumés."

Jeff brought the first one up. "I'm looking forward to the new monitors arriving. They'll make things a lot easier. I'm glad you talked to me about it, and that we ordered them. I can't imagine why we never made this upgrade before."

Several days earlier, Brains had become frustrated one too many times by the fact that he had to keep minimizing and maximizing windows to get the information he wanted. He'd stopped what he was working on, looked up information on double and triple screen monitors, and printed out information on several types. He highlighted the one he felt would work best for him, and International Rescue, and took all the printouts to Jeff and Dianne. Jeff had approved of his choice, with his wife's agreement, and Brains promptly ordered a dozen. They were to arrive soon.

"I agree. But other things kept taking priority, well, until I got fed up, I guess. And even Tin-Tin has commented on it." He peered myopically at the screen. "I'm not so sure about this Jeanine Laroche person. Her qualifications are merely adequate, and if she speaks and understands English like she writes it, I don't think she'll work out."

"I agree." Jeff closed her application, and brought the next one up. "Hmm. Henry Drake. Interesting. He has quite a résumé, but something about the way he's written it up makes me wary. I can't put my finger on it, but it does." He minimized it and brought the third one up.

"Will Abbott. His résumé looks like he's never written one before."

"True, Brains, but look. After the Navy, he began working for his father. He probably never needed to. Hmm. I wonder what the 'family emergency' was."

One by one, Jeff brought up the last two résumés. "The others look like they might qualify. Sally Miller isn't far away, and neither is Sammy Kyung."

"I think we should do background checks on all four of these people."

"I agree. Tell you what; I'll take Drake and Miller, and you take Abbott and Kyung. Let's get background checks on these people as fast as possible. If we're lucky, we should have something back within twenty-four hours."

"Okay, Mr. Tracy. I'll get right on it." Brains turned and left the lounge.

Posted by hobbeth on August 31, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:05:41 GMT

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Monday, September 17, around 11:30 p.m NYC (Tuesday, September 18, 3:30 p.m, Tracy Island)

Cassie leaned her head back against the window of the subway car but refrained from closing her eyes. There were only a few others on the car with her but she knew she could never be too careful in the city. Despite the nap on the plane and the one she had taken before work, the time change was getting to her. She had never been so happy to see the night shift come into the fire station.

I should call Mr. Tracy when I get home, Cassie thought to herself, as the subway train rocked steadily on its journey under the city. The motion wasn't helping the sleepy feeling. It's late here but mid-afternoon there, she thought, having figured out and memorized the time difference between Tracy Island and New York so she would know it when she wanted to call her family after she moved. If I wait till morning, it's going to be too late on the island to make the call.

At the next stop, Cassie got up and left the train. She walked up the steps to street level and quickly walked the few blocks to her brother's apartment building. She keyed in the code at the front door and let herself into the building.

As she expected, her brother's apartment was empty. Mark had said he was heading to one of the gay bars in the city after work tonight to unwind. Cassie really wished her brother would finally find someone he could have a serious relationship with.

Flopping down on the couch, Cassie dug both her phone and the card with Mr. Tracy's number on it out of her jacket pocket. She dialed the number and listened to the phone ring. On the third ring it was answered.

"Hello," came the now familiar voice of her new employer.

"Hi, Mr. Tracy. It's Cassie Kishi."

"Cassie, hi," Jeff said, a bit surprised to hear from his newest recruit so soon. "Must be getting late there."

"It is. I just got off work, and I'm exhausted. I wanted to call and let you know that I talked to Chief Calloway today. He isn't requiring that I put in the two weeks but he does want me to finish out the posted schedule. The schedule's out to Sunday evening." Cassie paused. She wasn't sure how he'd feel about her next request but she wanted to make it. "After that, sir, I'd like a few days to go see my one brother and his family in Connecticut before I leave. I haven't seen them in awhile and I'm not sure when I'll see them again."

"Of course," Jeff told her. He paused as he looked at the calendar. "How about I send someone for you on October second, which will probably end up falling on the first there. Will that be enough time?"

"I can be ready by then," Cassie told him.

"Great. I'll have someone pick you up at JFK Airport that day. I'll get back to you with the exact time and who to expect when day gets closer."

"Okay, Mr. Tracy."

"Looking forward to having you on the team, Cassie."

"Thank-you, Mr. Tracy," she replied.

Ending the call, Cassie stood up and headed for her bedroom. Her bed was definitely calling her name.

Posted by starrynebula on August 31, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:06:51 GMT

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Dominic was silent for the journey back to Tracy Island. Elise had, naturally, asked how things had gone. She had, however, received no more than a grunt as a response. Her normally chipper team mate kept his eyes forward at all times. Elise didn't know whether to feel offended or not, because Dom was being incredibly rude, but she didn't know what had went on. She snuck a sidelong glance at him from time to time, noting the very pale pallor of his skin -- which was saying something, as the Irishman was naturally pure white. He looked exhausted. I'm not surprised at that, Elise thought, considering the stress of the day combined with the changing time-zones. Under normal circumstances she would have called him on his behaviour, but at that point, he looked as if he could snap, and he was her co-pilot.

By the time she requested permission to land on Tracy Island at exactly half-past five in the evening, the stony silence had gotten too much for her. As soon as she could she was out of the cockpit and starting into her post-flight checks. Dominic walked off without so much as a goodbye or a thank you. She shook her head as she watched him leave. Either there was something incredibly grumpy in the water in Kansas, or the hearing did not go well. For Dominic's sake, I

hope it was the water. She left the matter to simmer in her mind, turning her attention to her checks, and what would hopefully come soon after: bed.

Posted by ArtisticRainey on August 31, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:06:59 GMT

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Tuesday, Sept 18; Silver Spring, 1 AM (5 PM on TI)

Lena threw the bedcovers off and sat up, reaching for her robe. It's no use; I can't sleep. Dere's something I need to do. She stood up and slid her feet into her slippers, then went out into the hall. She walked to her home office, hesitating at the door, then opened it and went inside.

She glanced at her computer - Not now, she thought - and sat down. Opening one of the drawers, she took out some notepaper and a pen. She thought for several minutes before she began. She wrote swiftly, pausing only a few times to consider what to say next. When she was finished, she read it over.

Dear Matthew,

I'm writing this to you as my eldest child, but most of it you should share with the rest of the family. You will know what to tell them, I'm sure.

First of all, I needed to put my thoughts down on paper, not on the computer. As wonderful as computers are, they seem too impersonal for what I want to say. I feel you deserve better. Hence this letter.

Since the plane crash, the realization of my own mortality has grown increasingly stronger. It's also made me realize that there are some things I need to tell you, before anything else happens to me. Of course, I hope that many years pass before you see this, but none of us can tell what the future holds for us.

On to the practical. As you know, I sometimes take on special projects for Mr. Tracy. In order to do them, he has provided me with state-of-the-art computers, both here and at work, and a top-of-the-line security system for this house. You and Joy already have the passwords for my home alarm, but I ask you again not to give it out to anyone, including your children. That's how sensitive some of the projects can be.

However, should something happen to me, so that I can no longer do the job, Mr. Tracy should be informed, so he can send someone to remove the computers and security alarms. I am including the number to call and tell him of my condition. You can let him know that whomever he sends should contact you.

If I am dead, you will all have heard the will. I truly don't care what each of you does with what I leave you; they're only things. What I really wanted to leave you, can't be put into a will. So I'm

telling you here.

I want to leave the greatest treasure I have in equal amounts to each of you: my love. You have all been sources of great pride to me. Any disappointments I may have had were few, and small - and forgotten. My one regret in dying would be that I'd have to leave you, even if it is only for a time.

I also hope I've left you many good memories of the times we spent together. Keep them in your hearts, and we won't be completely separated.

I wish you all years of love, health, and happiness. I love you all very much.

She folded the paper and placed it into an envelope. She wrote on the envelope: For Matthew, to be opened if I am permanently disabled, or have died.

Lena turned to a cabinet and opened it. It contained a safe, among other things. She entered the combination, and reached inside, taking out some papers. Locating her will among them, she placed the letter she just wrote with it, then put everything back into the safe, and closed everything up.

Feeling like an important task had been performed, she headed back to her bedroom, removed her robe and slippers, and lay down with a sigh of relief.

Two minutes later, she was asleep.

Posted by hobbeth on August 31, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:07:12 GMT

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Tuesday, September 18; 10:15 AM; BWI Airport (2:15 AM the next day on Tracy Island)

The flight attendant greeting the boarding passengers recognized the older black woman who was approaching the doorway. "Mrs. Matumbo! I'm so pleased to see you again, and very happy that you're traveling with us. After what happened the last time, a lot of the survivors still find it difficult to fly, and those who have, have taken another airline."

Lena stopped out of the way of passengers behind her and smiled at the attendant. "Dat's silly of dem. It wasn't at all de fault of de airline; it was dat air traffic controller. Personally, I tink it was due to de captain's abilities dat de deats and injuries weren't more extensive."

"You are so right. I just had a mild concussion and a few bruises. I was back in the air in only a couple of weeks. I wasn't about to let what happened stop me from doing what I love."

"Good for you. Have you heard any more about de captain? How is he doing?"

"He is doing better than the doctors expected him to, but I doubt he'll be able to fly a commercial jet again. His legs were so severely damaged, he'll be in a wheelchair for the rest of his life, unless someone comes up with some new medical procedure to heal them completely. Oh, and he proposed to that woman he was seeing, and she accepted."

"Dat's wonderful! But if her brotter heard, I'm sure he isn't happy about dat."

The flight attendant chuckled, then became serious again. "I understand he went ballistic when he heard his sister was visiting the captain at the hospital, and had to be sedated. I believe he's in a psychiatric ward somewhere, and I don't really want to know where."

"I don't blame you. But I tink I'd better take my seat. I'd ratter be in it when we take off." Lena winked at the attendant and headed down the aisle. She was in the second row of the first class seats, and found herself next to a middle aged woman, who looked frightened. Once she was settled, she turned to the woman and smiled. "Is dis your first flight?"

"No, but it is on this airline. I have to get to Seattle for the birth of my first grandchild, and there were no other flights available. And after what happened last month to one of their flights out of Denver, I'm not so sure I want to be here. You heard about that crash, didn't you?"

"Hear about it? Honey, I was in it. As you can see, I survived. And out of de tree hundred or so passengers and crew aboard, less dan two dozen died. As tragic as dat was, it could have been a lot worse.

"You were a victim of the crash and still are flying with this airline? Why?"

"It wasn't de airline's fault, nor de fault of de people flying de jet. It was caused by an air traffic controller who had serious personal problems, and took dem out on de captain of de plane. But dis airline has very capable people, and dey did a good job, under dose circumstances."

"Thank you, Mrs. Matumbo. I appreciate your words very much."

Startled, Lena turned to see two men standing in the aisle beside her seat. One was in a business suit, and the other in a pilot's uniform. The latter continued. "I was the co-pilot on that flight, ma'am, and I really want to thank you for what you just said."

"It's only de trut, young man."

"When Michelle - the flight attendant - told me you had come aboard, I had to meet you," the other man said as the co-pilot excused himself and headed back to the cockpit. "I am Ron Parker, vice president of Human Relations. I would like to ask a favor of you. Would you mind if we used your name as a survivor of the crash who isn't afraid to fly with us again? It would be in a press release, and perhaps in an advertisement down the road."

"You can use my name in de press release, Mr. Parker," she replied. "But I'm not so sure about de rest of it."

"Excuse me, sir," the attendant interrupted. "But we need to get going, so you'll have to take your

seat and buckle in."

"All right," the businessman replied. "Mrs. Matumbo, I hope we can chat later during the flight."

"Dat will be fine."

Mr. Parker smiled and quickly got into his seat. Lena heard his buckle snap shut as the plane pulled away from the terminal. She turned to her seatmate, who was regarding her with some astonishment. "Look, I love my job, part of which is to fly to a different part of de country each mont. I'm not going to let some - well, I'm not going to get into name calling here. I'm not going to let anyone stop me from doing my job. Don't worry; we'll be fine. And when you have to travel, flying is still one of de safest ways to go."

The other woman relaxed slightly. "That's true. And if you can do it, after going through what you did, I guess I can, too."

They smiled at each other, and soon the jet was speeding down the runway.

Posted by hobbeth on August 31, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:07:23 GMT

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Wednesday, September 19, 2068, 10 a.m., Tracy Island

"Well, this feels familiar." Emily opened the door to Heather's apartment. "Twice in a week," she said, shaking her head.

"I know." Lisa pulled the anti-gravity float into the living room behind her. "I feel bad for her, losing half her family in one terrible blow." She, too, shook her head, then gazed around the room, turning slowly. "She didn't even have time to make this place her home."

Emily pulled in a deep breath and let it out in a heavy sigh. "I know. But there shouldn't be too much to pack. I'll start in the kitchen."

"I'll take the bedroom."

The two women grabbed packing materials and each headed off to their respective rooms. Emily frowned as she checked the refrigerator. She certainly stocked up for a party. Wines, cheeses... it's not going to be easy packing this up. Maybe we'd just better buy them from her, as we did with Kat's supplies of meusli bars and long-life milk. She shook her head sharply. Seemed like that girl had those stashed everywhere!

Lisa, on the other hand, smiled as she ran her hand over the red velvet gown. This is lovely, and she looked lovely in it. It was a happy coincidence that she had this red dress for Virgil's party. She pulled it down and draped it carefully over the bed, then turned to the other dresses that hung

in the closet. My, she has expensive tastes! I hope she has some happy occasions so she can wear these, too.

With a sigh, she began to take the dresses from the closet, and lay them out. I'll need a long box, maybe two, and lots of tissue paper to keep them from getting wrinkled. Well, better get to work.

With that, she went back out to the living room and the float, looking for the type of box she needed.

Posted by Tikatu on August 31, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:08:01 GMT

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Tracy Island, Wednesday, September 19th, 1:30 PM

Elise hummed to herself as she finished straightening up a few things. "There, dishes washed; laundry caught up; housecleaning done!" She smiled to herself. "Now, I have some time before I meet with Virgil, what to do until then?"

As if on cue, there was a knock on the door. She walked over and opened it.

Luke stood in the doorway. "Help."

"Luke! Come in! What's wrong?" she asked as she led him inside.

Luke sat down at the table. "Those white walls in my apartment. I can't stand it anymore!"

Elise chuckled. "Yeah, I have to agree with you on that." She gestured around her own place. "I never got around to doing anything about it. In fact, I think Dom is the only one who did!"

Luke shook his head. "I don't have a clue where to begin. Paint, I guess, but what colors?"

Elise handed him a glass of lemonade. "Well, what about your place at home? How did that look?"

Luke thought for a moment. "Modern mostly. Barry liked minimal color, dark, monochromatic type stuff."

"Barry?"

"My partner. He's in advertising so he had a knack for that sort of thing. Me, I usually don't care, but can't stand just white." Luke took a sip of the lemonade.

Elise nodded thoughtfully. "I can understand that. Are you and Barry still together? I mean wouldn't it be hard with you here and him..."

"He got transferred to L.A. right before I took the job. In fact, him leaving was the reason I went looking for something else." He shrugged. "I needed the change, something to help me get over him, know what I mean?"

Elise smiled softly. "I do. And, I'm sorry. Breakups are always hard."

Luke smiled back. "Thanks."

Elise stood up. "Well, to start, let's go upstairs and see what we have to work with. How about I grab Nikki and get her opinion too?"

"Sure! I can use all the help I can get!"

A short time later the three of them were standing in Luke's living room. Rommel kept nudging his muzzle under one of their hands, trying to get their attention. Elise laughed and knelt down to pat him. "Aren't you a big, beautiful boy. So handsome."

Luke rolled his eyes. "God, Rommel, you're pathetic."

Nikki eyed the stacks of books scattered around the edges of the walls. "Read much?"

He laughed. "I need to get some bookshelves made. I'll add wood to our list." He frowned. "Speaking of which, where do we get stuff anyway?"

"On the mainland. Christchurch, New Zealand mostly. I'll ask Dom where he bought the supplies for his place and we can try there," Elise replied.

"Sounds good." Luke looked around the room. "So any ideas?"

Elise stood up, and looked around, hands on her hips. "OK, what do you have for the walls? Any pictures, posters, things like that?"

Luke led her over to a pile of crates. "Barry was into real edgy, cutting edge art. He took most of it with him." He rummaged through a box. "Here, this is some of what I have." He pulled out a framed print featuring a snow capped mountain range.

Nikki ran her hand along the edge of the frame. "This is gorgeous. Where did you get it?"

Luke shrugged. "Got the pic at an art shop and made the frame myself."

Elise looked up in surprise. "You made it?"

Luke blushed. "Yeah, sort of one of my hobbies." He put the picture down and dug into another carton, pulling out a small object and handing it to her. "I carve. Small things mostly, but can build shelves and stuff too. Made a coffee table for my folks for Christmas a few years back."

Elise looked at the tiny statue of the deer in her hand. The detail was exquisite. She could almost see it breathe. "Luke, this is beautiful."

He smiled. "Then it's yours."

She looked up at him, eyes wide. "No, I couldn't."

"Sure you can!" He bent into the box again and took out something else, this time handing it to Nikki. "And for you. Consider it payment for your consulting services."

Nikki smiled and then gasped as she looked down at the small box in her hand. It was a tiny jewel box, carved with an intricate woven knot on the cover. "Thank-you, Luke. It's lovely."

"You're welcome." He put his hands on his hips and glanced around. "So, you two will help me? Get this place looking less like a sterile lab and more like a home?"

"You bet," Elise told him. "We'll check with Mr. Tracy, see who else we can grab and head to town as soon as we can."

Posted by lillehafrue on September 1, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:08:18 GMT

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Wednesday September 19th 2068, 4.30pm, Tracy Island.

Jeff opened his email for what he felt like was the hundredth time that day. There were communiqués from several departments across his extensive business, and he got to work reading them right away, taking down notes on a data padd at his wrist. The list got shorter and shorter, until only one was left: it was from the security department that handled the background checks on anyone he asked. I wonder who exactly this is about. I have several people being checked at the moment.

He clicked on the link, and found that it was about the new dentist his family were registered with. That's good. It came back clean. I'll have to send off an email to confirm we will be staying with them...so long as there was an address supplied. I know there was a phone number... Jeff went to locate the letter, smiled when he saw the email address, and began to type.

xxxx

Izarra Soto Fernandez had finished with her patients for the day. Two of her other dentists were still working -- one with a particularly frightened young teenager, who really didn't want to be there. I'll have to look into getting these walls better soundproofing. I hate having jittery patients. Izarra swung around on her swivel chair and reached for her computer mouse. She was sitting in her spacious, modern office, with its curved edges and calming colour scheme. The previous owner had taste, she had observed when she visited the practice to view it before she put her money down on it. Now, it was all hers: a modern practice with an established clientele, and years to go to retirement.

Izarra had taken her work with her across three continents: Europe, where she had studied for her dentistry qualifications in Madrid, South America in her native Dominican Republic, and now Oceania, with her new Christchurch practice. She called up her email, and began working through the long list of unread mail. It's good to see that people are staying with us, she thought. I have been led to believe that Edmund McCann was a respected man; hopefully they will come to think the same of me -- except a respected woman, obviously. Izarra chuckled to herself, and opened the next email. Oh, I am pleased at that. The practice's most famous patient, Jeff Tracy of Tracy Industries fame, was remaining with them. That means eleven patients remain with us, she thought. Hopefully. I suppose many of his children are now grown and able to make their own choices...

Izarra finished reading her emails, and walked through to the reception area, her five inch heels clicking loudly. Such footwear, she realized, was not the best for working, and could project a negative image. I certainly do not want that. However, I would at least like to be able to see my patients eye-to-navel... Standing at a mere four foot nine, height had always been an issue with the slim, middle-aged woman. She made sure to wear long trousers to cover the height of the heels.

"Hey Ms Fernandez."

"Hello, Elizabeth."

Izarra smiled at the perky young woman manning the reception desk. Elizabeth was twenty years of age, wore her long blonde hair in low pigtails, and seemed to be forever chewing gum. Izarra shook her head.

"What have I told you about the gum? Spit it out."

"But there's no one here," Elizabeth whined.

Izarra gave her a stern look, and the blonde deposited her gum in the nearest waste bin.

"That's much better. Now, have you got everything up to date? Because I don't want to have Mandy cleaning up your mistakes again tomorrow. The woman is seven months pregnant and doesn't need the extra pressure on top of her work. Saying that I offered to let her take extra leave -- not all paid, obviously -- but she refused. In any case, you should be doing your job correctly, which I know you can do. You just need to concentrate and stop chewing -- have you put another piece of gum into your mouth?"

Elizabeth clamped her lips tightly together, and disappeared for a moment under the desk.

"Not any more..." she said sheepishly.

"Oh, Elizabeth, what am I going to do with you?" Izarra shook her head at the young woman, before sighing. "I want no more of this gum nonsense. You're on your last warning before I make it official on your record. Understood?"

"Yes, Ms Fernandez."

"Now, finish up, and you can clock out on time."

"Okay, no problem."

Izarra shook her head and turned to walk back to her office. That girl... I've only been here for three weeks and she's already had five 'unofficial' warnings. Enough is enough. She sat down at the computer once again, but her eyes strayed to the picture of her husband, framed and sitting beside the monitor. Oh Sébastian, she thought. I wish you were still here with me. Well, I suppose I wish that we were both together in Madrid once more, rather than here. I would go anywhere to be with you again. She smiled sadly at the photo, before turning back to her monitor to finish up her work for the day.

Posted by ArtisticRainey on September 1, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:08:31 GMT

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Thursday September 20th, 2068, 08.00, en route to Tracy Island.

"I do love to visit Tracy Island."

"Yus, milady."

Lady Penelope sat back in the comfortable passenger chair in her private jet, her finger perfectly manicured finger pressed on the intercom that connected her to Parker in the cockpit.

"What time will we be arriving?" She asked him.

"Alf an hour, milady."

"Ah, good. I do wish to see everyone again. A trip to Bongo-Bongo never feels proper without a trip to see my good friends."

Penelope had been checking up on her sheep ranch in Australia -- and things were going wonderfully, thank you very much -- and as had become her custom, she was now heading to Tracy Island to spend a few days there before travelling back to England.

"It was dear Kyrano's birthday last Monday. I was sorry to miss it. However, I do hope he will like the gift that I have for him. I was going to purchase some cufflinks from dear François' new accessories for men collection, but I didn't feel that they were just the right gift. I think the handmade batik wall hangings are more appropriate. They're terribly delicate and very beautiful.

"Yus, milady. H'I am sure 'e will like 'em."

"I think I shall have a quick nap before we arrive."

"Quite right, milady. H'I will wake you in good time for landing."

"Good show, Parker."

Lady Penelope lifted her finger from the intercom button, and used a nearby remote control to lower her seat into a more suitable incline for sleeping. She picked up a pink, silk eye mask, from a pocket in the side of the seat, slipped it on, and was soon asleep.

xxxx

Jeff watched from the balcony as Lady Penelope's jet made its final pass at the island, before descending in an arc towards the runway. Gordon, who had offered to meet her, was sitting nearby the landing strip to ferry their guests and their luggage up to the monorail, and then on to the round house. I'd like to have been meeting her myself, but I was in conference when Parker requested landing clearance. I'm glad it wrapped up sooner than I expected. I'll have Kyrano prepare some tea and meet her then. And I hope Gordon didn't bring a rubber chicken with him, or worse: a fake mouse. In the back of his mind, however, Jeff was chuckling at the thought of what his son could, but thankfully wouldn't, do to their guest. He smiled all the way down to the kitchen.

xxxx

"Hey there, Penny, Parker!" Gordon said with a wide grin. "Welcome back."

He had just finished up some routine maintenance on Thunderbird Four with Brandon, and had decided to greet their guests in the interim between that and his meeting with Brains to discuss potential upgrades to the craft's navigational system at eleven a.m.

"Good morning, Gordon," Lady Penelope said as she gracefully exited her plane. "Lovely to see you. Is your father still in conference?"

"No, he's just told me to tell you he's finished now. He's sorry he couldn't make it down."

"Oh, it's of no real consequence. I shall have ample time to see him. How is everyone?"

"Well," Gordon said with a chuckle as he moved to help Parker load the baggage onto the little cart he had driven down in, "there is a lot of 'everyone' these days! Mom and Dad and Grandma are fine, and as far as I'm aware, so are all my numerous siblings. Thankfully we haven't lost any more recruits since Kat and Heather -- there's been a little turbulence for a few of them, but mostly it's been training, rescues, and training. Kyrano had his sixty-fifth birthday on Monday. He got some cool stuff; I'm sure he'll tell you himself."

"Well, I look forward to catching up with everyone."

Lady Penelope seated herself in the cart as Parker and Gordon finished loading her many bags, and smiled demurely as Gordon got into the driver's seat, and began to ferry her to her suite.

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:08:45 GMT

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Thursday 20th September, 2068, 1:30pm, Tracy Island

Pen kissed paper as Nikki wrote a new entry into her diary.

Am I ready?

That question has been niggling in my mind ever since it was suggested that I take a trip down to the hanger to see Thunderbird Seven. It's weird how I can face dangers in rescues but I can't face Seven. So much for me being over the whole tornado roller coaster.

Many times I've thought about going down there. I stand up, put on a brave face and then...I chicken out and sit back down or continue with something else.

Ever since the day of the accident, I've been wondering what my life would've been like if I wasn't approached to join the team. Would I still be working in the same hospital? Be living in London? Seeing someone?

Nikki sighed before continuing to write.

I guess there's no point in wondering, because I'll never know.

Having nothing else to write, Nikki put her diary away and looked out her window.

'No point staying in ,waiting around on a clear day like this,' she thought. Nikki looked at her watch. She still had an hour until she met up with Alan for another one-on-one basketball game. 'Might as well go for a walk and hang out on the beach before meeting up with Alan straight after.'

After changing her flip flops to trainers and grabbing a small bottle of water, Nikki headed out of her apartment.

She was five minutes into her walk when she noticed Scott sitting on the beach. From what she could tell, he seemed to be in deep thought as he looked towards the ocean. So she was surprised when he waved at her and said hi.

"Hey, Scott. You seemed to be concentrating so hard on the ocean, I didn't think you'd see me heading towards you. I wasn't sure if I should disturb you or not."

"I saw you out of the corner of my eye," Scott replied. "Not a lot gets by me, or did you forget about my paintball victory on my birthday."

"Ok, subject change," Nikki said. This caused Scott to laugh slightly. "Can I join you?"

"Sure," Scott looked towards the ocean again as Nikki sat down. "Heard that you and Alan have a basketball game later."

"Yeah. It's funny. The first time I played him, he took it easy on me, thinking I didn't know how to play. Now..."

"Let me guess. You beat him before or the scores were close and now he's trying to prove that he's better," Scott finished.

"Exactly."

"It's an Alan thing."

"I think a guy thing is more accurate."

"Not all guys are competitive."

"Sure they're not." Nikki smiled. "You know as I said that, I was thinking about the paintball war."

"So much for the subject change." Scott smirked. "How about I come and referee the game?"

"I don't mind. Alan, on the other hand, probably wouldn't want anyone to witness him being beaten by a girl."

"Oh, I'm definitely coming to watch the game."

Posted by nikki on September 3, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:08:57 GMT

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Thursday, September 20; Tracy Island; 2 PM (7 PM the previous day in San Francisco)

"Mr. Tracy, I finally got back the information on Will Abbott and Sammy Kyung. If you got the reports on the other two, perhaps we can make a choice, and get things moving."

"I was just about to contact you, Brains. Sally Miller and Sammy Kyung withdrew their applications. Apparently they've known each other for some time, and decided to get married. They're on their honeymoon, heading to Korea to meet his family."

"You're kidding!"

"Nope. They both put an addendum on their applications. You can look them up and see for yourself."

"That's ... Well, I have no words. What about - what was his name? - Henry Drake?"

"I was right to be wary about him. The background check on him turned up some interesting information. He was in prison for carjacking, and got out about three months ago. His application was plagiarized from another person's. The other guy got a good job with it, and Drake apparently thought it would work for him, too."

"So that leaves William Abbott. It turns out the family emergency was his younger brother, who got hooked on a narcotic that's been going around for a few years. It's known as Arise. Abbott had to resign from the Navy to help his family get his brother off of it. Apparently they were successful; his brother has remained clean, and has a good job."

"Interesting. Sounds like the man knows how to keep things to himself. But I'm sure he'd realize that if we interviewed him, we'd ask about that. I think we should have him come here, and find out if he's what we need."

"I agree, Mr. Tracy. But we can't really spare anyone to go get him right now."

"True. I'll contact the HR department in Christchurch and have them arrange transportation on a commercial airline. We can spare someone, I'm sure, to pick him up there and bring him here."

xxxx

8:30 PM Wednesday, September 19, Will's apartment

The syncopated ring tone told Will that he had a long distance call coming in. At first he thought it might be from someone in his family, but one look at his caller id screen told him otherwise.

"Hello?"

"Is this Mr. Abbott?"

"Yes, that's right."

"I'm Jack Tripper, with Tracy Industries Human Resources in Christchurch. Mr. Tracy liked your application and would like you to fly out here for an interview."

"He would? When?"

"Would the day after tomorrow be too soon?"

"Friday?" Will thought about it. "Yeah I can be ready."

"Good. I'm emailing you the information now. We've reserved a plane ticket for you, which you'll pick up at the airport, of course. Plan to stay for two nights at Mr. Tracy's home."

Will turned his computer on and a minute later saw the email in his box. "I got it. I'll be there."

"Well, I'm sure you have things to do to get ready, so I'll hang up now. Have a good flight."

"Thanks, Mr. Tripper."

When the call terminated, Will opened the email. The flight leaves at 11:45 AM Friday and arrives in Christchurch at... 2:50 PM the next day?? I lose over a whole day in one, he checked the information again and did some calculating, eight hour flight? Man! Well, I guess I'll make up for it when I come back. And it's a first-class ticket. They do know how to treat their employees well. Man, this is happening faster than I expected. Well, I know Carl can take over for me, so the transition will be smooth. Of course, that's if I get the job.

He shut down his computer and stood up, then sat back down. "I'm doin' it; I'm really doin' it. I sure hope I don't blow it."

Posted by hobbeth on September 3, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:09:12 GMT

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Thursday, September 20, 2068, 5:45 p.m., Christchurch, New Zealand (same time on Tracy Island)

"I'm so excited!"

Cherie nearly squirmed with happiness in the seat of the family's sports car as Virgil pulled into the parking lot at the Christchurch Community Center. The two of them had come to the city early so Cherie could purchase the supplies she'd need for the class. They had dinner together at a local fast-food eatery; not one of Virgil's favorites, but Cherie had declared, "Sometimes I miss McDonald's," in such a pitiful voice that he couldn't help but indulge her.

He grinned as they talked over burgers and fries. I don't get to spend a lot of just brother-sister time with Cherie. This Thursday night thing could be a regular date. And while she's in class, I can shop for myself. It'll be a nice time away from the island, too.

As they pulled into the parking lot, they noticed a number of teenage girls and boys getting out of cars and vans, and heading into the center. A young woman stopped by their car on the driver's side, and Virgil rolled the window down. "Mr. Tracy?"

"Yes?" Virgil looked up at the dark-skinned girl, and surreptitiously pulled a picture out of a folder. Cherie looked at the picture, then ducked her head to see the young woman standing by Virgil's door. "You're our contact?"

"Yes, I'm Airini Wirihana." The young woman didn't look much older than a teenager, but Virgil knew better from reading her dossier.

"I'm Virgil Tracy, and this is my sister, Cherie," Virgil said, indicating the teen next to him.

Airini ducked her head to favor Cherie with a bright smile. "Nice to meet you both. I'll be your shadow, Miss Tracy, but will try not to get in the way."

Cherie nodded and sighed. She had already argued with her parents about the need for security, but Jeff had been adamant. "You'll have a bodyguard, Princess, but we'll work it out so won't be too onerous." He had put an arm around her and squeezed her gently. "You don't get upset about the security when you visit your Koch grandparents, do you?"

"No," she'd replied reluctantly. "They don't get in the way, but we know they're there."

"That's how it will be for your class," he had assured her. "You'll see."

Now the two Tracys got out of the car. Cherie grabbed her purse and her art bag, while Virgil took the bag of supplies they'd just bought. The last few stragglers were hurrying inside. Airini walked ahead of them and entered before they got to the door, while Virgil lingered a little at the doorway.

"Have a good time, sis," he said, handing her the bag. He held her by her upper arms and kissed her on the forehead. "I'll be back at 8:30 to pick you up."

"See you then," Cherie said, smiling hesitantly.

He stepped out of the way, and Cherie straightened her shoulders, took a calming breath, and went inside. Virgil watched her clear both sets of doors before turning, his hands in his pockets, and sauntering back to the sports car.

Inside, Cherie found her bodyguard waiting for her. Together, they walked down to the room where the art class was being taught. She noticed that Airini already seemed to know where to go. She probably scoped it out beforehand.

When they reached the room, Airini crossed the room and set her things on one of the drawing tables, leaving Cherie to look around for her own place to sit. There was a spot open by a dark-haired girl who looked to be about her own age. Cherie walked over slowly, and asked the girl, "Is this seat taken?"

"No, it's not." The girl smiled and indicated with a hand that Cherie was welcome to sit there.

Cherie smiled back, a little shyly, and set her things down. The girl leaned over. "By the way, I'm Anneliese." She held out her hand, and Cherie took it.

"I'm Cherie. Nice to meet you."

"You, too."

At that moment, the teacher, Mr. Jernigan, came in. Cherie settled into her seat, feeling a thrill that she was here, on her own, and doing something she loved. She glanced over at her neighbor, and smiled. Maybe I've even made a friend!

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:09:22 GMT

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September 21st, 1:30pm

The jet from Tracy Island made its way across the blue sky. Brandon was going for his pilot's license and had asked Scott to fly him the short distance to Christchurch. After taking off, Scott turned the controls over to him for a little more practice. As they flew along, he tried to make conversation. "I bet you're excited to be going for your license."

There was no reply. He looked at his friend, noticing his look of concentration and the tight grip he had on the steering yoke. "Hey, you can loosen up a little," he said lightly. "You're flying a plane, not killing chickens."

Brandon relaxed his hands. God, I haven't felt like this since high school. I don't know why I'm so uptight about doing this. "Sorry. I guess I'm a little nervous," he answered, staying focused.

Scott was surprised by this revelation. Brandon had seemed more confident and sure during the last few flight training sessions. He thought a moment before speaking again. "Brandon, I've watched you fly. You'll pass the test, trust me."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence," Brandon replied. "I hope it's not misplaced. I want to do better than I did when I took my driver's test."

"Oh, didn't do too well the first time?" Scott asked.

"Pffft, that's an understatement." Brandon shook his head. "The instructor wasn't exactly the most pleasant person to be with. Suffice to say, I didn't make a good first impression. I was so nervous; I did everything wrong. I jerked the steering wheel too hard, went up on the curb and hit the brakes too hard among other things."

"Take it easy," Scott replied, putting a hand on Brandon's shoulder. "You'll do fine." Quickly changing the subject he asked, "So how are your parents doing?"

Brandon smiled. "They're doing great. Dad's getting more feeling in his legs with each passing day and the therapist is amazed at the progress he's made. Hopefully, he'll be walking on his own soon. Mom's working in the garden again, and she told me Rocky's right there with her." Brandon chuckled softly. "I guess he wants to help her dig holes for the plants."

The jet approached Christchurch and Brandon handed the controls over to Scott, who brought it in for perfect landing. As they taxied to the terminal, both men saw the examiner, clipboard in hand, waiting for them.

As Scott brought the plane to a stop and shut down the engines, Brandon took a deep breath, unbuckling his seatbelt. "Here goes nothing; Wish me luck." He picked up his log book and exited the plane.

Posted by MagicMaster8 on September 3, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:09:39 GMT

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Friday, September 21, Tracy Island; 1:30 PM

As the cargo plane came in for a landing, Jeff turned as he heard one of the golf carts approach. "Mother? What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I received an email from Marion that she had sent a package to me. It should be on this plane and I was too curious about what it contained to wait until it was brought inside. So I asked Kyrano to bring me down."

"She didn't give you any hints as to what might be in that package?"

"None whatsoever. Land sakes, some people can be mighty secretive." She looked at her son with a twinkle in her eye. "I wonder if it's something in the Kansas air, or water."

Jeff laughed, then turned as the plane taxied up. As the engines shut down, he walked over to the plane. "Afternoon, Ed. What do you have for us today?"

"Well, those computers you ordered came in. Then magazines, mostly. You do like to read about a wide variety of subjects, don't you?"

"Well, there are several people living here, and they all have their own interests," Jeff replied, as he took a bin from the pilot. "Oof, this is heavy, though."

"I'll take that, Dad."

Jeff glanced to his right and saw Virgil walking up to him, followed by Brains, an anti-gravity float behind them. "Gladly, son. Thank you," he replied, handing the bin over. As his second eldest son put the bin on the float, and the engineer went to get the computers, he turned back to the pilot. "What else?"

"A few personal letters, some legal looking ones - guess those would be for you from your business - and a couple of packages." Ed handed the items to him as he enumerated them. "Looks like someone ordered some new DVDs. And this one here is addressed to Mrs. Emily Tracy."

Jeff took the last package from him and said, "Hold on a minute." He walked over to the cart where his mother was waiting impatiently and handed it to her. Then he took another carton from

the cart he drove to the airstrip, and walked back to the pilot. "Here's our outgoing mail. It's not as much as what you bring us, but..."

"But it's important to the sender - and the receiver, I know. Thanks, Mr. Tracy. I'll see that this gets to the post office as soon as I get back." Ed shut the hatch and headed back to the cockpit. "See you next week, sir. Take care of yourself."

"You too, Ed. Happy landings."

Jeff stepped back as the pilot started the engine, and watched as the plane taxied to the runway, then took off. Then he turned and started over to the carts, but stopped suddenly when he spotted his mother.

Something about the way she was sitting in the cart was different. She was looking down at the package in her lap, so he couldn't see her face.

"Mother! Are you all right? What's wrong?" He rushed over to her as Kyrano and Virgil, who had been sorting the mail, turned to look.

"Jeff, they've been found! They weren't lost! They weren't ruined! They've been found!"

"What's been found?"

She showed him the package. Inside were five framed eight by ten pictures. They were the ones that had hung on the living room wall in the Kansas farmhouse, behind the couch. The first one was of Emily and Grant on their wedding day; the next one was of the two of them with Jeff, when he was a baby. The third was of the three of them, taken when Jeff was in the Air Force. The fourth was of Jeff, Lucille and the five boys, when Alan was just a baby. The last one was taken on the day of Jeff's wedding to Dianne, with all of the family (except Emily, who'd been against the marriage at the start, and Grant, who had died some years earlier), including Dianne's three children, in the picture.

"These were the only copies I had of these pictures. They were never scanned into the computer." Tears began to trickle down her face, but her expression was one of relief and joy.

He slid in beside his mother and put his arm around her. "This is wonderful, Mom. But how?"

"I don't know." She leaned against his shoulder.

He searched the box, and found an envelope in the bottom. It had one word on it - "Emily". He started to hand it to her, saying, "Perhaps this will explain."

"You open it. I don't think I could read anything right now." Sitting up again, she sniffed, and took a tissue from her pocket, then blew her nose.

He smiled at her, then opened the envelope and took out a single sheet of paper. He scanned it, then read it aloud as Virgil and Kyrano moved closer.

Dear Emily,

You and I both know that strange things happen when tornados hit, but this took me by surprise. These pictures were blown thirty miles away, and landed in the front yard of a family whose house was untouched. At first, they didn't recognize the people in the photos, but when one of their kids was studying about the space program in school, he recognized Jeff, and they had the pictures sent to the farm.

The glass was cracked on all of them, and two of them had damage to the frames. But the pictures were totally intact! Amazing, isn't it?

Anyway, I took them into town and, as luck would have it, found a store that still sold the same frames, so I was able to replace the two that were damaged. And I got a good price on glass for all of them. So there you have it; all five of your favorite photos back, none the worse for having been in flight for goodness knows how long.

You tell that son of yours that he shouldn't even think of reimbursing me for the replacements I bought. If I'd wanted him to, I'd have sent him a bill. But I was glad to do this.

There was a lot of damage throughout the area, but people are starting to rebuild. There have been a few questions as to what you and Jeff want to do about the farm, but they were just questions of a social nature, not feelers. I told them you had too much on your minds, what with Dianne's accident and all, to give any thought to it, as far as I knew.

So there you have it. Something good coming out of a tragedy. By the way, how are Momma cat and her kittens doing? Please write me - or email me - when you get a chance, at least to let me know you got the package okay, and to tell me about the cats. I'm curious.

My best as always to the entire family.

Marion

Emily sniffed again, dabbed at her eyes with the tissue once more, and took the note from her son. "That Marion; what a treasure she is."

"Absolutely, Mom," he replied, as she handed the pictures to Virgil and Kyrano. They were joined by Brains, who had finally realized that something special was going on. "But I will send her a check for her trouble, no matter what she says."

"You'll do nothing of the sort, Jefferson Tracy!" Emily exclaimed. "She did what she did out of love, not duty!" A thoughtful expression showed on her face, and she smiled. "But a raise might be a good idea."

The three men chuckled. "Grandma, you are so right."

"And it's probably long overdue." Jeff then looked over at Kyrano, who smiled and shook his head.

"It is a good idea, Mr. Tracy. She deserves one, for all she does, not just for this. And if you're

thinking the same about me, do not. I am very content with all you give me."

"Kyrano, you earn every penny, and more."

"But you have given me more. Far more than I ever could have dreamed of having. Think no more about it; all my present and future needs have been met, or will be, I am certain."

Virgil handed the pictures back to his grandmother, then put a hand on Kyrano's shoulder. "Of course they will. You are part of our family, and have been so for a long time. And soon, you will become more tied to us." He paused, then added, "I hope, though, that you don't expect me to call you 'Grandfather'. I'm not sure I could, after all these years."

"Fear not, Virgil. I do not expect that of you, or some of your brothers, unless they choose to do so. I would never force any of you to call me something; I shudder to think what Gordon might do if I did. I just hope that he doesn't decide to make me a target, once I become an 'official' family member."

"If he does, he'll have to deal with both Mother and Lisa. Hope I'm around to see that if it happens," chuckled Jeff.

Grins and chuckles greeted him as they all started back. Jeff went to his cart, and Virgil and Brains to the anti-grav float. As they walked away, they heard Kyrano ask, "Where do you plan to hang those pictures, Mrs. Tracy?"

Posted by hobbeth on September 3, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:11:29 GMT

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The incident with the smaller human hadn't frightened Blacktuft off. There's still so much to see... And so many cool things I can tell my friends! The tarantula had trekked from the jungle into the island's garden. It had been a long trek, and all eight of his legs were beginning to ache. I have to keep going until I find one of those humans...hopefully not that boy again though!

Blacktuft made his way up another large hill, and sifted his way into a large, dense clump of vegetation. The ground undulated, and loose debris made his legs slip and slide. When he emerged back into the sunlight, he found the ground smooth and strangely hard. What is this place? There was a large body of glimmering, bright blue water. It wasn't like the sea, with its crashing waves and streaks of white foam. It was uniform and gently rippling. He looked all around, and saw swaying palms, and strange, long, legged contraptions. On one of them was...a human! Blacktuft scuttled forwards in excitement. It was definitely a human, dressed completely in pink. I wonder what this one is like... He walked closer to his newest discovery, creeping over the hard ground without being noticed. Until...

"Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaargh! Paaaaaarker!"

Blacktuft leapt backwards a little, but steeled himself. No! I will not be afraid! He moved forwards again, and the human scrambled backwards up the strange contraption, still screaming. He moved forwards once more, and the screams grew louder.

Suddenly the contraption gave way, giving rise to a huge crash that reverberated through the ground. Blacktuft's little heart leapt at the calamity, and he turned and scurried backwards behind another of the long, tall human-supporters. Several more humans appeared and crowded around the one that had fallen. Blacktuft was shaking from leg one to leg eight, but beyond the fright, there was an incredible sense of achievement. I did it again! Close to another human! Yes!

"Milady!" Parker held onto his hat as he bounded down the stairs towards the pool at the sound of Penelope's screams. "I'm coming, milady!"

Virgil and Jeff, who had been in the lounge at the time, were hot on his heels, their faces pictures of worry, and their bodies fuelled by adrenaline.

Parker got there first, and found Penelope sitting in a heap on a broken recliner chair, her hair a mess, tear-tracks on her face, and holding her mouth. There was blood dripping from between her fingers. When Jeff saw that, he ordered Virgil to get Dianne; Virgil took the stairs back two at a time. Parker held out a hand to help Penelope up, and he settled the lady onto the nearest chair.

"What happened here Penny?" Jeff asked.

Penelope raised her eyes to meet his, and took her hand away from her mouth to reveal something pearly white lying in her palm, and a large gap where one of her front teeth should have been.

"Oh, Jeff, I am sorry to have created such a fuss," she said, gazing down at her tooth. "There was... oh, it sounds so silly, but there was a monstrous spider. It frightened me, and in my efforts to get away, the chair collapsed beneath me and in my fall, I appear to have broken one of my teeth. Oh, and I am modelling for François in two days. How frightfully inconvenient."

"What happened here?" Dianne asked as she jogged up to Penelope, Virgil behind her.

"A spider," Parker said. "A bloomin' spider's gone and frightened milady an' she's broken 'er tooth."

"Oh no," Dianne said. "Let me see the damage."

Dianne pulled on a pair of gloves from the medical bag she had brought, and tilted Penny's chin up to look into her mouth, and then at the fragment of tooth.

"There's not much I can do except give you something for any pain you have. You need a dentist, and fast. The quicker you get it attached, the more successful it will be."

"Quite," Penelope said.

"I'll call and see if I can organise something for today with our new dentist in Christchurch. It's worth a shot," Jeff said, before jogging back up to the villa.

"Thank you," Penelope said.

Virgil, hovering in the background, almost caught himself smiling. She's just had an unceremonious fall and one of her teeth has been broken, and yet she's still maintaining her composure. Not like the mouse incident! She's really something.

Posted by ArtisticRainey on September 5, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:13:16 GMT

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"It was rather a good turn that Jeff was able to get me fitted in," Penelope said.

She and Parker were sitting in the waiting room of the Crane Dental Surgery. Jeff had gotten Penelope a slot that had been cancelled just before he had rung the practice.

"Yus, milady, very convenient."

Penelope was every inch the elegant lady, though she refrained from opening her mouth or smiling unless speech was necessary. A blonde girl was sitting behind the reception desk, twirling her hair between her fingers, and chewing gum loudly, with her mouth wide open. How rude, Penelope thought. She watched as the girl picked up the telephone as soon as it rang, still chewing.

"Okay, I'll send her in."

The girl put the phone down, and stood to lean over the desk.

"Ms Creighton-Ward? Go ahead to surgery one, Ms Fernandez will see you now."

Penelope smiled demurely at the girl, vaguely wondering if any of her manners would rub off on a woman who so desperately needed them. I have never been called 'Ms' in my life...

"Milady?" Parker asked, holding out a small, sealed cup.

"Oh, thank you Parker."

She accepted the cup that she knew contained her broken tooth, and walked through to the appropriate room, knocking before she entered.

"Hello, Lady Penelope. How nice to meet you again, although in unfortunate circumstances. However in saying that, the circumstances in which we first met were not pleasant. I believe you

held a gun in my face."

It took Penny a few moments to connect a name with the face of the small woman in dental scrubs standing before the recliner chair, but she did.

"Ms Toulouse," she said. "Or rather, Ms Fernandez."

The two women stood watching each other for several moments. Penelope was going through past events in her mind. She imagined Izarra Fernandez was doing the same.

Penelope's face was cold and steely as she stood with one arm outstretched, holding out her compact, semi-automatic pistol. Her long coat and her hair were swept about on the strong winds as she stood outside a large, dark warehouse at the side of the Thames.

"Put down your weapon," the other woman said, holding up her hands. "I believe we are working towards the same end."

"I think not," Penelope replied, still holding the gun steady. "I believe you are just who I am looking for."

"My name is Izarra Toulouse, Centro Nacional de Inteligencia. I too am investigating the MacMillian drug ring -- we believe they have been transporting cocaine from their base here to locations in mainland Europe -- including my own Spain."

"And what if I don't believe you?" Penelope asked.

"Then you will shoot an innocent person who could have helped you. But you won't shoot me. You know that you will not. I have my identification with me; I can show you."

"Don't move," Penelope said as Izarra moved her hand towards her pocket. "I believe you are armed."

"You are right. Let me unarm myself then, and I will show you that I am legitimate."

"Put down your weapon." Penelope said.

Izarra acquiesced; she set a gun down that Penelope recognised as a .44 Magnum Colt, as well as two small, gleaming daggers.

"I will take off my coat, and you may search me," Izarra said. "I am not your enemy."

Penelope moved closer, unafraid, but still holding her gun. She placed the barrel to Izarra's temple as she performed a frisk with one hand; the woman was clean.

"All right. Your identification," she said, moving backwards.

Izarra reached into one of the pockets of her trousers, and produced the appropriate document, throwing it across to Penelope. In her work in MI6, Penelope knew of the seals and codes of the other world-wide intelligence agencies. It was legitimate. She lowered her gun.

"I was glad to hear that MI6 were successful in catching the criminals," Izarra said.

"As was I. By that time I had left the organisation."

Izarra chuckled, and Penelope pinned her with a look.

"Do you not find this humorous? You and I, once spies, now meeting in such benign circumstances? It is strange."

"Yes, I suppose it is."

"Now, how may I help you? Mr Tracy told me you had broken one of your teeth."

"Yes, in a rather untimely accident. I am modelling in two days' time; I rather need it back."

"Let me see."

Penelope gave the container full of milk that the fragment of her tooth was floating in, and Izarra nodded her head.

"Ah. It is a clean break; I'll be able to laser it together in no time, and it will not look any different. Please, take a seat."

She gestured to the reclining dental chair, and Penelope lay back on it gracefully. I shall have to tell Jeff of this discovery. This woman has quite the reputation.

Posted by ArtisticRainey on September 5, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:13:32 GMT

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Friday, September 21, 9:30 a.m. NYC (Saturday, September 22, 1:30 a.m. Tracy Island)

"Thanks for coming with me, Jordan," Cassie said to her older brother who was standing next to her. It being midmorning, the subway car was packed and the two of them were near the door, holding onto the rail overhead. Under her other arm, Cassie held a small shoe box.

"It's not a problem," Jordan told her. "I still can't believe you're heading for Wichita, though. Now who am I going to drag to bars with me so I can check out women without looking desperate?"

Cassie laughed. Jordan was the only one of the triplets not married. He had broken up with a long time girlfriend a few months back, and had just recently started dating again. More than once, Cassie had gone out to the bar with him only to have him hook up with someone and leave her looking for a ride home.

"You would think you could find someone at the hospital to date," Cassie replied.

"The problem is, all the nurses in the ER have heard my lines," Jordan joked. "This is our station, right?"

Cassie looked out the window of the subway car. "Yeah, this is it," she said, easily recognizing the subway station she had used for so many years.

The two siblings made their way off the car and toward the exit. Following the crowd, they made their way up to the street level. They walked down to the corner and turned left. Two blocks later they were standing outside of her old apartment building. Leading Jordan up the steps, Cassie headed inside, nodding to Jack, the doorman, who held the door open for them.

Cassie headed over to the front desk. She had called Alex last night and told him she wanted to stop by for some of the photos in their photo albums. He had told her he would leave a key for her at the front desk.

"Hi, Cassie," Isaac greeted her, as she approached the front desk.

"Hi, Issac. Alex was supposed to leave me a key for the apartment."

"Ah yes," Isaac said. He walked to the other end of the desk and unlocked a drawer. He took out an envelope, which he handed to Cassie. "There it is. Alex said to tell you to just leave the key in the apartment."

"Thank-you, Isaac," Cassie replied, taking the envelope.

Jordan followed her to the elevator and soon, Cassie and Jordan were standing outside of the apartment she used to share with Alex. She took the key out of the envelope and let them in. As she hadn't wanted to face him, she had purposely come when Alex would be at work.

Alex had put the photo albums, four in total, on the coffee table. A piece of paper sat on top of them. She put the key down beside the albums and picked up the note.

Cassie,

Here are all the photo albums. Take whichever photos you want as you were always the photographer anyway. I never did care much for taking pictures. If you want a photo album or two, that's fine, too. Also feel free to look around and make sure all your stuff is out.

Good luck on your new job.
Alex

"Let's get this over with," Cassie said to her brother, as she tossed the note down on the coffee table. She sat down on the couch, without removing her jacket, and put the shoe box down beside her. Jordan sat down on the other side of her. "Can you go through this one?" she asked, handing him the photo album that held the wedding pictures. "I just want some pictures of our family."

"Got it," Jordan said, taking the album from her and flipping it open.

Cassie took the next album. It had pictures from when Alex and she had been in high school. It seemed like ages ago. She flipped through the pages, taking out pictures here and there. Very few of them had Alex in them and those that did were group pictures. There were pictures from her cheerleading meets. The senior trip to Washington, D.C. Her high school graduation.

A half hour later there was one photo album left. Cassie hesitated in picking it up.

"You okay?" Jordan asked, resting a hand on her shoulder.

Cassie nodded. "It's just that Nathan's pictures are in there."

Her brother slipped his arm around her shoulders and gave her a quick hug. "I know you miss him, and at some point you're going to want pictures of him to remember him by." Cassie nodded, knowing he was right. "If you want, I'll pick out the pictures. You can take Alex's suggestion and look around and make sure you haven't forgotten anything."

Cassie nodded. She stood up and started looking around the rest of the apartment while Jordan picked up the last photo album and started going through it. Alex hadn't changed the apartment much at all. There were empty spots on the wall where the pictures she now had used to hang. The mantle above the electric fireplace was now empty as that was where her grandmother's tea pot, cups and other utensils used during a tea ceremony used to sit. Those items were already carefully wrapped and packed for the trip to Tracy Island. Above the mantle hung Alex's degree. There was clean square on the wall from where her own degree from NYU used to hang.

Next, Cassie walked into the bedroom Alex and she had shared. Clothes were strewn everywhere. Evidently since he now lived alone, picking up after himself wasn't a priority. She didn't stay long, knowing she had thoroughly cleared her stuff from this room when she had originally moved out. Next to that was the small bedroom that had been Nathan's. The door was closed. As far as she knew, it hadn't been opened since the accident.

Taking a deep breath, she turned the knob and walked inside. As she suspected, things were in the same exact place she had left them as she had gotten Nathan ready for day care that afternoon. She walked slowly into the room, remembering her son's laughter and cries that had so often filled the small room.

Up on a shelf sat Nathan's first pair of shoes. Cassie reached up and took one down, turning it over in her hand. In her mind, she could see the night Nathan had taken his first step. She and Alex had been sitting on the couch watching a movie; Nathan had been playing with his toys on the floor in front of him. The little boy had grown tired of the toys and had used the coffee table to pull himself into a standing position. He had then turned and taken a couple of wobbly steps toward his parents before falling on his bottom.

Cassie wiped the tears away, and put the one shoe in her jacket pocket. She'd leave the other one for Alex. Turning from the shelf, she walked slowly around the rest of the room. Reaching the door again, she looked at the crib in the center. Nathan's favorite teddy bear and blanket lay there. Taking the few steps needed to reach the crib, she reached in and took the two items out. Jordan was right. She would want things to remember her son by once the pain of losing him had healed.

Wiping more tears away, Cassie left the room, pulling the door shut behind her. Jordan was just standing up from the couch, the shoe box in hand. He looked from his sister's to face to the bear and blanket in her hand and knew what was going on. Putting the box on the coffee table, he crossed over to her and hugged her tight.

A few minutes later, Cassie pulled away. "Let's get out of here," she said. "I've got to be at work at three."

"Okay," Jordan said. He picked the shoe box up from the coffee table. Cassie followed her brother out of the apartment.

The walk to the subway station was quiet. Cassie wasn't in the mood to talk and Jordan didn't know what to say to his sister. After swiping their metro cards in the turnstiles, Jordan finally spoke up.

"You want me to go back to Mark's with you?"

"No, I'll be fine. I know it's out of your way. I guess I should take the box now."

"Actually, let me keep it for now. I'll buy you a photo album and put the pictures in it before you leave. That way, you can't sneak off to Kansas without saying good-bye to me."

"You know I wouldn't do that."

Jordan smiled. "I know. Just the same, I want to do this for you."

Cassie nodded. "Thanks," she told him, knowing it would be a long time down the road before she would even consider taking the time to put those pictures in an album herself. She gave her brother a hug before the two parted to catch their respective trains.

Posted by starrynebula on September 5, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:15:02 GMT

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Saturday, September 22, 2068; aboard Thunderbird Five; 2:45 a.m. Tracy Island Time

Callie was sleeping soundly in her quarters after a fairly boring day of flagging calls, none of them requiring International Rescue's assistance. She was anticipating watching her college football

team face a tough rival the next day.

As her sleep fell deeper, she started hearing an odd laughter. "Mmm...what the--?" As the laughter became louder and more wicked, she started tossing and turning violently.

Suddenly, a low male voice could be heard. "So, my dear, we meet again."

"Huh!?" She awakened and saw a bald-headed man looking down at her. "What the hell!?" she gasped as she jumped out of her bed. "No...no, you can't be here! There's no way you can be up here!"

With an evil smile on his face and an eerie yellow glow in his eyes, the Hood chuckled. "You are quite mistaken. I know how to get around...even somewhere this far from Earth."

She grabbed her hard-cover book and threw it at him. "Get out of here, you jerk! I don't know how you got on the station, but I'm sure gonna get you outta here one way or another!"

As the book went right through him, he laughed harder. "Do you honestly believe you can stop me? I will get the secrets of International Rescue from you!"

"If you can do that, then I'm Bear Bryant!" Running to the closet to get the broom, she started swinging wildly. "Either get out of here or take a headache!"

Little did she know her constant movements in bed activated the alarms on the monitor bubbles.

Tracy Island; 2:50 a.m.

Nikki, the official medic on duty, was asleep in her quarters when she suddenly heard an alarm. Waking fast, she said, "An emergency call now?" She realized the alarm sounded different than the regular emergency klaxon. "It must be Thunderbird Five. Brains tested this out last week to make sure the special alert was working properly."

Grabbing her robe, she quickly ran to the monorail and rode it to the Villa. From there, she sprinted to the sick room and checked readings from the monitor bubbles. "Oh, my. Callie's blood pressure and heart rate are far too high."

When she turned on the cameras, she saw Callie moving all over her bed. "She must be having a nightmare. I hope I can get through to her somehow. If not, I may need Dr. Tracy."

Callie continued swinging away at the Hood in desperation. "Go away, you monster! You won't get anything from me!"

"Callie, listen to me, it's Nikki. Wake up! You're having a nightmare! You've got to snap out of it!"

When she heard Nikki's voice over the loudspeakers, Callie became more confused. "Stop! Go away! Leave me alone!" she cried, swinging her arms wildly and nearly rolling off her narrow bunk.

"I can't get through to her. I have no choice." Nikki spoke into her communicator. "Doc?"

In the master bedroom, Dianne heard her wristcomm beeping. Turning it on, she noticed Nikki in the sick room. Still half-asleep, she slowly said, "Nikki?"

"I apologize for waking you up, Doc, but it's Callie. She's having a nightmare and won't respond to my calls."

Dianne slowly sat up and rubbed her hand through her hair. "Okay, keep trying," she said with a half-yawn. "I'll be there as soon as I can."

Jeff rolled over and blearily blinked his eyes. "Honey? Wha's wrong?"

"Callie's having a nightmare again. I'm going to give Nikki a hand in trying to get her to wake up. You just go back to sleep."

"S'okay, luf," he muttered. He rolled over, and Dianne gave him a quick kiss just before he went back to sleep.

She put on her robe and hurried down to the sick room. Sitting next to Nikki, she tried to get through to Callie. "Callie, it's Dianne. I need you to wake up, okay? You're having a bad dream, that's all."

Still struggling in her fight, she heard Dianne's voice. "Doc? Where are you?"

"She cannot help you now," said the Hood angrily. "Your secrets will be mine!"

Callie slowly realized how unreal this whole event was. "Wait a minute. You couldn't get up here without serious astronaut training, you creep! Now get out of here before I really get mad, and you wouldn't like me at that point!"

In an explosion of light, the Hood literally vanished.

With a sudden gasp, she awakened to reality. "What...what happened to me?"

"Callie?" said Dianne. "Can you hear me?"

She looked around her room and realized there was nothing out of place. "Doc? Is that you?"

"Yes, it's me. Are you all right?"

"I am now. Wow, what a nightmare." Callie rubbed her head. "I thought they were going away."

Nikki spoke, "Your vital signs were going crazy at one point."

"Oh, man, I'm sorry for waking the two of you like that."

"It's okay," said Dianne. "Listen, I'm going to put in a call to Anna later this morning and tell her about what happened. She may want to talk to you, too, but I'll let her be the judge of that."

"I thought the anti-depressants were working," Callie said.

"Hm." Dianne thought for a moment. "Callie, when was the last time you had a nightmare like this?"

It was Callie's turn to think. "I guess... I guess this is the first real nightmare I've had in almost two months."

"Then the drugs are working, to an extent. We may just have to tweak them a little."

With a sigh, Callie said, "Am I ever going to recover from this?"

"Sure you will. It's just going to take a little longer than we expected. Will you be all right now?"

Callie nodded. "Yeah, I think so. I guess I'll be talking with Anna sometime in the next couple of days?"

"Very likely. It could be as soon as tomorrow, so I want you to be prepared for that call."

"F-A-B. I just hope we don't get an emergency call at the same time."

Dianne smiled. "So do I. Now try to get some shut-eye."

"Right...and thanks, Doc. You, too, Nikki."

"Glad to be of help," said Nikki. "Take it easy up there."

"F-A-B." It took Callie a few minutes to finally fall asleep again, but she managed to do so.

Nikki put the monitor on stand-by again, then stood, stretched and yawned.

"Brains had a good idea when he installed the system in our individual rooms," she said. "At least I could tell it wasn't the regular emergency call."

Dianne rubbed her eyes and nodded. "I agree. Nice job in responding, Nikki. I'll see you in the morning."

"Right."

The two women parted ways and soon returned to sleep.

--disturbed sleep by TracyFan4Ever on September 5, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:15:32 GMT

Friday, September 21, 2068, 5 p.m., Wiltshire, England (4 a.m., the next day, Tracy Island)

Kat drove her Lotus Elise back into the mews behind her parents' home. She was excited; she'd just found a flat of her own in the next town over, not far from where she worked. Her standards had been exacting: it had to be furnished, have a balcony and a secure garage for her car. The place she had found was on the second story, and had stairs up, so moving was not going to be an easy thing.

While the rental agent showed her the flat, she tried hard not to compare it to the one she had just left. Standing on the balcony, she swallowed her disappointment at the view, squelching the memory of palm trees gently waving in the breeze. She tried to tune out the noise of the street below as a fire tender came through, sirens wailing, and savagely dispelled the soothing sound of the ocean waves lapping on the shore. The pungent smell of someone cooking with onions and garlic rose up, and she had to clamp tightly on the remembered scent of the sea. The flat wasn't as big as her Cliff House home, but it was what she could afford, and it would suffice.

"Kat, dear!" Her mother came from the kitchen as Kat entered the house. "Several large boxes have come for you today. They came from your home in Kansas."

"Oh!" Kat replied, startled. "Where are they?"

"I put the smaller ones in your room, and the larger ones in the box room. Most of the customs markings on the smaller parcels said they contained clothing. The ones marked as books are very heavy! How many did you take with you?"

"Quite a few, I fear," Kat replied, already heading up to her bedroom. I wonder how the Tracys made the boxes look like they were posted from Kansas.

She opened the door to her room to find a stack of smaller boxes in one corner. One large box lay across her bed. The customs markings said it was "one classical guitar". She smiled to see it. I'd forgotten I'd brought it along.

Pulling it off the bed, she all but stumbled over one very solid, square carton on the floor behind her. Setting the guitar box upright (after reading the labels to discover which end was up), she sat on the edge of her bed, and pulled the carton over to her. It was heavy, and Kat was not surprised to see it had "Books" written on the customs forms. "Perhaps that mystery I was reading is in here. I was unable to finish it before I left."

She opened the crate with some difficulty; the Tracys were obviously very good at packaging things. Smiling at seeing her familiar friends, she began to pull them out one by one, stacking them haphazardly on her bed. But her smile faded as she pulled another, less familiar book from the box. A Guide To The Heavens. She turned the book over, to see the author's handsome, smiling face, and she sighed. Then, she opened the book's cover.

There, in his precise handwriting, was a message: "Keep looking to the stars, Kat. Your friend, John G. Tracy."

Friend. Just... friend. With that thought, all the memories she'd been suppressing that afternoon came flooding into her mind, filling her with a great sense of loss. She clutched the book tightly to her chest as the hot tears began to fall.

Posted by Tikatu on September 5, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:16:58 GMT

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Friday September 21st 2068, 9.00pm, Kansas (Saturday 22nd, 2.00pm, Tracy Island)

Matt Hawkins sucked deeply on his cigar as he leant against his car, waiting. He was parked on a side-road off the main highway into Wichita. The ground crunched when he adjusted his stance, and the air was tinged with cold. The near-by fields were barren, bereft of their sunflowers and wheat -- the farmers had already finished their harvest. He knew they were already preparing for the next growing season. It's the nature of the business.

He took another draw of smoke as he saw a car pulling onto the road he was parked by. As he expected, it pulled over behind his. The driver sat inside the vehicle for several minutes. Matthew kept his attention on his cigar. Eventually, Margaret Houston stepped out of her sedan, and stared at him.

"I'm surprised you came," Matthew said.

"Let's cut the crap. You said you had something for me." Margaret folded her arms and began tapping one foot. "I'm not going to wait around."

Matthew sneered at her, and dug one hand into his jacket pocket. He pulled out a small data card, and threw it to the woman. She caught it.

"What's this?" She asked, clearly unimpressed.

Matthew tapped his cigar and let the ash fall to the ground. In the dimming light, he watched it swirl away on the light wind.

"Bring that card to your bank and have them deposit the money that's on it. A total of fifty thousand dollars."

"What?"

"In return for this money, you leave my son and my grandson alone."

"What? It's my son; your son took him away from me."

"Oh, you cut the crap this time, Margaret. You used Dominic, and you left him, and you didn't want anything to do with him or the baby. I don't know what idiotic idea has gotten into your head, but

you cannot take the child from him."

"What the hell do you care, anyway?" Margaret snapped. "He told me all about you. You abandoned him!"

"And now I'm trying to make up for it!" Matthew strode forwards until he was leering down into the woman's face. "I've made a lot of mistakes and I'm not proud of myself. I'm trying to build up a relationship with the son I should never have left."

"And so am I!"

"But why? Why now? I have it on good authority that you were unceremoniously dumped by your fiancé; now you want your son back?"

"How did you know that?"

Margaret was on the verge of tears.

"Listen sweetheart, I'm a very important man in this town. I know everything that goes on here, and I know everything about you. You want love? Go buy yourself a kid with that money. I don't give a damn what you do, as long as you leave my son alone. You've already caused him enough pain, and the only way you'll get to cause him more is over my dead body. Understood?"

Margaret stood frozen on the spot, tears beginning to spill down her cheeks. She looked down at the data card in her hand, and then back up at Matthew. You've got a deal. I'll pull out of the case. So long as I never, ever have to speak to you again. We're strangers."

"Fine by me."

Margaret stuffed the card back in her pocket, before striding back to her car and getting in. She slammed the door, and the wheels spun as she rode hard on the accelerator, turned the car sharply, and sped off. Matthew stubbed out his cigar on the ground, before picking it back up and depositing it in the ashtray of his car. It's done...

Posted by ArtisticRainey on September 6, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:17:13 GMT

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Christchurch, NZ, Saturday, September 22, 10:30 am...

Luke stared blankly at the wall of paint chips. Off to his left, Nikki and Elise chatted happily, comparing one color to another. John had disappeared, claiming he was going to get them a dolly, but he'd been gone over fifteen minutes now and Luke figured he was trying to avoid being asked for advice.

Luke sighed as he glanced down at his watch. The four of them had left right after breakfast, landing in Christchurch around nine. By the time they had gotten the car and made their way to the store, it was nearly ten. The girls dragged Luke straight to the paint section, claiming they couldn't do any real shopping until they had the walls figured out. I suppose they're right, Luke thought to himself, but God, I hate shopping. Whose bright idea was this anyway? His thoughts were interrupted by Elise calling his name.

"Hello! Earth to Luke! What do you think of these?" She held out some chips for him to look at.

Luke shrugged. "They're OK."

"OK? OK? A little enthusiasm here."

John appeared at their side pushing a large flatbed dolly. "So, what have you decided?"

Elise glared at Luke. "Nothing yet. Here, John, do you like these colors?"

John held up his hands. "Hey, leave me out of it. I'm just the hired hand!"

Nikki giggled as Elise rolled her eyes. "All right, Nikki and I thought this one here, Desert Sands, would be nice for the living room." She handed Luke the chip.

He looked down at it. "It's tan."

"Desert Sands," Elise corrected. "And this one for your bedroom."

"Green. That works."

Nikki shook her head. "It's called Spruce. It's a warm green, and with the right bedding and curtains, the room will look great."

Luke got a pained look on his face. "Bedding? Curtains?"

Elise nodded matter of factly, "Of course. What did you think, you were keeping that moth eaten blanket you have on the bed now?"

"Hey! I've had that since college," Luke protested.

Elise arched one eyebrow. "And your point is?"

John elbowed Luke. "Just smile and nod; it's easier."

"I heard that," Nikki said. John merely grinned.

"Fine, Spruce and...Desert Sands. Paint done." Luke turned away.

"Not quite. We still need something for the kitchen area, and do you want satin, gloss, semi-gloss or matte finish?" Elise asked.

"Matte what?" Luke asked, dumbfounded as John tried not to laugh and Elise sighed in frustration. "Look, I trust you two, that's why I asked you to come help in the first place. So, get whatever you think works. John and I are heading over to the lumberyard to pick up what I need for bookshelves. We'll meet you at the check out." Luke all but dragged John away. When they were out of sight, Luke glanced over at his friend. "I didn't think we were going to get out of that alive."

John chuckled. "Just think, you still have bedding and curtains to buy."

Luke groaned. "Oh God, this is torture...And before you say it, yes, I know it was my idea." They made their way to the lumberyard, and Luke sorted through the boards. He picked out some nice oak ones, examining each one carefully first. Then loading those on the dolly, he selected some two by fours and other assorted pieces. Finally he decided he was done, and he and John made their way to the check out. They found Elise and Nikki waiting, eight cans of paint on the counter. "Do I want to know?" Luke asked, grinning.

"It would serve you right if we got pink," Elise told him.

"Aww, would you really do that to me?" Luke asked, wrapping his arm around her shoulders and batting his eyes at her.

Elise shook her head, but smiled. "Good thing you're not straight; you'd have the female population falling at your feet."

"Who says I don't anyway?" he replied with a wink.

Laughing, they paid for their purchases, arranging for them to be sent to the airport. Nikki and Elise then led them to a department store and headed straight to the interior decorating section. It took time, but Luke finally settled on a plaid comforter in shades of dark green, navy blue and maroon on a tan base. He chose curtains in the same shade of maroon for the sliding doors in the bedroom, and navy ones for the living room.

"What about couch pillows?" Nikki asked.

"What about them?" Luke replied.

"Hopeless, men are hopeless," she muttered.

"That's why we depend on you, right, John?" Luke called out.

John shook his head. "Oh no, I'm Switzerland here. Not getting in the middle of this one, either." They all laughed.

They made their way down the escalator, where Elise paused thoughtfully as they passed the women's department. "You know, Nikki, while we're here..."

Nikki smiled, "I was just thinking the same thing."

"No! No way! I picked out paint, bedding, curtains, even pillows! I am NOT going clothes shopping," Luke insisted.

"But--"

"No." Both Luke and Elise glared at each other, arms folded across their chests.

John stepped forward. "OK, as Switzerland, I'm proposing a truce. Elise, you and Nikki go get what you need. Luke and I will go finish up getting whatever else he needs. Will that work for everyone?" They nodded. "Good. Have fun and we'll see you at lunch." With that Luke and John headed one way, and Elise and Nikki the other.

xxxx

Later, around 2:30 PM...

"There, that's it. Done!!" Luke said as he paid for his groceries. They were going to be delivered to the plane which freed the two men from having to cart them back to the airport.

"Anything else you need to get?" John asked.

Luke thought for a moment. "I don't think so...House stuff, food, pet supplies....I think I'm all set. Want to go grab a cup of coffee or something while we wait for the girls?"

John nodded. "Sure. I have another hour or so before I meet our interviewee. I know where there's a great bookstore-coffee shop."

"Lead the way."

A short time later, both men were seated at a table, drinking coffee and sharing a plate of chocolate chip cookies. Luke glanced at the book stacks behind him. "I need to see what they have for fishing books. Bet you don't have many rainbow or cut-throat trout on the island."

"No, we probably don't. Gordon does some beach and deep sea fishing once in a while, and I know Alex has explored some of the jungle. If anyone knows where there are some freshwater streams, it would be him. Get him to show you sometime. You two nature buffs would have a field day," John grinned.

Luke chuckled. "I'll do that. I asked him and Tyler to keep an eye on Rommel for me while we were gone. I don't want him in the pool again."

John laughed. "Don't blame you. Wet dog, eww." He took a sip of his coffee as the two sat in comfortable silence for a few minutes. "So, how did you get involved in Search and Rescue?"

"This is going to sound cheesy, but when I was a kid, I knew I wanted to grow up and be a ranger. I was always outside somewhere, fishing, hunting, hiking, exploring. It was just sort of natural that I'd go that direction." Luke took a cookie. "I worked all over the West for a few years, then took a weekend search and rescue course. I enjoyed it more than I thought I would, so I took some more

in-depth courses and got certified."

"Cool. We sort of fell into it, family business and all," John grinned.

Luke laughed. "I can see that! Anyway, my career's been pretty uneventful until the last few weeks. Started with Barry leaving, then the plane crash, and ending up here. But, I'm looking forward to the challenge. Can't wait to get in there, if you know what I mean."

John nodded. "So, how did you and Barry meet?"

"At a party. I'm not the 'go out and party type', but the gang from work dragged me there. Barry was tending the bar and we got to talking. We dated on and off for a few months, then I got into a bad accident at work."

John frowned. "Accident?"

Luke nodded. "Avalanche. We managed to find all the victims and were getting them off the mountain when a news helicopter showed up to cover the story. The noise triggered another slide and I got caught in it. Broke my arm and my ankle, both on the same side, of course. The ankle was pretty bad; the docs wouldn't put me in a walking cast, so with the arm, I couldn't even hobble around on crutches. Barry offered to move in for a few weeks to help me out and things went on from there."

"Why did you guys split up? If you don't mind me asking."

"No, not at all. Barry's in advertising. He'd been commuting from Boulder to Denver and then got offered a big promotion in L.A. He would have been a fool not to take it. Plus, I was spending more and more time up at the SAR cabin so we really didn't see each other as much as we used to and we just drifted apart." Luke toyed with his coffee mug, his thoughts clearly on his ex.

"I'm sorry," John said. "I didn't mean to bring up bad memories."

Luke shook his head and smiled. "Don't worry about it." He drained the last of his coffee and got to his feet. "I'll go find those books and we can get out of here."

Posted by lillehafrue on September 9, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:17:25 GMT

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September 22, 4 PM; Christchurch Airport

Whew, thought Will, as he walked into the waiting area. I thought I'd never get through customs. I hope whoever is meeting me didn't get tired of waiting. He looked around as he walked, his carry on hanging from his shoulder. Soon he spotted a face he'd seen in a picture, and walked over to the man.

"John Tracy?"

"Yes. Are you Will Abbott?"

"That's right." Will held out his hand and John shook it. "I recognized you from one of your book covers; I have it at home. I like how you made the subject matter easier to understand, and interesting for the layman."

"Thank you; I appreciate your feedback," John replied. "Do you have anything to pick up at baggage claim?"

"Nope." Will indicated his shoulder bag. "This is all I brought."

"Then let's head for the jet. You'll meet three of the other people who are working for us." He led Will to a transport vehicle

"Jet? You don't live in Christchurch?"

"No," came the reply as the transport started moving. "We live on an island. Don't worry, it's a short flight, but you can only get there by boat or aircraft."

"I see. That's why there was no mention of autos in the ad."

"Right. We don't have any roads where we live. But there are other vehicles you might be interested in working on. We don't always get around on foot."

By this time, they had reached the terminal where the jet waited. They got off and walked out. Will saw another man and two women loading different packages aboard. John turned to him and said, "Would you mind lending a hand? We can get away sooner if you do."

"No problem." Will swung his bag off his shoulder and on to the tarmac, then grabbed one end of a large, long box, while John took the other. With their help, the jet was soon loaded, and Will picked up his bag again.

The cargo transport was moved off and they all boarded the jet, where John introduced Will to Elise, Nikki and Luke.

Will smiled and shook hands with each person then, still holding Luke's hand, looked at John, then back at the other man. Letting go, he smiled and said, "John and Luke, huh? If one of you tells me that Matthew and Mark are waitin' at our destination, I'm gonna get worried."

Amid the chuckles, Luke replied, "You don't have to worry on that score." He then added, with a wink and a grin, "But we'll have to work on that."

Elise and John went to the cockpit and the others took their seats and buckled in. A short time later, the Tracy jet took off and headed over the ocean toward the island.

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:17:55 GMT

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Sunday 23rd September, 2068. 2.00am. Tracy Island (9am Kansas Saturday 22nd)

Dominic licked his lips as he stared at the massive chocolate éclair. It was sitting on a shining silver platter, with a delicate tag attached to it, saying: 'For Dominic -- only'. He could feel himself salivating heavily as he moved closer to the delicious morsel. He reached for it, and just as his fingers were closing on its sides, it began to ring.

"What the...?"

Dominic suddenly woke up midway through falling out of his bed. The crash just above his head told him that the 'dessert' he had been reaching for was a bedside lamp. But it wasn't it that was ringing (thankfully, he thought). Rather, it was his satellite phone. He reached up from his fallen position to grab it, and looked at the illuminated time before answering.

"Who's phoning at two in the blessed a.m.? Hello?"

"Hello, Dominic? It's Mike Lavender here. I have some news."

Any retort that Dominic was going to give was suddenly silenced, and he simply said, "Yes?"

"You and Joshua are safe. Margaret has withdrawn her appeal for custody. It's over."

"What? You can't be serious. After all of this?" Dominic was being torn in two, between anger and elation. "Wha...why?"

"I don't know. I got a phone call not five minutes ago. And it was lucky, too. I don't usually work weekends."

Dominic was silent. His jaw hung slack, and he slumped back against the bed.

"It's over..."

"Yup. It's great news."

"Thanks for calling, Mike. I really appreciate it."

"No problem, Dominic. All the remaining papers and assorted rigmarole will be dealt with at the start of next week. But it's over. Congratulations."

"Thanks, Mike."

They exchanged a few more pleasantries over the phone, before Dominic hung up and carefully placed the phone back on his nightstand. He stared forwards into the darkness for several minutes, until finally he smiled. It's over... I can't wait to tell Mr Tracy! He didn't get one more wink of sleep that night.

Posted by ArtisticRainey on September 10, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:18:13 GMT

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Sunday, September 23, 1:30 PM; Tracy Island

"Did you enjoy your tour of the facilities this morning?"

"Yes, sir. Brains is a good guide. I gotta say, I was particularly impressed by the boat pen. Not only are your vessels well protected there, the shape of the pen facilitates repair. You can bring the tools you need very close to the boats, and have them handy."

Jeff walked into the lounge, followed by Will and Brains. He sat down at his desk, started his computer, and indicated that the other two should seat themselves, also. He was just about to speak, when Tin-Tin walked in. Will looked at her questioningly.

"Since this is an interview for the mechanic's job, I thought I should be here, too."

"You're a mechanic?" He realized almost immediately how that sounded, and tried to redeem himself. "No offense, Miss Kyrano; there are two female mechanics at the shop I manage, and at least ten of my father's other shops have them as well. But I thought you worked in other areas."

"None taken, Mr. Abbott. I do help out with maintenance, when needed."

Will looked admiringly at her, then started when he heard an "ahem" from the man sitting to one side. He looked at Brains, then back at Tin-Tin. A suspicion entered his head that these two might be more than colleagues. But he had to say one more thing. "Well please pardon me for sayin' so, but if my father's shops had female mechanics who looked as good as you do, we'd've blown the competition out of the water long ago."

"Why thank you, Mr. Abbott."

"Let's get down to business, shall we?" Jeff interjected. "Both Brains and I have a number of questions for you."

"Yes, sir. I'm ready."

Jeff glanced at the information he'd brought up. "Your record with the Navy is impressive. Your teams scored at the top every time for keeping both the ship and the jets in optimum condition. And it says that any repairs needed were done right, the first time. That's over a ten year period."

You should have made the Navy your career, but you left, due to a 'family emergency'. Would you please elaborate on that?"

I knew this question would be comin', but right off the bat? He doesn't waste time, does he? "Well, sir, it had to do with my younger brother, Mitchell. Have you heard of the drug called Arise?"

"I have. It's an offshoot of a prescription medicine called Arris, an antidepressant, as I recall," Brains answered. "Someone thought it would be a good over-the-counter medication that less fortunate people could afford. But the changes they made in it caused certain types of users to become extremely addicted to it very quickly."

"That's correct. Mitchell was one of those people. He'd become depressed after his engagement was called off. A so-called friend gave him some Arise one day, and that's all it took. He was on it for about six months before anyone found out, though. At that time, the only way to combat the addiction was to quit, cold turkey. But the withdrawal symptoms were terrible to go through, and almost as hard to watch. I was needed to help. At first, I thought I could take a leave, and return to duty a couple of months later. Well, I found out differently - showed how little I knew about the stuff. I finally had to resign."

"And you couldn't go back once it was over?"

"Well, sir, it took over a year to get him off it, and then I had to take over the business, so our folks could get some rest; their health had suffered. Mitch was by then able to help out, and he, our sister, Jenny, and I sent them on a cruise. Durin' that time, I found I liked what I was doin', and felt I'd been gone too long to go back to the Navy."

"And for the last," Jeff checked the computer again, "two years, you've been managing the branch in San Francisco." He looked back at Will. "That's a good job; why would you want to change?"

Will rubbed the back of his neck. "I miss the hands-on work. In the Navy, I didn't just tell my teams what to do, I worked alongside them. Sure I can do paperwork, and inventory and sign off on things, but that's not what I'm cut out to do. It took me a while to realize that, but I finally did, not long ago."

"How does your family feel about you leaving the business?"

"Well sir, I talked to my father about it, and he told me that I could leave, provided I didn't go to one of the rivals, and the transition to a new manager was a smooth one. I guess he understood that I needed to find my niche - to do what I do best."

"We don't have automobiles here on the island; we don't even have roads. Aren't you going to miss working on cars?" asked Brains.

"Well, sure, but I'll still be workin' on boats and jets, if I get the job. Somehow I suspect you all would keep me so busy, I'd forget after a while that there weren't any cars around."

"More than you imagine, Mr. Abbott."

"Please, sir; just call me Will. Mr. Abbott's my dad."

Jeff smiled. "Okay - Will. Does anyone have any more questions?" He looked at Brains, then Tin-Tin, who shook their heads. "Will, you might have questions, but I'd like you to hold them for now. If Brains and Tin-Tin agree with me, I'd like to offer you the job, but before I do, there's something you need to see." He looked again at the others, who were nodding and smiling their agreement. He stood up. "If you will come with me, please. Brains? Tin-Tin?"

"I have something that requires my attention elsewhere, Mr. Tracy," Tin-Tin replied, and turned to leave. "I'll see you all later."

"All right, Tin-Tin. Will, I'd like you to accompany Brains and me." Jeff glanced at the engineer, who nodded and led the way. As they headed toward the monorail, he continued. "I know you had a tour of the island - or part of it. But there's something you need to see before you make up your mind."

Will looked puzzled, but followed the others out of the room. It wasn't long before he found out what they wanted to show him.

Five minutes later, he was staring up at Thunderbird Two. His jaw dropped. He closed it, and tried to speak, but nothing came out. He swallowed and tried again. "Holy mackerel! That's a... You... I... It's... How..." He stopped, and looked around, then turned back to Jeff and tried once more.

"That's a Thunderbird!"

"Right."

"But a Thunderbird's an International Rescue vehicle! You're International Rescue?"

"Right again."

"You're tellin' me that you want me to work for International Rescue?"

Jeff nodded, amused at Will's reaction.

"Hoo boy. I'm - I'm - I don't know what I am! This is big, a lot more than I expected." He gazed at Thunderbird Two again for a long minute, then turned to Brains. "You're not expectin' me to work on somethin' as huge and complex as that, are you?"

"Not by yourself, no. You might be asked to help me and one or another of the pilots once in a while," Brains replied. "But your main duties would be to maintain our boats, jets and auxiliary vehicles and equipment."

Will shook his head slowly. "I gotta say I'm relieved to know that. She's a beauty, and I'm feelin' privileged to be one of the few in the world to have been shown her. But it's been a long time since I've felt overwhelmed by anythin'."

"Look, Will," said Jeff. "I want you to think this over carefully. If you decide to take the job, it'll

mean living here on the island, away from your family. And you won't ever be able to tell them the whole truth about what you do. I don't expect you to give me an answer now, or even before you leave tomorrow. I want you to consider all the ramifications of accepting this job offer first."

"Thank you, sir, I will. And I appreciate it."

Posted by hobbeth on September 10, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:18:25 GMT

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Sept. 23rd, 3:00pm

Gordon walked outside, looking for Brandon. Checking all of his friend's usual places, he found no sign of him.

"Hey, Virgil, have you seen Brandon?"

"No, I haven't."

"I wonder where he's at."

Tin-Tin spoke up. "I saw him earlier. He said he was heading to the beach to do some drawing."

"Thanks." Gordon headed in the direction of the beach.

Brandon sat on a rock, drawing supplies at his side. It had been a while since he'd indulged in his hobby. That doesn't look right; the color's off. He started the picture over again, concentrating on something in the water. He was so into what he was doing that he didn't hear Gordon come up behind him.

"I thought I'd find you here." Brandon didn't respond. That didn't work. Gordon tried again. "Hey, way to go. Not many people get their pilot's license on the first try."

Brandon looked up and smiled. "Hey I didn't hear you come up. Thanks for the congratulations."

"You're welcome," Gordon replied, sitting down. "So, was it hard?"

"Was what hard?" Then it dawned on him what Gordon was referring to. "Are you kidding? I don't know why I was so nervous; the written test was a breeze. And once I was airborne, the moves the examiner told me to make were easy."

The two men continued talking, Brandon describing his solo flight. "I tell you, the flight went well. I did hit a pocket of clear air turbulence, but it was nothing I couldn't handle. And afterward, I made a perfect landing, no bumps and no bouncing."

"That's great," Gordon replied. Looking at his watch he groaned. "Oh man, I got so interested listening to you that I forgot what I came here for."

"Oh? What did you come here for?"

"I wanted to see if you were up to playing a game of racquetball. Scott and Alan challenged me to a game and I need a partner."

"You do, huh?" Brandon stood up, reaching down to pick up his art supplies. "In that case, I'll take you up on your offer and help kick their butts."

Posted by MagicMaster8 on September 10, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:18:45 GMT

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Sunday, Sept 23; Tracy Island; 4:30 PM

Will went to his room to rest and think, but he found himself unable to do either. So he headed to the ocean, to consider all that had been revealed to him. From the moment he got outside, he had an internal running dialogue going. If anyone had been with him, they would have easily been able to read the emotions showing on his face.

Workin' for International Rescue. That's somethin' I didn't bargain for. Even if I never got within ten feet of any of the Thunderbird vehicles, I'd be takin' on a tremendous responsibility, more than I ever have, or even thought of. The possibility of lives lost if I don't to my job right - I can't even imagine it. Am I up to this? Can I do this?

C'mon, Abbott. You've worked on an aircraft carrier, and on the jets that have landed - or crashed - on them. A helluva lot of people were counting on you and your teams to do a great job then. What's so different?

There're a lot of differences. The necessity for an organization like International Rescue makes it different. It's not just the people usin' the equipment who need it to be in perfect workin' order, the people they're rescuin' would be dependin' on it, too. And for another thing, it'll be mostly me. The technology is - wow! I'd have a lot to learn. And I'd have to learn it fast. You'd never know when any of those vehicles or devices would be needed, and workin' right. I wouldn't want to let these people down.

Well, you are a fast learner, or so you've been saying all these years. And you did manage to get not one, but two degrees while at Annapolis, plus participate in the Trident Scholar program. That's packin' a lot into those four years.

Yeah, but that was over a decade ago. Can I do somethin' like that again?

You won't know until you try.

Will walked slowly along the water's edge during his mental dialogue, his hands in his jeans pockets. Sometimes he shook his head; once or twice he stopped for a few seconds, then moved on. Finally he stopped, turned, and gazed out over the water. A look of decision was in his eyes.

I'll give them my answer tomorrow. I could do that today, after dinner, but... He looked at his watch. Whoa! I'd better head back, or I might not even get dinner. Although with Lady Penelope here, they might be eating "fashionably late". Good thing I brought slacks along.

Will headed back to the Villa, his long-legged stride eating up the distance, and halving the time it had taken to get to his "decision point".

Posted by hobbeth on September 10, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:19:06 GMT

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Sunday, September 23, 2068, somewhere over the Pacific and past the IDL (Monday, September 24, 8:00 a.m. Tracy Island)

"Dad, I'm bored."

Jeff and Dianne glanced at each other, exchanging weary looks. "An hour into the flight and you're already bored?" Dianne said, shaking her head. "Tyler, read a book, watch a movie on your portable player, play with your computer game... hey, even take a nap! But find something to do!"

As Tyler grumpily went to look for a distraction, Emily glanced up and said, "Makes me glad we don't have to drive all the way to Kansas." She went back to her magazine. "I remember well all these boys saying, 'Are we there yet?'. Got to be quite a chorus of them after a while."

"Aww, we weren't that bad, were we, Grandma?" Gordon asked from where he was playing Battleship with Alex.

"You, young man, were the worst of them all!" Emily replied, tipping a wink toward Jeff. "You had this whine..."

"Are we theeeeerre yet?" Alan whined, his fake falsetto sounding like a little kid. The rest of the occupants of Tracy One's cabin laughed, and Scott's voice could be heard over the intercom.

"Hey, what's so funny back there?"

"Nothing, Scott," Jeff said. "Just your brothers dredging up some memories."

"Ah, okay."

"Let me know when you need someone else up there," Jeff added. "Your flight hours are pretty

close to the edge."

"I will," Scott promised.

Jeff shook his head. "That boy won't relinquish the controls until we hit L.A."

"Of course not," John piped up. "Neither would you, if you were in the cockpit."

Will Abbott, riding back to the States with the family, felt a bit like an outsider among all this familial banter. Brains and Tin-Tin had remained behind to hold the fort with the new recruits as the Tracy family headed for Kansas to remember a sad and solemn time in the lives of Jeff and his sons. Emily had been part of that time, too, but Dianne and her children were along to support the others, and to learn more about the history of the Tracy family.

"Excuse me, love," Dianne said, rising from her seat. "This morning's coffee..." She favored Jeff with a smile as she headed to the lavatory at the back of the plane.

Will took the opportunity to stand, and to address Jeff. "Mr. Tracy? Do you have a few minutes? I'd like to talk to you."

"Of course, Will. Sit down." Jeff motioned towards Dianne's empty seat. "My wife will be a few minutes checking her makeup."

"Thank you." Will complied. "I did a lot of thinkin' yesterday after you showed me the big picture about what my job would be. I'd like to accept."

"I'm glad to hear you say that. Welcome aboard. When can you return?"

"Well," Will rubbed the back of his neck, repeating the gesture he'd used during the interview. "I need to transition one of my employees into my job, do something about my apartment, and visit my family. I know you're shorthanded and all, but can you give me til October 5?"

"We've been handling things this long; I think we can give you that much time. But no more. You'll have a lot of training ahead of you, and the sooner you get on it, the better."

"I agree. I'd make my stay in Carefree shorter, but I think my mother would kill me if I tried."

Jeff grinned. "I know the feeling. Well, if you do find yourself able to get back here sooner, let us know."

"Will do."

"Hey, Will. Would you like something to drink?" Gordon was rummaging through the small refrigerator. "I'm taking orders, everyone."

"Better ask the pilots if they're thirsty, too," Emily said. "I'll have an apple juice."

Cherie, who had been sketching John while he was reading, got up to stretch. "I'll go ask,

Grandma." She headed for the cockpit, knocked on the door, and was admitted.

"I'd like orange juice, if you have it," Will said.

"One orange juice and one apple juice, coming up." Gordon poured the bottles of juice into tumblers especially made for air travel, then brought them over. He handed one to Emily, and one to Will... who rose as he saw Dianne return from the lavatory.

"Just water for me, Gordon," she said as she passed. She smiled at Will as he vacated her seat with a flourish of his hands, then returned to his.

As Gordon served the rest of the family, Will peered at the title of the book John was reading. "A Morbid Taste for Bones," he read. When John looked up, he added, "Sounds creepy."

"It's not as creepy as you'd think," John explained. "It's a historical mystery story, set in England during the period of civil war between King Stephen and Queen Maud... somewhere in the 1100s, I think. The detective is a Welsh Benedictine monk by the name of Cadfael." He hefted the book. "It's pretty good. A friend of mine got me interested."

"Hm. I like mysteries. I guess I'll have to look it up on the Web."

"I've got another by the same author, if you're interested." John opened the backpack by his side, and pulled out three books. "Take your pick."

Will selected one entitled The Rose Rent. "Thanks," he said, as he settled back to read.

Cherie came back from the cockpit and joined Gordon at the fridge. "Scott and Virgil both want coffee, if you're making it."

"Coffee sounds good to me," Alan said, looking up from his racing magazine.

"I'd like some coffee, too, Gordon," Jeff said. "But I can make it..."

"No sweat, Dad," Gordon said, waving a hand. "One pot of coffee, coming right up."

"And none of your motor oil, either, Gordon," Emily said sharply. "You know how to make a good pot of coffee..."

"Don't worry, Grandma," Gordon said. "I'll do it right; after all, I'll be drinking it."

Satisfied that her grandson would behave himself, Emily sat back with her juice and magazine. Alex and Tyler had linked their computer games together, and were playing as they drank chocolate milk. Cherie, cup of juice at her side, picked up her pad and pencils and went back to sketching. Dianne leaned her chair back, and rested her head on a travel pillow, turning so she was looking at her husband. Jeff looked a million miles away, one hand absently fingering his chin, gaze fixed on the blue sky through the window.

"A penny for them," she said softly.

Jeff turned to smile at her; a weary smile, she thought. "Just thinking how different this time will be without the house there. I don't know that I'm prepared for it. I just hope that the graveyard wasn't hit too hard by the tornadoes. I never did ask Marion."

"If it was, it'll do us good to clear it out and spruce it up," Emily said without looking up. "And we can make some plans for the house, too. Something to keep us from dwelling on our losses."

Jeff smiled, a sad one this time. "You're right, Ma, as always. And... I have something else in mind as well."

Both women gave him inquiring looks, but he turned his gaze back out the window and refused to say anything more.

Remembrance, part one (with Will Abbott dialog by Hobbeth)

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:19:27 GMT

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"Ladder 124, Adam-66, Boyd-66, respond to a vehicle accident with injuries on Queensborough Bridge, Eastbound. Vehicle fire reported."

"No rest for the weary," Neal commented as he and his co-workers sprang into action. Ladder 124 had just gotten back from a false alarm fire about ten minutes ago. The station's paramedic units had been busy most of the shift, too.

"Hey! What happened to my helmet?" Cassie exclaimed having donned the pants and boots of her uniform, and went to grab the jacket and helmet off the hook. The jacket was there but the hat was missing. I know I hung it there when we got back, she said to herself silently.

"Use this one," Chief Calloway told her, handing her another helmet. "We'll worry about it when we get back."

Cassie took the helmet from him, and hurried toward the fire engine. Climbing behind the wheel, she started up the truck, the missing helmet out of her mind for now, and her thoughts on the accident they were heading to.

Farewell Party part one by starrynebula on September 12, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:19:45 GMT

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Sunday, September 23rd, just before 11 pm locally (Monday, September 24th, just before 3 pm

on Tracy Island)

"I'd still like to know where my helmet got to," Cassie said as she sat on one of the beds and blow dried her hair. The whole squad had come back from their last call, a fire at a factory, covered in soot. Cassie and Jackie had already showered and dressed in jeans and T-shirts and the guys were now taking their turns in the shower. There was still ten minutes left to their shift and they were all hoping the next call would wait for the next shift to take over, a few of whom had already made an appearance.

"Didn't Frank tell you not to worry about?" Jackie asked as she put gel into her short hair and spiked it, using the mirror on the inside of her locker. "Not to mention you won't need it after today."

"Yeah, but it still bugs me," she replied, turning off the blow dryer. She tucked it away in her bag, which held the rest of the contents of her locker already. "I've never lost equipment before. Not exactly the note I wanted to leave on," she told her friend, as she deftly braided her hair.

"I wouldn't worry too much about it," Jackie said, taking a final look in the mirror. Satisfied, she closed the door and locked her locker. "I think when we think of you we're going to be thinking of a very white Frank, not a missing helmet," she told her friend with a grin.

Cassie chuckled. Neal had insisted that she helped him with one final prank. Their target had been none other than their chief. The two of them had rigged a bucket filled with flour above his office door. When he came out to join them for dinner, the trap was tripped and Frank had been covered in flour. The look on her boss's face had been worth having to clean up the flour. She was going to miss Frank and his easy-going nature. She wasn't sure how her new employer would feel about those kinds of antics, but Frank had always taken them in good-humor, having also played a few pranks of his own in retaliation.

"I'm going to miss you guys," Cassie said, her voice wavering.

"Now don't go crying," Jackie told her.

"Yeah, especially not when the party is about to begin," L.J. said, coming into the room, his hair still wet from his shower but now in street clothes.

"What are you guys talking about?" Cassie asked, looking from Jackie to L.J.

"Hope you didn't have plans tonight, girl, because we've made plans of our own," Jackie told her, smiling. "And don't worry about needing to call your brother, we already informed him we were taking you out tonight."

"Out? Where?" Cassie asked, feeling a little uneasy. She had worked with these guys long enough to know that things could get out of hand when everyone got together, especially outside of work.

"It's a surprise," Jackie told her.

"I don't like surprises, especially when you guys are all involved in it together."

"Relax. We're going to have fun, I promise." Jackie said, coming toward Cassie. She leaned over and whispered, "Besides, if you don't come willingly the guys will just drag you to our destination."

"Fine," she said, giving in.

***a few hours later ***

"Whatever you do, don't tell my wife I know how to slow dance," Neal told Cassie as they swayed to a slow song in the middle of the dance floor at The Wild West Saloon.

The Wild West Saloon was a popular bar about four blocks from the fire station and a popular hangout for the members of the 66th precinct station. This was where her co-workers had dragged her to after their shift. When they had come in, they had escorted Cassie to the private room to the one side of the place that was rented out for parties. The members of the shift who had been off that day had decorated the room and gotten things ready. Cassie had walked in to find a huge banner hanging across the room saying - 'We'll Miss You, Cassie'. On the table, along with the presents, other foods and drinks was a cake with blue trim and red roses. It read - 'Good Luck, Cassie'.

By this time, the cake was gone as was a lot of the food. It was now one-thirty and everyone was still enjoying themselves, some more drunk than others. Cassie had finally managed to drag Neal out on the dance floor.

"If she doesn't know you can dance, what did you do at your wedding?" Cassie asked.

"Our first dance lasted about ten seconds. She walked away after I stepped on her feet three times. Hasn't asked me to dance since."

Cassie laughed. "I promise, your secret is safe with me."

They finished the dance and then made their way through the crowd to the room their group was occupying tonight.

"Ah, there's the guest of honor," Frank said from the doorway as he spotted Cassie and Neal. "Anyone seen, Carter?"

"I found him," Lexis commented, coming from the direction of the bar. Both she and Carter had drinks in their hands.

"Then I think it's time for presents," Frank said. "Everyone else is inside."

Moments later the entire evening shift was seated around the table. The music from the main area could still be heard, as Cassie opened the gifts from her co-workers. Some of the gifts were serious, like Jackie's present of four different cake molds, while others were on the silly side. Lexis gave her a T-shirt which read 'Always a New Yorker at Heart'. Neal had gone out and bought her a slingshot and a squirt gun. "Wouldn't want you to forget about all the fun we've had," he had told

her when she opened them. L.J. had bought her a Risk game. Frank had bought her a journal to write in.

"And now for one last gift," Frank said, reaching under the table. He brought out an odd shape packaged. "This is from all of us," he told Cassie, as he handed it across the table to her.

Wondering what it was, Cassie took it from him. Ripping the paper off, she saw it was her missing helmet. Her co-workers had all signed pieces of tape which were now stuck to the helmet. She started to read the messages they had written her when the words began to blur. Reaching up, she wiped the tears from her eyes.

"That's so you don't forget any of us," Frank told her.

"You guys are the greatest," Cassie told them, looking around the table at everyone. "I'm going to miss you all."

Farewell Party Part Two by starrynebula on September 12, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:20:08 GMT

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Monday, September 24, 2068, 10 a.m., local time, outside of Wichita, Kansas (3 a.m., Tuesday, September 25, Tracy Island)

"Wow." Alex stood just outside the picket fence, gazing at the piles of debris that marked where the Tracy farmhouse had once stood. He glanced up at his father, who had taken in a sharp, deep breath.

"'Wow' is right, son," Jeff said, putting a hand on the boy's denim-clad shoulder. He scanned the lot, nodding slightly. "Good thing we got some people out here quickly. I'd hate to see what this would look like if we hadn't."

Actually, he had a good idea what it would have looked like; they'd passed two or three lots where the houses had been smashed, and the owners didn't have the resources to clean up and rebuild. Overgrown with weeds, homes half standing, debris scattered all over... at least on his property they didn't have to slog through knee-high grass to get to the cordoned off spot where the basement still stood.

Marion came up beside him. "Ken and his crew did a good job. Everything from the basement, and anything that could be salvaged is in a storage unit a few miles from here. The major equipment was pulled out and they tore down the barn just last week."

He turned to her. "Have you been out to the graveyard?"

She nodded solemnly. "Yesterday. There are a couple of trees down, part of the fence is missing, and it needs a good mowing. I'm not sure what else you want to do there." She hesitated, and

sighed. "I don't know why Ken hasn't sent someone out there before now. I guess he thought you wanted the house and barn dealt with first."

"I did." Jeff said simply. "We'll take care of the graveyard ourselves today. Just need to get hold of some tools, that's all."

He raised his eyes again, and called to his family. "Everyone gather around!" They all approached from where they'd been wandering, looking at the leveled lot and discussing matters amongst themselves. When they came close, Jeff began to make plans. "Okay, folks. Marion tells me that the graveyard needs work. Trees are down, fencing is missing, the grass needs mowing. So, we'll head out there and see what needs to be done. Scott, Gordon, you're to head back into town with the pickup. I'll phone you and let you know what tools we need to buy, and what we need to rent, then you can stop by the hardware store and fill the order. Make sure you get all the safety equipment: goggles, gloves, rope... whatever we need."

"Yes, sir." Scott took the keys from his jeans pocket. He, Virgil, and John had brought the family's pickup truck from the airport hangar to the hotel where they were staying, while Jeff brought along the seven-passenger van, and Alan, with Gordon, had brought the sports car. All three vehicles were at the farm right now, being necessary to carry all the family comfortably to the site.

Jeff turned to his wife. "Sweetheart, could you and Mother see to it we get some food and plenty of water out here?" He gazed up, pulling up his canvas outback hat to see the cloudless sky better. "The day'll be warm before we're finished."

"Do you want to drive out to the graveyard first? Or walk?" Dianne asked. "Em and I will probably need the van, and you won't be able to fit the rest of the crew into the sports car."

"I think we'll walk," Jeff told her. "I know I could use the exercise. It'll give us a better idea of what else might need fixing around here, and you know Alex will love looking for wildlife on the way."

"All right, then. We'll take Marion back to town with us." Dianne stretched up to give her husband a kiss. "You might want to camouflage the sports car somehow; it advertises that we're here, and the last thing we need is the media."

"Good idea. Alan? Please pull the car back behind that pile of wood over there, then catch up with us. The rest of you, come with me."

Scott and Gordon were already gone, and Dianne and Emily wasted no time in following them towards town. Tyler put his hand in Jeff's as they headed for the corner of the farm designated as the Tracy burial ground.

"How come we bury people out here?" Tyler asked as they walked. "Why not in one of the big cemeteries in the city?"

"Why not on the island itself?" Cherie asked, her art bag slung over one shoulder. She paced her father on the other side.

"Well," Jeff began. "This farm has been in our family for nigh on 200 years now. It was purchased

way back in the late 1800s when the west was first opened to homesteaders. A pair of brothers, Patrick and Seamus Tracy, sons of Irish immigrants, claimed two adjoining homesteads, each 160 acres. They built sod houses, and had been farming on the land for two years before sending for their wives and children." He paused, smiling a little. "Back then, there weren't many churches out here on the plains, and Catholic ones were few and very far between. Most good Catholics wanted to be buried in consecrated soil, and you could only find that near a church. So, when a priest who was on his way to California stopped in the vicinity, the brothers asked him to consecrate a corner where their properties met as a graveyard for them and their descendants."

"So the priest did?" Tyler asked, his brow furrowed.

"He did."

"Then how come you're not... we're not Catholics?"

Jeff laughed. "A good question. As I recall, one of Seamus's sons married a Lutheran gal, who refused to convert to the Catholic church. Instead, she got her husband to convert to Lutheranism. She was a smart girl though; she waited until after Seamus had died and his son, Lincoln, had inherited the family farm. My grandmother was responsible for making the family Methodist... which is the denomination we claim if asked." He glanced down at Tyler. "That's not to say that your mother is Methodist..."

"So, what happened to Patrick?" Alex had come up and wanted to bring the topic back to the point.

Jeff sighed. "He died from one of the diseases that often afflicted people out in the plains. He had five daughters at that point; his will specified that his firstborn or surviving son was to inherit. I guess he still had hopes. If he didn't have one when he died, Seamus would get his farm, with stipulations that he took care of Patrick's wife and children. Both Patrick and his wife died from their illness, as did two of their daughters. Seamus took the other three girls and raised them as his own. He also inherited his brother's land. My forebears purchased more land over the years until we had one of the largest farms in the county."

Cherie frowned. "How do you know all this stuff?"

"Journals, mostly, though some other family records go back that far." Virgil had dropped back to pace his father, while John went on ahead with Alan. "Our family has always been one for keeping journals. There are a couple of surviving ones from Seamus's day under glass at headquarters. Grandma has copies of the contents on data chip if you want to see them."

"Hm." Cherie looked thoughtful. "That might be a good project for my history class this year. I think I'll ask her about it when we get home."

"Oh my," Jeff breathed as he stopped in his tracks. Alan and John were already examining the old oak that had fallen across the entrance to the graveyard. "That was at least a century old," he murmured, closing his eyes for a few seconds.

"Damn. Marion has a gift for understatement, doesn't she? We're going to have a rough time

cutting that up before tomorrow," Virgil said. "The smashed fence will probably have to be special ordered, and I'll bet that some of the gravestones are broken, too."

"You're very likely right, Virgil." Jeff took in a deep breath. "Boys, let's find another way in," he said, as the executive and commander came to the fore. "We'll need a good idea of what tools Scott should purchase before I call him."

"Chainsaws at the very least, Dad," Alan called. "And likely a chipping machine."

"Unless some of this can be converted into wood for the new house," John suggested.

Jeff raised an eyebrow. "Hm. Not a bad idea at that, John. Let's get in there, and start making our list."

Remembrance, part two by Tikatu on September 12, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:20:20 GMT

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Monday, September 24, 9:15 AM; San Francisco (4:15 AM Tuesday on Tracy Island)

"Will? Got a minute?"

"Carl! Come in. I was about to come and find you. I wanted to talk to you," Will said as he looked up from his computer. "Please sit down."

"I really can't. I just came in to ask you for the rest of today and tomorrow off."

"Why? What's wrong?"

Carl sighed and took one of the chairs opposite his boss. "I just learned over the weekend that the owners of the apartment building I live in have sold it. It's gonna be torn down and a new more earthquake resistant building put up in its place. I have two weeks to find a new place that I can afford."

Whoa! Talk about serendipity! "Carl, I think I can help you out in more ways than one. First of all, remember when I told you that I was thinking of moving on, and I believed you'd be the right person to take over my job?"

"Well, yeah. But that's not gonna be for some time. Or is it?"

Will grinned. "It's happened. I've had a job offer from the CEO of Tracy Industries to be the maintenance person for their personal vehicles. And I accepted."

"You're kidding!" Carl looked at his boss intently. "You're not kidding!"

"Correct. So, I want you to take over here, and we'll spend the next couple of days making the transition a smooth one. Which brings me to your request. I don't think you'll need time to go apartment hunting."

"Why not?"

"Because I just signed a five year lease on my place, and now I'm moving to where the Tracys live," Will answered with a grin. "They're supplying housing for me, so I'll need to sublet the apartment here. Interested?"

"Am I interested?!" Carl looked like he wanted to leap over the desk and give Will a bear hug, but he contained himself. "I'll take it!" He paused and grinned. "It is the same place we were all at for your Super Bowl party, right?"

Will laughed. "Right. Two bedrooms (with good closets), one and a half baths, living room, fair sized kitchen with a 'breakfast nook', den, and even a balcony that runs along the west side, so you can sit out there and watch the sun set over the ocean. It also has a parking garage and storage units for all the residents. Anything else?"

"What about pets? I don't have one, but if I wanted one someday, would they let me?"

"Yes, they do take pets, but they allow no more than two: dogs, cats, birds, hamsters... that sort of thing. When it comes to fish, they're more flexible."

"And the furniture?"

"Included, Carl. I understand the living quarters there come already furnished. I just need to take bedding, bath linens, curtains, and accessories. Man! I'll have to sort through all my paraphernalia to figure out what to take and what to put in storage."

"When do you plan to leave?" Carl asked.

"I'm supposed to be there no later than October fifth, their time, which is the fourth here. They're on the other side of the International Date Line. But I gotta visit my folks first. What about you? How long will it take to pack up what you need to and get your things over to my apartment?"

"I've already got a head start, Will. I started sorted and packing Saturday night; it gave me a way to work off my anger." Carl sat back in his chair. "Man! Things happen fast around you!" He grinned and Will laughed.

"I suggest then that we take today and tomorrow to get you transitioned into this job. Tomorrow evening, you can start bringing your stuff over to my apartment Wednesday, I'll have you handle things yourself, while I finish my packing and get ready to head down to my folks' place. If I don't spend a week with them, I may not get to my new job in one piece." Will winked and grinned at Carl, who laughed.

"Your mom?" When Will nodded, Carl continued. "Sounds a lot like mine. Well then, let's get to work. We can't keep our mothers waiting too long."

"And since you've taken over for me before when I had to be away, there shouldn't be much to go over," Will replied. "So bring your chair around here. This is when you learn about all the end-of-month and end-of-year duties that you never had to do before."

Carl moved himself and his chair next to Will and the two men got started.

Posted by hobbeth on September 13, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:20:39 GMT

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Monday, September 24th, 5:30 Hartford, CT (Tuesday, September 25th, 9:30 a.m. Tracy Island)

Cassie stowed her bag where her six-year-old nieces, Kate and Allie, slept, then returned to the living room. While she was sleeping on an air mattress in her nieces' room, Mark would be sleeping on the couch during their stay in Hartford.

Kate and Allie were on the floor playing Trouble. Both Cassie and Mark had promised to join them in a game after dinner. Jason was in his bassinet, sleeping. Lisa was in the kitchen finishing dinner. Mark and Philip were sitting on the couch discussing their work. It was a safe topic for the two brothers, who both knew that Mark's personal life was a touchy issue between them. Though he still loved his baby brother, Philip was still uneasy with his brother's sexual orientation. It had put a strain on their relationship.

"Do you need any help?" Cassie asked her sister-in-law, as she stood in the doorway of the kitchen.

"No, I'm just about done, but thank-you," she replied.

Cassie turned back to the living room. Walking over to the arm chair, she sat down and listened to her brothers' conversation. Philip was talking about the current story he was working on, involving a car theft racket that had the Hartford police baffled. He was still talking about it when Lisa called them for dinner.

"So what's with this impromptu visit?" Philip asked his sister after grace had been said.

"I wanted to see you all before I leave New York. I'm starting a new job which is going to take me to Wichita, Kansas."

"I didn't realize you were unhappy with your job, Cass," Philip commented.

"I wasn't. It was more that I needed a change of scenery after everything that has happened."

"I can definitely understand that," Lisa said. Her husband nodded in agreement. "What's this new job of yours?"

"I'm going to be a consultant for fire safety and protocols for Tracy Industries. Though I'll be based in Wichita, I'll be traveling to their other plants around the world and making sure fire codes and safety protocols are within company specifications, as well as keep those specifications up to date."

"Bet Dad is happy you're finally taking his advice and doing something less dangerous," Philip commented.

"Yes, Dad was quite happy about the change in jobs, though he said he'd rather I was based in New York."

"Of course, he just isn't ready to completely let go of his little girl yet," her brother teased. "You know Mom and Dad are going to support any decision you make though," Philip said, purposely refraining from looking at his younger brother. Their parents had all but written Mark off when he admitted he was gay. Philip just tried to steer clear of the issue, not wanting to get involved. "They might miss you but they're not going to stand in your way."

"I know. It's going to be weird being out on my own though. I've never really experienced that before," Cassie commented, finding the prospect both frightening and exciting.

"Hope we didn't shelter you too much growing up, Cass," Philip commented.

"You and your brothers shelter her?" Lisa commented with a laugh. "If anything, she probably learned how to fight thanks to all of you."

"Guilty as charged," Philip admitted as the grownups at the table laughed. "When are you leaving, Cass?" he asked, growing serious.

"Next Monday. I'd give you contact information but I'm not completely sure of that myself yet. There is always my email account, of course. I'll email a phone and mailing address to everyone as soon as I'm settled."

"Does that mean we won't get to see you as much?" Kate asked, looking at her aunt. Beside her sister, Allie looked toward Cassie, too. The two girls had already said they didn't see her enough.

"Yes. It's going to be harder for me to come visit," Cassie told them, looking at both of them in turn. "But I'll tell you what; I'll write to the both of you personally. Wouldn't it be neat to get your own mail?"

"You mean, like when we get birthday cards?" Allie asked. Both girls looked forward to getting the cards. Receiving mail made them feel important like their parents.

"Exactly, only instead of getting a card, I'll write to you about what I'm doing. You can write back and tell me what's going on here."

Katie's face fell. "But we don't know how to write many words yet," she admitted. The girls had just started first grade. "What if we want to tell you something that we don't know how to write?"

"Then your mother or I will help you, Sweetie!" Philip assured her. Katie and Allie nodded, returning to their dinner. Looking from his daughter, Philip addressed his sister. "You let Alex keep the computer didn't you?"

"Yes, I did," Cassie answered, wondering where her brother was going with the subject. She hadn't needed the computer when she had moved in with Mark and right now, it was at least one less thing she'd have to worry about packing and shipping.

"Well, then, you and I are going to go find you a laptop tomorrow," Philip said. He had discussed the idea with Lisa before, wanting to do something for his sister after what she had gone through. Given the situation, he knew she wouldn't mind that he did it now instead of waiting. "If your new job is going to entail traveling then a laptop is going to come into handy. Consider it our going away present to you."

"Philip, you don't have ..."

Philip held up his hand, cutting her off. "I know I don't have to but I want to. Besides, this way I know you won't have any excuse for not keeping in touch."

"Thank-you," she told him, giving in. She knew her brother had the same stubborn streak that she did. All her siblings had it and they got it from their father.

A cry from the baby's room interrupted them. Lisa wiped her mouth on her napkin and stood up. "I'll go get him." She looked across the table at her sister-in-law. "Cassie, why don't you come with me?" she suggested, knowing that Cassie was likely going to be upset seeing the baby for the first time. Lisa figured she didn't need an audience for that.

Cassie nodded. Standing up, she followed Lisa out of the kitchen. Her sister-in-law paused outside of the room. "If you're not ready, you don't need to come in. I just figured this way it would just be you and me. I know losing Nathan wasn't easy," she said softly, her voice conveying the empathy that only another mother could show.

Cassie took a deep breath. "No, it hasn't been, but seeing Jason before I leave is one of the reasons I came. He is my nephew and I'm happy for you and Philip."

"I know," Lisa said, putting her arm around Cassie's shoulders and giving her a small squeeze. Cassie smiled at her sister-in-law, thankful for her understanding. Lisa turned the light on as she walked into the baby's room. Jason was lying in his bassinet, his face scrunched up, and crying at the top of his lungs.

"Hey little one," Lisa said, leaning over and picking up the crying baby. "Your Aunt Cassie wants to meet you," she told her son. The baby stopped crying as she cradled him in her arms and walked over to where Cassie stood.

Cassie held out her arms for the tiny baby, sight blurring as she remembered holding Nathan like this. Her nephew was such a beautiful baby. She was happy for Lisa and Philip, but her heart still ached for her own son.

Her thoughts drifted to her new co-worker whom she had flown to Kansas with. I sure hope the custody battle went well for him, she thought as she rocked her nephew in her arms.

Posted by starrynebula on September 13, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:21:13 GMT

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Tuesday, September 25, 2068, 3:00 p.m., Tracy family graveyard, Kansas (8:00 a.m.,
Wednesday, September 26, Tracy Island)

I will remember you
Will you remember me?
Don't let your life pass you by
Weep not for the memories.

Jeff led the family, dressed both somberly and formally, back to the graveyard. They had worked until past sundown to cut up the oak and the two uprooted cypresses that had served as part of the windscreen. That morning, Jeff called in Ken and his crew, and between them and the Tracys, the graveyard was made presentable for the afternoon. There was still work to be done: parts of the fence needed replacement, and several of the older gravestones would need repair or out-and-out replacement. The latter made Jeff sad; one of those that was totally smashed by the fallen oak was that of Seamus himself.

"You know that Grant's father made rubbings of all the old stones in the cemetery before he died," Emily told him. "They're in a safe-deposit box at the bank. New stones can be cut and engraved to match the old ones."

His mother's words were comforting, but only just. The losses in the graveyard left Jeff feeling bereft, as if a part of the family's history had been lost.

Today, they wandered through the graves, telling the children what they knew of the various people who were buried there. The fragrance of honeysuckle permeated the air, borne on the breeze, all the wind that the remaining Leyland cypresses would allow to hiss through their trimmed branches. The vine was bunched along a length of wrought iron fence that had been spared, and bees buzzed busily among its blossoms. Small clumps of bright zinnias raised their petaled faces toward the sun, visited by butterflies flitting their way from flower to flower. A few marigolds were blooming here and there, orange and yellow blossoms showing bright against the dark stones. Marion had planted them both earlier in the year, and the mowers had spared as many as they could.

Jeff carried a sheaf of yellow roses to place in the vase that stood at the foot of Lucille's grave. The stone was etched with the words, "Lucille Anne Tracy, October 25, 2010 -- September 25, 2045, Loving and Devoted wife and mother. We will remember you." Dianne slipped her hand in Jeff's and squeezed it as he closed his eyes against the moisture that had suddenly collected

there. He squeezed back, and gave his new wife a shaky smile. "I think I'll take a walk around, then come back to pay my respects. Give the boys a chance to say what they want to."

"Would you like me to walk with you?" Dianne asked softly, not knowing if her husband needed time to be alone with his thoughts.

Jeff hesitated for a moment, then nodded. "Yes. I would."

Dianne smiled, and squeezed his hand once again. He took it, kissed it, then put it in the crook of his arm as they walked off toward some of the older graves.

Emily sat on a wrought iron and wood bench near her husband's grave. Alan carried a hanging basket of red geraniums for her and Gordon followed with a tall, decorative hanging hook. He pressed the straight ends of the hook into the soil, and made sure it stood firm. Then Emily took the basket and hung it up. "There. Red geraniums for comfort."

She turned to her grandsons. "You two help keep an eye on Tyler and Alex now. I want a few moments alone with Grant."

"Okay, Grandma." "Sure, Grandma." Each gave her a kiss on the cheek, and went off to obey her commands.

She sat down heavily again on the bench. "Well, Grant, we're back for a bit. It's a nice day, but Lord, did we have some work to do when we got here. Never thought that the Lord would test us as much as He has this year, but I guess He's had a purpose in it all, if only to teach me that I can't fix everything." She paused and sighed. "The house is gone, Grant. A tornado up and took it away. So little was saved... but then, there wasn't much left there to begin with. Nothing but a few keepsakes, and the memories. Still, it was our anchor, our reminder of where we'd come from, and where we could come back to."

She paused again. "We nearly lost Jeff, too, Grant. A helijet accident in New Hampshire. He hovered on the edge of life and death; it was due to the boys' strength, and Dianne's skill, that he didn't slip over the edge and join you and Lucy. He's healed now, in more ways than one." She shook her head slowly. "God's put us through the wringer this year, darling. But He's blessed us, too. Nothing has come our way that we haven't been able to face as a family - and a bit of help from Him."

Each of the boys in turn came to Lucille's grave while the others were spread throughout the graveyard. Scott crouched down before the stone and kissed his fingers before putting his hand on top. "I wish you could see Dad now, Mom. He's moved on, and is happy. I'm doing okay, though it's been a rough year for us. Still looking for that special girl, though. Not sure if I can find one like you."

He paused and smiled, glancing off toward Cherie, who was seated on the grass by a group of zinnias, sketch pad in hand. "It's different having a sister in the house, Mom. I kinda see why you and Dad kept trying; girls are special in their own way. But it's okay that you and Dad only had boys; I don't think I could send a sister out to do what we do." He looked around, and saw Virgil glancing his way. "I think someone else wants to talk with you, so I'll go see what my sister's up to."

I love you, and I'll see you again next year."

Scott got up and went off to sit in the grass by Cherie, and Virgil walked up, hands in his pockets. "Hello, Mom," he said quietly as he crouched before the stone. He smoothed his hand over the top and traced the letters with a finger. "I'm sorry I didn't come out to visit last time I was here, but it was kind of hectic. The house had been destroyed by a tornado, and Dad's new wife was almost killed by one, too. We were all scattered hither and yon, and well, we were focused on the living, and not those who had passed on. Maybe if I'd come out, we'd have seen what needed doing here, and not had to work so hard to clean this corner up." He rotated a shoulder. "I'm sore in spots I'd forgotten existed."

He smiled a little, then sobered. "We almost lost him, Mom. A damn snowstorm nearly took him from us. What is it with us and weather, anyway? Heavy rain took you, a blizzard nearly took him... a tornado ripped up our roots..." He shook his head sadly. "Listen to me, still angry at it all. You should see my paintings -- all dark colors. And my latest compositions; I'm almost afraid to play them because Scott would be on my case, wanting to know what was wrong."

He paused again. "Okay, change of subject. I've met this girl. Her name's Elise. She served with Scott in the Air Force, and was piloting the helijet Dad was in during that blizzard. We became friends, and now... well, it looks like it may become more than that. She's a spitfire, and fun to be with, and I hope... I hope there's a future there." Smoothing a hand over the gravestone again, he smiled. "I'll keep you up to date on things, okay?"

A shadow fell over Virgil and the headstone, and he glanced up quickly, then back. "Looks like someone else wants to talk to you. Love you, Mom. See you again soon."

John squeezed Virgil's shoulder as the latter got up. "Thanks, Virge."

"No problem, John. I'll go see what Alex has found."

Virgil walked off as he'd come, hands in his pockets, but now whistling an unfamiliar tune. He headed toward the spot where Alex held something in his hand, showing it to Tyler.

"Hi, Mom." John chose to sit, cross-legged, before the headstone. "I'm sorry I didn't get out here when we were at the house last; there was so much going on, too much, really. The farmhouse was taken by a tornado; nothing was left but the basement. Half the barn went, too, but left behind a momma cat and her kittens." He smiled and chuckled. "You won't believe it, Mom. Grandma insisted we bring them home. They've been living in her suite; she says the kittens are ready for new homes. I'm thinking of asking for one." He leaned over to whisper, "Don't tell Dad; but I'm going to smuggle it up to Thunderbird Five. See how a cat does in space."

Chuckling again, he sat back. "We've got a lot of new people on the island; they've been a big help with the organization. I'm getting to know some of them really well. There's Dom; he's got a little guy named Josh. Luke is new. You should see the way he carves wood; he makes it an art form. Callie's a sweetheart. We had a bet on about the Final Four in college basketball." He paused, then sighed. "There was a girl that I thought I..." He ran a hand through his hair. "She wanted more than a friendship, and I wasn't ready for it. I'm still not, for that matter. She's gone now, anyway. I couldn't give her what she wanted, and someone else could." His voice dropped

when he added, "I wish her well."

He glanced around him, and spied his father and Dianne standing near his great-grandfather's grave. Jeff's back was to him, and Dianne had an arm resting across it from behind, reaching up toward Jeff's shoulder. He smiled. "I hope you don't mind that Dad remarried, Mom. He's needed someone to light up his life again like you did." Kissing his fingers as Scott had, John laid them on the top of the headstone, then hauled himself to his feet. "I'll see you again soon, Mom. Love you always." With that, he walked off in the direction of his grandmother, who smiled at him and patted the bench next to her.

Gordon and Alan came up together, both fidgeting a little. Ever since they were little, they'd made the journey to their mother's grave, but it was an obligation that neither really enjoyed. Gordon's memories of Lucille were fuzzy; snatches of music, an occasionally remembered smile, laughter in the bathtub were the clearest. Alan's memories were fewer still, and even more fuzzy, so much so that he didn't know where his own memories ended and his brothers' recollections, told to him in quiet, private places so as not to upset Jeff, began.

"Hi, Mom." Gordon brought a small bouquet of white and pink carnations. He didn't dare put them in the vase with his father's bountiful and beautiful roses, so he just laid them on top of the stone. His grandmother had told him all about the meanings that some of the flowers and trees that were planted around the graveyard. But he wasn't into such things, and the carnations seemed to be appropriate. "It's a nice day to be here. We had a lot of work to do to clean up the graveyard; a tornado ripped up some of the trees, and the fence was smashed."

He shifted his weight from one foot to another. "I've been good, though I got into a couple of scrapes that injured my back. Mo... I mean, Dianne was really strict with me about getting well. Dom -- he's the new nurse -- taught me some yoga positions that help." He laced his fingers together. "We've got some new people in IR. One's a firefighter; her name is Cassie. Haven't gotten much of a chance to know her; she hasn't moved in yet. Brandon's another; he's an aquanaut and has been a great help to me." Gordon glanced at Alan. "I guess Alan wants to talk to you now." He sighed. "See you again, Mom." He motioned toward his brother, and went off, hands in his pockets and head down.

"Hello, there." Alan rocked back on his heels. "I usually don't know what to say to you when we come, but you know that already. I say it every year, don't I?" He sighed. "I guess the first thing I should tell you is that I broke up with Tin-Tin. I told Penelope that my life was too dangerous to have someone in it... which it is! I felt I had to break up with Tin-Tin to keep her safe." He shook his head. "I was being a jerk; something I've been told more than once by more than one person." He shrugged, then smiled a little. "Gordon told you a little about Brandon and Dom. Well, I guess I should tell you about the other new nurse -- Nikki." He chuckled. "Never thought I'd fall for someone like her. We didn't start off too well, mind you. I guess my 'chauvinistic ways' made her mad or something. But... there's something special about her. I don't know whether it's her eyes, or the way she holds her head up, or even the way she beats me at basketball. I've just grown to really enjoy her company."

He paused. "When the tornado took the farmhouse -- it's gone, by the way, in case no one told you -- and tore up the graveyard, it also took out Thunderbird Seven. Mom... I mean, Dianne... Dom, and Nikki were on board. I wasn't here; I was in space, helping to separate a couple of

satellites, but when I heard about it, I was scared. Not as scared as I was when Dad's helijet went down... that was a whole different kind of fear. But I was really scared. Scared for Dianne, because she was hurt the worst, but also for Nikki. I mean, we'd just gotten to be friends and... I thought we could become more. Then she's in the hospital." He paused, and said thoughtfully, "Maybe her life is the dangerous one." The idea made him quiet for a moment, then he perked up. "But she's okay now, and well, that's the news in my life. Maybe next year I can bring her and introduce her."

A hand fell on his shoulder, and he turned to see his father standing behind him. "Everything okay, son?"

Alan nodded. "Yeah, Dad. Everything's okay. You want to talk to her now?"

"Just for a minute."

Dianne stood back as Jeff took one yellow rose from the bouquet, and moved close to the gravestone. Alan stepped back, then turned to Dianne and hugged her tight. "Thanks, Mom," he murmured in her ear. "Thanks for showing me what a mother's all about. I love you, y'know."

"Oh, Alan," Dianne said quietly, a bit of shock in her voice at his comment. She sighed, a grateful sound, and hugged him back. "I love you, too, Alan. And I'm proud to be your mom, even if I didn't give birth to you."

In the meanwhile, Jeff crouched before the headstone, and traced the two entwined hearts that were engraved between Lucille's name and statistics, and the epitaph. "Thank you, Lucy," he whispered. "You gave me far more than I ever gave you. Every day of our lives together was filled with love, even when we fought or were angry with each other. I have mourned for you for a long time, but my mourning is through. I'll always remember you with love, and cherish the memories we made together. But now I have someone new to love and cherish, and I wouldn't have her if you hadn't shown me how to open myself up and love unconditionally." He let the soft tears roll down his cheeks. "If you can see me, see us, from where you are, I hope you understand how happy I am now." He kissed the rose and laid it at the foot of the headstone. "Yellow roses say 'I miss you', and I have missed you. Now I'm moving on."

He took out his handkerchief to wipe his eyes and face, then put it back in his pocket and stood. His gaze swept the graveyard, rested briefly on the gently smiling face of his wife, and glanced toward his father's grave, where his mother sat, John and Tyler beside her.

Gathering Dianne to his side with one hand, he headed for his mother. Scott, noticing this, whispered in Cherie's ear, and began to help her gather her pencils and other supplies together. Virgil, who was with Alex, examining an insect he'd found, nudged the boy, who let the bug go. From all corners of the cemetery they came, converging on the spot where Emily sat.

"Well, son," Emily said, beginning to rise. "I'd best go pay my respects to Lucy before we leave."

"That's fine, Ma. Just come right back. I've got something special in mind."

Emily gave Jeff a quick, puzzled look as she went off to visit her late daughter-in-law's burial site.

Jeff rubbed a hand over his father's headstone and smiled. "Wish I had more to say, Dad, but I miss you, and I wish you were here. You'd have three new grandchildren, and I think they would have loved to have you as a grandpa."

--remembrance part 3 by Tikatu on September 14, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:21:52 GMT

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When it was clear that Emily was finished paying her respects, Jeff had Scott and Virgil move the bench over to Lucille's grave site, and place it at the foot of the grave.

"What's this all about, Jeff?" Emily asked.

"Sit down, Ma. You too, Dianne, Princess." Once the ladies were seated on the bench, and his sons were ranged around them, some standing, the young ones seated on the grass, Jeff stood before them. "Do you have the envelopes, Princess?"

"Yes, Dad." Cherie opened her art bag and pulled out some manila envelopes, which Jeff retrieved.

He returned to his place, shuffled the envelopes, and cleared his throat. "Yesterday, we were talking about the history of our family, and how much of it has come down to us from journals." He gave Dianne a smile. "A few weeks ago, during another anniversary, Dianne had her wedding album out, and was remembering her special day with Rick. I brought out my wedding album, too." He looked slightly embarrassed when he admitted, "It was actually Grandma's copy as, at the time, I had no idea where mine had gone."

Dianne smiled and chuckled a little, and Emily said, "Now I know what you wanted the album for."

"Uh, yeah, Mom. That was it." Jeff huffed once, then cleared his throat again. "In any case, I realized that there were a lot of things I hadn't thought about for a long while in regards to Lucy, memories I hadn't revisited because I thought they'd be too painful. And, in doing so, I was... well, I was robbing you boys of parts of your family history." He looked down and swallowed. "So... I went looking for that history. I found my copy of the wedding album, and it's now sitting next to the one from Dianne and Rick's wedding, and the one from our wedding. I went looking for the photo albums and storage disks, and had them copied to data chips -- and to archive paper, so they could be viewed by everyone."

He paused, and his voice lowered. "And I also found Lucy's journals." He drew in a deep breath in order to compose himself. "They were hard to read at first; I kept hearing her voice and getting lost in the memories that the entries prompted." Rubbing the back of his neck, he smiled sheepishly. "Not to mention finding out what she thought of me when we'd had an argument or I'd displeased her in some way."

Now everyone chuckled, except the little boys, who were glancing up at their mother with

questioning looks. Jeff cleared his throat again, and the laughter died down. "In any case, I went through and found some of the things Lucy said about you boys, some of her hopes and dreams for you, and I've tried to match them up with a picture of you with her, one that you can frame as you please. I'd like to read them here, as from her lips." He put on his reading glasses, and selected one of the envelopes, tucking the others under his arm. "I'll start with Scott."

Scott started, eyes growing wide, fixed on his father as Jeff pulled a piece of paper from the envelope and began to read.

"Today... today I became a mother. It's an indescribable feeling and one I know I'll never have again. When I look into my precious Scotty's eyes, my heart is filled with love and joy and a deep warmth. Much like when I stared into Jeff's eyes on my wedding day, but different, too, because this little baby is part of both of us. He is Jeff, and he is me, and he is himself. If I could have one wish for him, it would be that he would grow to be like his father, bold and fearless and caring and full of laughter. Already I see the fearlessness in him; it doesn't matter who is holding him, he doesn't complain -- unless he has fair reason to do so, like hunger or a dirty diaper. He will always be special because he is my first child, my first son, and he will never lose that specialness, no matter how long I live."

Jeff stopped and drew in another deep breath, then opened the envelope again, and pulled out a picture. It was of Lucy and Jeff in the hospital, with newborn Scott wrapped in a blue blanket with a tiny blue cap on his head. Lucy was holding him so that she looked in his face, but Jeff had leaned over to put his lips gently on the baby's head. Putting the picture on top, Jeff handed the envelope and the paper with the journal entry in it to his son. Scott looked at it for a long time, biting his lower lip. Then he met his father's gaze and, his voice thick, said, "Thank you, Dad."

"You're welcome, son." Jeff took out another envelope, and smiled a little. "Virgil is next."

Virgil stood straight, a slight smile on his face as Jeff began to read. "Virgil, Virgil, Virgil... what am I going to do with the boy? He's always coloring on the walls, banging on the piano keys, and dancing when I play. My mother says he looks like me, and when I tell her what he's been up to, she smiles and says, 'That sounds familiar. You did the same thing when you were his age.' He has so much energy, and gets so frustrated when I take away the crayons, or close up the piano. I asked him what he was drawing today. He said, 'Daddy!' Now that I look at it, it does resemble Jeff a little... with blue hair and a purple face! I guess I'd better cherish this little artist, and try to channel his obvious talents into more structured pursuits -- before I wash the paint clean off the walls!"

The comments made the little group laugh, and Virgil blushed even as he smiled. Jeff took out the picture of toddler Virgil, his face a study in surprise as he was caught red-handed with a fat crayon pressed to the wall. His mother was squatting down beside him, her hand over his, and she was trying hard to look serious and stern, but not completely succeeding. Jeff handed it over and Gordon peered over his shoulder to look at it. "Nice to know I'm not the only one who misbehaved!"

Virgil looked up, smiling again. "Thanks, Dad. I'll be sure to frame this one."

"You do that." Jeff selected a third envelope, and opened it, saying, "This one is John's."

John's eyes widened, and he stood a little straighter as Jeff read. "I went looking for John tonight at bedtime, and couldn't seem to find him anywhere! I was beginning to worry when I heard Jeff's voice out on the back deck. He was talking to someone in those deep tones of his, and when I listened a little harder, I could hear John responding, asking a question. I didn't want to interrupt them; Jeff has precious little time to spend with the boys as it is with the company and all. So I sneaked out onto the deck as quietly as I could. It was a heart-warming sight; John sitting on Jeff's knee, both of them looking up at the sky. John was asking questions about the stars, really intelligent ones for a three-year-old, and Jeff answered, sometimes drawing something on a piece of paper, and shining a flashlight on it. He was teaching John the constellations, and it seemed John couldn't get enough of it. Finally, he yawned, and I cleared my throat. Both of them were startled to find me there, and I reminded Jeff that it was past John's bedtime. Jeff grinned, then picked John up and put him on those broad shoulders of his to carry him inside."

Jeff paused for a moment, swatting a pesky fly off the paper. His audience began to stir, and Jeff looked up. "There's a little more here."

When they had quieted, he continued. "Jeff has a special bond with Scott... they are so much alike in so many ways. Virgil and I share a similar connection. I was so afraid that John would be the odd man out, but I see that this isn't so. Jeff and I can both relate to him in different ways. He's not missing out; he's got the best of both of us. I hope this continues, especially once the next baby gets here."

The picture that Jeff showed them was one of a preschool John sitting on his mother's lap, both of them looking at a book... one that was definitely about stars. John smiled softly as he took the papers from his father. "I think I remember this book, too."

"You would," Alan said as he looked at the picture with John.

"Can I see?"

"Come on over here, Tyler, and see what I looked like when I was a little kid."

Tyler got up and hurried to John's side. "Huh. I never knew you were ever that little."

Everyone laughed, and when it wound down, John looked at his father with gratitude in his eyes. "Thanks, Dad, for everything."

"You're welcome, John."

Jeff coughed a little, and shifted from one foot to another. He was used to making speeches, but they'd been there a while, and his throat was getting dry. He pulled out another envelope, and adjusted his glasses. "Gordon's turn."

Gordon grinned as his father began to read. "Bath time was never like this for the others. In fact, Virgil hated baths! But Gordon? He's happy as a clam in the tub. Never complains, even if a little soap gets in his eyes. He wails when I take him out of the water to dry him off! Em was here today, and kept an eye on the other boys while I got a much needed nap between Alan's feedings.

She fed them lunch, and by the end of the meal -- as usual - there was more food on Gordon than in him! When I came down from the nursery, he was wailing because she was using a face cloth to wash him up. I told her just to strip him down and put him in the bath. I swear he does this on purpose; gets himself so filthy that he has to be put in the tub. Of course, she came out of the bathroom drenched from Gordon's splashing."

"Sounds like you were a practical joker even back then," Scott quipped.

"He was!" Grandma declared. "And he only got worse!"

"I expanded my horizons, that's all, Grandma," Gordon said, a pseudo hurt look on his face.

This time the laughter was long, and Jeff waited patiently for it to die down. "There's just a little more here. Bear with me." He glanced along the page and nodded when he found his place. "Maybe getting a little wading pool will help with the 'getting filthy as a reason for a bath' thing. Though I'll have to keep a sharp eye on this water baby of mine; he's totally fearless in more ways than one. I hope that this fearlessness doesn't translate into recklessness later in life; I don't think I could bear to lose him in some stupid accident due to his own actions."

At these words, Gordon sobered. "And what happened? We lost her to a stupid accident."

"It wasn't her fault," Scott reminded him sternly.

"And we almost lost you, too, Gords, to that hydrofoil." Virgil put a hand on Gordon's shoulder.

"At least she wasn't around to see that." Gordon sighed, and glanced up at his father. "What does the picture look like, Dad?"

"Here it is." The print was one of toddler Gordon sitting in a plastic wading pool, looking up at the camera, grinning, a boat in his two pudgy hands. Lucille was in the process of putting a hat on him, and her face was in profile. She wasn't smiling, but she wasn't frowning either. She just looked preoccupied.

"It's the best I could find to fit the journal entry," Jeff said apologetically.

Gordon smiled slightly. "It's fine, Dad. Thanks for doing this."

Jeff just nodded, then he opened the last envelope. "And this is about Alan."

Alan took in a deep breath as his father adjusted his glasses again and started to read. "I thought I'd feel jaded by now. Five babies, five sons, but when I look at Alan, I still feel that wonder. It's not the same as it was with Scott when everything was new; I've given birth five times now, and some of that seems like old hat. But the tiny fingers, the way they curl around mine, the long, long lashes, the tiny feet that kick as he squirms without thought... all of these are still a wonder to me. Even as a newborn, Alan has a personality. He's a mama's boy, it seems; if anyone else other than Jeff or myself holds him, he wails until he's handed back to one of us. He even did this for Jeff at first, until Jeff cooed to him in that deep voice of his and he recognized the sound of his daddy. But he's happiest in my arms, which may cause trouble, especially considering that

Gordon's only just turned one. It's going to be hard giving all my boys the attention they need and deserve, and, as much as I'd love to have a little girl, I've convinced Jeff that this will be the last one for a while. Maybe a couple of years down the road, when Alan's ready for preschool. But until Em brings the boys to visit tomorrow, the world consists of Jeff and me and Alan. Which is as it should be for now."

Alan's eyes were closed, and his face was angled downward when Jeff finished. He sniffed, then raised moist eyes to his father. Jeff pulled out the picture. It was almost a mirror image of Scott's; Jeff was the one holding the baby to look him in the face, and Lucille was the one kissing the blue-capped head. Both looked older; Lucille in particular had laugh lines at the corners of her eyes that weren't there in Scott's picture. But they still looked very much as if this child were the center of their universe.

"I... I don't know what to say. Thank you, Dad," Alan murmured as he took the envelope from Jeff. Then he stepped out from behind the bench, and embraced his father, squeezing hard. One by one, his brothers followed suit, each telling Jeff in their own, wordless way how much they loved him.

"Now, unless anyone else has something to say, I think I'm ready to go." Jeff offered his hand to his mother, who took it and let him help her rise.

"Can we go eat now?" Alex asked. "I'm hungry."

"Yes, Alex, we can." He tucked Emily's hand in one elbow, and entwined his fingers with Dianne's hand on the other side. "By the way," he called after his sons, who were making their way toward the parked cars. "I brought some of the photo albums along if you want to look through them. We won't be leaving right away tomorrow, so there'll be opportunity now, and when we get back home."

"Thanks, Dad," Scott said, turning to acknowledge the call. He put an arm around Cherie as they wound their way through the graves. Tyler was walking with John, and Alex had latched on to Gordon for a change.

As they reached where the wrought iron gates used to be, Jeff glanced back one last time. "Goodbye, Lucy," he whispered. Then he let go of Dianne's hand and put his arm around her waist, drawing her close.

--remembrance part 4 by Tikatu on September 14, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:22:17 GMT

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Tuesday, September 25, 2068, 9:30 p.m., local time, Wichita, KS (Wednesday, September 26, 2:30 p.m., Tracy Island)

"Whew! What a day!" Dianne slid out of her shoes in the sitting room of the suite she and Jeff

occupied. The family had taken several suites; the younger boys were staying with the elder ones, and Cherie with Emily, just to give the married couple some privacy.

"It was at that." Jeff pulled on the knot of his tie, undoing it, and draped his suit coat, which he'd already removed in the elevator, over the back of one of the settees. He laid the tie on top of it, and sat down to untie his shoes. "I had reserved the restaurant's meeting room for an open ended period of time. But I didn't realize we'd take it up for quite that long."

"Once the boys started reminiscing, there was no stopping it." Dianne opened the door to their bedroom and stepped inside. There was a moment of silence, then an awed, "Oh my!"

Jeff put his shoe down, and joined his wife, coming up behind her where she stood rooted to one spot. He put his hands on her shoulders, and she turned her head to see him. "Oh, Jeff! It's beautiful!"

"I'm glad you like it," he murmured, moving his hands around to gather her in his arms from behind.

The room was filled with fragrance from the dozens of red roses in vases placed around the room. Where there were no roses, the long stems of white calla lilies were grouped, tall and elegant. The lighting was dim, and the bed was turned down.

"I love it, Jeff, but... why?"

Jeff released his clasp and put his hands on her shoulders again, briefly squeezing them before kissing the nape of her neck, and beginning to slowly pull down the zipper on her dress. "I've spent the past hours remembering my late wife, and reliving parts of my life with her. Now it's time to focus on my present, and my future, and you, my love." He kissed her neck again, and moved his lips to her shoulders. She moaned softly, and he nuzzled her ear. "Please, love me, and remind me what I have, instead of what I've lost."

Dianne took one of his hands from her shoulder, and turned to face him. Looking into his eyes, she traced along the edge of his jaw with her fingers, then drew his face toward hers. Their lips met in a long, passionate kiss. Without a word, she gently took his hand, and drew him over to the bed.

--remembrance finis by Tikatu on September 15, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:22:31 GMT

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Wednesday, September 26, 2068; Tracy Island and Thunderbird Five; 3pm

"Tracy Island calling Thunderbird Five." The eyes on John's portrait blinked for a second, then his picture disappeared and was replaced by Callie's face.

"Thunderbird Five here. Hi, Dom; hi, Anna."

"Hello, Callie. Looking forward to coming back to Earth?" Dom grinned, happily at her. After the scare of almost losing Josh, he seemed to be unable to feel anything but happy.

Callie grimaced. "I'm not sure. Ask me when this session is over."

Anna raised an eyebrow. "I'm not that scary, am I?"

Dom decided retreat was the better part of valor. He waved at the screen and headed out toward the pool where Josh was splashing Nikki.

Anna put on her best 'mildly interested but not too concerned' look and asked, "Dianne told me you had a bad nightmare. Do you want to tell me about it?"

Callie described the nightmare in detail. In the end she said, "Then, I woke up. Dianne was calling my name from the radio. Nikki was there with her. I'd become so upset I'd tripped the medical alarms and awakened Nikki. She couldn't wake me, so she called Dianne."

"How did you feel when you woke up?"

"Dazed. Surprised that nothing was out of place. Upset that I'd woke Nikki and Dianne up."

"But not scared?"

"No. I was more angry than scared."

"Who where you angry at?" When Callie looked at her, confused, Anna explained. "Were you angry at the Hood or at yourself?"

"At the Hood. I mean, how dare he disturb me up here where I was safe."

Anna grinned at that. "I think that's very important. You felt safe up there. Do you still feel safe?"

Callie nodded. "Yes. I know he can't reach me up here. Not unless he gets a rocket. And I'd see him coming."

"He can't reach you on the island either because you would see him coming as well. But you're used to space and probably feel a lot safer there, naturally. I think you've show a lot of progress with this dream."

Callie looked surprised at that. "If I am making progress, why am I still having nightmares? Do I need to increase my antidepressants?"

"Callie, you're a scientist. Analyze this dream and compare it to your previous nightmares."

Callie looked thoughtful for a moment. "In my previous dreams, the Tracys were hunting me and wanted to kill me. In this one, the Hood was attacking me."

"Go on," Anna said neutrally.

"Before, I was terrified and tried to run away. This time, I wasn't as scared and I didn't try to escape. I fought back!" There was a look of triumph on her face.

"When the mind can't deal with something, it suppresses it. When your subconscious thinks you are ready to start dealing with it, you can start having dreams about it to help you handle it. You feel very safe up there, so your subconscious relaxed enough to start dealing with what happened. Now think about it. You won! You didn't give the Hood any information and you chased him off the station. You aren't scared of him anymore -- or at least not as much. Yes, your reactions set off the alarms, but you woke yourself up; you didn't need rescuing. You still have some work to do, but I'll talk to Dianne about lowering your antidepressant dosage as soon as she gets home. Just don't stop taking them or drop the dosage until you're back down here."

"I won't, although it seems I'm doing better."

"You're not 100 percent yet, but this is a major step. I expect you'll have some more nightmares. We still have work to do and things to get through. I suspect the worst is over. But stopping or lowering the dosage on any antidepressant can be tricky. I'd rather you were back on earth with other people around before we try it." Anna grinned. "Keep on like this and I'll have to retire again."

Callie grinned back. "You'll retire about the same time Mr. Tracy does -- the 12th of never."

Anna laughed. "Will you be all right for the rest of your stay on Thunderbird Five?"

"I think so. I'll be coming home next week anyway." With a sigh, Callie added, "Thanks for hearing me out, Anna. I probably would've gone mad if I hadn't told anyone about this."

"I've known many people who have done that before, not talking about nightmares until something bad happened. Dreams and nightmares tend to be reflections of whatever is happening in your head. Just remember you have a large support group on your side, okay?"

"I will. Thanks again."

"You're welcome. See you next week. Take care."

After Callie ended the transmission, Anna sat down by the coffee table and started typing notes into her computer. She was thinking to herself, That was a major step. She'll be ok now; she just needs a little more time.

Posted by SusanMartha on September 16, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:22:43 GMT

Thursday, September 27th: Tracy Island

Brandon stood on the balcony, the tropical breeze caressing his face. It was 5am and, for some unknown reason, he was unable to sleep. It's been a while since I've had this happen, he thought. I hope it doesn't become a habit. After a few minutes, he went back inside. I'd better try to get some sleep or I won't be worth a damn later on.

He walked to his computer and was about to shut it down when the sound of somebody logging on caught his attention. Looking at the name, he smiled broadly. Well, what do you know. Sitting down, Brandon began typing, his need for sleep forgotten.

Brandon: Hey Aaron, it's been a while. How've you been?

Aaron: Big Mac, nice to see you. I was wondering what hole you fell in

Brandon: It was a deep one. Sorry I haven't been on lately but my job's been keeping me busy.

Aaron: No problem, I know how it is. It would be nice though, if you'd try to keep in touch more often. Okay, enough scolding. Has anything exciting been happening in your life?

Brandon: Hmmm? Does getting my pilot's license count as exciting?

Aaron: What? You're kidding, right!?

Brandon: No, I am not kidding.

Aaron: So, does this mean you'll be able to fly to San Diego for a visit once in a while?

Brandon: I'm sure going to try. And when I do, we'll have to skydive at least once while I'm there.

The two friends talked for a bit longer before Brandon looked at the clock and realized he'd been talking to Aaron for almost two hours. He said goodbye to his friend, promising to keep in touch with him.

Posted by MagicMaster8 on September 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:23:18 GMT

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Wednesday, September 26, 5 PM; Kansas (10 AM Thursday on Tracy Island)

Jeff and Dianne had settled to watch the news before going out for dinner. They'd been out all day, running errands and making decisions, and wanted to unwind first.

It was the local news report, and it began with the all-too-familiar car accidents during rush hour, holding up traffic more than usual. Then there was a report of a trial going on. Two men had robbed a convenience store and shot the clerk, seriously injuring him. Then there were two political reports. Finally, some good news came on.

The female anchor said, "August fourteenth was a day no one is likely to forget for a long, long time. It was the day several tornados roared through, causing damage, death and destruction to all in their path. One twister even damaged an International Rescue vehicle, injuring its medical staff. I hope somehow they are watching, because we have an uplifting story to tell.

"We go to Murray Gill High School, and our reporter on the scene, Roger Cambry. Roger, what's happening there right now?"

The scene shifted to the school grounds. A thirty-something man, with wavy dark hair and a moustache, was standing a short distance away from the school's entrance. Behind him was a fairly large group of people. "A month and a half ago, this was the scene here." Footage of the school, recorded after the tornados had ceased was replayed, with Roger still on camera in an inset in the lower right hand corner. "This is what Murray Gill High School looked like three days after one of the tornados hit it. A Special Olympics Challenge Day had been held here, and the awards had been given out, when the sirens sounded.

"Everyone headed inside the school, but the tornado hit and blew the doors in. The sponsor of the event, Michael Hart, owner of Hart Construction and a well-known philanthropist, was among the injured. As soon as he could, he got his company to begin work on rebuilding the damaged structure, and it is now completed. Today they are having a ribbon cutting, and the school will reopen tomorrow morning."

Roger moved closer to the entrance, so the cameraman could pick up the ceremony more easily. Now Dianne could see a few familiar faces. She started to tell Jeff who they were, when the reporter continued.

"Mr. Hart is here with us today, along with some of the participants from the SO Day. It looks like the ceremony is about to begin; let's listen in."

The camera zoomed in on Michael. He and some of the kids, including Peter Valerian, were holding a long pair of scissors. Michael began to speak. "I am proud to be here to do this, and I thank you all for coming. Those of us who were here on that terrible day have a lot to be grateful for. And thanks to International Rescue, we can do what we're about to. So, without further ado," and he and the children began cutting the ribbon, "I declare that Murray Gill High School is once again..."

"Open!" shouted Peter, as the cutting was completed and the ribbon fell away. He raised his small arms straight up and yelled, "Yay!"

Michael looked down at him in astonishment, and Peter's mother, Carol, gasped, as the audience stood and applauded. Carol rushed up to her son, and the camera showed her squatting down beside his wheelchair and talking to him. He answered her, hesitantly, as Michael bent over to try to hear them. He was leaning on a cane to do so.

Roger, sensing a story, headed toward them, as the people headed inside to see the changes that were made. When he reached them, he said, "Excuse me. Would you mind telling us what just happened here?"

Seeing that Carol was so focused on her son that she was oblivious to the reporter and the cameraman, Michael moved away to answer. "Peter is five years old and one of the boys who participated in the Challenge Day. He had been in the accident that killed his father about fifteen months ago. Not only did that put him in the wheelchair, he hasn't spoken a word since that day. Until," he stopped and swallowed hard, "until just now."

A giggle drew their attention to Peter. His mother was smiling, although she had just wiped away some tears.

Roger moved closer to the boy. "Hello there, young man. I hear you've been pretty quiet until now. Do you want to say anything to the people watching you?"

Peter giggled again and ducked his head shyly. His mother whispered something to him and he looked up again. Grinning widely, he said, "Hi, In-nash-al Rescue. Thank you." And he waved at the camera.

"Thank you, Peter," Roger said as the camera panned back to him once more. "Well folks, there you have it. Not only is a school open once again, but a little boy begins to speak once again. Very good news here today. Back to you, Nora."

The camera cut back to the anchor desk, and Jeff's attention turned to Dianne, who had two fingers crooked over her mouth. Tears filled her eyes, and as she blinked, ran freely down her cheeks.

"Are you okay, love?" he asked, putting an arm around her shoulders.

She nodded quickly. "Yeah, Ah'm okay." She sniffed loudly. "Oh, God, that's so amazin'! He's talkin'!" She turned to her husband. "Ah remember him. His mama was so worried. He'd broken his arm... but seein' the Thunderbirds... that seemed to perk him right up!" She leaned her head on Jeff's shoulder. "Moah than evah Ah'm so glad we do this."

"D'you think the boys will remember him? We can let them know. I bet there'll be a repeat of this later, too."

"Gordon might remember him, maybe Virgil or Alan. It was mostly the new recruits though, who were theyah workin' with us."

He pressed her to his side with a gentle squeeze. "Then perhaps the commander of IR needs to ask for a copy of this report to show our people back at headquarters."

With thanks to Tikatu for writing Jeff and Dianne's reaction to the story.

Posted by hobbeth on September 18, 2007

Tracy Island, Thursday September 27...

Luke jogged up the path, Rommel a few paces in front of him. Suddenly the dog paused and looked back at his master. "What is it, boy?" Luke asked. Rommel gave a "woof" and with his tail gyrating madly, he waited for Luke to catch up. They entered the clearing around the Cliff House and Luke saw what was getting Rom so excited.

"Doggy!" Josh got to his feet and toddled over towards them. Rom sat down next to Luke, looking up with pleading eyes.

Luke sighed. "Go ahead." The dog jumped up and met Josh halfway, dropping to the ground and rolling so the boy could scratch the dog's belly.

"Jak, where have you--JOSH!" Dom saw his son with the big shepherd and froze, the color draining from his face.

Luke stepped forward instantly. "Rommel, come!" The dog got up and trotted to his master's side. "Stay," Luke commanded. He turned to Dom. "He wouldn't hurt him."

Dom nodded hesitantly. "I-I know." He eyed the dog warily as he scooped his son up in his arms.

Josh struggled to get free. "Doggy! Doggy!"

"Rom, upstairs. Go." The dog obeyed, quickly making his way to the stairs outside the apartments and disappearing from view. Luke turned back to Dom. "I'm sorry. I won't let him go near Josh again."

"Doggy!"

Joshua struggled against his father's grip, and began to wail as Rommel disappeared from sight.

"It's...it's not that," Dom said over the sound of his son's crying, as he tried to coddle the child into quiet. "I know he wouldn't hurt Joshua, but... I'm not the world's biggest fan of dogs. Truth be told I'm outright scared of them." He gave a little self-deprecating snort. "I bet you think that's wild stupid."

"No, of course I don't," Luke said.

He studied the other's man's facial features and body language, and came to the conclusion that he was stressed. Very stressed.

"Joshua likes him...there's no need to keep him away from him..."

"But keep him away from you?" Luke asked.

"That would be...appreciated. Sorry."

"No, it's fine! Almost everyone has a phobia of some sort." Luke paused for a moment, as Joshua began to quiet down. "I've heard that things have been pretty rough for you, recently. Would you like to join me for dinner tonight? I'll do all the work; you just show up with Josh. And you won't get any trouble from Rommel."

Dominic didn't answer straight away. Do I want to be in company? Is it going to be exceptionally rude for me to say no...? Screw it, maybe it'll be fun!

"Sure, that sounds good."

Luke clapped his hands together. "Great! I'll see you around seven? You know where to find me," he said with a grin. "Does stir-fry chicken sound okay?"

"The stir-fry does, but not the chicken. I'm a vegetarian."

"Ah, I didn't know. Well, I can whip up a veggie stir-fry no problem. So I'll see you later?"

"Yeah. Yeah, you will."

"Great! See ya."

Luke trotted off in the direction Rommel had gone, and Dominic turned Joshua around in his arms; the child's sniffing had stopped, but he kept looking towards the point where Rom has disappeared.

"You'll see the doggy later, Josh."

"Doggy?" Josh asked excitedly.

"Yes, doggy. We're going to go visit the doggy. Now, let's get you cleaned up and down for a nap, hmm?"

Joshua responded only with a happy squeak: "Doggy!"

Luke stood at the counter, chopping up vegetables and tossing them into a skillet. The steady thumping of rock and roll pulsed in the background. He took a sip from his beer and glanced behind him.

Most of his things were still in boxes, but he had managed to get the bedroom and one wall of the living room painted. He'd put the curtains up around the glass doors, so the room didn't look too bad. Brains had shown him where the power tools were, and Luke was in the process of building book shelves.

Rom was locked in the bedroom, the AC turned on high. Knowing the mutt, he's probably

sprawled across the bed, Luke thought to himself. He turned back to his task and was just finishing up as the door chime sounded.

Wiping his hands on his jeans, he turned down the music and then answered the door. Dom stood there, Josh in his arms. The child smiled up at Luke. "Doggy?" he asked.

Luke chuckled. "We'll go see the doggy later, he's taking a nap. C'mon in. Can I get you anything? Beer, juice, soda?" He frowned at Josh for a minute. "I'm afraid I don't have a sippy cup for the big guy here," he said, ruffling the boy's hair.

"I always come prepared," Dominic said, turning to the side to reveal an over-stuffed diaper bag.

Luke laughed. "Sure looks like it. Have a nuclear fallout bunker in there, too?" he asked with a grin.

"Just about," Dom said, chuckling. "I'll take a soda, please. I have some juice here for Josh."

The little group settled inside the apartment, Luke assuring Dominic that he didn't need any help.

"You're the guest," he said, and saw to it that the man was settled in a seat, enjoying his drink.

Joshua was babbling about Rommel: "Where doggie? When doggie?" It was only when he was assured that he would get to see the German Shepherd fifteen times, and when the smell of dinner became stronger, that the boy shifted his attention away from him.

"Foods? Foods-foods?"

Luke chuckled at the boys antics, but not at Dominic's exasperation, even exhaustion. He sure seems tired... I wonder why he chose to be a part of International Rescue with such a young child.

"Yes, Josh, you will see the dog. Yes, we're getting food." It was all spoken in the same soft, weary tone.

Dinner was a quiet affair (for all except Joshua). Afterward, Joshua got his wish to see Rommel, and the dog and boy played together in the living area under the careful watch of the two men. At first, Dominic didn't take his eyes off Rom, part out of fear for himself, part out of fear for Joshua. But surprisingly, he seemed to relax somewhat and even looked away from time to time. The men talked in general terms about island life, and Dominic recounted a few anecdotes about life before Luke had arrived. He didn't talk about the recent events that had affected him, but Luke was glad to note that when he left, he had a smile on his face, and his voice had attained a less monotone and more cheerful element.

"Thanks for dinner," Dominic said as Luke saw him out. "Next time, my place."

"I look forward to it."

Dominic and Joshua waved goodbye, and Luke watched as the door slid shut.

"That's what I call a successful visit," he said, ruffling Rom's ears. "Now, how about I show you how to do the dishes."

By ArtisticRainey and Lillehafrue on September 23, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:25:34 GMT

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Friday, September 28, 2068, 7 a.m., Tracy Island

Jeff let go a heavy, relieved sigh as the engines' whine ceased. He unbuckled himself from the pilot's seat. "Home at last."

John, who had flown shotgun on the last half of the journey from Kansas, removed his headphones, unbuckled his restraining straps and stretched. "That felt like it took an eternity."

"The ride home usually does," Jeff commented. He put the mileage and fuel data into the computer pad he held, marking off which of them had been piloting and co-piloting. "I'm glad Scott agreed to sit in back this time. His flight hours are pretty much full for this month."

"His official ones? Or his overall ones?"

"Overall. He's done a lot of flying, ferrying people around. Fortunately there's only a few more days to the month."

"Does this mean I can take One on the next rescue?" John's question was real and teasing at the same time.

"That depends." Jeff gave John a side wise glance.

"On what?"

"On who's flying Two, and if we have a rescue before Alan goes up. We do have Elise available, too."

John groaned. "Looks like I won't be going on any more rescues than I did before Callie came on board."

"I didn't say that..." Jeff's explanation was interrupted by the cockpit door opening, and Dianne sticking her head in.

"Are you two coming?" she asked. "We do need to unload the luggage, and do post-flight checks."

"I'm coming, Mom," John said, turning to the copilot's door. He opened it and eased himself to the hangar floor, stretching again. "I'll leave you lovebirds alone."

His last comment, made just before he closed the copilot's door, caused both parents to turn toward him, and shake their heads in near unison. Jeff returned to his report, but redirected his attention as Dianne draped a languid arm over his shoulders.

"So, how are you?" she asked, leaning close.

Jeff met her gaze, smiling. "I'm better. I feel like I've had closure on part of my life."

Dianne frowned a bit. "I don't understand."

He put down the pad and took her free hand in his. "For a long time, I shut my feelings and my memories of Lucille up in a little box and wouldn't touch it. I was... numb, I guess, when it came to her. Now I've opened that box, and I'm looking through those memories, and remembering those feelings, but there's a difference. They don't hurt, not like I thought they would. I can remember her without feeling the pain of grief." He kissed her palm. "I've finally allowed myself to let go. And that's due to you. Just as my being able to love you is due to her. She taught me how to open my heart to love."

"I think I understand now," Dianne said, her eyes moist. "Like Rick taught me how to fight for the one you love. There's a part of our relationship that was part of what we had, what we learned, with our first spouse."

"Yes." Jeff put his free hand on the side of Dianne's face and drew her near for a soft kiss. It was followed by a second, and a third, then she drew back.

"I think we'd better go, and pick this up later," she said, a touch of disappointment in her voice.

"I agree." He picked up the pad again, saved the information, and opened the pilot's door. He slipped out, and turned to help his wife, who had slid into his chair, down to the floor. Scott sauntered by, pushing an antigrav float, piled high with luggage.

"I'll take this upstairs and get it sorted out," he told his father. "The laundry room's going to be busy for the next day or two."

"I'm sure it will be," Jeff said. He kissed Dianne. "I'll be upstairs as soon as John and I complete the post-flight inspection."

"All right. I'll see you there."

Jeff turned and called for John, as Dianne fell into step with Scott. "I wish we could have gotten home sooner so that Cherie wouldn't have had to miss her art class," she said.

"It would have been nice," Scott admitted, "but the IDL is a bear when traveling to the States."

"And we did have a lot to do there on Wednesday; things we could have done on Monday if we hadn't had to clean up the graveyard," she commented. "It was nice to find a place that will cure all that oak for us."

"Yeah." Scott pushed the float into the elevator, and both he and Dianne squeezed in after it. "I wonder what Dad's planning to do with it in the new house?"

"I think he mentioned using some to carve the fireplace mantle. The rest of the wood? I'm not sure. Do you think there's enough to floor the living room? Or the porch?"

"I think flooring the porch with that would be a waste of good board." Scott thought for a moment. "But the front door... there's an idea."

"I thought he'd want something stronger than oak, for security's sake." The elevator stopped on the lower floor of the Villa, where Kyrano and Lisa waited for them. "Hi, Mom. Hello, Kyrano."

Mother and daughter embraced, and Kyrano spoke quietly with Scott, then took charge of the float.

"There's breakfast waiting for you in the dining room. You can tell us all about the trip then," Lisa said, putting one arm around Dianne's waist, and gathering her grandson in with the other.

"Sounds great, Grandma P.," Scott replied with a grin. "And, Mom? I think an oak veneer over a nice strong cahelium door would work, don't you?"

"You may have something there, Scott." Dianne nodded slowly. She straightened a bit. "I'm looking forward to what design Jim Kennedy proposes for the new house."

"Too bad Heather was out at the testing grounds. I would have liked to see her again." Scott's tone was slightly wistful.

"Well, first you eat," Lisa insisted as they entered the dining room, where most of the family -- including Brains and Tin-Tin - was already gathered. "Then we can talk."

Posted by Tikatu on September 26, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:25:56 GMT

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Sunday, September 30, 2068, 2 p.m., Tracy Island

With nothing better to do, Gordon headed outside. He didn't have any particular destination in mind, he was just walking. His wandering brought him to the basketball court where Alan was practicing shots from the free throw line.

He stood quietly watching as his brother lined up the throw. Aiming carefully, Alan sent the ball through the air toward the basket. The ball hit the rim and bounced off, heading to the side of the court that Gordon was standing on.

"Hey, Alan, the ball is supposed to go into the net," Gordon said lightly.

Alan looked at his brother in surprise. "When did you show up?" he asked as he bent down to retrieve the ball.

"Just now. Been here long enough to see you miss that shot," Gordon commented.

"Think fast," Alan said, tossing the ball in Gordon's direction.

Reacting quickly, Gordon caught the ball. "Game of one-on-one? Full court, first person to twenty-one wins."

"Sure. It'll be my last chance to play for a month. I'll even let you start with the ball."

"Thanks, but I'm not going to need that consideration in order to beat you," Gordon told him, as he dribbled the ball toward center court. Alan shadowed him.

Not long after that, Gordon had his first basket. Alan took control of the ball and headed toward the other basket. Gordon kept with him and, when Alan went to take a shot, Gordon was able to knock the ball out of the air. Both brothers ran to recover the ball, Gordon getting to it first.

"Told you I didn't need to start to beat you," Gordon told him as he made another basket.

"It's still early," Alan replied as he started dribbling the ball down court.

When the game ended, the score was 21-18 in favor of Gordon. Worn out, the two brothers collapsed on the sidelines. "Hey, Alan, did I tell you about the website I found about International Rescue?"

"No, you didn't."

"Man, it's a hoot. The title of the page is 'International Rescue, Our Tyrikalican Brethren'. Can you believe it? They gave us names and everything."

"And let me guess, you just had to go and add some information of your own."

Gordon shrugged. "You'll have to check out the site yourself to figure that out," he told his little brother.

"I may just do that," Alan told him. "Rematch?" he asked.

"You're going to lose again," Gordon told him, getting to his feet.

"We'll see," Alan said, following Gordon to center court, ball in hand.

--one-on-one by starrynebula on September 27, 2007

Monday, 1 October 2068, 2:35am, Tracy Island

Nikki yawned as she carried her mug of hot chocolate into her living room and sat down in one of the seats. She looked at the clock.

"2:35. I should be in dreamland."

No matter what Nikki did, she just couldn't get to sleep. She had tried watching TV and reading magazines and books, but nothing worked. Giving up, Nikki had previously relaxed in a lavender scented bath and was now curled up in her armchair.

Thoughts of events that had happened during the day ran though Nikki's mind.

Thunderbird Seven. I can't believe I actually went down there. I didn't think I could actually do it.

xxxx

Flashback

"Are you sure you want to do this?" Alan asked as the monorail began to move.

"You've asked me that three times now." Nikki smiled. "I've been putting this off for ages. I want to move on completely from the accident and I think this will help."

Alan placed his hand on top of hers and squeezed it slightly.

Nikki was glad that she called him. She didn't know what she would do without his support. The monorail soon came to a stop and the door opened. She took a deep breath and made to stand, only to find that her legs wouldn't respond.

"We can go back, you know. You don't have to do this."

"I want to. I can do this." Nikki, with a determined look, stood up along with Alan and approached the door. Hand in hand, slowly, they both walked towards the pod vehicle repair bay.

Alan hesitated before turning on the lights to reveal the stricken ambulance. "Are you ready?"

Nikki nodded. "Ready as I'll ever be."

It didn't take long for the area to be illuminated. Alan felt the grip on his hand tighten a bit as they got closer to Thunderbird Seven.

They were only a metre away when Nikki stopped walking. "I...I ca..."

"We can go back if you want to. We don't have to look inside."

Nikki silently nodded before the young friends silently made their way back to the monorail.

End Flashback

XXXX

I didn't need to look inside. I've already got what the cockpit looked like etched in my mind, from when the accident took place. She shook her head. No. Empty my mind. That's what I have to do to get some sleep.

Nikki tried her best, but fresh thoughts purged their way through. Thoughts of home, family and friends.

I wonder how everyone at the hospital is. I wonder if they all still work there. I must write or call them sometime. Nikki looked at the clock again and worked out the time difference. She smiled. No time like the present. I'll check if anyone is online.

Nikki walked to her desk and turned on her computer. When it was ready, she opened up her internet messenger box. As soon as the box came up, she noticed her younger brother went offline.

Doesn't matter. Didn't want you anyway. Nikki smiled when Evie, a workmate from the hospital, signed on and started an online conversation with her.

Evie, Eve said: "Nikki, Nik. What am I going to do with you? What happened to keeping in touch more often?"

Nicole said: "And hello to you, too. How are you, Hun?"

Evie, Eve said: "Don't change the subject, missy."

Nicole said: "I've just been busy with work and everything."

Evie, Eve said: "Sure you are. Oh well, you're online now so that's something. As to your question, I'm great, I'm glowing, I'm pregnant."

Nikki paused and silently berated herself for not keeping in touch more often.

Nicole said: "Congratulations. How far are you? Who's the father? Is he good looking? Have I met him yet?"

Evie, Eve said: "Thanks Nik. I'm six weeks along. Yes, the father is good looking and, yes, you have met him. In fact, you worked with him."

Realisation dawned on Nikki. She remembered Evie telling her during her birthday that she was getting close to Danny, another nurse from the hospital and friend of both.

Nicole said: "It's Danny, isn't it? I knew you were getting close, but I didn't know you were that close. Well, Hun, I'm happy for you both. Tell Danny I said congratulations and give him a hug and kiss from me."

Evie, Eve said: "Sure I will."

Evie, Eve said: "Oh shoot. I've just seen the time. I've got to meet my mum. She insists that we start baby shopping now. You'd think this was her first grandchild."

Nicole said: "It's your first child, so her being fussy is understandable."

Evie, Eve said: "Take her side why don't you. I'm going to love you and leave you. I'll ttys. Take care, Nikki."

Nicole said: "You too. Say hi to everyone at work for me."

Evie, Eve said: "Ok. Bye."

Nicole said: "Bye."

Nikki yawned again, before logging off and shutting down her computer. She finished the rest of her hot chocolate, washed the mug and put it to dry on the rack.

I better try to get some sleep again, she thought as she walked to her bedroom. If sleep doesn't come, then I'll try jogging along the beach. Nikki laid down on her bed. Please let me get some sleep.

Posted by Nikki on September 27, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:26:32 GMT

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Monday, October 1, 2068, 3:30 p.m., Thunderbird Three

"Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Three." Alan touched his earpiece. It's nice to be hands-free, even on Thunderbird Three, he thought as his hands moved over the command console.

He turned his attention to the lift, where John was making an appearance, a mug of coffee in each hand. "Here," the older blond said, giving the pilot one. "You'll need the energy for unloading."

"Thanks," Alan replied, taking a cautious sip of the drink from the spill-proof travel mug. "Should be hearing from Callie right about... now."

In the space station, Callie smiled when she heard Alan's voice. "Thunderbird Three from Thunderbird Five, reading you strength five. Ready for docking?"

"Ready, willing and able," Alan replied, smiling. "Let's get this show on the road!"

He put his mug down, and began to fire the positioning rockets that would bring Thunderbird Three's sleek nose into line with Thunderbird Five's docking bay.

His hands moved expertly across the controls; his eyes watched the targeting screen that mutely told him if he was lined up properly. A quick glance at the speed indicators showed him how fast he was moving, and he cut out the rear thrusters. The ship began to slow, though the lack of friction would keep it moving even without propulsion at the rear.

The opening of the docking bay grew nearer, and he applied a brief burst from the front thrusters to slow the ship even more. "Docking in five... four... three... two... one."

A mechanical voice declared, "Docking complete," and lights across the control board flashed green.

"Thunderbird Three from Thunderbird Five, confirming completion. Opening airlock now. I'll meet you guys in a moment."

After pressing another button, Callie took the elevator down to the lower level, where the airlock door was opening. "Hey, guys. Welcome back."

"Hey, Callie!" John strode through the airlock first, coffee in hand, while Alan followed, his garment bag draped over one shoulder, a laptop case over the other, and a overstuffed gym bag in one hand.

John took a sip of his coffee, then wrapped an arm around Callie's shoulder to give her a squeeze. "How's it been up here?"

"For the most part, everything's been fine." She had no intention of bringing up the nightmare from the week before. "Had the usual flagging calls; Alabama's doing well in the standings, just the usual happenings."

Alan's face wrinkled into a puzzled frown. "Alabama? Standings?"

John laughed, and smacked Alan lightly on the shoulder. "Don't tell me you don't know! Callie's one of the most rabid college sports fans I've ever met. We had a little bet on during the basketball season." He turned back to Callie and gave her a wink. "Guess this means you're football fan, too, huh?"

"Let me put it this way, John," said Callie with a smirk. "When it's college football season in the South, it's not a sport. It's a religion!"

Alan shrugged. "They love football that much?"

"Oh, just wait until next month, when Alabama and Auburn go at each other. The state's divided in two that day."

Alan shook his head. "I knew major league football could get hairy, but not college."

"You haven't been to a Yale versus Harvard game," John told him. "The campus gets worked up into a positive frenzy!" He stopped to think for a moment, then a sly grin crossed his face. "Hm. I wonder if Scott would like to put a little wager on that game this year."

"Well, while you're working that out, I'm going to put my stuff in my cabin and start unloading," Alan said, a touch of exasperation in his voice. "You coming, Callie?"

"Yeah, all right, Alan," said Callie. "Come on, John, let's get going while His Royal Highness gets his stuff stuffed away."

As John and Callie started unloading supplies, she asked, "How are Doc and the others doing?"

"They're doing okay, I think," John said, manhandling a cryofreeze cooler full of prepared meals out into the docking bay. "Mom is still seeing Anna; I understand she should be okay for full duty soon."

"Nikki and Dom were both on that panda rescue," Alan said as he joined them. "I guess they're getting over things, too. The real test will be when we bring Seven back online."

"Dad's hired a new mechanic, and a firefighter, to add to the crew," John added. He looked at Callie, a light frown on his face. "You did hear about Kat leaving, didn't you?"

"Yeah, I did." She let out a sad sigh. "I honestly thought things would've worked out between you and Kat. I thought I knew her, but apparently not. She was a good mechanic."

"Uh, yeah." John's face went red with embarrassment. "She was a good mechanic." He drew in a big breath and let it out in a sigh. "But... there was really nothing but friendship between us... at least, that's what it was on my end."

"I'm just sorry she couldn't--" Callie turned and noticed John's face. "Are you all right?"

Alan grinned as John cleared his throat. "Yeah, I'm okay, Callie; thanks for asking." He secured the cooler to the float they'd brought. "Let's just get this food put away, okay?"

"Okay," Callie said with a shrug, obviously not wanting to know all the details.

With that, the three astronauts pushed the float through to the galley, and began to unload the meals Kyrano had prepared for Alan's month as space monitor.

--changing of the guard by TracyFan4Ever and Tikatu on October 2, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:27:00 GMT

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Tuesday, October 2, 2068, 10 a.m., Tracy Island

Once again, Cassie found herself coming off of Tracy One and onto the tropical island that was now her home. A small group was waiting at the air strip for them. Cassie was glad to see Luke among them. She felt herself smile despite the nervousness and fear she was feeling at the prospect of being truly out on her own for the first time.

"I'll start getting your things from the cargo hold," Virgil told her, coming off the plane behind her.

"Thank-you," Cassie replied as she walked forward toward Mr. Tracy, Gordon, and Luke.

"Welcome to your new home, Cassie," Jeff said, stepping forward and shaking hands with Cassie.

"Thank-you, sir," Cassie replied.

"Welcome, back," Gordon said, cheerfully holding out his hand. Cassie hesitated taking it, meeting Gordon's gaze easily.

"I'd be happy to shake your hand after you remove the joy buzzer," she told him, a hint of a smile on her face.

"How did you know?" Gordon asked turning his palm so everyone could see the small buzzer. Luke laughed while Jeff wore an amused expression.

"You've got to be more creative than that to trick me. I've played quite a few tricks on people myself," Cassie told him, shaking his hand now that he had removed the device.

Gordon's cheerful expression returned. "You and I could have some fun together," he commented. Cassie laughed.

"Before this turns into a planning session," Jeff commented, looking at his son, "there are few things I wanted to go over with Cassie." His gaze turning from Gordon to Cassie. "I won't bombard you with too many work details today. I think you need some time to settle in first. I do, however, want to give you this," he said nodding to Gordon who was standing beside him. Gordon handed her a small box and a phone. "It's a wrist communicator. We use them to communicate with one another both here on the island. The satellite phone will allow you to keep in touch with friends and family back home. Gordon and Luke will help you get settled in. I've honored your request and put you in the two bedroom apartment next to Luke."

"Thank-you sir," Cassie replied. Over Mr. Tracy's shoulder she saw Luke grinning at her. She maintained a calm, professional manner.

"If you have any questions, feel free to ask one of my sons or myself. We'll meet tomorrow afternoon to discuss your training schedule. That will give you some time to get settled in."

"Okay, sir."

"Welcome aboard, Cassie," Jeff told her.

"Thank-you sir," she replied.

As Jeff turned to leave, he turned to Gordon. "No getting her into trouble on her first day here," he told him. Gordon gave his father an innocent 'who me?' look and Jeff smiled, heading to the golf cart he had brought down.

Virgil, Elise, Gordon, and Luke all helped Cassie get her stuff up to her assigned apartment. Virgil and Elise wandered off together once everything was in the apartment. After going over the basics of the phone and wrist communicator, Gordon excused himself, leaving the two friends together.

"The apartments look even bigger when they're empty," Cassie commented, glancing around the living area of the room. Spotting the doors leading onto the balcony, she walked over to them. "A little fresh air will do this place good," she said as she opened them.

"Are you hungry?" Luke asked. "I could walk over to my place, make us some sandwiches. After we eat, I'll help you get settled in."

"Sandwiches sound good. While you're doing that, I'll start making this place feel more like home," she told him.

Luke left the apartment and Cassie surveyed the bags and boxes containing the things she had brought with her. Deciding to start with the bedroom, she picked up the garment bag and draped it over her arm. She had two bags containing some clothes toiletries and linens. She slung one of them over her shoulder, picked up her pillow in one hand and the other bag in the other, and headed for the bedroom in the back of the apartment. She placed the bags on the floor by the door, dropping the pillow on top. Still holding the garment bag, she walked over to the closet. She took out her gi, and hung it up, then zipped the bag, which still held her kimono, and hung that up too.

After opening the doors to the balcony, Cassie made the bed. Next, she moved to the bathroom and unpacked her bag with toiletries so she wouldn't have to go digging through the bag when she needed them.

"I'm back," she heard Luke call out.

"Coming," she called back, setting the bath towel, couple of hand towels, and wash cloths she had brought with her on the side of the sink.

She exited the bathroom through the second bedroom so she could open up doors and air it out too. Luke had placed a plate of sandwiches and a couple of sodas on the table near the kitchen area of the apartment. The two friends sat down at the table and made some small talk while enjoying the simple meal.

Posted by starrynebula on October 3, 2007

"So what's next?" Luke asked.

"I guess finish unpacking and get the pictures I brought with me up on the walls."

"Do you plan on painting?" Luke asked, thinking the pictures should wait if that was the case.

Cassie paused briefly, considering it. "I'll probably paint the bedroom," she replied, "but I think I'll leave out here white. That way whatever I decided to do for curtains and rugs will be okay. Besides, I've gotten used to white walls as the superintendent of the apartment building I lived in refused to let anyone paint the walls. He felt that basic white was something no one could really have an issue with."

"Well, that explains while all the walls in your apartment were white," Luke commented. "Here I thought it was just a lack in taste," he quipped.

"Very funny," Cassie said, swatting him on the arm. "I think most of the pictures are in that box," she said, pointing to the smaller of the two boxes sitting in the middle of the floor.

As Luke retrieved the box and brought it back to the table to open it, Cassie unzipped a new grey duffle bag. She had bought it at the airport to pack the things her family had given her as going away presents. Reaching in, she took out a tissue paper-wrapped picture. Her mother had given it to her and it was a copy of the family portrait they had done four years ago at Christmas time. Having the portrait taken had been a Christmas present from her dad to her mom and it had always hung above the fireplace at her parents' place. She had been touched that her Mom had gotten one made up for her to take with her.

Picture in hand, she walked over to stand beside Luke, who had opened the box. "This is definitely not a picture," he commented, holding up the fire hat that had been given to her at the farewell party.

"No, but it fit in the box with them and I didn't want to risk it getting lost if I shipped it with the other things," Cassie told him, as Luke sat the helmet on the table.

He took a few pictures out, removing them from the tissue paper they had been wrapped in. Unwrapping one he paused looking at it for a few moments. Cassie looked to see which picture it was and realized it was the one taken out in California. "Seems like a long time ago, doesn't it?" she asked.

"It sure does. Looks like the glass got cracked on the trip here," Luke said placing the picture on the table as he continued to remove pictures.

"Actually it was broke before I left New York," Cassie told him, reaching into the box for the last picture. "It got left at the apartment when I first moved out and when Alex finally gave it to me, the glass was cracked. I figured he did it on purpose."

"Yeah, I got the feeling when I visited that he didn't particularly like me."

"More like he was jealous of you," Cassie said, reaching in the box to retrieve the packages of picture hangers with adhesive backs. "He didn't like that we were such good friends and I think he was always worried there was something more going on between us. I don't think he ever quite believed me when I told him you would find Mark more attractive than me."

Luke shook his head at the thought. "How do you plan on hanging these up?" Cassie held up the picture hangers. "Let me guess, your superintendent didn't like holes in the wall, either," he commented.

"Exactly," Cassie told him. "I think I'll hang the pictures on that wall," she said, nodding toward the outside wall of the one bedroom, across from the entrance to the apartment.

They started hanging up the various pictures, eight in all. "So, what's that brother of yours up to anyway?" Luke asked as they worked, having met Mark when visiting Cassie in New York.

"Why? Interested?" Cassie asked slyly.

Luke rolled his eyes. "You've been trying to set us up for the last couple of years."

Cassie shrugged her shoulders. "Can't blame a girl for wanting her brother to be with a good man now, can you?" she commented, glancing over at Luke in time to see a slight blush creep onto his cheeks. "Seriously though, he's doing good. Still with the force. He's been talking about taking the test to make sergeant. Possibly trying to become a detective in a few years. He's also started teaching karate to a group of eight-year-olds at the youth club. Loves doing it and Uncle Satoyuki, he's the uncle that started teaching both Mark and me karate, was ecstatic when he found out. I think he's just glad one of us took a serious interest in it."

"Sounds like he's keeping himself busy," Luke commented.

"Yeah, and secretly he's probably glad to have me out of his apartment so he can bring his dates home with him more often. He brought a few of them home to meet me when I first moved in but then he stopped. Claimed I asked too many questions. I was only trying to be a good big sister."

"The overprotective big sister, you mean," Luke commented, putting the last picture on the wall.

The two stepped back and looked at the wall. "Makes the place look more like home already," Cassie commented. She glanced toward the two bags and box left on the floor. Walking over to them, she picked up the other box and headed toward the kitchen with it. Luke followed her.

"I think you need more bubble wrap there," Luke said jokingly as he watched her unwrap one of the items from the box.

"I didn't want to risk them getting broken," she told him as she sat the tea caddy she had unwrapped on the counter. "These were all my grandmother's. This tea caddy," she said, nodding toward the item on the counter, "and the other equipment for the tea ceremony she got when she turned eighteen. The tea cups for everyday use were made by her father as a gift for their

twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. My mom passed them on to me when I turned twenty-one."

"Guess I can understand the overkill on the bubble wrap then," Luke commented as he carefully took another item out of the box and started unwrapping it. "Planning on hosting a tea ceremony here?"

"I hadn't really thought about it," Cassie told him as they continued to unpack the box. "I guess maybe if there is interest I would do one," she said, thinking of the questions Virgil had already asked about her Japanese heritage. He might be interested in it. Some of the others may be too, she thought. "Plan on coming if I do?"

"Do I have to wear a kimono?"

Cassie laughed. "No, it's not required for guests unless it's a really formal ceremony."

"Then count me in. I just refuse to wear a dress."

"It's not a dress."

"Close enough for me," Luke told her. "Oh wow! That's beautiful. Is this one of the ones your great-grandfather made?" Luke asked as he held a handleless red tea cup in his hand. He turned it slowly and saw that there were four different Japanese characters written on it.

"Yes. The characters on it are: wa, kei, sei, and jaku - harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility."

"That's a nice sentiment," Luke commented, sitting the cup on the counter next to the other items from the box.

The conversation moved onto other things as they continued to work. Cassie put the things away in the cupboards while Luke gathered up the bubble wrap and tissue paper into the two cardboard boxes for disposal. The fire helmet still sat on the table.

Luke picked up the helmet and walked over to the electronics center, placing it up on top. "How does that look for now?" he asked, looking over his shoulder at Cassie who was standing near the table. "You could always move it when you get some shelves and things in here."

"Looks fine for now," Cassie said with a nod. "That reminds me though, I need to talk to Mr. Tracy about when someone can take me shopping so I can pick up some things. Other than the vanity I've had since I was sixteen, I let Alex keep all the furniture and electronics when I moved out. I wasn't sure how long I'd be with living with Mark and arguing over who got what would have just drawn out the process."

"Yeah, just mention it to him. I'm sure he can find a way to get you into Christchurch before too long," Luke told her. "Which reminds me, want to come see the things Nikki and Elise helped me pick out to decorate my apartment with? Unlike you, I couldn't stand the white walls!"

"Sure! Lead away," Cassie replied, interested to see what colors he had ended up with.

Posted by starrynebula on October 3, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:27:58 GMT

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Tuesday October 2nd, 2068, 11pm, New York City. (Morning on October 3rd, Tracy Island.)

Tom Hawkins sat at the small desk near his hotel room's window, staring at his laptop in the dark. From the corner of his eye he could see the bright windows of the other high-rise buildings along the busy New York City street. He had a word processing program open, but the document was blank. Twenty-one: the number of days since International Rescue's last appearance. There was only so much rehashing and reiterating that he could do. I need fresh dirt, and fast. But...what?

The blond had traveled up to New York two weeks before for a conference on the ethics of International Rescue and their work. As the world's latest rising anti-IR star, Tom had been on the guest list, and ended up speaking to all present about the immorality of the whole institution of secrecy and selfishness. He had been a hit. He had enjoyed the trip so much he had stayed on in New York to write articles for several magazines interested in the aftermath of the conference. Now the media attention had dropped to near zero, and he had nothing to write about to bring it back up again. I've been keeping tabs on all possible disaster situations, but nothing. What I need is a juicy story. What I need is for International Rescue to make a critical error -- or maybe even just not turn up. Then I could get another angle: 'IR Only Rescues Certain Citizens'. Yeah. That'd be great...

He continued to ponder late into the night, coming up with only empty rhetoric and old news.

Posted by ArtisticRaineY on October 7, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:28:38 GMT

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Wednesday, October 3, 2068, 1:50 p.m., Tracy Island

Cassie looked out the window as the monorail made its way up to the Villa. Though it was almost two o'clock in the afternoon, it didn't seem that way to her. I can't believe I slept until eleven this morning, she thought. Makes me feel like I missed half of the day.

The monorail came to a stop and Cassie got out. She made her way upstairs to Mr. Tracy's study. Reaching it, she knocked on the door. Hearing Mr. Tracy's call to, "Come in", she walked into the room. "Good Afternoon, Mr. Tracy."

"Good afternoon, Cassie," Jeff replied, standing. With a smile, he motioned to the round table before him. There was a neat stack of data pads, and a small stack of papers beside it. "Have a

seat."

Cassie sat down, feeling slightly nervous. She remembered feeling this way when she started as a paramedic. Must be new job jitters, she mused. "So, I guess this is where I start signing my life away," she quipped, trying to make herself feel at ease if nothing else.

Jeff chuckled. "To some extent, yes," he said. "Let's start with the easy stuff first. This is a contract to cover your duties with Tracy Industries. Please make sure all the information on it is correct. We don't want to deposit your money into someone else's account."

He handed over one of the data pads, and a stylus. "An electronic signature is fine."

Cassie read over the document. Not seeing anything amiss, she signed it and handed it back to him.

"Thank you." Jeff put it aside, and picked up another pad. "This is a non-disclosure form regarding your work with International Rescue. Though we are a secret organization, we do have penalties for willfully disclosing our secrets." He shifted in his seat, a bit uncomfortable. "We've never had to use them, and I hope to God we never do." With that ominous remark, he handed over the second data pad.

Cassie took it from him, feeling a little more uneasy at her new employer's latest remark. She read the document carefully. He's serious about protecting International Rescue and those involved in it, she thought as she read through the possible penalties. Though seeing as his wife and sons are all involved, I guess it's to be expected.

As she didn't see anything unreasonable in the document she signed it too and handed the data pad back to him.

Jeff laid it on top of the first she'd signed. "All right. Thank you." Picking up a third pad, he handed it to her. "That's a sort of 'rental agreement'. It concerns the Cliff House apartment you're living in. It gives a list of the furnishings, what we expect as far as treating your neighbors right, what you can and can't do as far as alterations are concerned, all that sort of thing."

He shrugged. "I didn't think it was necessary, seeing that no one can leave with any furnishings, but my legal team thought it was wise to put some of these things in writing."

Cassie smiled at his comment. "I'm sure it's no worse than the rental agreements I've signed for the landlords in New York," she told him.

She quickly read over the rental agreement. As she expected, it was very similar to those she had previously signed. Having signed it, she passed it back to him. "My last landlord would have probably considered you crazy for not being more thorough. His rental agreements are probably about twice as long."

He chuckled again. "That's New York for you. It's the reason I have my own place there when I have to see to company business." He picked up the last data pad, but didn't hand it over. "I'd like to go over some of the skills you have so we can figure out what things we still need to teach you,

and what you could use refresher or advanced training in. I remember that you don't have a pilot's license, so learning to fly will be one of your first classes. Can you use a parachute?"

"I've done it before, but could definitely use a refresher course. After helping out in California with the wildfires, I got interested in learning more about how they work and how to fight them. I decided to spend some vacation time the following year going through one of their schools out there so I got some training as a smoke jumper. I never used it after the class though."

"All right. Then refresher on that. How about fire arms? Have you ever used a gun? If so, what kind? Handgun or rifle?"

"Handgun only. My brother taught me how to shoot the Creighton he uses for work."

"A Creighton, huh? Our London agent, Lady Penelope, will be pleased; her family started Creighton Firearms Manufacturing." He tapped a spot on the data pad. "I'll let Gordon test you and decide what level of training or refresher you'll need, and start your rifle training." He read the list again. "How's your swimming? Can you scuba?"

"Well you can tell her that the NYPD is very happy with the gun," Cassie replied. "As for scuba, I don't know anything about it. I'm a good swimmer when it comes to pools or calm waters. Never really swam much in the ocean."

"Ah, good. More work for Gordon, though Brandon will likely be training you to scuba." Jeff tapped a few more spots. "Now, do you know how to rock climb?"

They went through a long list of skills, with Jeff making notes of Cassie's responses throughout. Finally, he sat back a little. "All right. The answers you've given will be worked into a training schedule for your first few weeks here. The schedule should be in your IR email box by tomorrow evening. In the meantime," he picked up a piece of paper, "here's a checklist of some things you'll have to schedule for odd moments. You'll need to see my wife for a physical and implantation of a locator chip, see Tin-Tin so she can take measurements for your uniforms and specialized gear such as heat suits. You'll need to see Brains to have a visor made. Virgil will show you how to use it." He paused and glanced at her. "Each of our operatives has a code name; do you have an idea what you'd like to be called on the field?"

Cassie thought about it for a moment. She had never really had a nickname before as she didn't count her father calling her baby all the time as a nickname. "I think I'd like to use Jade," she finally said, not sure where the name came from but once it was in her head she knew she liked it.

Jeff smiled. "That sounds appropriate. I'll add it to the file."

He handed over the checklist. "You'll find your IR identification here, too. You can use it to access the IR server. The first time you access it, you'll be given instructions on how to use it. We have some quirks built into the system to keep it separate from the Tracy Industries servers." Picking up another piece of paper, he added it to the small pile. "Here are the specifics for your Tracy Industries account. We'll have a picture taken, and a badge made, so that when you do go out on your 'job', you'll be official."

Suddenly, he sighed, and looked sober. "And last, but not least, here is a form for you to fill out dictating your final wishes, and your personal Will." He shook his head. "Another thing we've never had to use, and I hope to God we never have to."

Cassie took the form from him. It wasn't the first time she had seen the form. Though it wasn't a requirement, she had been strongly encouraged to fill out advance directives and a Living will when she had joined FDNY. She had taken the advice, knowing how dangerous the job could be because of her father being with them. Still, the thought of filling it out in front of someone else made her feel strange.

"Could I take this with me, fill it out, and turn it in tomorrow?" she asked, wanting to fill the forms out in the privacy of her apartment later that night.

"Oh!" Jeff looked startled. "Of course! I'm sorry I didn't tell you that. Just let me know when you're ready to turn it in; it'll have to be witnessed, and I can arrange for someone to be here then to do that."

Cassie nodded. "Anything else?" she asked, wanting to make sure he was done before asking him her question about getting someplace to pick up some things.

"Do you have any questions?"

"About business stuff, no not right now," Cassie told him. "However, I was wondering if it would be possible to go somewhere to do some shopping. When I left my husband I didn't much worry about fighting over possessions and let him keep most things. Luckily, the apartment had furnishings to begin with or it would be very empty. I just have a few things that are being shipped."

"Of course." Jeff thought a moment. "My daughter takes an art class in Christchurch on Thursday evenings. You can make arrangements to go with whoever is flying her there, and shop while she's in her class. In fact, I can ask whoever is taking her to leave here a little early so you have plenty of time. Would that do?"

"That'll work fine. Thank-you," Cassie told him.

"All right then. If you have no more questions, we're done here for the moment." He rose, and offered his hand. "If you do have any questions, don't hesitate to ask me, my wife, or one of my adult sons. You're welcome to continue eating with the family until you feel you're finally settled, and take the rest of today and tomorrow to get acclimated. Jet lag can be a bear; I have reason to know!" He paused, and added, smiling widely, "Welcome to the team, Cassie."

"Thank-you, sir," Cassie said, shaking his hand. She was feeling both excited and nervous at the prospect of what the next few weeks would hold for her.

--the little details by on October 9, 2007

11:30:00 p.m. Tuesday October 2, 2068 in Wichita, Kansas (5:30:00 p.m. Wednesday October 3, 2068 on Tracy Island)

Lisa sighed as she headed for her locker. She loved her job, she really did, but some days it got to be too much. Five call outs, the last one an auto accident with two children dead. The mother didn't believe in forcing her kids to stay in the booster seats with their seatbelts on, that was 'too confining'. A 35 mph crash had thrown both kids through the front windshield. Mom wasn't even bruised. "Unfortunately, like the poor, fools will always be with us. I just wish they were the ones to pay the price of their stupidity instead of their children," she muttered to herself. She had the next two days off and planned on relaxing, starting with a long bath.

Dave Kandagaye cornered her on her way out. He'd been keeping an eye on her for the past month. Her work was, as always, excellent; she was considered one of the best paramedics in the state. Not even the very messy divorce she'd gone through last year had made her lose her professionalism. But for the past two months or so, she seemed distracted, as if something were weighing on her mind. He knew about her child custody troubles and wanted to give her some time to come to terms with it. But she wasn't doing any better. He decided it was time to find out if he could help, even if all he could do was listen.

"Lisa? Can I talk to you for a minute?"

"Sure. What's up?"

"Why don't we talk in my office?" Dave opened the door to what he called his favorite broom closet. Lisa raised her eyebrows, but followed him in. He closed the door behind him and sat on the edge of his desk.

"Lisa, for the past month or so, you've seemed distracted. You haven't been joining in with the normal banter around here. Is there anything I can do to help? Is something wrong with the girls? A new custody fight, maybe?"

"Not exactly." Lisa stared at the wall behind him. The divorce had been bitter, but she had done what she had thought best for the kids. She had visitation rights one weekend a month and for three weeks in the summer. But she had not thought to demand the children stay near her and her ex had moved to New York. By the time she saw the kids next, they would have forgotten her. It still hurt, but she couldn't afford a long custody fight. "It might affect them but that's not the main problem." She looked at him and seemed to come to a decision. "Dave, can I tell you something? I don't know what to do and I need to talk to someone about this." At Dave's nod, she began her story. "It was about a week after the tornadoes..."

xxxx

"Ms Simmons?" The two men stepped out from beside the fire station entrance. Both wore dark suits, and had been invisible even with the brightly lighted doorway and path.

"Yes, what do you want?" Lisa already had her car keys out along with the pepper spray. This was a safe area but it never hurt to be prepared.

"It's ok; we just want to talk to you for a minute."

"If you're a reporter wanting to interview me about International Rescue, I have no comment. I've already said all I have to say. They were very worried about her. That's it."

One of the men stepped forward, his hands open and in front of him. "No, we're not reporters. I'm Agent Clark from the World Government. This is my partner, Agent Jenkins." The second man nodded and smiled. "We'd like to talk to you for a couple minutes. How about we go across the street and we'll buy you dinner?" He gestured toward a restaurant frequented by the fire and rescue personnel.

"Let's see some ID first." After checking the IDs of both men, she nodded. "Ok, gentlemen. But I'm very tired and this better be good."

A few minutes later, with a steak in front of her, she turned to the two men. "Ok, what does the World Government want with me? I've already answered questions about International Rescue; I don't know anything more."

"We're not interested in what you know about International Rescue. We're interested in what they might know about you." Lisa kept her expression neutral as she cut up her steak. Clark went on. "IR has added several new people this past year. We've identified at least four new people since February, including two new nurses helping out the new doctor. We don't know how they are choosing people but you fit the profile of someone they might want."

Lisa looked surprised at this. "I'm not anything special."

"Define 'special'. The first reason we think they might be interested is that you are well regarded in your field. Both the emergency room doctors and nurses you work with speak well of your ability to assess a patient quickly and recommend the proper procedure. Your fellow rescue workers talk about your ability to keep a clear head, no matter what. You were also well thought of as an operating room nurse while you were in the military. In short, you would make a great field surgery nurse."

"Number two, you're young. You're thirty-one. Most of the people we have descriptions of seem to be in their mid-twenties to mid-thirties. Three, you currently have no dependents." Lisa winced at that.

Agent Clark continued. "Finally, both 'Van Gogh' and 'Tynan' seemed to like you. Several other of the rescue personnel thought so, at least. We don't know if they will be looking for any new nurses, but if they are, we think they might talk to you."

"And you want me to spy on them for you." Lisa pushed the empty plate away. "Now why would I want to do that?"

Agent Jenkins spoke for the first time. "We don't exactly want you to spy. Just, if they do come

calling, let us know who contacted you and how. If you get interviewed, just tell us by who and where it took place. You don't have to take the job, if you don't want. Just tell us what you can. As for why should you want to do this, well, sometimes custody judges can be influenced by public service on the part of one of the parents."

Lisa froze for a minute then asked, "How would I get in touch with you if they do contact me?"

"Write to this address." Agent Clark pushed a small card over to her. She glanced at it and then put it in her pocket. "Use regular mail. Just say you've been contacted and what you did. We'll send someone to talk to you when we're sure you're not being watched. That will be the end of it, and you can do whatever you want after that." Lisa nodded and both men stood up. "Thank you, Ms. Simmons. Don't get up. We'll handle the check as we leave. Order some dessert if you want. Good evening." Both men went to the front of the restaurant as Lisa sat there staring at the table. When the waiter asked her if she wanted anything else, she shook herself and ordered chocolate cake and coffee. She sat there a long time, eating the cake and staring straight ahead at nothing. [/color]

xxxx

"I went home but I haven't been able to get the whole thing out of my mind," Lisa said, finishing her story. "Could they help me get the girls back? Or at least see them more often? Would I be betraying International Rescue if I told the World Government anything?" She sighed. "I'm almost glad no one ever contacted me, so I didn't have to make that choice. I'd do a lot to get my girls back, but I keep thinking, 'For what would it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul'."

"You think God would be mad at you for passing on information about IR?" Dave looked at her in surprise.

"No. I think I'd be mad at me if I felt I betrayed them. And I can't see it any other way, no matter how much I tell myself it wouldn't hurt anyone." She gave a half smile. "Anyway, it's a moot point. No one ever contacted me. I just haven't been able to get it out of my mind. I'm still not sure how I feel about the whole thing. I'm angry at those two men for putting me in this position. But I'm afraid if I contact International Rescue and tell them about this, I might find it even harder to see my kids. And after the games my ex played this past summer, I don't want to risk it."

Dave regarded her, thoughtfully. Her ex had kept changing the dates of the visits on her, after she'd paid for the airline tickets and arranged for vacation time. She'd finally arranged new visiting dates but, at the last minute, supposedly one of the girls had gotten sick, so the whole visit was canceled. She wouldn't be able to bring them out here until next summer. "Well, I probably would have felt both angry and afraid at the same time. And knowing me, I would have punched both of their lights out. Now that you've gotten it off your chest, do you feel better?"

She laughed. "Yes, I do. Thanks for listening."

"You're welcome. That's why they pay me the big bucks." He stood up from the desk. "Go home, get some sleep. Take the next two days off." He grinned at her; he knew the next two days were her normal off days.

She smiled back. "Such wild extravagance on your part, Dave." She went out the door looking better than she had in the last five weeks.

Dave went and sat at his desk, trying to figure out what to say in a letter to a man he'd never actually met, only seen from a distance a few times.

Posted by SusanMartha on October 9, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:29:40 GMT

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Thursday, October 4th, Tracy Island, a little past dawn...

"I said, don't move."

Elise stifled a yawn and glared at Virgil. "Well, maybe if you didn't insist on doing this so early..."

Virgil lightly brushed paint against the canvas in front of him. "It has to be early. The sun is too bright later. Now don't move."

The two were in Kyrano's garden. Elise wore her red dress, and was seated on a bench, a single purple orchid in her hand. Her hair was loose and hung about her shoulders and she looked off to the side. Virgil was dressed in ratty paint clothes, his easel in front of him. He looked from Elise to his canvas, painting quickly but carefully.

After a few minutes of silence, Elise spoke up again. "Am I going to get to see this masterpiece?"

"Maybe, when it's done. And if you sit still," Virgil replied, clamping one brush in his teeth and reaching for another.

"If you talk to all of your subjects like this, it's a wonder they ever pose for you again."

Virgil chuckled. "You aren't much of a morning person, are you?"

Elise stuck her tongue out at him before resuming her pose. Finally Virgil stepped back. He glanced up at the sky and shook his head. "There, that's it for today. We can work again tomorrow."

"Tomorrow?" Elise stood up and stretched. "How long is this going to take?"

Virgil shrugged. "Until it's done."

She started to walk over to him. "Can I see it?"

Virgil quickly stepped in front of the easel. "No. Not until it's complete. No one sees my stuff until

it's done."

Elise raised an eyebrow. "My, aren't we temperamental."

Virgil drew himself up, crossing his hands across his chest and looking down at her. "But of course." They both laughed. "You look really great in that dress," he said, a few moments later.

Elise smoothed the material, not quite looking up at him. "Thank-you. That was a fabulous party. I never had caviar before. Or drank so much champagne."

Virgil made a wry face and groaned. "Don't remind me!"

Elise giggled. "You know, this dress gives me an idea."

Virgil started gathering up his painting supplies. "If it has anything to do with champagne, I don't want to hear it."

"Halloween is in a few weeks. We should have a costume party!"

Virgil looked up. "You know, that's a terrific idea!"

She paced a short stretch of the path. "We could do all kinds of things, bob for apples, a costume contest, maybe even some sort of haunted house!"

"Dancing to spooky songs, lots of weird looking stuff to eat..."

"Exactly! And I think Dominic's birthday is around then, so we could have cake, too! And it will be different from your party, so the younger ones can stay later."

Virgil shut his art case with a snap. "I love it. I'll go see what Dad thinks." They started walking down the path together. "No, instead I'll go talk to Mom. She'll convince Dad."

Elise nodded. "Great! I'll see what I can do about invitations and let the others know."

Posted by lillehafrue on October 10, 2007[/size]

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:30:29 GMT

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Thursday, October 4th, 9 a.m., Tracy Island

Looking up ahead, Cassie saw Gordon waiting for her. He had asked her yesterday if she was up for getting together for an informal session, as he wanted to see how she did with their hand gun so he could figure out a training schedule for her.

Cassie glanced at her watch. I'm cutting it close, but I'm not late, she thought to herself.

"Little paranoid?" Gordon asked jokingly, having noticed the action.

"This might not be an official training session, but being late still isn't the first impression I want to make," Cassie replied, more awake than she had been yesterday morning.

"Yeah, well I wouldn't have cared about a couple of minutes," he said as he started leading her to the firing range. "Dad said you have previous experience with a Creighton?"

Cassie nodded. "My brother, Mark, is a police officer. He taught me. I've done more work with stationary targets, though I have done moving targets a few times."

"Okay, then. We'll just do stationary targets today. I don't want to keep you too long, as I know you're leaving with Mom at eleven. I'll go over our gun briefly with you and then let you take some shots and we'll go from there."

Cassie nodded. Reaching the firing range, Gordon showed her where everything was. Once both of them had safety goggles and ear protection, Gordon went over to the weapons locker. Putting his hand in the scanner, he unlocked it and opened the door. He handed a gun to Cassie and went over the basics on how it worked. That out of the way, they headed to the range.

Cassie took a place on the firing line, surveying the target, she noticed Scott and Elise come onto the range. Scott walked over to Gordon. "Hey, Gordon. What's going on? I thought Dad wasn't starting Cassie's training until tomorrow?"

"He isn't. She's already got some experience with a hand gun so I want to see how she does with our guns so I can figure out where I need to start with her firearms training."

Scott nodded. "Elise and I will go to the other end and stay out of your way," Scott told him.

"Suit yourself," Gordon commented as Scott and Elise walked down to the other end of the practice range. "Whenever you're ready," he called out to Cassie. "Take about six shots. Move the target to whatever distance you feel comfortable with."

Cassie nodded. She glanced in Scott and Elise's direction and noticed both of them were watching her. He probably thinks I'm not going to hit the target, Cassie thought as she gazed back down at the target, determined to hit it. She was going to prove to him that she belonged here no matter what it took. Looking down the range, Cassie moved the target to a moderate distance that she knew she could hit it at without it being too easy. She fired off six shots, with five of them hitting their targets. Not bad for the first time with this gun, Cassie thought as she turned away from the target to see Gordon's reaction.

Gordon was nodding. "Nice job," he told her.

Cassie glanced quickly at Scott and Elise. Their curiosity satisfied the two were getting ready to start their own practice. Maybe now he won't be so quick at making assumptions about me, Cassie thought to herself as she turned her attention to Gordon, who was critiquing her form and technique on the shots she had just fired.

She listened to him carefully, some of what he said being the same things Mark had repeatedly told her. After about five minutes, Gordon told her to take a few more shots but to move the target a little further away.

Taking a deep breath, Cassie calmed herself as she sighted the target. She mentally went through everything that Gordon had told her and attempted to apply it as she fired off her next round of shots. Four of the shots hit the target, one of which hit dead center.

"Not bad," Gordon told her. "This is what I noticed though," he said, walking toward her.

Posted by starrynebula on October 10, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:31:03 GMT

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Thursday, October 4, 2068, 11 a.m., Tracy Island

"Everyone ready back there?" Dianne's voice filtered into the passenger cabin. She was sitting up front with Anna for first leg of the day's journey.

"We're okay!" Cherie called back. She grinned at Cassie, who sat in one of Tracy One's luxurious seats. "This is gonna be fun!"

Tracy One lifted off the runway smoothly, climbing quickly into the warm spring sky. Dianne leveled off at a good cruising altitude for the jet, and turned to Anna.

"Sorry we're leaving so early, Anna, but I've got a couple of errands to run before Cherie's class and no time to waste."

"That's all right," Anna replied. "It doesn't make sense to send someone out to take me back just so I can sunbathe a little longer." She paused. "I talked to the people I needed to talk to." She glanced over at the pilot. "Do you think we can go through with what we talked about when I'm here next?"

Dianne took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "Yes. I think I'll be ready. I need to get back to work... all of my work."

"You need to take this at your own pace and not push yourself," Anna reminded her. "We'll see how things go next week. One step at a time."

"Right."

xxxx

Cassie glanced away from the window and over at her young companion. "So what kind of art

class are you taking?" she asked wondering if Cherie was doing a general art class or one that specialized in something like painting or pottery.

"Oh, this is an advanced drawing from life class. Virgil's been teaching me a lot, and I've been practicing, but I could use a different perspective on drawing." Cherie smiled. "I've been having fun so far. Are you into art?"

"I like to appreciate what others have done. I used to visit the art museums in the city whenever I could find the time. However, I don't have any talent for it myself. My six-year-old nieces can draw better than I can. I was happy when I got to sixth grade and art class at school was no longer mandatory. Perhaps I could see some of your work sometime."

Cherie nodded. "How do you like living on the island so far?"

"It's different. Much quieter than what I'm used to. Never thought I'd say it, but I'm actually missing the sounds of cars and horns when I'm trying to fall asleep."

"You could get a recording of city sounds to play when you're feeling homesick."

Cassie laughed at Cherie's suggestion. "My brother actually offered to make a recording of New York City sounds for me if I ever felt like that."

xxxx

Within a half-hour they were setting down at the Lake Colonge Airport. Cherie helped Anna gather her things as they taxied to the small terminal.

"Have fun tonight, Cherie," Anna said as she left the plane. "I want to hear all about it next week."

"Yes, Mrs. Hanson," Cherie replied with a grin. "See you next Wednesday!"

"Cassie? Would you like to come sit in the cockpit with me?" Dianne called back.

"Sure," Cassie replied, excited at the chance to sit up front. She had caught a glimpse of the cockpit when she was on the plane before but had never actually been in the cockpit of a plane. She excused herself from Cherie's company and headed up front.

She sat down in the empty seat and looked over the controls in front of her. "I'm not sure I'll ever be able to learn what everything does."

Diane chuckled. "I'm sure it looks overwhelming now but once you start learning what everything is and what it does it won't seem so bad. I think Jeff is going to have Scott give you flying lessons."

Cassie nodded not sure how she felt about the idea. She couldn't shake the feeling that Scott still didn't want her here. Deciding to change the subject, She decided to ask the question that had been on her mind since meeting Anna Hanson before they boarded. "Is Mrs. Hanson a member of IR or just a family friend?"

"Mrs. Hanson works for us as our family counselor. She knows about IR as well. It's been helpful having her on board to help cope with personal issues that may pop up. She comes out to the island on a weekly basis."

Cassie found herself nodding again. She thought about her own sessions with Dr. Lindon. Talking with her had helped her sort out the turmoil of emotions following the loss of her son. There had also been job related issues that she had talked through with the department psychiatrist. She could see how the rescues that IR would be involved in could cause some issues that needed to be dealt with. It's good to know there's someone I could talk to if something goes wrong on a rescue, Cassie thought to herself.

"If you don't mind me asking, what do you need to visit Sydney for that couldn't be done in Christchurch?" Cassie asked, trying to make small talk.

Dianne put up a finger, indicating that Cassie should wait for a moment. She put a finger up to the headphones she was wearing, and pressed a button on the side. "TRAC-0001 to Lake Colenge Tower, requesting take off clearance."

"TRAC-0001, you are cleared for take-off on runway 2B."

"Roger that, Lake Colenge, and thanks."

"Roger, TRAC-0001. Fair skies to you."

Dianne guided the plane to the indicated runway, and lined it up with the guidelines. "You'd better put on those headphones," she suggested, indicating the pair that hung on the back of the co-pilot's chair.

Cassie nodded, and pulled the headphones around, sliding them down over her ears. She made sure her safety restraints were fastened. The noise of the jet's engines was muted, even as it went up in pitch. Dianne pressed the steering yoke forward and the plane moved down the runway, increasing in speed, until it finally left the ground and soared into the air once again. Once they were again at a safe cruising speed, Dianne turned to smile at Cassie.

"In answer to your question," Dianne said, her voice coming in through the headset Cassie was wearing, "I'm visiting a very special jeweler in Sydney. When my husband's helijet went down back in February, the hospital had to cut off his wedding ring. I promised him I'd get him a new one, and I'm going back to the same jeweler who made both of ours." She rubbed her own ringless finger with her thumb. "Our second anniversary is coming up; I wanted to give Jeff his ring then." She sighed. "My rings have gone missing, too. I wouldn't be surprised if Jeff's already made a trip out here himself."

"Oh, okay. I understand now." Cassie found herself thinking of her own ex-husband and wondering if Alex would have ever thought of doing something romantic like replacing her wedding band if it had ever been lost or damaged while on the job. She pursed her lips. "Will this trip still allow time for us to shop?"

"Sure! At the speed we're traveling, it'll only be an hour's flight. And it'll be two hours behind island time, so we'll get there a half-hour before we left!" Dianne chuckled, and Cassie joined in. "We can hit a few shops in Sydney, and be back just in time for Cherie's class. Then I can take you around a few stores in Christchurch while she's in class."

"Sounds like a plan," Cassie said, smiling.

In an hour, Dianne was requesting permission to land at Sydney's busy jetport. "Customs won't be a problem," she assured Cassie. "Just show them your ID and let them search your handbag. Since we'll have already paid the taxes and all, and aren't 'exporting' something large, like a car, we won't have trouble taking our things with us, either."

The three women climbed into the sleek, chauffeured sedan that waited at the hangar for them. "Wow! Must be nice to have a chauffeur wherever you go," Cassie remarked.

"We don't have chauffeurs everywhere," Cherie informed her. "Just in places where we're sort of expected to have them."

"And sometimes not even then," Dianne added. "In New York, we're more than likely to grab a cab as likely as not."

Cassie's face became thoughtful. "I had an interesting cabby when I came out to interview for the job. His name was Bernie..."

"Ah yes, Bernie." Dianne's eyes twinkled as she mentioned his name. "He's a keeper, that one."

Cassie looked startled and was about to ask a question when their chauffeur said, "Dr. Tracy. We've arrived."

"Thank you, Estelle," Dianne said graciously. "Well, girls. Let's go!"

As Estelle opened the door, the three of them got out of the car and stepped onto the sidewalk. Cassie looked at her surroundings. Sydney was different from New York but there were still those aspects familiar to all cities. They were surrounded by buildings, some taller than others. People walked the sidewalks, going about their daily activities. On the street, vehicles rolled by on their way to whatever destination the occupants needed to get to.

Definitely not New York, but it seems more like home than the island does, Cassie thought to herself as she took in the sights and sounds of the city. I'd love to explore this place sometime. Maybe check out the Museum of Contemporary Art or even catch a performance of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

A doorman stood ready to do his job, and tipped his hat as the three women entered. An understated brass plate on the outer wall said, "J. R. Symmes, Custom Jewelry Design". As they stepped inside, Cherie looked around with wide-eyed amazement at the ornate furnishings. She'd never been to this place before.

"Dr. Tracy." Alicia rose from behind her receptionist's desk and approached. "Very good to see

you again."

"Thank you, Alicia. This is my daughter, Cherie, and a... friend, Cassandra Kishi." Dianne indicated each of her companions.

"Nice to meet you both," Alicia said. Then she paused. "Cherie... are you the one who has the charm bracelet?"

The girl looked startled. "Yes. Yes, I am. My brother, Scott, gets me new charms every year." She looked a bit sheepish. "I normally wear it, but I have art class today, and sometimes it gets in the way of drawing." She cocked her head to one side. "Does he get the charms here?"

Alicia smiled widely. "He does. They are custom made."

"Ooh." Cherie's eyes went wide. "I didn't know."

"Now that you do, does it mean you'll wear the bracelet more often?" Dianne said as she guided her daughter over to a chair. Cassie had already sat down, and they sat near her.

"I'll try."

In the meanwhile, Alicia was on the phone. She glanced up at the little party, then down at her desk, and frowned. "All right, I'll tell her." Looking up again, she said, "There's an appointment before yours, Dr. Tracy, but it seems that Mrs. Chauvelin is late. Mr. Symmes says he'll see you now."

"Thank you, Alicia." Dianne rose gracefully from her chair, and followed the receptionist back.

As Dianne disappeared to the back of the store, Cassie continued to look around the room. She had never been in such a fancy store before, though she had glanced in the windows of some of the fancy ones in New York. She never had a reason to go in though, as everything in them was well above her price range. Besides, she wasn't a huge fan of jewelry anyways. As Cherie had said about her charm bracelet, Cassie had found that it tended to get in the way. Not to mention that jewelry, other than wedding bands, had been against the dress code for the fire department.

Not sure how long Dianne would be with Mr. Symmes, Cassie decided to start a conversation with her young companion.

In Julian Symmes's studio, the slight, dapper jeweler came forward to shake Dianne's hand. "Dr. Tracy! A pleasure to see you again!" He looked her up and down with a shrewd eye. "You're looking well."

His comment and searching inspection made her raise an eyebrow. "Thank you, Mr. Symmes. You may have heard something about an accident..."

"An accident?" Julian sounded surprised. "What kind of accident?"

If you want to play innocent, I won't stop you, but I'm sure Jeff's been here. Dianne smiled. "I was

in an auto accident back in the States. But I'm well again now. Do you have my order ready?"

"Yes, yes, I do!" He moved over to a safe, and put his hand up to a scanner, then tapped in a code. When the safe opened, he pulled out a small velvet box. "It sounds like both you and Mr. Tracy have had a rough year." He brought the box to her, and opened it, then handed it over. "What do you think?"

She slipped the silvery band from its cushion and examined it. "It's perfect!" she exclaimed. She read the inscription. "Yes, that's exactly it. Different from the first one, but far more appropriate now." She handed it back to him, and he polished it slightly with a chamois before putting it back into the box.

"I'm so glad you like it!" Symmes said. "I'll have Shang gift box it, if that's all right."

"Yes, please."

Symmes called for his assistant, Shang, who took the velvet box, and put it in a larger gift box, then wrapped it in gold paper with a red ribbon.

"Now, what about this other commission?" Julian asked.

"Ah, yes." Dianne reached into her purse, and pulled out a small envelope. Opening it, she dumped its contents into her palm. A silvery ring, cut and warped, sat there. "This is the ring they cut from Jeff's finger after his accident. I... I don't know what to do with it, but I think something should be done. Something different."

She handed it to him and he gazed at it long and hard. "Hmm." He nodded. "Your husband's not one for wearing necklaces, is he?"

Dianne shook her head. "No, he isn't. Though if it's precious enough... he might be persuaded. He did wear dog tags at one point."

"Yes. I can see a few possibilities." Symmes looked up at her with a smile. "I'll come up with some designs and email them to you."

"Thank you so much, Mr. Symmes." Dianne smiled back gratefully.

"Please, call me Julian."

"Excuse me, Mr. Symmes." Alicia slipped into the room. "Mrs. Chauvelin has arrived and..."

"And is being her obnoxious self." Julian shook his head. "Please, tell her I will be with her in a moment."

"Yes, sir." Alicia nodded and went back to the reception area.

Dianne had her phone out and was calling Estelle. "My car will be out front in a few moments."

"I'm sorry, Dr. Tracy." He suddenly chuckled. "I just remembered..." His voice trailed off as he realized he was about to tell her about Jeff's earlier visit. "Ah, it's nothing." He offered his hand. "I will send those designs within the next two weeks."

"I'll be looking for them." Dianne took his hand and shook it. "Thank you so much." She took the handled shopping bag that Shang held out.

He walked her out to the reception area. "I'll be in touch. Have a good day, Dr. Tracy."

"You, too, Mr. Symmes."

A cross-looking red-haired woman looked up. "It's about time!" she snapped. "I had an appointment."

Dianne raised her chin, looking down regally at Mrs. Chauvelin. "Perhaps next time, ma'am, you'll show up when yoah expected. Mr. Symmes's time is very valuable," she drawled. Striding into the reception area, she motioned to Cherie and Cassie. "C'mon, gals. We've got shoppin' to do!"

--Sydney side trip by Tikatu and starrynebula on October 15, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:31:21 GMT

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Thursday, October 4, 2008, 5:50 p.m., Christchurch, NZ

"Enjoy your class, Cherie," Dianne told her daughter, as she stopped the car in front of the Christchurch Community Center. Airini was already standing by the front door of the building.

"I will, Mom," Cherie said, climbing out of the car, art supplies in hand. "Bye, Cassie. Have fun shopping!" Cherie said waving to Cassie.

Cassie waved back as Cherie turned and headed for the entrance of the Community Center. Dianne waited for both her daughter and Airini to enter the building before addressing Cassie. "So, what else do you need pick up?"

Cassie looked down at the list of things she needed. Most of the items had already been crossed out. Their shopping in Sydney had been productive. She had found a bookcase and desk that she liked. Both had to be put together, but she felt sure she could figure out the directions. The electronics hadn't been hard to pick out either, as she hadn't been too particular about them. Just as long as she had something she could watch her favorite movies on and listen to music, she was happy. Cassie had taking a little longer picking out a printer for her computer. Most of the time though had been spent picking out the curtains. She hadn't been sure what she wanted, other than she knew she wanted something to block out the sunlight when need be in the bedroom, so she had let Cherie make suggestions and then she chose from those. She had ended up with a forest green for the living room, and a midnight blue for the bedroom. The last item she had purchased in Sydney had been a throw rug that was black with a gold geometric

design on it.

"Well, I'd like to pick up paint for the bedroom. I'll need a color that will match the curtains I picked up for that room. I still need a couple of shelves to put on the walls. Other than that, I just need to pick up some groceries."

Dianne nodded. "We'll get the paint and the shelves first and leave the grocery shopping for last," she told Cassie as she put the car into drive and headed for the parking lot exit. A few moments later, they were amidst the evening traffic on the way to their destination. "Christchurch has a nice mall with a DIY store."

"A DIY store?" Cassie asked, having never heard of them before.

Dianne chuckled. "DYI for Do-It-Yourself. Basically like a Home Depot back in the States. You pick up the materials you need for doing your own home projects." She shook her head. "Took me a bit to get used to the term, too."

"Oh, okay," Cassie replied. "Sounds like a good place to look." She glanced out the window, though she couldn't make much out in the fading light. She tried to think of something to say to fill the silence. Remembering that she still had to set up a time for a physical, she decided to bring that up. "Mr. Tracy mentioned that I would need to set up a time with you for a physical and implanting some kind of chip," she said, realizing that she probably should have asked him more about the chip when he had mentioned it.

"Yes, that's true," Dianne replied, her eyes on the road. "I'll need a baseline physical. The chip Jeff mentioned is a locator chip. It'll help us find you if you're ever lost... or kidnapped." She glanced at her passenger. "When would you like to set that up?"

Cassie thought about it. She was a little leery about the idea of someone being able to track her whereabouts, though with the nature of the job she had accepted, it was probably good to take precautions.

"I guess I'd rather get it over with as soon as possible," she said, trying to keep any signs of hesitation or nervousness out of her voice. She thought about the training schedule she had been giving. "I think the earliest time I'd have free would be after my training session with Virgil tomorrow afternoon. It's supposed to end at three."

"That's perfect. My children will be finished with school." Dianne nodded. "Come by the infirmary when you're finished; Virgil can show you the way. We'll take care of everything then." She smiled as they turned into a large parking lot. "Well, here's the mall. Ready for some more shopping?"

"Not really," Cassie replied as Dianne pulled the car into a parking spot. She had gotten her fill of shopping back in Sydney. "If I don't get this over with, though, it'll just mean another shopping trip at a later date."

"Well, we'll try and make this as quick and painless as possible," Dianne said in sympathy. "You tell me what you need, and I'll take you to the closest shops. I know this place better than the malls back home."

"Okay," Cassie replied, as the two of them got out of the car. "I guess getting the paint decision out of the way would be the best place to start."

--finishing the job by starrynebula and Tikatu on October 16, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:31:34 GMT

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Friday, October 5, 9:30 AM, Tracy Island time; somewhere over the South Pacific

Will sat in the co-pilot's seat of the Tracy jet. Scott had flown from Tracy Island to Scottsdale Air Park while John slept, and they would switch on the return trip. So, not to disturb the eldest Tracy son, Will had gone forward. He and John had chatted easily for some time, pausing only when Will went to the galley to get food or drinks for them.

Finally, the talk had faded into a friendly silence, leaving each man with his thoughts. Will went back over the events of the last several days. Getting Carl up to speed on the job was the easiest thing he'd had to do. Getting his things packed up was harder. Good thing I had an SUV. I had more stuff than I thought. But I was able to get rid of a lot. And my folks were willing to store what I brought down, but didn't want to take with me. And Jenny and her family can sure use the car.

The most difficult thing was telling his family how far away he'd be going to live and work. His mother was especially distressed.

"Australia? Why on earth would you take that job? What kind of life will you have when so far from family, Will?"

"I'll be fine. I've already met several co-workers. They all seem very friendly. I'm told I'll even learn how to fly."

"Flight? You don't know how to fly. How are you going to meet a nice girl?"

Will had laughed, then hugged her. "Mom, you have a one track mind. Look, if I'm supposed to find someone, I'll find her no matter where I live. And if not, well, so be it. It won't be the end of the world. But it might comfort you to know that there are plenty of unattached women in Australia. I haven't even met all my co-workers, yet."

"I suppose it does somewhat. But what about your living arrangements?"

"I'm sure I'll find a suitable apartment and can purchase furniture. I brought my other stuff with me, to take there."

Will's mother had insisted on going through what he had, and pronounced some of it too old or too ugly to use. So she went shopping - something she loved to do anyway - and returned home with a trunkload of items for him. Fortunately, she knew him well enough to stick to things he'd like and

use.

He got to know his brother's new girlfriend, Helena, and liked her. She seemed to fit in with the family very well, and showed a deep affection, at least, for Mitchell. He even spent an evening at his sister's, having dinner, playing with the kids and watching a movie they had picked out.

Also during this time, a couple of parties were thrown for him. Neighbors, friends and relatives came from far and near to say goodbye and wish him well. He accepted their good wishes, but told them that he'd probably be back for visits from time to time. "I just don't know when yet."

Will had called Jeff, to let him know that his mother insisted on him staying with them until the fourth, so he couldn't start work sooner. He also asked his new employer how to arrange for shipping of his things, and was told that two of the older Tracy sons would fly out to pick him up, so he could bring everything with him. Will gave him the name of the nearest airport and was told he'd be contacted about the arrival time.

The jet had landed at 7:30 in the morning, and Will was there to meet it, along with his parents. They helped load everything into the cargo hold, then Joanna suddenly burst into tears.

"Mom! What's wrong?"

"Y-you're going so far away!" she wailed.

He took her in his arms. "I wasn't exactly just around the corner for the last two years, you know."

"But you were" sniff "not out of the country. You won't" sniff "be able to come home as often. I'll miss you!"

"And I'll miss you, Mom. But we can keep in touch by phone and emails. And I will come home whenever I can."

"Promise?"

"Promise. Now stop crying, and give me a smile. It's time to go."

Poor Mom, Will thought. She won't be happy until I'm married, have kids, and live within five miles of her and Dad. It may happen someday - or part of it will - but not for a while.

"Will?"

Startled out of his thoughts, he turned to John. "What's up?"

"We're about a half hour away from the island. Would you mind rousing Scott? He'll want to be fully awake when we land."

"Okay."

Will headed back into the cabin and shook Scott gently. When the other man opened his eyes and

looked at him, he said, "Did you sleep well?"

"Yes, until you woke me up. I was having this dream... Why'd you wake me, anyway?"

"We're about half an hour from landing. John thought you'd like to be awake when we do."

"He was right. Thanks. Why don't you go back to the cockpit so you can get an aerial view of the island? I know you couldn't when you were here before."

"Thanks. I'd like to do that. See you on the ground."

"Right." Scott grinned at him.

Will headed back to the cockpit, ready to begin a new phase of his life.

Posted by hobbeth on October 16, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:31:44 GMT

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Tracy Island, Friday, October 5th, a little after noon...

Elise shifted the bundle in her hands, and rang the buzzer to Nikki's apartment. A moment later, the door opened. "Hi there! Come on in." Nikki led the way into the kitchen. "Can I get you something to drink?"

Elise shook her head. "No thanks. I brought some of the craft supplies I had. I thought we could start by planning what we want to do and then make invitations."

Nikki nodded. "Good idea." The two women sat down at the table, each pulling out a notebook. "I still can't believe we're going to have a Halloween party."

"I know! Won't it be a blast! The weather should be nice, so I thought we could have it outside, around the pool area."

"That would be prefect. Now, what shall we do first?" Nikki asked.

Elise thought for a moment. "How about a list of the things we want to do, and what we'll need."

"Right. Music, can't have a party without music."

"Virgil told me he'd take care of that," Elise said. "But I'd better make a note for myself to make sure. Games?"

"Hmmm....Bobbing for apples? That's always fun. How about some sort of scavenger hunt? We could hide some things around and have people find them?"

Elise's eyes lit up. "That's a great idea! We could set up in teams of two or three and give each team a list." They continued brainstorming, coming up with a few more ideas.

"What about food?" Nikki asked. "It seems kind of unfair to ask Kyrano and Mrs. Tracy to always do all the cooking."

"I agree. What if we asked each person to bring something? It doesn't have to be homemade, even a few bags of candy will do. We can make a list of who's bringing what and then see what we need from there."

Nikki nodded. "Great. We are going to have a costume contest, right?"

"Of course! Any idea what you'll be dressing up as?"

Nikki shook her head. "I have a few ideas, but nothing that really catches me yet. You?"

"Not a clue." Elise grinned. "Maybe we'll just have to go shopping again!" Both women laughed. "Now, for the invitations. I brought scissors, markers, and glue."

"And I have construction paper and this confetti." Nikki handed Elise a small package of Halloween shaped cutouts. "I had bought it to stick in some letters home, but we can put it in the invitations. Really catch people's attentions." She paused for a moment. "You know, it's Dominic's birthday that night. We could make this a surprise party as well."

"I love it! We'll mention it on the invites, all but his. And maybe we can get Mrs. Tracy to bake a cake. That's one thing I don't want to attempt." They quickly got to work, cutting and gluing, with quite a bit of laughter. A couple hours later they had invitations labeled for each person on the island. "Oh wait! We forgot the new guy. He's coming in today. Will?"

Nikki nodded. "Yes, that's his name." She wrote Will's name on the last envelope. "Now, let's go deliver them." Nikki paused. "What if instead of handing them out ourselves, we gave them to Mr. Tracy to give out with the mail? That way it's sort of like a surprise!"

"Good idea! Let's go do it now." Elise quickly gathered up the envelopes and together the girls set out to deliver the invitations.

Posted by lillehafrue on October 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:31:56 GMT

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Friday, October 5, shortly before 3 p.m., Tracy Island

Cassie listened as Virgil went over the basics of the Firefly. Virgil had started by telling her about the chemical that had been created to help battle fire, dicetyline. Cassie had found it interesting as

it seemed more effective than what conventional firefighting companies were using. She just hoped Virgil hadn't been too annoyed with the string of questions she had asked him.

Once she had stopped asking questions, he had shown her first the Fire Truck and then the Fire Tender. Cassie had been amazed at the modifications they had made to the two vehicles. She was anxious to see how the equipment performed out in the field.

Well, they've certainly seem to have enough equipment to battle a fire in a settled area or a wild fire from the ground, Cassie thought to herself, as she listened to Virgil going over the controls of the Firefly. Wonder what they have in terms of equipment to fight the fire from the air, she pondered, making a mental note to ask Virgil when he was through.

"Don't worry, I don't expect you to remember everything I told you today. I just wanted to give you a basic idea of what we have in our arsenal," Virgil told her. "Any questions?"

"Not about this equipment. I was wondering though, do you have any capabilities of fighting a fire from the air?"

Virgil paused to think for a second. "Well, Thunderbird Two can fire a dicetyline missile and Thunderbird One has the capabilities of firing two. Other than that, it's just these three pieces of equipment," Virgil waved his hand to indicate the Firefly, which they were still sitting in, the Fire Truck and the Fire Tender. "Why do you ask?"

"I was just wondering because aerial firefighting is an important part of battling a wild fire, especially the larger ones. It's important to be able to come at it from all angles."

Virgil nodded. Being able to come at a fire from above had never even crossed his mind. Judging from the lack of equipment in that area, no one else had given it too much consideration either. "Got any suggestions on how we can correct that deficiency?"

"Not right off hand. Give me some time to think about it and I can come up with some kind of proposal," Cassie told him.

"Well when you do, if you want, you can run your ideas by me. The two of us can polish things up before presenting to Dad."

It was Cassie's turn to nod. "I'll do that," she told him, nervous at the prospect of making any kind of pitch to Mr. Tracy.

"We'll call it a day for now," Virgil told her. "I just wanted to give you an overview of the equipment. Next time we start the in depth training."

"Looking forward to it," Cassie told him.

"You're supposed to meet up with Mom in the infirmary, right?" Virgil asked. Cassie simply nodded in reply. "I'll take you there. I'm heading back to the house as it is," he offered as they headed toward the monorail car.

"Thanks," Cassie said, as they boarded the monorail and headed for the villa.

Posted by starrynebula on October 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:32:20 GMT

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Nikki glanced up from her reading when the infirmary door slid aside. She smiled at Cassie, who stood there, looking a bit apprehensive. Virgil stood behind her, and he grinned as he saw Nikki rise to greet them.

"Nikki, this is Cassie Kishi." He gave Cassie a reassuring pat on the shoulder. "You're in good hands here. I'll talk to you later."

Cassie looked over her shoulder at Virgil. "Thanks for showing me the way."

"No problem," he told her as he headed down the hallway.

Cassie looked back at the young woman Virgil has addressed as Nikki. Part of her wished she was anywhere other than there. She hated seeing medical personnel for any reason. "Hi," she said. "I set up a physical with Dr. Tracy for today."

Nikki extended her hand. "Figures that Virgil wouldn't properly introduce us. I'm Nikki Jackson, one of Dr. Tracy's nurses." The two women shook hands. "Come along with me and I'll show you where you can undress, then let Dianne know you're here."

She led the way into the surgical scanner room, and brought Cassie over to the small dressing area. "Here are the gowns. Take off everything but your panties. I'll be back with Dianne in a few moments."

Cassie nodded as Nikki disappeared. She grabbed one of the gowns and stepped behind the privacy screen. Quickly she changed into one of the gowns. Another thing I hate about seeing a doctor, she thought to herself as she finished changing. Stepping out from behind the screen, she waited for Dianne to show up.

Dianne came into the room, a data pad in hand and Nikki at her heels. She looked up and smiled. "Hello there, Cassie. How's your day been?"

"Not too bad," Cassie replied. "Had some training with Gordon this morning both with firearms as well as getting my first experience of being in the ocean more than walking the shore line. I think I like the pool better. My first session with Virgil didn't go all that bad either."

"Good!" Dianne patted the scanner as Nikki moved a small step closer. "Come on up here, and let's take a look at you."

For the next half hour, Dianne poked, prodded, listened, peered, and instructed Cassie as she

examined her. She had Cassie walk across the floor as she watched. She read the notes on her data pad, and referred to them when she noticed the scar on Cassie's shoulder.

"What's this from?" she asked, sliding a gentle finger over the scar.

"Gunshot wound," Cassie replied. "Price for not following procedure."

"Hm. I see." Scrolling down the information on the pad, Dianne nodded. "Here it is. Looks like it's well resolved."

As she worked, Dianne added to the doctor's notes, then finally put the pad down. "Okay, Cassie. Things look fine. But I do need a baseline scan. If you'd lie down on the scanner and stay as still as you can..."

Nikki helped Cassie lie back, and covered her with a sheet.

"Um, what exactly does this scanner do?" Cassie asked.

"You've never had a scan before?" Dianne asked. She made a little "hmm" sound, then continued. "It scans your insides for me, giving me a comprehensive picture of how your body works. If you're sick, or injured, I can compare a scan taken at that time to this one and see what's damaged or not working properly," She stopped, then added. "It doesn't hurt."

"What can I say; seeing doctors isn't exactly on the top of my things to do list," Cassie admitted sheepishly. "I only do so when absolutely necessary."

Nikki and Dianne glanced at each other and chuckled. "Well," said Nikki, "I'd say that's a pretty universal sentiment."

"Are you ready?" Dianne asked, moving toward the console in the corner.

Cassie took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "Ready as I'll ever be," she replied.

"Just lie still. It'll only take about 20 minutes."

Nikki dimmed the lights, and the scanner began to work.

The room was quiet except for the hum of the scanner and the occasional murmur from Dianne as she made notes on what she saw. Nikki left the room for a few moments, and came back with a covered tray, which she set on a stand by the console.

After the aforementioned 20 minutes was up, Dianne made a satisfied sound, and softly said, "I think that's enough." The humming stopped, and she came over to the side of the scanner to help Cassie sit up.

"Okay, Cassie. I've got a clear picture of how you're doing. You're looking fit; are there any chronic medical issues that I should know about?"

"Well, I do have migraines, but I know what triggers them: heavy perfume and cigarette smoke. One of the reasons I always looked for the bars that don't allow smoking in the New York," Cassie admitted. "Other than that nothing comes to mind."

"Well, it's a good thing that I managed to get Jeff and the boys to stop smoking!" Dianne said, grinning. "I'll warn you though; our London agent, Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward, is a frequent visitor and she does like her perfumes. You may want to stay upwind of her when she comes calling."

She motioned to Nikki, who brought over the tray and uncovered it. "I do have your immunization records, and they're very complete. We, however, require an anti-malarial vaccine for our operatives, and we'll do that today. Then the locator chip." She picked up one of the hyposprays, looked at it carefully, and applied it to Cassie's neck. "You do get to say where we put the chip."

"Exactly how necessary is the chip?" Cassie asked, hesitantly. "The idea of a locator chip makes me feel like a pet that someone is afraid of losing."

Dianne sighed. "Well, we've had some instances where it would have been very handy. For instance, while flying home from a rescue, Scott was shot down over the Sahara by a bunch of weirdos called Zombites. It was only because some archaeologists were working in the area that he was found and rescued. Then we've had a couple of agents kidnapped, too. Lady Penelope, who I just mentioned, was kidnapped while undercover. It was a miracle that she was able to contact base and the boys were able to figure out where she was. More recently, one of our newer agents, Lena Matumbo, was abducted and taken to England. Again, it was only her quick thinking that let us know where she was."

Her voice got quieter. "On the recent mission where we rescued the King of Thailand, one of our operatives, Callie - I don't know whether you've met her or not; she's just come back from Thunderbird Five. Anyway, Callie was waylaid by a scumbag called the Hood. He's a sworn enemy of International Rescue. We managed to get her out of his clutches quickly, but if he'd managed to spirit her away, the chip she has would have helped us locate her." Dianne didn't mention the communications interference that they'd experienced on that rescue; she wanted to impress on Cassie the need for the chip.

Cassie listened closely to what Dianne was saying. Given those accounts, she could see the usefulness of a locator chip. I certainly don't want to fall into the "it won't happen to me" mentality that so many people seem to have, she thought, thinking of those whom tragedy had struck that her job had put her in contact with.

"Okay, go ahead," she said with a sigh, still not happy about it but willing to go along with it. "As for where, I'll let you make that decision."

"Hm." Dianne looked Cassie up and down. "I think maybe... just below the collarbone on the left - you're right handed?"

Cassie nodded in response to her question.

"Good. First the local anesthetic..." Dianne used a hypospray to numb the area, then picked up

the needle. "If needles make you squeamish, better look away. We've had a couple of fainters with this..."

Cassie smiled slightly, thinking of some of her experiences with needles. She had been scared of them as a kid but she had gotten over that. "Training to be a paramedic got me over that fear," she commented.

With a deft hand, Dianne inserted the needle under the numbed skin. "Nikki? Do you have Alan on the line?"

"Yes. I've given him the chip number, and he says it's working fine."

"Good!" Dianne patted Cassie on the knee. "I think we're done here."

"I guess that wasn't too painful," Cassie said, relieved the ordeal was over.

"I do try to make my patients comfortable," Dianne quipped as she put the implements back on the tray and Nikki whisked them away. "Go ahead and get dressed. Just leave the gown in the dressing area, and you can go."

Cassie nodded again. "I did have something I wanted to talk to you about that isn't related to the physical," she commented. "After I get changed that is, if you have a few more minutes."

"Sure. Just come into my office."

"Okay," Cassie said standing up.

As Dianne left the room, Cassie went behind the privacy screen again to get out of the gown. Feeling much better back in her own clothes, Cassie left the room and headed for Dianne's office. Reaching it, she knocked.

"Come in, Cassie." The door slid aside to let Cassie in.

Cassie stepped into the office. Dianne indicated for her to have a seat in the chair in front of her desk. Cassie did so.

"What did you want to talk to me about?" Dianne asked.

"Well, I know the job position was for a firefighter, but paramedic skills were listed as a plus," Cassie began, asking something that had been on her mind but that she thought Dr. Tracy would be the more appropriate person to bring the subject up to than Mr. Tracy. "I was just wondering if my paramedic training was going to be utilized and how I'd fit into the group. I've met both Dom and Nikki now so I know you already have two capable assistants."

"Yes, and Luke is just a few hours away from finishing his paramedic training." Dianne looked thoughtful. "We can always use more help in the field, triaging and treating before a patient gets to... Thunderbird Seven." It was hard to say the name; she hadn't been down to see what had become of her vessel and, to her, it was stuck in that memory from her last visit. "When we were

in the Ural Mountains, we had too many patients, and too few qualified medical professionals. It would have been helpful to have people out there who could stabilize a patient, who really knew what to do." She shook her head and sat up straighter. "Ask Dom about the amputee sometime. He could have used an extra pair of hands there." She cocked her head. "So, does that answer your question?"

"Yes," Cassie said, nodding. "I have to admit, I'm glad I'll still get a chance to put those skills to use. Originally, training as a paramedic was just a step on the way to getting to my dream of being a firefighter. It didn't take me long to enjoy the rewards of the job itself despite the dangers and heartaches that can come with it. I'm glad I don't have to give that up entirely."

"Oh, believe me, we'll use every skill you have, and teach you a few new ones as well," Dianne told her, giving her a wink. "Wait until you have to learn to rock climb, or caving. You'll wonder why... until we have to rescue someone in a mine, or some other inaccessible place."

"I love new challenges," Cassie said. "Even one's that scare me at first."

"That's the attitude to have."

"Well, I guess that's about it. I don't want to be taking up anymore of your time than necessary," Cassie said, pushing the chair back and getting to her feet.

"As long as your questions are answered," Dianne said. "And if you have any others, just ask. If I don't know it, I have an 'in' with the head honcho."

Cassie smiled. "I'll keep that in mind. Thanks for your time."

"You're welcome, Cassie. Have a good evening."

"You too, Dr. Tracy," Cassie replied, as she turned to leave the office. I wonder if Tin-Tin has replied to my email about a good time to get the uniform issues out of the way, Cassie thought as she left the infirmary and headed in the direction she hoped the monorail lift was in.

The Physical by tikatu and starrynebula on October 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:32:32 GMT

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Friday, October 5, 7:00 p.m., Thunderbird 5

Having some free time, Alan decided to check out the website Gordon had hinted at before he left the island. Though his brother hadn't admitted to it, Alan had a feeling that Gordon had added information to the website. Doing something like that was right up his alley.

Opening the web browser, Alan tried to recall the name of the website. He looked up at the ceiling as he tried to think of the title. I think it was, 'International Rescue, Our Tyrikalican Brethren'.

Wonder how you spell that.

Taking a stab at the spelling, Alan entered something into the search engine. Soon a page saying 'Did You Mean' and a link popped up. Alan clicked on the link and was taken to the website. He knew instantly that it was the one Gordon had been talking about. Like Gordon, Alan found himself laughing at some of the stuff that was on the website. These guys are creative, I'll give them that, he thought, shaking his head.

A link caught his eye: 'Photos of one of the Jestreethzi n'Hildrathuk'.

"I wonder what this is," Alan said out loud. Expecting to see another poor quality photo, he clicked on the link and was taken to a page with a couple of similar pictures. As he suspected, the pictures were blurry but Alan had a good hunch as to what they were actually of.

Alan thought back to the prank he had helped Gordon pull off. His brother had all but admitted that he had taken pictures of the results of their handiwork but had never shared them. He really did get some pictures, Alan mused, wondering exactly what the originals looked like.

Alan read the words at the bottom of the page which said the pictures had been supplied by a member of the Jestreethzi n'Hildrathuk's inner sanctum. I sure wouldn't want to be Gordon if Scott ever finds this web page, Alan thought to himself, still laughing.

"I probably shouldn't do this, but this is too good not to share," Alan said quietly to himself as he opened his email in another window. He quickly composed a short message to John, telling him about the website and giving him the link.

Posted by starrynebula on October 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:32:41 GMT

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Saturday, October 6, 1:15 p.m., Tracy Island

John was in his room, checking his email. As he scanned the names of the sender's he noticed Alan had sent him an email. Curious, he clicked on the subject and quickly read the short message, following the link that Alan had provided.

You would think that people would have better things to do with their time, John mused as he scanned the outrageous website. At any rate, I've got to give them credit for creativity.

John heard a knock at the door. "Come in," he called, still looking over the website to see what else the group had come up with.

"Hey, John," Virgil said coming into the room. "What are you doing?"

"Hey," John greeted his brother, glancing briefly over his shoulder. "I was just checking out this

web page that Alan sent me a link for. Remember those guys in the robes we saw on that retrospective about IR?" When Virgil nodded he continued. "Seems they have a website."

"Are you serious?"

"Take a look at this," John said, waving a hand toward his computer screen.

Virgil walked over to John's desk, and looked over his brother's shoulder. He found himself shaking his head at what he saw. A particular link caught his eye. "Hey John, click on that link. I want to see what these so-called pictures of one of us are."

Moving the arrow to the indicated link, John clicked the button on the mouse. Soon several blurry pictures of a male figure, in nothing but a towel, appeared on the screen. Both of them immediately noticed that the head was cut off. "Provided by a member of their inter sanctum," John read off the screen.

"Did Alan mention how he found this site?" Virgil asked.

"He said Gordon mentioned it to him, why?" John asked looking from the screen to his brother who started laughing.

"I have a feeling this so-called member of the inner sanctum might just be a certain brother of ours," Virgil said. "Remember when Gordon and Alan stuck Scott's dresser drawers shut with the spaghetti?" John nodded, so Virgil continued. "Well, Scott was running around the house in a towel looking for him. Knowing Gordon, he probably took some pictures which he then modified to add to this website."

"I wouldn't want to be Gordon if Scott ever figures it out," John commented.

"Me neither," Virgil commented.

"So was there a reason you came to see me?" John asked, closing the web browser.

"Oh yeah. I was wondering if you were up for a game of pool?"

"Sure, why not," John said, closing the web browser and exiting his email. Putting the computer into hibernate, he followed Virgil out of the room.

Posted by starrynebula on October 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:32:57 GMT

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Saturday, October 6, 2068, 4 p.m., Tracy Island

Emily looked about her sitting room. "I suppose this is everyone. We should get started."

"Can I pick first, Grandma?" Tyler asked from where he was on the floor. He had a feather teaser in his hand and was playing with one of the kittens.

"It depends on who else wants them," Emily said. She looked again. "Maybe we should draw names..."

"No, Grandma," Virgil said, holding up his hands. "I'm not here for a kitten. I'm here to give Elise a hand dragging the kitty supplies back to her apartment."

"And Brains and I will share a kitten," Tin-Tin said, smiling softly. "Though he or she will live in Brains's suite."

"You want one, John?"

"I sure do, Grandma," John said, rubbing his hands together. "Looking forward to owning one."

"It's more like being owned by one," Elise said with a grin.

The kittens were rolling and playing together on the floor. They'd come back from the vets the week before after having been spayed or neutered. Jeff's words had been, "I don't want a cat colony here!" and Emily had felt the same. Big Momma had also been spayed, and was now hiding under Emily's bed from the presence of so many strangers. She still didn't allow for much in the way of petting or affection.

"All right then, we have four people for four kittens. We can draw lots as to who chooses first." Emily was determined to make things as fair as possible.

"Oh, Mrs. Tracy, why don't we let Tyler pick first?" Elise suggested. She turned and motioned to the other would-be cat owners. "I'm sure we'll be glad to choose after they do."

Brains and John nodded, and Emily sighed. "All right. Tyler, you and Alex can choose first."

The two boys put their heads together, and whispered, pointing to first one kitten, then another. Finally, Tyler pointed at the black and white. "That one. That one's ours." He lured the kitten over to him with the feather teaser, then reached out and caught his new pet. "This is a boy, right, Grandma?"

"Yes, the black and white is a boy. So is the gray tabby. The other two are girls."

"What are you going to name him, Spud?" John asked.

"Patches," Tyler replied. "Because he has patches of black all over him."

The adults murmured approval of the name, then exchanged glances. "Uh, ladies first," Brains said, indicating with a hand that Elise should choose next.

She glanced at John, who nodded and smiled. Crouching down, she wriggled her fingers near the

carpet. The gray tabby noticed them, and his little haunches settled into a hunting crouch. With a spring, he attacked her hand, batting at it. She laughed and scooped him up. "All right, little guy. You're coming home with me."

"What are you going to name him, Miss Elise?" Alex asked.

"I think I'll name him... Henry." Elise held him in both hands and showed him to Virgil. "What do you think? Does he look like a Henry?"

Virgil gave the kitten a skeptical glance, remembering the last time he'd come to visit, and the bite he'd sustained from that very kitten. "Uh, yeah. He looks like a Henry." He could hear John snickering. Don't you say a word, Johnny-boy, about Henry McCullough, he silently warned his brother. My rival on the football team, quarterback while I was tight end, rival for every girl I ever liked... why did she have to name him that?!

"John, it's your birthday soon," Brains said as Virgil internally agonized. "Why don't you pick next?"

"You're sure, Brains?" John asked, hesitating.

"Oh, for pity's sake!" Emily sputtered. "Tin-Tin, you choose for Brains since neither of them can make up their minds who's next!"

Tin-Tin laughed, and dipped towards the floor. "I like this little calico," she said, picking the kitten up carefully. "That leaves John with the cat as black as space, which is appropriate, I think."

"Why, thanks a lot, Tin-Tin." John disentangled his new cat from the feather teaser that the boys were still using to play with Patches. "C'mere you little imp."

"What will you name her, Brains?" Tin-Tin asked as she handed the ball of fur to him.

"I think you should name her, Tin-Tin. You're much better at such things," Brains said, as the kitten climbed up his arm and onto his shoulder. He bent over, and the kitten crawled down his back halfway, then headed up to his shoulder again. "My, she has sharp claws!"

Tin-Tin came to the rescue and plucked the little ball of fur from his back. "You should name her, Brains. She is supposed to be your kitten."

John was looking his new cat in the eye, but far enough away from his face that the kitten couldn't reach his nose with a paw. "I christen you Skitty," he intoned, then he moved the cat down to his chest so he could stroke her. She dug in her claws in an effort to climb his shirt. "Ow!"

Brains was now looking at his kitten's face, too, as Tin-Tin held her firmly. "You know, there's something about her eyes that reminds me of someone..."

Tin-Tin brought the cat around so she could see the facial features, too. "You're right! She reminds me of... of..."

They turned to each other, their eyes wide in startled delight. "Lena!"

"You're going to name the cat 'Lena'? Let me see." Emily approached and took the calico from Tin-Tin, carefully regarding the kitten's face. "You're right! I see a bit of her there." She handed the newly-christened kitten back to Brains. "Lena it is. I'm sure she'll be thrilled when she hears."

Pulling away, she clapped her hands, which startled kittens and owners alike. "Now, let's get your equipment together. There are bags of cat litter, self-cleaning litter pans, food bowls, food, cat care guides... they're all in the hallway. You can leave your kitten here for the moment while you haul your supplies to your room if you like." She ducked quickly into her bedroom and pulled out one of the cat carriers. "Elise, you might want to put little Henry in here when you take him to your apartment. Don't know what will happen if he gets out in the monorail."

"In that case, I'll take him with me now, and save us a trip." Elise took the carrier, and deftly slipped the protesting kitten inside. Then she followed Virgil out. John turned to Brains.

"How about you and I help each other out here? We can haul the supplies to the various suites. Alex can help us set up the food and litter boxes while Tin-Tin and Tyler watch the kittens until we get back."

"Sounds like a good plan to me," Brains said. He handed Lena to Tin-Tin, and John handed Skitty to Emily. "We'll be back soon."

Emily cuddled the black kitten to her face. "I'll miss these little ones," she said. "They've brightened my day in a lot of ways. But now I can focus on building bridges with Big Momma. Fortunately, she's a semi-feral, and may come around to becoming domesticated in time."

"Oh, I hope so, Grandma," Tin-Tin said as she crouched down to play with Lena.

Posted by Tikatu on October 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:33:08 GMT

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The Cliff House, Sunday, October 7th, Mid-morning....

"There, perfect." Luke surveyed the room and smiled. This place is finally starting to look and feel like home, he thought to himself. "Thanks again for your help, Scott. I knew if I tried to move that thing alone, I'd have dinged it and really made myself mad."

Scott shook his head. "No problem." He ran his hand over the smooth wood of the shelving unit he and Luke had just carried in. "If I hadn't seen you do it, I'd never believe that you actually made this yourself." Rommel sniffed around the edges of the shelf, then apparently approving, lay down in front of it.

Luke blushed and ran a hand through his hair. "Thanks. I usually don't do stuff this big; I'd rather carve. Smaller pieces are easier to do. At least for me anyway."

"Got any of those small pieces? I'd love to see them."

"Sure." Luke began rummaging through a box. "Here, I made this right before I left Colorado." He placed a small object in Scott's hand.

Scott whistled. "Wow, this is so cool! Look at the detail! It looks just like him!" He examined the tiny dog statue. "My brothers did a few modifications to some of my furniture a few months ago. I made them replace it, but I'm thinking I could use some shelves too. Would you be able to build a couple for me?"

Luke raised an eyebrow. "Modifications?"

Scott shook his head. "You don't want to know."

Luke smiled. "Sure. Next time you head over to the mainland, we'll pick up some wood and stain."

"Might be easier to just have it shipped."

"No thanks." Luke shook his head. "I'd rather pick it out myself. The lumber yard guys tend to give the leftovers and junk wood to people who order without looking at it."

Scott grinned. "And I thought Virgil was the perfectionist." The both chuckled. Scott looked around the room. "Well, now that the paint's dry and you have all your furniture, I guess all that's left to do is unpack."

Luke groaned. "I know..."

"You know, I'll bet if you bribed Elise with something chocolate, she'd come up and give you a hand," Scott told him.

"That's a good idea." Luke straightened out the shelf, moving it a little more to the right. "How long have you two known each other?"

"Quite a while. She served with me in the Air Force, then went to work for my Dad as a company pilot a few years later." Scott went on to tell Luke about the plane crash in New Hampshire and how Elise had found out the family was International Rescue.

Luke nodded sagely. "I spent a couple winters in New England. Not a fun place to be when the snow starts flying. Up there in the White Mountains, the weather can change in a heartbeat. Your father and Elise are lucky to be alive."

"Yeah, they are." Scott stared out the glass doors, lost in memory for a moment, then shook his head. "What did you do in New England?"

Luke reached down into another box and started unpacking books, placing them on his new shelf. "I went to college over in upper New York State. A bunch of us decided to head over to Mt. Washington one weekend to do some winter hiking and ski Tuckerman's Ravine. What a rush!"

Scott's eyes lit up. "You skied Tuck?"

"Well, I tumbled down it anyway. It's rougher than it looks. Do you ski?" Luke asked.

"Yes, not as often as I like to, but I try to get to the mainland a few times a year. We'll have to go sometime."

"Sounds like a plan." Luke looked down at his many boxes and sighed. "I am so not in the mood to do this."

"Then don't! Tell you what, why don't you come look at my stuff, then I'll take you to the hanger and give you an up close tour of Thunderbird One."

"Sure. I've gotten a few simulator lessons for Thunderbird Two, but after the initial tour, haven't seen much of the other vehicles."

"We want everyone to learn to fly at least Two." At Luke's startled glance, Scott held up his hand. "Not that we expect you to ever fly her, but better to be safe than sorry."

Luke nodded. "Good point." He snapped his fingers and Rommel trotted to his side. "Well then, let's get going. Maybe by the time I get back, this stuff will have magically unpacked itself."

Scott chuckled as he led the way out the door. "Yeah right, let me know how that works for you."

Posted by lillehafrue on October 19, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:33:21 GMT

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Sunday, October 7, 2006; Tracy Island Game Room; 12:10 p.m. local time (6:10 p.m. the previous evening in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA)

While everyone gathered around the pool to have lunch, John grabbed a sandwich and walked into the home theater. He took a chair in front of the large TV and turned it on. He recalled Callie saying earlier in the week that Alabama was to play one of their rivals, the University of Tennessee. "I think I'll take a look at that game to see just how rabid they really are."

Changing the channel to the sports network, he saw the stadium filled to capacity. "Wow...how many people are in that place?"

Virgil walked into the home theater with his own sandwich and pulled up a chair next to his brother. "Mind if I join you?"

"Not at all, Virg. I'm watching the Alabama-Tennessee football game. I've learned how big a sports fan Callie really is, but look at all that sea of red in the crowd."

Virgil's eyes widened. "Those fans are all decked out in crims...even crimson face make-up?"

"And the game hasn't even started yet." John shook his head. "I can recall times when Harvard and Yale fans were crazy, but they're nothing compared to the madness at that place."

Just before kickoff, one of the commentators said, "Coming up on Monday, it's the 80th anniversary of the famous 'Earthquake Game'." He explained about a football game at Louisiana State University, where the crowd reaction to their team scoring created enough noise to register on the seismograph at a nearby science complex.

"Now that's what I call fan dedication," John said. "When it's enough to cause a Richter Scale measurement, that definitely proves how football fans down in the South are--devoted and raucous."

After the coin toss, as Alabama's kicker launched the football into the air, both brothers heard the crowd yelling, "Roll Tide!"

"They sure know how to shout their battle cry," Virgil said excitedly.

After watching a Tennessee player get tackled, John said, "I wouldn't be surprised if Callie's enjoying the game from her apartment...and screaming at the top of her lungs."

"You think it might be enough to register around here?"

"No way, Virge," said John with a chuckle. "I think the only people who would notice are anyone living in the Cliff House. Right now, the rest of the family and the crew are outside, and the windows are shatterproof. She can scream to her heart's content."

When Virgil saw a elephant on two feet, he said, "Ah, their mascot. Isn't he named 'Big Al'?"

"Yeah, that's him all right. What's really strange is Alabama's biggest rival, Auburn University. They're called the Tigers, and their mascot, Aubie, is a tiger. The battle cry, though, is 'War Eagle'."

"'War Eagle'? I would've assumed that to be more like 'Go Tigers', or something close to it."

John chuckled again. "I looked it up on the Net. The story about the battle cry is a bit of a mystery. A golden eagle appeared at the first meeting between Auburn and Georgia back in the 1890s. Auburn fans were yelling 'War Eagle' before the eagle died some time later that day. It's stuck ever since. There's been a total of nine golden eagles in Auburn's history, and all of them have had the name...Tiger. Now that's enough confusion to drive anyone who doesn't understand that completely crazy." After both brothers laughed, he added, "Oh, well, she's already given this warning for next month: do not disturb her while Alabama and Auburn are playing each other."

"When exactly is that game played?"

"She said the third Saturday in November--the exact same day as the Harvard-Yale game."

"You're kidding," said Virgil. "Your rivalry game is the same day as hers?"

"Yeah, which reminds me. Before I get to the station for next month, I want to make a wager with Scott concerning that game. It's still early in the month, though, so I'll have to make a note on my calendar as soon as the game's over." He smiled. "I think Harvard's going to do a number on Yale this year."

Virgil sighed. "There's only one thing worrying me about Callie's love of sports. What if she's needed on a rescue when the big game's on?"

John's mood turned serious when he faced Virgil. "She knows the rescue goes first. If push comes to shove, she can always get the highlights when she comes back. It's happened at least once during her time on the station."

Moving back in his seat, Virgil said, "Take it easy, John. I believe you."

John's tone was much calmer. "It's a good thing her apartment's too far away from the Villa. Otherwise, she'd be screaming down the halls when Alabama won."

"Oh, well, let's just watch this game and relax. I need a break from painting today, anyway."

Both brothers enjoyed watching the game while eating their sandwiches and taking in the incredible amount of crimson-clad people in the stands.

Posted by TracyFan4Ever on October 20, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:33:33 GMT

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Monday, October 8, 9 AM; the repair bay

Brains arrived to find Will already there, wandering around, looking at the layout and some of the vehicles that weren't in the pods. "Will, good morning. How long have you been here?"

"Mornin', Brains. I got here about half an hour ago. I came early, in case I got lost. I hope I wasn't out of line, checkin' things out. I'm eager to get started."

Brains chuckled. "Not at all. The sooner you familiarize yourself with where things are, the better. Well, let's get started by checking the pods. You'll need to know which vehicles and what equipment go in which pods. And I'll give you a quick overview of each. We have manuals to help you learn what you need to know to maintain them."

"Sounds good to me. Lead on."

They spent the next two hours going from pod to pod. Using a data pad, Will entered information

about what went where, any special tools needed for certain things, and what needed more immediate attention. Brains showed him where the manuals were kept and picked one out, so they could get to work. He found Will to be a quick study, and by lunchtime, they had checked over the firefighting equipment, making sure the dicetyline tanks were full on those that had them.

Brains checked his watch. "It's time to take a lunch break, Will. I'm going to be busy in my lab this afternoon, so why don't you take one or two manuals to study this afternoon? Then tomorrow, we'll work on those vehicles."

"Good idea. Which ones do you suggest?"

They went to the cabinet where the manuals were kept and the engineer selected two: the Mole's and the Excavator's. "I think that's enough to keep you busy until tomorrow. I'll see you then, or you can contact me via your wristcomm, if you have any questions. You've had your physical and gotten your locator chip, right?."

"Right. I got that done Saturday afternoon. Didn't want to wait. Now I have to decide what color accent I want for my uniform - do I really need one? - and choose a code name. Man, all the details. Mr. Tracy went over everythin' with me Saturday morning. I'm beginnin' to feel a bit like I'm back in the Navy." Will grinned at his companion, who chuckled.

"You'll get used to it. Are you going to have lunch with the family? I know you haven't had a chance to buy supplies."

"No; I think the family should be able to eat together without relative strangers barging in. So I got introduced to Kyrano on Saturday. He allowed me to raid his pantry and freezer a bit." Will then laughed. "But I didn't need too much, mostly veggies. I brought some food with me. My mom was convinced that I'd starve, so she prepared some casseroles, bread, and desserts to tide me over. I probably brought enough to last a month or more. They were in a cooler, and seemed none the worse for the trip here."

Brains grinned. "It must be nice to have a mother like that. And now we part company. Enjoy your afternoon."

The two men went their separate ways.

Posted by hobbeth on October 21, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:34:08 GMT

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Sunday, October 7th, 2068, 4:30 pm., Kansas (9:30 am., Monday, October 8, Tracy Island)

The LifeFlight helijet lifted off with the two critical patients inside. The trauma center was two and a half hours away by road, even if there weren't any traffic problems. By helijet it was only twenty

five minutes. There was no way the two people would have survived that longer trip or even survived being taken to the local hospital by regular ambulance.

Dave Kandagaye walked back toward one of the paramedics from the neighboring district. Both districts had been called out to the crash site due to the number of cars involved and the location. It was inside of the northern district but Dave's station was the closest. The fire started by the crash was out and the less seriously injured victims were being put into ambulances. "It looks like we're done here. We're about ready to pull out."

The other man nodded. "I'll be leaving a truck here to keep an eye on it until all the cars are towed. The police investigation will take at least another four hours."

Dave nodded. There had been one fatality, so the investigation into the accident would be very thorough. "Let's hope the two we just transported make it. I'm just glad LifeFlight is around. They wouldn't have a chance, otherwise. By the way, I've been meaning to ask you. You know most of the LifeFlight people, don't you?"

"Yeah. My brother volunteers with them. He's always has all of them over for a picnic in the summer."

"There's one I haven't seen in a while. His name wasn't Don, but something like it and he had an Irish accent. I'd heard he was taking paramedic training and wondered how he was doing. I used to see him at classes a lot but I haven't seen him recently. I was wondering if he would consider working for us." Dave tried to keep the question casual.

"Dominic Kelly. Yeah, I know him. He'd talked about becoming a paramedic but he told me it was hard enough being a single parent as a nurse with a regular schedule. He really loves that kid of his. Cute kid. He moved somewhere last winter; I'm not sure where. I heard he got a job offer from Tracy Industries that would let him have more time with the kid plus the pay was a lot better." They had reached the fire engine Dave had arrived in.

"Oh, well. I guess I'll just have to wade through resumes again." Dave waved and climbed into the engine. The driver had been waiting for him and headed back toward their base.

Dave learned back and looked out the window. Dominic Kelly takes a nursing job with Tracy Industries and, all of a sudden, shows up with International Rescue's mobile hospital. I wonder who would know where he moved. Someone at his old job, maybe? If I send a letter to Mr. Kelly through Tracy Industries, I wonder if it will get to him?

Posted by SusanMartha on October 21, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:34:22 GMT
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Monday, October 8, 3:30 PM

Will was sitting on the balcony; he'd been studying for over two hours. He closed the manual for the Mole and thought, It'd be better if I was at or in these vehicles while I read these at this point. That way, I can get a better feel for things. He looked at his watch. I've got time. I think I'll go down to the pod bay for a while.

He stood up, picked up the manuals and went inside, then headed for the elevator. Soon he was in the bay. Now, which pods did Brains say these babies are in again? Oh yeah. He walked over to the pod and opened it, then went inside. The Mole was the first vehicle he encountered, so he began with that. He was able to open the hood and look inside.

He gave a long low whistle of appreciation as he opened the manual once again. "I'm gonna enjoy workin' on you," he said. He spent forty-five minutes checking out the "innards" and going over the controls, then closed it up and moved on to the Excavator. Another forty-five minutes later, and he was satisfied that he'd made progress toward understanding his job. He looked at his watch again and realized two things: it was after five, and he was getting hungry.

He decided to head back to his apartment and get dinner started. Then he'd catch forty winks and try to come up with a code name. Perhaps he'd even watch one of his favorite old movies: The Hunt for Red October. He closed up the vehicles, then the pod, and headed for the elevator, satisfied with the day's work.

Posted by hobbeth on October 22, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:34:38 GMT

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Monday, October 8, 2068, 2:30 p.m. local time, Parkes Observatory, New South Wales, Australia (4:30 p.m., Tracy Island)

"Well, looks like this is the place," John said to his companion.

"Feels like it's out in the middle of nowhere," Dr. Amy Fitzpatrick replied. She pulled a brush from her handbag and ran it through her short, red hair. "Took forever to get here."

"But it'll be worth it," John said firmly. "The upgraded array will be something to see." He climbed out of the car and stretched his long legs before circling the sedan and opening the door for Amy. She thanked him with a coquettish smile as she stepped out.

It had been a nearly three hour drive from Sydney to Parkes, but since the observatory's nearest town didn't have an airport, it was a necessary one. The early morning flight from the island had landed him in Sydney near lunch time, and allowed him an opportunity to catch up with Amy, an old friend from Harvard. They'd kept up a correspondence over the years, and had agreed to travel together from the city to the country.

They walked slowly toward the administrative building, joining a few others who had come for the

momentous occasion. The Parkes Observatory now had the distinction of being the largest radio telescope in the world. A new dish, bigger by far than any built on Earth before, now dominated the hill where a smaller, but more famous dish still stood.

"I have to admit, John, this is a strange way to celebrate a birthday." Amy commented as he held open the door for her. The air conditioned administration building was bright and modern, and they approached the welcome desk to check in.

"John G. Tracy," he said to the young man behind the desk. Amy stated her name and, after they both had tendered their identifications, each was given a visitor's badge. John tacked his on the lapel of his sports jacket.

"In answer to your question," John said as they moved away and further into the building, following the signs that directed them to the working heart of the observatory, "yes, it is a strange sort of birthday. But I didn't exactly choose the day that the new telescope array would come online, and my father thought it would be best if I represented the Tracy name for the occasion." He smiled and shrugged. "Besides, I had a party last night at home. A luau, down on the beach."

And so he had. The family and the recruits had dined around the pool for a light lunch provided by Emily and Lisa, which allowed Kyrano to outdo himself with the main party: a traditional luau, complete with tiki torches, poi, pineapple, and roasted pig, held on the island's beach. Jeff had insisted that the party be held the night before with this particular trip in mind. John had gotten several nice gifts, including a top of the line laptop from his father and stepmother.

"That's for writing your next book," Dianne had stated. "Maybe you'll keep all your notes in one place this time!"

"Dad?" John had asked later, after he'd had a good look at the computer. "Where'd you get that program? The star mapping one? I don't think I've seen that one on the market..."

Jeff had just winked at him and said, "It's nice to have old friends at the WSA."

"Mr. Tracy?" A middle-aged woman approached them, smiling broadly and extending her hand. "I'm Dr. Laura Irwin, director of the Parkes project."

"I'm John Tracy. This is Dr. Amy Fitzpatrick." John shook hands with her first, then Amy did.

"I'm so glad you've come, Mr. Tracy. Our project couldn't have done without the financing provided by Tracy Industries. We now have the world's largest radio telescope, and the first one directly connected to a gravitational-wave array." Dr. Irwin sighed, a happy sound. She clapped her dark hands together. "So, are you ready to see what our new telescope can do?"

"We certainly are," John said, glancing at his companion.

"Then, come this way, please." Dr. Irwin gestured toward the observatory labs, and the couple followed her.

Posted by Tikatu on October 23, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:34:54 GMT

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Tuesday, October 9, 2068, 9:30 a.m., Thunderbird Two, en route to Mateo Island

Luke sat back and watched his new teammates, a shiver of excitement running up his spine. This was his first excursion in Thunderbird Two, and already he was impressed. Though he had seen Thunderbird One launch during the airliner rescue, he hadn't been able to see Thunderbird Two do the same. He'd looked at the vessel time and time again and wondered how, with so short a runway, it managed to get off the ground. Now he knew, and that launch had put his heart in his throat for a few long moments.

He glanced down at his uniform. It felt strange to be wearing it, but as this was an official excursion, the call had been to be properly dressed -- for those who had uniforms. Cassie and Will did not. Cassie was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt marked with the logo of the FDNY, while Will had opted for a mechanic's coverall.

"All right, everyone." Scott stood behind the pilot's chair, clapping his hands once to get everyone's attention. When he had it, he continued. "A little bit of background on Mateo Island. It was originally, like our base, a volcano, but one that blew its top several hundred years ago, leaving behind what's basically a big rock in the middle of the ocean. It still had some impressive lava caves and tubes, and as a result, Japanese forces used it as a way station during World War Two." There were a few glances in Cassie's direction, but she didn't seem to notice. "It was sold as part of the larger spread of islands and atolls that included our base, and didn't seem to be of any particular use... at first. But we discovered that -- with very little effort on our part - the natural caverns of Mateo would make excellent secondary hangars and repair facilities for the Thunderbirds." He paused and grinned. "It just didn't make for a very nice place to live, that's all."

There was a ripple of laughter through the cockpit, and Virgil piped up. "Better strap in, Scott. We're coming up on Mateo."

"Right." Scott took his seat, fastening his safety belt. Those others who had relaxed enough to undo theirs -- Gordon, Brandon, Elise -- also redid theirs. Luke noticed that, although both nurses were in attendance, Dr. Tracy was not. Nor was John, who had left for some function in Australia the day before and had evidently not yet returned.

Thunderbird Two made a wide sweeping turn, changing its direction entirely. The island became visible to those in the cockpit, and Luke realized that Scott was being literal in his description -- Mateo was a rock sticking up out of the sea. There seemed to be a bit of greenery at the top of the cliff they were heading for, but it didn't capture his attention for long. Instead, the rapidly approaching wall of rock drew his eye, and he almost held his breath. It didn't seem like they would stop in time!

But, as he watched, a dark line appeared in the cliff face. Portions of it separated, sliding both upwards and downwards, creating an wide opening two thirds of the way to the peak. Thunderbird Two slowed, and the VTOLs took over so that they eased into the huge cavern beyond. It was big enough to accommodate Two... and for the cargo carrier to turn around to face the opening again. Virgil eased his baby to the floor, where lights marked the landing spot. The opening began to

close again, cutting off the sunlight.

Scott unbuckled himself again, and stood. "Okay, everyone. To the pod."

--Mateo Island, part 1

Posted by Tikatu on October 23, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:35:14 GMT

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Will's eyes nearly popped as the ramp door opened, and allowed the Thunderbird Two's passengers access to Mateo's secrets. He looked up at Thunderbird Two's chassis, suspended on what seemed to him to be spindly telescoping legs. Holy sh--! he thought. I knew I'd eventually be workin' on these beauts, but never thought I'd be ridin' in one, and on my second day on the job, too!

The cavern was dark, and smelled of something that Will recognized as lubricating oil. There was also another scent, more elusive, but that he finally pinned down as being fuel. Must be from Thunderbird Two, he guessed.

"Getting in here was pretty impressive, guys," Callie said. "But so far, all I see is dark. And all I saw on the way in was a cave."

"Ah hah!" Gordon said, in his best conspiratorial tone. "That's what you're supposed to see, m'dear." He paused, took a deep breath and shouted, "Lights!"

Bank after bank of lights, hidden in the cracks and crevices of the ceiling, came on, illuminating the entire room. Virgil rolled his eyes. "Don't think Gordon did anything spectacular, folks. He was just the one holding the remote, that's all."

Gordon stuck out his tongue at Virgil. "You take all the fun out of it, Virge."

"But..." Nikki said, her face carrying a puzzled frown. "It's still just a cave. A huge cave, but pretty plain."

"Things aren't what they seem, Nikki," Scott said with a grin. "Okay, Gordon; it's showtime."

There were gasps of amazement as the walls started sliding down, revealing equipment large enough, and complex enough to puzzle most of them. A larger wall disappeared into the floor, opening up another cavern, nearly as big as the one they stood in.

"You might be interested in this, Will," Scott said, coming near and indicating the machinery around them. "This is all computer-controlled emergency repair equipment. We have some of this equipment at base, but we prefer to get our hands dirty in repairing our own craft. Besides, the computers, as good as they are, can't do everything. Just the major hauling and positioning.

Saves wear and tear on the back."

"That sounds good to me. Are the repairs permanent, or just temporary until you can get the vehicle in question back to Tracy Island?"

"Temporary, as we don't usually have Brains or Tin-Tin out here to give us a hand."

Will nodded. "Makes sense. You can't always rely on machinery to make good repairs; after all, what if they break down, too?"

Scott laughed. "I can see that we're going to get along just fine."

By this time, the lights were on in the other cavern, which had a huge turntable emblazoned with the IR logo on it.

"There's room in the main cavern for both Thunderbirds One and Two to land and be serviced," Virgil explained. "This is where the temporary quarters are, too, as well as access to the upper levels and the silo for Thunderbird Three."

"John mentioned possibly landing here if there was some kind of emergency," Callie said, looking thoughtful. "Said it would minimize collateral damage if we had to land here. Having seen Mateo, I can see what he meant. I mean, there's not much to lose here."

Gordon and Virgil looked at each other, and Virgil sighed. "That's not quite true. It would keep us from losing what we have on Tracy Island, and all the lives there, but if there was any kind of explosive emergency, we could lose Mateo Island entirely."

"What do you mean?" asked Dom.

"Well, it's part of the reason we came here today. But we'll get to that as we go further into the complex." Scott motioned to the long flight of steps that went up and over the quarters that Virgil had indicated.

"Hey, can't we see what the temporary quarters look like?" Cassie asked.

Scott and Virgil glanced at each other, and Virgil shrugged. "Sure. Why not?"

He pulled open one of the doors under the steps, and the new recruits followed him inside. "As you can see, there's not much to see. A small dining area and kitchenette, a small half-bath, a lounge on the far end of the room, and a spiral staircase that leads to the sleeping area upstairs." Virgil glanced at Cassie, who stood at his side. "Hm. I think I'd better talk to Dad about putting some sort of portable partition here so we can separate the sleeping room into men's and women's areas. And the shower upstairs... that'll have to be shared, too."

"Are there any medical facilities?" Nikki asked as she surveyed the spartan living conditions, arms folded.

"Yeah, through here." Gordon opened a door to their left, next to the door to the half-bath, and

everyone who could, followed him into another room, with Dom and Nikki in the lead. He spread his hands apologetically. "As you can see, it's nothing compared to the infirmary back home."

"Hell, that's nothing compared to the sickbay on Thunderbird Two," Luke said, shaking his head.

"Ah, yeah." Gordon had the good grace to look embarrassed. "I guess we'll put a bug in Mom's ear, too."

"So, has everyone seen what's here?" Scott asked. He glanced at his watch. "We do need to move along."

They headed for the stairs again, and Dom peered down a short, shadowed corridor at the base. "What's back there?" he asked, giving Gordon a nudge.

"Storage, mainly. And an emergency exit. Sort of a reinforced bunker, just in case something nasty happens."

"And what kind of nasty thing might happen?"

"Well," Gordon said, rubbing his chin. "I think Scott and Virgil will explain that."

They climbed the stairs and entered a corridor. Will noticed the smell of fuel getting stronger. He also heard the familiar humming of machinery, well-oiled and running smoothly. The group took a left hand turn, and were brought out into another large chamber, not as large as the ones below, but impressive nonetheless. There was a large squarish chamber with a single metal door, and a quietly humming tank arrangement.

"Isn't that a water purification plant?" Will asked.

"Yeah, it is. The whole complex is powered by a cold fusion reactor that's shielded with a cahelium-graphite silo, and water purification and sanitation are handled by what Will's already identified." Virgil pointed to each as he warmed up to his topic. "The entire island is hooked up to a satellite system, and it's functions are monitored in Thunderbird Five."

"Yeah! That's right!" Callie exclaimed. "Don't know why I didn't put the two together before now!" She shook her head and laughed. "I kept wondering what was so special about the Mateo board. Now I know!"

"So, what else is here?" Will asked as they headed back down to the original corridor. "I keep smelling fuel."

"Ah, yes." Scott said as he led them all into another large room. "This is why we're here today."

"What is it?" Luke asked, frowning at the sleek red aircraft sitting in the lift cradle. "It's marked for Tracy Aerospace."

"It's a fuel tanker," Elise explained. When the others looked at her, she added, "I used to see them in the military."

"Elise is right." Scott nodded, and smiled slightly. "This one carries fuel from here to Tracy Island for our use. One of us will be flying it back to the island today."

"How does it get out?" Cassie asked, curious.

"There are camouflaged hangar doors above us that open outward, and the cradle is lifted up by hydraulics," Virgil said. "The tanker is VTOL equipped, so it doesn't need runway."

"I see," Will said, nodding. "But I bet it doesn't store all the fuel that the complex needs. Where's the rest?"

"Down here!" Gordon called, as he headed down another long stairway.

--Mateo Island, part 2

Posted by Tikatu on October 24, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:35:43 GMT

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The crew, recruits and veterans alike, followed Gordon down another long flight. He paused on a landing and in front of a heavy metal door. The smell of fuel was stronger now, and it made Cassie nervous. There were flammability warnings on the door, and a human biohazard warning, but no environmental biohazard ones, a fact that made her blink in surprise. A fuel that's not considered an environmental biohazard? she pondered. I've never heard of such a thing.

"Is everyone here?" Gordon asked, peering over the small crowd.

Virgil was last down the stairs. "Yeah."

"Okay. You've all seen the tanker. Now here's where we keep the fuel." Gordon put a hand up to a scanner, and unlocked the door. Scott, who had wormed his way to the front of the crowd, led them all inside.

"Wow," Nikki breathed in awe.

Six huge tanks loomed before them as they stepped out onto a catwalk. Cassie noticed that the scent of fuel didn't increase as much as she thought it would; it was hardly noticeable at all. Scott led the way to the right, walking slowly backwards as he began to speak.

"These cahelium reinforced tanks hold enough fuel to provide Tracy Island and IR's auxiliary vehicles for nine months to a year. However, we don't like to let them get less than 75 percent depleted, so a tanker arrives roughly every six months to fill the tanks." He smiled, and scratched the back of his head. "With the increased needs of our jets, and the increased use of the pod vehicles lately, we found we needed to make a fuel run a little sooner than normal."

"So, you come out here every six months to see to the tank refilling?" Will asked.

"Actually, no. The whole fuel retrieval system is totally automated," Virgil piped up from where he was at the back of the pack. "A tanker ship pulls up, assisted by navigation lights and a laser-guidance system, and the computers take over. We usually run a diagnostic on the place when we come out. Gordon's gone off to do that now."

They kept moving along the catwalk, passing through a control room where Scott stopped. "Virge, if you'd take them the rest of the way around, I'll see that our tanker's full and ready to go."

"F-A-B," Virgil said as he slipped through the crowd and to the head of the line. "Come along here."

"How do you keep this place safe?" Callie asked, a puzzled frown on her face. "I mean, we can monitor it from Five, but we can't really do anything about it."

"And I don't see that you have the equipment at Tracy Island to do anything about a fire or explosion from there, either," Cassie added

"Well," Virgil said, sounding a bit sheepish. "This room is inside a blast shield made of reinforced cahelium, just like the power plant we saw, and the power plant on the island. So that's our second line of defense." He stopped and pointed down to a series of four relatively stubby pipes with open vents on their slanted tops. "Down there is our first. Those vents can suck the air out of this room, or flood it with seawater, within two minutes. Brains discovered that to be the optimum balance of time between action and explosion."

"I see," Cassie said with a nod. "I'd think that sucking the air out would be more effective."

"I'm sure you're right, Cassie, but Brains likes to cover every contingency."

"What's this cahelium that I keep hearin' about?" Will asked, scratching his head a bit.

"It's a metal that Brains designed," Virgil replied. "He's got several variations of it, and all of the Thunderbirds are made of it. It's virtually indestructible."

"That's right," Dom said quietly, catching everyone's attention. He realized that people were listening, and he gave a pained, crooked smile when he realized it. "Dr. Tracy said we were okay in Seven, that nothing could damage cahelium except more cahelium. Then... the medical cabin..." His voice trailed off.

"Yeah," Virgil said just as quietly. A moment passed, and he heaved a sigh, and continued in a louder, brighter tone. "Why don't we turn around and head back? There's nothing much more to see along the catwalk."

There was a murmur of agreement, and the tour group allowed him to slip back to the head of the line as they turned around.

"Virgil," Cassie began. "I noticed that this stuff is flammable." She waved an arm at the tanks. "But you don't have an environmental biohazard warning on it? How come?"

"Because it's water soluble," Virgil said, shrugging a bit. "If it's spilled in the sea, or a lake, it breaks down quickly into harmless components. If absorbed into the ground, a good watering or rain will do the same to it. We have a human warning on it because it'll make anyone who drinks it ill, but the remedy is to drink lots of water and dilute it." He grimaced. "It'll move through the digestive tract like lightning, though. Not a pleasant prospect."

"I see." Cassie looked thoughtful.

Luke, who'd been following their conversation asked, "How does it burn? I mean, does it add to the air pollution? Deplete the ozone layer?"

"No to both, Luke. It burns clean."

"Then why hasn't Tracy Industries patented it and sold it?" Dom asked, frowning as he remembered his half-brother's article. "It would do the world a very big favor."

"Oh, it's patented," Virgil said as they entered the control room where Scott waited. "But there are groups out there, such as the oil cartels and the automobile industry, that want nothing to do with it. They've been actively working in the World Government to have its discovery suppressed."

"Hm." Dom said, his frown clearing a bit. "I wonder if the 'share the tech' people know about that."

"Or if they even care," Elise grumbled. She dropped back to walk with Scott at his invitation.

"Hey, Virgil," Brandon said. "You mentioned that the tankers pull up to the island for delivery. Does that mean the equipment is at sea level?"

"Yeah, it does," Virgil replied as they moved back onto the landing.

Gordon waited for them there. "Everything's shipshape with the computerized systems," he said.

"Good." Virgil shut the door, and Gordon put his hand up to lock it.

"What I was wondering," Brandon said as they started up the steps again, "was what do you have to prevent corrosion. All that equipment, getting slammed by the waves and the salt air..."

"Everything's covered." Gordon turned on the steps to look back at Brandon. "Covered and camouflaged, just like the entrance to the hangar. That way, corrosion is kept to a minimum."

"And Mateo will always look like just a rock in the middle of the ocean," Scott added. When they reached the top of the steps, the group stopped. "Elise and I will take the tanker to Tracy Island now. We'll be back within the hour."

"In the meantime, we can grab something to eat..." Virgil began.

"And whoever wants to go see where Thunderbird Four docks can come with me!"

"I'd like to see Thunderbird Three's silo," Callie said.

The three Tracy brothers glanced at each other. "Okay," Virgil said. "Whoever wants to see Thunderbird Three's silo, come with me."

Gordon rubbed his hands together. "And whoever wants to see Thunderbird Four's slip, follow me!"

He sounded so eager that Cassie decided to follow him. Dom and Nikki joined the small party as, predictably, did Brandon. Luke and Will went off with Virgil and Callie. Gordon led them back to the main hangar, and across it to another long flight of stairs.

"You certainly get your exercise roaming around this place," Nikki quipped.

"Yeah, I don't know if I'll make it back up," Cassie added with a grin.

"Pffft!" Gordon waved a dismissive hand. "You ladies are fit as fiddles."

He brought them down to another cavern, this one far more rough than the others, though the empty slip was smooth concrete. Dark sea water lapped gently against its side. "There's a camouflaged door below sea level over there," he said pointing to what looked like a solid rock wall. "Thunderbird Four can come and go undetected. In fact, that's what usually happens when we need the tanker. We launch Thunderbird Four via the airstrip -- it has small hover jets so we can do it -- and I chauffeur the pilots here and back."

"And today, Virgil gets to do it?" Brandon asked.

"Yep. We thought it would be a good experience for all you new folks... or newer folks, since some of you have been here a good while now."

"Has Dianne been here?" Dom asked.

"No, she hasn't, but she had to work with the kids today on schoolwork." Gordon grimaced. "She'd be unhappy with the state of the first aid station."

"You think?" Nikki said, chuckling.

Cassie listened to the conversation with one ear and looked down at the dark water, and unconsciously hugged herself. She knew that she'd be learning to swim in that environment, and it didn't exactly make her feel comfortable seeing it here, so opaque and foreboding. She was relieved to hear Gordon say, "Okay, folks, let's head back up to the hangar. My grandmother packed us quite a lunch, and I'd like to get into it before Virgil's group does!"

"Sounds good to me!" Brandon said heartily as they retraced their steps and headed up that long flight.

--Mateo Island, finis

Posted by Tikatu on October 27, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:35:54 GMT

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"Okay, Will," Brains said. "You've seen the vehicles and equipment you'll be working on, but you haven't checked out the tool area, right?"

"True, except for those you and I used to work on the firefighting equipment. And that wasn't very much, since we hardly needed to do anything to them. They're all kept in this section of the bay, I take it."

"Right. The ones you'll be using most of the time are in this cabinet and these two drawers." Brains indicated the two top drawers of a large chest. "But some of the vehicles, and especially the Thunderbird vessels, use specialized tools. Now, you probably won't be working on the Thunderbirds, unless one of the pilots asks for your assistance, but you could be asked to bring a specific tool. So you should know where we keep them."

"As you can see, each drawer and cabinet is labeled for the vehicle or vessel the tools inside are used on. Those used on our boats are kept in the pen. We'll head over to that area tomorrow. So go ahead and select a drawer, and open it."

Will checked the labels, then pulled on the fifth drawer from the top. When it opened, he saw something inside that didn't look like it could possibly belong where it was. He picked it up and saw another one beneath. "What the heck is this? A Muesli bar?" He looked over at Brains, puzzlement written all over his face.

Brains chuckled slightly. "Our last mechanic had a blood sugar problem. She secreted these in various places so she'd have them handy, just in case."

"A mechanic with a blood sugar problem? Sounds to me like someone who wouldn't get a whole lot of work done."

"No, she did her job well, usually. Her health problems rarely got in the way of her work."

"Then I'll probably find more in other places?"

"Maybe. We did find some of these in Thunderbird 2. She went on a few of our rescues, so she kept a stash there."

"She went on rescues? A mechanic?" Will scratched his head. "Does that mean I'll be goin' on rescues as well?"

"It's a possibility, especially if it's an 'all hands' type. So if you hear the emergency alarm - and I'm

sure you'll know it when you hear it - head to the lounge fast."

"Okay; I will." Will looked down at the bar in his hand, then glanced at the one still in the drawer. "So what do I do with these things whenever I find them?"

"Well, unless you or someone else want them, there would be only two choices, I guess."

"I know I'm not interested in eating these. And if anyone else liked them, I'm sure you'd know about that."

"With the exception of our other new recruit, you're right." Brains took the other Muesli bar out of the drawer and put it on the worktable. Will put the one he had next to it.

"So what are the two choices?"

"Either chuck them out, or..." Brains grinned suddenly.

"Or what?"

"Maybe Gatorade, Alan's pygmy alligator, would enjoy them."

"Alan's got an alligator?"

Brains laughed. "Don't worry. It's a little one, and is kept in a pen."

"I'm glad to hear that!"

"Well, let's get back to the job at hand, shall we?"

The two men turned back to the tool chest.

Posted by hobbeth on October 27, 2007[/size][[/color]

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:36:05 GMT

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Tracy Island, Wednesday, October 10th, mid-morning...

Luke shuffled through the letters in his hand. There was one from his brother, one from his parents, and a couple from the gang in Colorado. The last one stumped him. It was a bright orange envelope with only his first name on it. He paused, staring at it, realizing during the mail call today, everyone on the island had gotten the same thing.

Shrugging, he opened it and pulled out the card inside. As he opened it, a pile of confetti bats and pumpkins fell to the floor. "What the...? Great. No, Rom, don't eat it!" He bent over and scraped up the bits of paper, stuffing them back into the envelope. He quickly scanned the card, then

narrowing his eyes, he turned and marched out the door and down the balcony steps.

Luke made his way over to Elise's apartment, and knocked on the glass door. A moment later she appeared and grinned. "Hey, Luke," she said as she opened the door. "What's up?"

Luke stepped inside and held out the envelope. "A Halloween party? Are you kidding?"

Elise shook her head. "Nope. Why, that a problem for you?"

He sighed and ran a hand through his hair. "I'm not a big party kind of guy. I'll go, sure, but...it's the costume part that's got me worried. I'm not good at that sort of thing."

Elise chuckled. "Poor baby." Luke glared at her and she laughed again. "How about I come up with something and we can go together?"

Relief washed over Luke's face. "Sure. Thanks, Elise." He paused a moment, his face growing stern. "No tights, no drag. Something normal."

She nodded solemnly. "Normal it is." She held out her hand. "Want to spit shake on it?"

Luke rolled his eyes. "You're so gross." A tugging at his sock attracted his attention and he looked down to see a tiny tabby kitten. "Well, hello there. And who might you be?" He picked up the kitten, who promptly fluffed up and hissed. "Aren't you a tough guy? Where did you get him?"

Elise smiled. "One of the good things that came out of the tornado." She went on to explain how the Tracy homestead had been destroyed and how they had discovered Momma Cat and the kittens. "I called him Henry."

"Hi there, Henry." Luke adjusted his grip on the kitten and stroked it under the chin. Henry batted a paw at him, then cuddled up and began to purr. "Rom's going to go nuts when he gets a whiff of this guy."

"So you'll go? And you'll bring something to eat? We're trying to take the burden off of Kyrano and Mrs. Tracy." Elise chuckled. "Though she insisted on making the cake. Doesn't trust the rest of us," she added with a wink.

Luke nodded in agreement. "Good idea. Not sure what I'll bring yet. Do you want food-food or finger type stuff?"

"Finger stuff is fine." Elise raised an eyebrow in surprise. "You can cook?"

"Yes, I can cook," Luke shot back. "Well, a few things. How about wings? I make a mean garlic hot wing. I'll throw in the veggies and dressing to go with them."

Elise smiled. "Perfect! And I'll start working on a costume for us. Something fun...hmm..."

"I meant it about the tights," Luke said as he handed Henry back to her. "I've got to go find Will. Mr. Tracy broached a mailbox idea to me today and I want to get Will's opinion and help with it."

Talk to you later." He started out the door, then paused and turned, a devilish grin on his face. "Hey, Henry..." Luke dumped the confetti on Elise's clean floor and laughed as the kitten scrambled out of her arms to jump at it. He winked at Elise's annoyed expression. "Have fun!" Then he sauntered out the door.

Posted by lillehafrue on November 3, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:36:19 GMT

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Wednesday, October 10, 2068, 11:00 a.m., Tracy Island

Dianne smoothed her hand over the clean side of the medical cabin. Parts of it were still unpainted, the cahelium bare and coppery. She turned to Brains, who was there to answer her questions. "Will you be repainting the whole thing?"

"Yes," he answered simply, nodding. Dianne nodded back, then came to the wide side doors. They stood open, and the ramp was down, inviting her to enter. She took a deep breath, and walked up the ramp.

She stood there for a moment, looking around, as Anna joined her. Jeff was outside, hovering, but Anna had felt too many people would make Dianne feel crowded. If she needed his support, he was there, otherwise, Dianne had Anna to watch her and gauge her responses.

"How do you feel looking at this?" Anna asked quietly.

Dianne stood still, looking around thoughtfully. The diagnostic beds were back in place, but covered in plastic, as was the monitoring station and the storage lockers. The antigravity stretchers weren't in place, but their hangers remained. "It's odd. It's familiar, yet it's like seeing it for the first time... again." She ran a hand over the dust covered plastic on one of the beds, and gave Brains, who had followed at a distance, a wry smile. "We'll have a fun time cleaning this up, won't we?"

She moved toward the back corner, which had been rebuilt. It was empty; the storage lockers there hadn't yet been replaced. She turned to the surgical bay, and glanced in. The parts of the bed were lying on the floor, ready to be reassembled. Some of the lockers were gone; they'd been warped beyond use by the collision, but the sink still stood. Its smooth polymer surface was cracked, though. Brains came up behind her. "That's coming out today. We'll be replacing everything in here before reassembling the bed. Hopefully, we'll have it done by the end of the day, or mid-day tomorrow." He smiled slightly. "Will's been a great help on this."

Dianne nodded, and said slowly, "I'm just thankful that no one was back here when we collided." She shook her head vigorously, her voice cracking. "There would have been definite fatalities then."

She breathed deeply, then turned away and went back into the main cabin. Spying the door on

the other side, she walked toward it, slowly, and tapped the button to slide it open. It didn't budge.

"No power to it yet, I'm afraid," Brains said. "I'm still working on the new coupling devices."

Anna watched as Dianne merely nodded. "How will those devices work?" Anna asked.

"Well, there'll still be a magnetic coupler that will bring the two parts close together, but if there's a failure on the magnets, there will be a series of heavy duty studs fixed in the control cabin's rear wall. They'll slot into holes on the medical cabin, and be clamped from within. A power failure will freeze the clamps in place so the two pieces are still physically connected." He paused. "I can show you in computer simulation if you like."

"Maybe later," Dianne murmured. She turned, smiled a little, and said, "Where's the control cabin?"

"Uh, outside." Brains shot a glance at Anna, who said nothing. "Are you sure you want to see it? We've been dismantling it..."

Dianne bit her lower lip, letting it slide between her teeth. "I'd like to try, anyway."

"Not alone," Anna said quickly.

"No, not alone," Dianne agreed.

They left the medical cabin, Dianne pausing a moment to run her hand along the door. "You know," she said conversationally, "I didn't even look at the skylights or the windows. Just the equipment. All I could think about was how fast could we get it restocked for the next rescue."

"I'll let you know when it's ready for that," Brains said as he followed her out.. He motioned to his right, to where the control cab would normally be. "This way."

Jeff met Dianne at the bottom of the ramp. "What's happening, love?" he asked as she held out her hand to him.

"I'm going to see the control cabin. Come with me, please?"

Jeff glanced at Anna, who nodded a little. "Sure, love. I'll come."

They followed Brains to the end of the medical cabin. The control cab looked much different than it had the last time Dianne and Jeff had seen it. Some of the outer skin had been removed, and much of the interior walls, so in spots, they could see right inside. The ceiling had been removed, as Dianne could see from where she stood outside.

"As you can see, we're taking it apart to see what we can salvage before we rebuild," Brains explained. He waved his hand toward a pile of things, most wrapped in plastic, set to one side. "Hopefully we can use these things again."

The lockers were there; only Jeff noticed the dent in Nikki's door. So was the emergency

diagnostic bed, wrapped in plastic and laid on one side. But what made Dianne draw in a deep breath and tighten her grip on Jeff's hand was the chair -- the pilot's chair, her chair. It was still in the leaned back position, though it was no longer on its pedestal. The steering yoke was nowhere to be seen.

"I... I think I've seen enough for now," Dianne said abruptly. Anna, watching, noticed where Dianne's gaze went, and how Jeff turned to search her face as it went white. He lifted her hand to his lips, and she turned to him, then buried her face in his shoulder.

Anna moved in, and between her and Jeff, they drew Dianne away. "It's okay, Dianne. You don't have to do it all in one day. The medical cabin was enough."

As they headed out of the repair bay and back to the monorail, Anna asked, "How did you feel about this visit?"

Dianne breathed deeply a couple of times, before answering. Her voice trembled a little. "It was harder than I thought it would be. Not so much the medical cabin, though I had a quick vision what it might have been like if we'd encountered the tornado on the way in, instead of out." She sighed heavily. "I'm glad they're pulling it apart." Softly, she added, "The chair was the worst of it. I'm going to ask Brains to trash it entirely. Design a new chair."

"Good thought," Anna said, sitting next to her as Jeff sent the monorail car back to the elevators. "What else can you do?"

Dianne looked puzzled, and Anna continued. "You need to take control of your recovery, Dianne. What else can you do that would help you accomplish that?"

"Well, Brains has been consulting me on the design of the cockpit," Dianne said, her brow furrowing. "We've agreed that there won't be a steering column anymore, but will be all computer controlled. Sort of like a video game." She huffed a tiny laugh. "Tyler's promised that he'll teach me how to use a joystick."

"All of the ground based Thunderbirds and auxiliary equipment will be retrofitted with airbags, too," Jeff offered. "Drew bent my ear about that one."

"Be interesting to see how they design airbags for Thunderbird Four," Anna said. "This sounds like a start. What else can you do?"

"I'd get down there and work on the medical cabin, but Brains and Tin-Tin would tell me I'm in the way." Dianne looked down at her hands. "I've been making a list of what we'll need, and ordering the meds and other supplies. Some of them have arrived already."

"That sounds good, too."

The monorail came to a stop, and they stepped out into the rock-hewn vestibule. "I think you're ready to go back to the medical cabin, Dianne," Anna said. "You've had a rescue or two; you're taking charge again. We'll see about actually piloting Seven once things have been finalized on the new designs, and it's rebuilt."

Dianne smiled wanly, and shook her head. "Thank you, Anna. I know I couldn't have come this far without your help."

"We're not done yet, but you're getting there."

The elevator opened, and the trio stepped out. Jeff glanced at his watch. "Lunch will be served shortly. I'll get the kids, and have a word with their teachers before then."

"Then we'll meet you in the dining room," Dianne said, kissing him on the cheek. He turned and made the kiss a full one on the lips. She returned it, putting her arms around him. For a moment, they were oblivious to anyone but each other, so it was nearly a surprise when they heard Anna murmur softly.

"Teenagers."

Posted by Tikatu on November 6, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:36:38 GMT

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Wed, Oct 10th 2:30pm, Tracy Island

Callie walked through the door to Anna's office. "Nice office. This is new since I went up to Thunderbird Five."

Anna looked up from her computer. "Hello, Callie. Mr. Tracy thought I should have a permanent place here to meet patients. Someplace neutral where we can be private." Anna closed the computer and motioned Callie to a small sofa. She moved to a chair across from Callie. "Are you happy to be back on Earth?"

"Yes. One month is long enough to get things done, but I like feeling fresh air again."

"How did the rest of your time go after the nightmare? Are you more nervous now that you're back?"

"A little," Callie admitted. "However, it's not so bad anymore. I'm getting a lot better control of myself."

"You don't seem as closed off as you were before you left for Thunderbird Five." Anna leaned back in her chair. "How are you doing without the antidepressants?"

"I'm definitely improving. I've been sleeping much better at night, and I'm not thinking about...him so much."

"What are your thoughts when you think about him? How does it make you feel?"

"When I start thinking about him, I feel...violated, angry, like I want to get back at him so badly."

"Angry. Not scared?"

"At first, yes, I was scared. I started looking over my shoulder, getting the uncomfortable feeling he was somewhere close by. After a while, though, I felt angry, wondering why he would do this to me."

"Do you blame yourself for what happened?"

"In a way, yes, I do. I let him get to me too easily. I was an easy target for him."

"Why do you say that? Why do you think you were easier for him to get than anyone else?"

"I've been asking myself that same question since that incident. Probably because he saw me by myself and got me isolated, leaving me unable to get in touch with anyone else. No partner, no one. And my fear of snakes sure didn't help matters."

"Why were you alone? Did you wander off by yourself?"

"Oh, no. I was ordered to investigate the fuel at the scene of the plane crash. I got so absorbed with the work that I didn't know he was even there."

"Was there anyone who could have gone with you?"

Callie shrugged. "I really don't know. Everyone was so busy doing tasks to help the passengers, and all hands were basically tied up. After what had happened to me, Mr. Tracy ordered that NO ONE be allowed to go anywhere by himself."

"So there was no way you could have known not to go out by yourself?"

"Not at that time, anyway."

"Did anyone know you were afraid of snakes?"

With a nod, Callie answered, "Oh, yes. They found out when a snake jumped me after my incident with the Hood."

"But no one knew beforehand."

"Actually, Scott did. I had to report in just after I had seen one investigating the plane."

"So you were attacked then got a major fright right after being rescued."

"Right, that's when everyone else figured out my fear."

"If this had happened to someone else, would you have expected them to not be affected? What

would you tell that person?"

"That's a good question. I mean, I've been afraid of snakes my whole life. Who's to know if someone else exhibits that same fear, especially after what the Hood did."

"Other people have fears. At least one person on the island has a phobia as bad as yours. What would you say if this had happened to him? Or if he had been the one the Hood attacked?"

"I'd tell him he was surrounded by friends who would be there for him when he needed help..." Callie's voice trailed off.

"And?" Anna prompted, her voice quiet but encouraging. "Then what would you say?"

"I don't know what else."

"Think about it over the next week. You've been evading the question, though. Why do you blame yourself? You didn't plan on being attacked. Rape victims sometimes do the same thing, thinking they were to blame for their own rape. Why do you think you're doing this?"

Callie sat back and thought about it for a while. When she resumed talking her face was troubled. "I've been...wanting to blame myself for what happened, but I've been avoiding the fact it wasn't my own fault."

"Why do you think you do that?" When Callie just looked at her, Anna went on.

"You always try to be in control of yourself, but you had no control in this situation and no way to take control back. When the Hood attacked you, you lost control of yourself. That's terrifying for everyone but more so for someone who controls their emotions as much as you do."

Callie looked puzzled and slightly offended. "What do you mean? I'm not the type that orders everyone around or has to have things my own way."

"Callie, you are one of the most controlled people I know. And I don't mean that you are a control freak."

"What am I doing wrong? Am I living the problems all in my head?"

"No one is ever in control of their life. We can just try to control our reactions and we can't always do even that. It's easier to think we did something wrong than to admit there are things we can't control. You keep thinking you've done something wrong. By doing that, you regain the feeling your life is totally under your own control. But the events were not under your control. By blaming yourself, you pretend they were and you blew it. You'd done nothing wrong. But you were powerless, and you don't want to deal with that."

Callie nodded. "That's it. I couldn't deal with the idea of being powerless at the time...or even now."

"Has anyone or anything else ever affected you like this?"

After a moment of thinking, Callie looked sad. "There was one other time I felt this way. It still makes me angry to think about it."

Anna waited a minute but Callie didn't say anything else. When Callie had been silent for several minutes, Anna sat back and said briskly, "Ok, I want you to think about feeling powerless and trying to regain control. Write something about it every day until our next meeting. Also think about any other time you were powerless and how you felt then. We'll talk about that next week." She stood up.

Callie also rose from the sofa. "You want me to write about this every day?"

"And anything else you feel like. I don't care how much you write but spend at least fifteen minutes every day writing in your journal. Same time next week?"

Callie nodded. "This time works well for me. Thank you again. I guess you're going to continue to come on Wednesday?"

"As long as Cherie has the art class on Thursday nights. It makes it easier to get me home. "

They shook hands and Callie turned to leave. Anna went back behind her desk and started typing at her computer again. She's starting to see the problem but she's still fighting it. It will be interesting to see what she writes about this week.

--another visit by susanmartha and TracyFan4Ever on November 6, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:36:50 GMT

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Wednesday, October 10, around 3 p.m., Tracy Island

Cassie was listening to Virgil as he went over the good and bad points of her last training mission with the Firefly on the simulator. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Scott walk into the room. He didn't say anything, as he leaned up against the wall. After the nerve wracking flying lesson earlier today, Cassie was not happy to see him.

Cassie had felt totally out of her league when it came to learning to fly a plane. She had only flown, as a passenger, a handful of times. Her trip with Dianne the week before was the first time she had even been in a cockpit of a plane. With that feeling of needing to prove herself nagging at her, she had thrown herself into studying the book work he had given her. She had thought she had it down, but when she had gotten to the simulator today her mind had gone blank. Remembering the names of the controls had suddenly seemed difficult, remembering where they all were was even worse.

He probably thinks I'm a complete idiot at this point, Cassie thought to herself, as she recalled the earlier lesson.

"Cassie, are you listening to me?"

Virgil's question brought her out of her thoughts. "What?" she asked, looking over at him. "Sorry, my mind drifted for a moment. It won't happen again."

"Okay," Virgil said, debating on whether to question her further about it or not. Maybe, it's just been a long day for her, he thought, deciding to let it go for now. He was about to repeat the question he had asked her when he noticed Scott standing off to the side. "Hey, Scott. You need something?"

"Just wanted to talk to you about something. I can wait until you're done though."

"Okay. It won't be too much longer. Just want to run one more simulation," Virgil told him, before returning his attention back to Cassie.

Virgil continued the lesson, glad to see that Cassie maintained her focus through the rest of the lesson. "Good job today," he told her as they finished up and headed toward the exit of the silo. "Come up with any ideas yet on how to improve our firefighting arsenal?" he asked her out of curiosity. It hadn't been mentioned since their first lesson.

"I've been working on it. I'm just need to flesh out a few details and I'll be ready to share my idea with you. I should be able to do that tonight."

"Looking forward to hearing it," he told her, as they reached the spot where Scott was waiting for Virgil.

"Hi Scott," Cassie said politely. Scott returned her greeting. "I guess I'll see you two around," she said. She left the room and headed to meet with Tin-Tin so the measurements for her uniform could be taken. She had talked briefly with the engineer earlier in the week, and had chosen aquamarine for her uniform.

"What did you want to talk about?" Virgil asked his brother, once the two of them were alone.

"Just wanted an update on how Cassie's training with the pod equipment and Thunderbird 2 was going," Scott said casually.

"Well she's quite comfortable with the Firefly already. That last simulation went very well. Wasn't much I could criticize," Virgil told him. "Seeing as the Fire Truck and Fire Tender were both modified from commercial vehicles, she's already familiar with them and she picked up the modifications quickly. Some of the other equipment is taking a little more time but she's doing well. I think we made a good choice with bringing her on board."

"Good," Scott replied with a nod. "What was that about improving our firefighting arsenal?"

"Cassie just pointed out that we're lacking equipment to fight a fire from the air. All we really have are the missiles we can fire from Two and One. Cassie's working on an ideas for modifications we can make to change that."

"She's not wasting any time at offering advice." To himself he added, I didn't expect her to be making those kind of suggestions this early on, though that was the reason we brought her on board. It's good that she already feels comfortable enough to voice her opinions.

"No, she isn't," Virgil replied. "She actually brought the subject up at the end of the first lesson. Having a firefighter on the team is going to make the next rescue involving a fire easier. Hopefully, there won't be a repeat of what happened in Australia. Losing contact with Alan there for a while was one of the more frightening experiences I've had on a rescue."

"I know what you mean," Scott commented, thinking about his own feelings during that situation. What was it Elise had asked during that rescue? he thought, trying to recall her comments to him at Mobile Control. Something about 'how much did I know about fires and fighting them'. Not much. We've always kind of handled them as the situation developed. Elise said she felt out of her league. I think we're all out of our league when it comes to fires. Still, it remains to be seen how well our new recruit does.

"So how are her flight lessons going?" Virgil asked out of curiosity.

Scott thought about the lesson this morning. "Well, she definitely isn't a natural pilot," Scott told him as he headed for the door. Virgil fell in step beside him. "She seemed to have a very good grasp of things from the book work, so I started her in the simulator this morning. It seemed like once she was in the simulator, she forgot everything she learned."

"Maybe she's just nervous," Virgil suggested.

"Nervous about flying a plane in general, or are you suggesting that I'm making her nervous?" Scott asked his brother.

"Both, possibly. I know she wasn't your choice out of the candidates we had, but you haven't exactly come off as overly friendly since she got here. Maybe she's feeling a need to prove herself to you and that's what's making her nervous."

"Has she said something to you?"

"No, I'm just guessing," Virgil told him. "But have you tried having a conversation with her about something other than work?"

Scott thought about Virgil's question. Other than work related conversations, the last conversation he had with Cassie was his apology to her when she was here for the interview. "Not really."

"Then try talking to her in a more relaxed setting. See if it helps."

"I'll think about it," Scott told him.

Virgil nodded, sensing his brother wanted that to be the end of the conversation. "Hey, remember those weirdos in the robes from Ned Cook's show?" Virgil asked. Scott nodded an affirmative so he continued. "John and I were looking at their web site about IR a few days ago. This group has

got it into their heads that we're aliens from outer space."

Scott just shook his head. The things people come up with, he thought to himself.

"It was actually kind of amusing. They gave you the name Jhutu, which means Lighting Bird."

"Lucky me," Scott commented. "Sounds like something that would have gotten printed in the Weekly World News," he commented, thinking of the tabloid that he had learned about in the History of the Media course he had taken as an elective back in college.

"Weekly World News?" Virgil ventured.

With a smile, Scott started telling his brother about the paper and the outrageous stories it had printed while it was in circulation back at the start of the century.

Posted by starrynebula on November 7, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:37:06 GMT

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Wednesday, October 10th, 2068. Tracy Island

For once Anna was not sitting next to the pool, reading. The day had been rainy and dreary, and after dinner she holed up in the Library with a book she had found there. John found her sitting by the window, deep in Diplomatic Immunity.

"I always liked Bujold. Have you read her fantasy books as well?"

Anna looked up, and put the book down. "Yes, I love her Chalion series. I wrote a paper on the theology in it when I was considering seminary. I practically have Paladin of Souls memorized. And, of course, I've read all the 'Miles Vorkosigan' books." She gestured at the chair next to her. "Sit down. I was about to get up for a refill on my coffee. Do you want some? I have a pot of decaf made."

John smiled. "Since I'm already standing, let me get it." He put the book he was holding down and took her cup over to the coffee maker in the back of the room. "You take cream?"

In a minute, he returned with two cups. Handing hers to Anna, he sat in the armchair next to her and sipped his coffee.

Anna watched him. Do I want to wait for him to start? Or should I say something? He sat there, lost in thought. Finally Anna broke the silence.

"Do you miss her?"

John looked up from his coffee. "I'm not sure. I miss having someone to talk to about books. I

miss having someone special waiting for me when I get back from Thunderbird five. Someone my own age, that is."

"Tyler doesn't exactly count as a romantic interest. But do you miss having someone waiting for you or do you miss her specifically?"

John thought for a second. "I think I miss the idea of having someone more than I miss her. I liked her, but I was never sure how I felt. I enjoyed her company but in the same way I liked Tyler's or Tin-Tin's. I liked her as a friend, not romantically." He looked up from his coffee and added, "I miss having her here, but I don't think I miss her, if that makes sense."

"A great deal of sense, I think. What did you do together?"

John smiled. "We talked about books. She introduced me to a couple of new authors." He gestured at the book he had put on the table. "I was showing her the stars and teaching her the constellations. She was learning Spanish. She's a good student; she learned fast."

"Sound like a lot of adult mentoring. John, how old is Kat?"

"Oh, about..." John froze for a second. Then he continued, slowly. "I was about to say 16. But I know she's 25."

Anna nodded. "She is a very nice young lady. And she's going to be a very nice woman -- when she gets out of childhood. Physically, she's 25. But, emotionally, she's still 16."

John sat there for a minute looking down at his cup of coffee. When he finally looked up at Anna, his eyes were more thoughtful than troubled. "I always wanted to protect her, take care of her. I liked having her as a friend, but she seemed to want, well, all of me at all times. Tyler got mad at her for taking me away from him. But Tyler's nine years old. Kat acted the same way."

"Exactly. Wait five years, and she'll be a different person. But she's not really an adult now. She still has a child's romantic view of life. Not an adult understanding of romance and love."

"I think she took things a lot more seriously than I did. She was thinking romance; I was thinking friendship."

Anna nodded. "When I talked to her, I got the impression she'd never had male friends before. A boyfriend, yes, but not guys as friends, just to do things with. Maybe romance was the only way she could imagine having a male friend."

John's mouth quirked up in a wry grin. "And I wasn't interested in romance just yet. Much less marriage."

"John, if you had married her, you would have been bored out of your skull within a year - probably sooner. You're not the type who wants a pretty wife who cooks and cleans and gives you kids. You need someone who's your intellectual equal -- someone you can talk about ideas, concepts and dreams with." Anna looked down at the book next to John. "Did you talk about the Brother Cadfael books with her?" At John's nod, she went on. "I like Ellis Peters. I like her

understanding of the beliefs of the 12th century and she writes a good mystery. But could you imagine trying to explain the theology of Chalion to Kat? Or talking about anything of Heinlein's with her? Not the plots of the books -- but the ideas behind them? You may not want someone who loves the stars like you do, or who can discuss physics with you, but you need someone you can talk as an equal to. And you couldn't do that with Kat."

John's face had a distant, sad look on it as he said, "And the worst thing is: she never would have understood why she couldn't make me happy."

Posted by SusanMartha on November 7, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:38:08 GMT

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"Oh man, did you see that?"

Dominic clutched his stomach as he guffawed, nearly spilling the bottle of beer he had in his free hand.

"Yes, Dom, I saw, I'm right here..."

Luke chuckled more at his friend's reaction than at the goof on the televiewer. They were watching a TV outtake show; Luke shook his head. The Irishman seemed to find it ridiculously funny. The two had become fast friends, spending many evenings watching what could only be described as atrocious televiewer programs.

"Ah ha ha! Did you see that? Right in the face, bam! Ah ha ha ha!"

"Hey, you'll wake the baby," Luke chided, holding back his own laughter.

"Oh, God, right, hee hee..."

Dominic managed to get a hold of himself, before hopping off the couch to check on his son, who was thankfully still fast asleep. He grinned and closed the door back over, before crossing to the kitchen area.

"Do you want another?"

Luke twisted his lips in thought before nodding.

"Yeah, just one."

Dominic pulled a can of Guinness from the fridge and another light beer for himself, before taking a running jump and landing heavily on the couch, his legs splaying into Luke's view.

"Hey! You'll bust a spring! Or a hip!" Luke complained, and grappled the can from his friend. "How

am I supposed to open this now?"

Dominic gave him a toothy grin, and Luke shook his head again, chuckling with disbelief.

"You are one stra-a-a-nge man, Dom."

"Why thank you," Dominic said, and reached for their bowl of chips.

Posted by ArtisticRainey on November 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:38:26 GMT

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Wednesday, October 9, 8 p.m., en route to Sydney, Australia

"This is great!" Brandon sat in the co-pilot's seat of the JT-1. "I've never been to Australia before. Not even when I served in WASP."

"It's a great city," Virgil said, grinning at Brandon's enthusiasm. "Too bad I won't get to see a lot of it."

"Gonna be stuck in boring meetings, huh?" The aquanaut sounded sympathetic. "By the way, thanks for taking me with you on this trip. I really need to get some things, and I think I'll find more variety in Sydney than I would in Christchurch."

"You're welcome, and I'm hoping that the meeting won't be too boring." Virgil checked the plane's instruments. "You'll find more variety in Sydney, yeah, and it should cost less, too. Just don't get stuck doing too much sight-seeing. You've only got a few hours."

Virgil was heading for Australia at his father's request. "The management sensitivity training that Jerry came up with has been adapted for the offices in Australia," Jeff had said. "I'd like you to sit in on it and evaluate it for me. Take notes, get a copy of the recording. See if there's anything the team missed, or that they could improve on. We may have to use it for our own recruits at some point, and I want to see if it'll work." He had paused. "I'll eventually be sending all of you boys to a session as it becomes more widespread, but this is the first time it's been 'local', so to speak."

"Sure, Dad." Virgil had been amenable. It wasn't often these days that he got his hands dirty in the money-making part of the family businesses, and he was looking forward to the opportunity. He'd already made the arrangements to take Brandon shopping with him as he took Cherie to her art class, so it had sounded like a good idea to take him along. The meeting was early in the morning, which is why they were going the evening before. It looked like the session would run just long enough for him and Brandon to get back to Tracy Island by early afternoon... and for him to fulfill his duties to his little sister. He could shop for himself while she was in class.

"So, how am I going to get around tomorrow?" Brandon asked. "I don't know my way around..."

"I'll have the motor pool assign a car and driver to you for tomorrow," Virgil replied. "Most of them know their way around the stores."

"Pick a pretty one for me, okay?"

Virgil glanced at his companion and laughed. "I'll try to keep that in mind, but it's the older, grandmotherly ones who know where the best deals are."

"Hmm." Brandon looked thoughtful in the lights of the cockpit. "Never thought about that before." He playfully poked Virgil in the shoulder. "Okay, you're on. A grandmotherly type it is."

Virgil laughed again, and Brandon joined in.

Posted by Tikatu on November 18, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:38:36 GMT

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Wednesday, October 10, 2068, 10:55pm, Tracy Island

Jeff Tracy threw the magazine down on the coffee table with a look of disgust on his face. Hearing the noise, Dianne looked up from her own magazine. "What's up?"

"This," replied Jeff, in an angry tone of voice. He handed her the recent edition of Time. "He gets 10 years in jail. The dead get nothing. I'd love to do something to help the families and to make sure no one else ever pulls something like this, but I have no idea what I can do."

Dianne picked up the magazine and read.

"Mine owner gets 10 years" By Thomas Hawkins.

"Jacob Henderson was sentenced to ten years for reckless endangerment and criminal negligence in the Cougar mountain mine collapse two years ago. The sentence is in addition to the \$1.5 million fine leveled against his company, the Cougar and Bear Mountain Mining Company, for failure to follow safety regulations.

"Two years ago, a mine collapse killed 24 men and left thirty one others trapped and two missing. International Rescue was called in but four of the trapped men died before they could be rescued and two more died while undergoing treatment at a nearby hospital. The bodies of two missing have never been found, bringing the total dead to thirty two.

"One of the people testifying against Henderson was his secretary. She testified that one of the managers complained about the lack of emergency breathing apparatus and the need for extra shoring in the galleys. According to her testimony, Henderson told the manager 'If there is any trouble, we'll just call International Rescue. People will be so excited to see them, they'll ignore anything else and we can blame any problems with the mine supports on their drilling equipment.'

The manager was sentenced earlier to 8 years as part of a plea bargain.

"Several wrongful death suits have been filed against the CBMM. The company has declared bankruptcy, claiming they have no money left after paying the fines. Several of the families have named Henderson as a co-defendant in the suits, separate from his role as company president, based on his comments. 'Clearly the company was negligent, but we feel Mr. Henderson was clearly reckless as an individual as well as as a company employee,' said Ronald Ecks, a lawyer for several of the victim's families. 'We feel he deliberately ignored safety regulations in order to earn a higher profit from his shares in CBMM.' The case is expected to force the court to reexamine corporate versus personal liability for decisions made by an individual owning a majority corporate share.

"Several of the families of the miners who initially survived but died before IR arrived have considered bringing a lawsuit against IR. The family of one of those killed in the initial collapse brought a suit against IR, claiming IR was responsible for allowing Henderson to be negligent. The judge threw out the suit, saying it had 'no merit' and was 'equivalent to blaming the fire department for someone starting a fire'."

Dianne put the magazine back down. "Dear, there is nothing you can do. People have been trying to find a way to blame others for their greed since the Garden of Eden. The only people who would blame IR for this are the people who would blame you for an ingrown toenail if they could."

Jeff walked over to the windows and looked out at the ocean. "It just makes me so angry that the guy would ignore safety to begin with. Then he tries to blame us."

Dianne smiled. "Welcome to my world. People ignore their doctor all the time, then blame the doctor when they get sick. Then they want us to fix whatever is wrong and blame us for not having a magic wand. Don't take the responsibility for other people being blind and stupid on your shoulders. You'll just go nuts without helping anyone, really."

Jeff walked back to the couch and picked up the magazine again. "I suppose you're right. Thomas Hawkins. That's Dom's half-brother again. I hope Dom doesn't see this; he's had enough happen these past few weeks."

"Let's hope he doesn't see it. Now come to bed and I'll work some of the tension out of your shoulders. I'm sure we can manage to get you to think about something other than that man's stupidity and greed."

"With an offer like that, how can I refuse?" Jeff smiled and held his hand out to help her out of her chair.

Posted by susanmartha on December 1, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:38:59 GMT

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Everyone said it would happen. A massive earthquake in the heartland of the United States, caused by the movement of the New Madrid fault line, would damage and destroy cities that thought themselves beyond an earthquake's reach. It was supposed to happen by 2040, but that deadline passed without its appearance. The seismologists became more and more sure of a devastating earthquake, and as a result, the states of Illinois, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky and Missouri put measures in place to ensure that new construction would be as quake-proof as modern technology would allow.

Fast forward nearly 30 years more, and the quake-proofing programs are widespread. Every architect and builder has been thoroughly indoctrinated with the need for such precautions. Even a sprawling, four-story shopping mall has the technology built into it... or does it?

xxxx

Wednesday, October 10, 2068, 9:50 a.m., local time, outside of Covington TN (Thursday, October 11, 3:30 a.m., Tracy Island)

Jim D'Angelo frowned as he compared the plans on his data pad to what he saw in front of him. Taking out a laser measure, he did a quick comparison of the distance between two of the supports that were taking shape and what his data pad said. The results deepened the frown on his face, and he strode over to the builder's trailer, tucking the pad under his arm, and the measure back in his pocket.

The interior of the trailer was slightly cooler than the day outside; October in Tennessee was usually temperate, and sometimes even warm. The leaves had finally decided to change color, and since the building site was surrounded by young forest, Jim had found ample opportunity to appreciate them. But what drew his attention now were the daily reports by the construction boss, Terry Nicks.

What he read in the computer made his eyes widen in disbelief. He printed it out, and went in search of Terry.

He found the construction supervisor conferring with a couple of the workers. "Terry!" he called, waving.

Terry, a big dark-skinned man in denim shirt and work pants, finished his conversation with the workers and turned to face Jim. "What's up, Jim?" he asked.

"Look at these figures!" Jim was trying to keep his consternation and outrage from his tone as he showed Terry what he'd printed out. "These pilings aren't set deep enough, and the support columns are too close together. What's going on here?"

Terry bristled. "The pilings are just fine, and the columns are within limits," he replied sharply. "We used this same configuration at the mall in Raleigh, and the inspectors didn't say a word."

"That wasn't in an earthquake zone, or on top of an old landfill, was it?" Jim shot back. "The pilings need to be deeper because of the ground we're working on. And what about the MR dampeners? They're supposed to be ready and operational now."

The crew boss scowled. "They'll be online when they're needed."

"But the seismologists predict..."

"I know what they predict. 'Eighty-five percent chance of a major earthquake within the next six months'. That was four months ago and we haven't had it yet." Terry huffed out a breath. "If it'll make you feel better, I'll have them online tomorrow afternoon. But it'll take us all day to wire them up. That'll put us behind schedule."

"And what about the pilings, and the columns?" Jim was barely containing his anger. "You going to do something about those, too?"

"There's nothing we can do about them at this point, D'Angelo; you know that. The building will be fine." Terry took on a cajoling, soothing tone. "Just let me do what I do best. We'll bring this project in on time, on budget, and satisfy the brass, too."

Jim shook his head. "I'm not working with you again, Nicks. Nor is my firm. Believe me, these deviations are going on record!" With that last shot, he stalked off toward the trailer.

"Pencil pusher," Terry snorted, shaking his head. He turned back to yell at the men who were positioning a prefabricated slab on a set of cross beams. "Be careful with that!"

Posted by Tikatu on December 1, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:39:10 GMT

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Jim had just made it back to the shack when the ground began to tremble. The vibration was subtle at first, enough to rattle the half-filled pot in the coffee maker. Then it picked up force, until it became a shaking that rattled Jim's teeth and sent him flying across the width of the trailer. The trailer itself, set on simple concrete blocks, shimmied back and forth and suddenly fell from the supports onto one side. By this time, Jim didn't know up from down, and when the table and chair slid into him, he didn't know anything at all for a good long while.

At the building site, Terry noticed the subtle vibrations and knew, to his horror, exactly what they meant. Grabbing his walkie-talkie, he broadcast an emergency signal, shouting, "Everyone out of the building! Second floor - head for the stairwells! Head for the shafts!" His workers didn't need to be told twice. They abandoned their equipment and ran for the already completed safety stairwells or the empty elevator shafts. Some didn't make it; the pilings, not set deep enough, shifted as the old landfill below them liquefied, sending the prefab concrete panels raining down to crush. A few dove beneath the equipment on the first floor, praying that the sturdy Caterpillar lifters and haulers would prove sturdy enough. Others made it into the utility tunnels below the lower floor, staring up in fear that their new ceiling would itself come down on them and bury them alive. But a good number, including Terry, made it to the stairwells, or to the elevator shafts. Legs were broken as some workers fell the two stories to the bottom; arms were broken as people tumbled down the

steps to the basement. But they gathered and cowered, terrified, waiting for the earthquake to subside, and hoping they'd be spared. Terry gripped the handrail for dear life as he watched one man fall down the steps below him.

Finally, the shaking ended, and Terry breathed out a deep sigh of relief. He turned to one of his underlings. "Sam? I need you to get a head count of whoever's here, and a list of injuries. Take Patty with you; she's got a good memory. Find out if anyone has any first aid training and see what they can do for the injured." He glanced around at his men and women, some moaning, some shivering, some even crying. "Okay, y'all! Pull yourselves together! I need anyone who's got a cell phone to start calling out and tell people what's going on here!" He grabbed an electrician, and handed him the walkie-talkie. "Blake, you check around, see who else made it to safety. I'm going up to see how bad the damage is."

Blake nodded, and started to check the various frequencies that the crew used to keep in touch. Terry climbed the stairs, pulling himself up by the railings, letting his workers settle down against the wall. When he got to the main floor, just below where most of his people had been working, he pushed against the heavy metal door.

It didn't move. In fact, it looked like the bottom had been pushed into the solid concrete, leaving inches of warped open space around the door itself. Terry tried to peer out through those spaces, but found himself confronted by piles of rubble... and a set of bloodied fingers. He backpedaled, drawing in a hissing breath, reaching behind him for the wall to steady himself. He stood there for a few long moments, breathing heavily, then his pounding heart slowed and he was able to right himself. Running a hand through what was left of his short-cropped hair, he breathed out slowly, and headed up to the second floor.

Here, he could open the door, but what met him was a stunning sight. The second floor around the stairwell was gone. There were some slabs left farther out, too far away for him to jump to. The metal support beams were twisted, and the arm of the heavy crane lay across them. He shook his head, turned away, and headed back down the stairs.

One landing down, Blake met him. "Okay, here's what we have. Barb's crew made it to the elevator shafts on the north side; she's got five with her. Jaime and six more made it to the south elevator shafts. I got a faint message from Kim; she's holed up with another eight in the utility tunnels. She said they went in through the east stairwell. We're over here in the west stairwell. I haven't heard from anyone else, but there were quite a few people on the outside, and there are other safe spots where small groups could be holed up."

"What about getting some help out here?" Terry asked. He didn't want to mention the fingers he'd seen.

Blake shook his head. "We're trying, but all we're getting is busy signals. I'm sure the emergency services are swamped. Not to mention there are probably transmitter towers down."

"Well," Terry said with a sigh, "the governor will have to bring out the National Guard as soon as he can get them mobilized. And there shouldn't be too much damage in Memphis itself; from what I understand it's almost one hundred percent earthquake-compliant." He shook his head. "And I was just talking to Jim D'Ang... has anyone heard from Jim D'Angelo?"

Blake shook his head again. "No, I don't think so."

Terry rubbed his chin. "He was headed out to the shack; let's hope he was outside when this hit." He glanced around at the walls. "We can't get out; the door's blocked. Tell everyone to sit tight for a bit. They're safe where they are for now, and we have to expect some aftershocks."

"What about the injured?" Patty asked as she and Sam came up behind Blake. "We've got twenty people here. The injuries include three broken arms, a number of broken fingers, ribs, and a possible foot. Sprains, bruises, and at least one concussion. Don't know how the others are doing, but if they've got injuries..."

"We can't sit around, Terry," Sam told him bluntly "Aftershocks or no, we have to get these people out of here. They need medical attention."

"How do you suggest we do that?" Terry scowled and hooked a thumb over his shoulder. "The door's totally blocked from what I can see. We have few tools. I don't see any way we can get out."

Just as he uttered those words, the vibrations began again. "Aftershock!" he shouted, as the world began to shake and shudder once more.

Posted by Tikatu on December 10, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:39:23 GMT

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The first aftershock had passed, but Terry was still shaking. One of his workers hadn't been holding onto a railing when it happened and he fell, ending up at the bottom of a landing with his head resting at a strange angle. Patty approached the fallen man cautiously and pressed her fingers to his neck; she took in a sharp, hissing breath before looking up at Terry and shaking her head. That set off a round of gagging and retching from some of the others standing around.

"Enough!" Terry shouted. He got the attention of his workers, and took a deep breath before continuing. "There are going to be more aftershocks, so everyone needs to keep a hand on a rail, or sit down so you don't fall down."

The men and women on the stairwell shuffled around a bit, but eventually most were seated, and those who weren't had a firm grip on one of the railings.

"Has anyone gotten through to Emergency Services?" Terry asked. Many of the workers shook their heads, but one woman put up a hand.

"Celeste? You got through?"

Celeste shook her head. "No, I didn't, but I've got FM on my music player and there was an

emergency broadcast. The governor is mobilizing the National Guard."

"That's a help," Blake said, nodding.

"But not for us," Terry growled. "We've got injured people and we can't get out...." He stopped as the small two-way radio at his belt crackled to life. He picked it up. "Nicks here."

The voice on the other end was faint, and pain-filled. "Jim... it's Jim... trailer... help me..."

"Jim? Are you okay? Jim?" He looked at Blake. "He's not responding."

"I think it's time we called someone else, Terry." Blake put out his hand.

Terry handed over the radio. "What are you going to do?"

Blake popped open the back of the walkie-talkie. "I know a way to give the signal a little more oomph. Then I'm going to call International Rescue."

Posted by Tikatu on December 27, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:39:37 GMT

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Thursday, October 11; 4:45 AM; Tracy Island

Will walked out of his bathroom, having awakened early, as he usually did. He'd put on the clothes he usually exercised in, but decided he'd better get another task out of the way first. He went into the second bedroom, which he was using as his home office, and sat down at his computer. He'd started an email to his family the night before; his mother made him promise to write regularly, as well as call. He knew if he didn't, she'd let him know about it in no uncertain terms. He grinned sheepishly, remembering when she did just that, while he was in the Navy, and was determined not to give her the chance to repeat it.

He first read over what he'd typed in.

Hey all

How is everyone in Arizona? Has the heat started to subside enough for you? The weather is pretty great here, and since we're in the southern hemisphere, we're about halfway through spring. So our weather is heating up a bit. I'm told, though, that the temperatures don't really vary that much.

I'm settling in, and can tell you that Tracy Industries knows how to take care of their employees. Everything is state-of-the-art here. My apartment is a two-bedroom one, and well laid out. The furniture is comfortable and pretty much meets my needs. I know that you, Mom, would probably think that it needs more, but I'm happy with what I've got here, especially since I keep finding

things you packed for me without my knowing.

I've been meeting my fellow co-workers over the past few days. The first person, Dom, actually lives in the apartment above me, and has a two-year-old son, Joshua. He is Irish, and I enjoy listening to him talk. His kid's cute and seems to have taken to me right off.

Suddenly there was a loud piercing sound. Will paused, startled. That must be the emergency alarm. I'd better go, at least to see what the procedures are. He saved his mail, and left.

Posted by hobbeth on January 8, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:39:49 GMT

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Luke woke from a deep sleep as the alarm blared. He quickly got up and pulled on a pair of pants and struggled with his socks and boots for a moment. He tugged a shirt over his head and hurried for the door. Pausing, he grabbed Rom's vest from a hook.

"Rommel! Come!" The dog came trotting out of the bedroom, and Luke fastened the vest on him. Together the two of them got into the elevator. Cassie was already inside, looking far too awake for before dawn. "Hey," Luke said with a yawn.

She smiled. "Good morning to you, too." She nodded at the dog. "At least he's awake."

Luke chuckled. "Glad one of us is."

They made their way to the monorail, meeting up with the others as they got there. Sitting down, Luke frowned as he noticed Dominic was missing. He was about to say something when the young man came bolting through the doors. "Sorry. Couldn't wake him." Dom held Josh, who was still sound asleep, over one shoulder. Only one arm was in his shirt, which was inside out.

"Here, let me take him." Luke took Josh, cradling the sleeping child against his chest. Dominic nodded his thanks and straightened out his attire as the train started moving.

"Nervous, Luke?" He turned to face Elise. She smiled grimly. "This is your first big rescue, right?"

"Yeah." Luke handed Josh back to Dom and shrugged. "Not really nervous, much anyway. Keyed up would be the right term, I guess. I hope it's nothing too serious."

Callie piped in, "Unfortunately, they only call us when it is serious."

"True," Nikki said, turning to Luke. "But you're one up on us. At least you've had rescue experience. Most of us were green as grass."

They all laughed. Elise leaned over and squeezed Luke's hand. "Relax, you'll be fine. Thunderbird Two will get you there in no time."

Luke yawned. "I just hope she comes equipped with a coffee machine."

Posted by lillehafrue on January 11, 2007

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:39:58 GMT

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The recruits hurried into the lounge to find Jeff, Dianne, Scott, John and Gordon already there. Brains entered the room moments later, then Tin-Tin came in. Jeff was at his desk, talking to Alan. As the youngest Tracy finished his report on the call, his father made notes on a data pad in front of him.

"... and when I pulled up information on the computer while taking the call, I found out that the mall was being built on a landfill. That means there's bound to be pockets of methane gas that have been released." Alan stopped, waiting for his father to speak.

"That will be a problem. Methane is not toxic, but it's suffocating and combustible. We'll probably have to take extra oxygen. And it takes radical chemistry to remove methane from the atmosphere," Brains said. He looked over at Callie.

"Brains is right. In the twentieth century, they used a hydroxyl radical, formed from water vapor broken down by certain oxygen atoms, using ultraviolet radiation. Some progress has been made, but it's never been a real priority, and the process is pretty much unchanged," she confirmed.

"Then the sooner we get there and find the people trapped, the more people we will save," said Dianne.

"Right. Okay, Scott, take off in One. Elise, you'll pilot Two. Take the DOMO, Excavator, Seven's medical cabin, and the Mobile Crane. And all the oxygen tanks you can fit in with them." Jeff looked over at Will. "I presume the tanks are all full."

Will nodded, and replied, "Yes, sir. I checked them yesterday." He saw Scott take hold of the light sconces and was astonished to see what happened next. Jeff grinned at the look on his face, then sobered and continued.

"Okay. Callie, John, Gordon, Dom, Nikki, Dianne will all go in Two. Luke, you, too, and take Rommel. He'll be needed to help find victims. And if anyone says anything about us having a dog, just say something about how it had taken time to train him, it's his first rescue, something along those lines. Brains, Tin-Tin, I'd like you to go, too. Work with Callie to see if you can do anything about those methane pockets."

"F-A-B, Mr. Tracy."

"Then get going. The rest of you, stand down."

Everyone stood up and Dom handed a still sleeping Joshua to Lisa, who had walked in a few minutes earlier. He, Dianne and Nikki took the elevator directly to the hangar. Will, seeing Elise leaving in her own special way, shook his head and stood up, too. "I'll go help them load up, sir."

"F-A-B, Will. Come back here when you're finished."

"Yes, sir." Will followed the others to the regular elevator. As they headed down, he turned to Luke and quietly asked, "F-A-B?"

Luke snorted a laugh and began to explain.

Posted by hobbeth, January 12, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:40:11 GMT

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Wednesday, October 10; Opp, Alabama; Spencer family home; 10:20 a.m. (4:20 a.m. the next morning on Tracy Island)

Lorraine Spencer was busy replacing the ladles on the rack next to the stove. They had fallen off only 10 minutes earlier while the house shook. "Goodness, I haven't felt an earthquake in about 30 years. At least it wasn't too bad around here. I wonder where the source is."

She went to the living room and turned on the TV. On the news, she saw a terrifying sight. "My word...it wasn't too far from Memphis!" She quickly grabbed the phone and called her husband at the steel mill. "Richard, did you feel something there about 10 minutes ago?"

"Yeah, we all felt something shaking. Some tools fell off the walls and counters. Was there an earthquake around here?"

"Not around here, but the news is reporting one centered not too far from Memphis. We must've felt the shockwaves from that."

Following a few seconds of silence, he asked, "Is everything okay at the house?"

"It's all fine, hon. A few ladles fell off the rack. Everything else is still in one piece."

"Same here. Everybody here's already working again." After thinking for a second, he added, "Do you think we need to notify Callie in Hawaii?"

"What?" Lorraine gasped. "Honey, she's in a time zone 5 hours earlier than ours. It's only 5:22 there. She won't answer the phone that early."

"I know it's silly, but if she's heard about the quake, she may be worried about us. We just need to let her know we're all okay."

Lorraine nodded. "Okay, dear. At least I can leave a voice mail if she doesn't answer right away." After disconnecting with her husband, she contacted Callie's phone. "I sure hope you answer, sweetie."

Waiting patiently, she hoped to hear her daughter's voice. After five rings, though, she got the voicemail message. After the beep, Lorraine said, "Honey, it's Mom. I just wanted to let you know we had a bit of an tremor here at home, and it's probably stemmin' from the bigger quake near the Memphis area. Some things were knocked over at the mill and here at the house, but it wasn't anything like what they've had up there. I want to tell you we're all safe and sound here in Opp. I haven't heard any reports of injuries yet, so I'll call you back if anyone did get hurt. Take care, Callie. Bye."

Placing the phone back into its cradle, she sighed. "I sure hope those people up there are doing okay." She had no idea her daughter was about to take part in a rescue about 450 miles away from the family home.

Posted by TracyFan4Ever on January 13, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:40:45 GMT

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Thunderbird Two, en route to Danger Zone...

"I hate having to wake Joshua like that," Dominic said.

"It is unfortunate," Dianne said.

The two were buckled in beside one another in Thunderbird Two's cockpit. Dominic yawned, and then shook his head.

"Yeah. I can't see any way around it, though. Ack, well."

"At least he's good at sleeping through the alarms, though," Nikki said from her seat to the left of the two.

"True enough, true enough," Dom said with a smile. "He can be mustard to wake sometimes."

"Mustard?" Elise called back from the pilot's seat.

"Umm, hard, like. Difficult to wake," Dom said.

"Ah, I see," she said. "Sometimes you can speak in a different language, buddy."

The crew in the cabin laughed, and Dominic shook his head. He pushed his baseball cap down over his eyes, crooked his legs and bent his arms.

"Ah, to be sure, to be sure. Me leprechaun ways can be confusin' alright," he said in as thick an Irish accent he could.

There was more laughter as the crew enjoyed the temporary levity before the danger that awaited them.

Posted by ArtisticRainey on January 17, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:41:02 GMT

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Wednesday, October 10, 12:10 p.m., US Central, somewhere en route to the Danger Zone
(Thursday, October 11, 6:10 a.m., Tracy Island)

Dianne glanced at her watch for what seemed to be the umpteenth time since take off. She turned to Dom. "I think we have enough time to do a down and dirty inventory, and run some diagnostics before landing."

Dom exchanged glances with Nikki. "Should we have been down there earlier?" Nikki asked.

"Probably," Dianne replied, "but I wanted to give Gordon and John a chance to hook the cabin up to its power source. Can't work without the lights. They're probably finished by now." She unbuckled herself and stood. "Come on. Let's get down there and make sure we're ready for whatever we find."

The two nurses exchanged glances again, and Dom shrugged. Dianne told Elise what they were doing, then led the way to the rear of the cockpit.

"Are you all right, Doc?" Dom asked as they took the tiny lift down to the pod's smaller entrance. "You seem a bit nervous."

"I admit I am, Dom, just a bit," Dianne replied. "I've been involved in a couple of rescues, and have been cleared for the medical cabin, too. Still..." She shook her head. "I'm not sure how the cabin's equipment will work given the circumstances. And I'd like to know which machine will be towing it out."

Her answer seemed to satisfy both nurses, and they followed briskly in her wake as she threaded her way through the pod vehicles to the medical cabin. Gordon was just coming out from under the DOMO, which was now connected to what remained of Thunderbird Seven.

"How's it going?" she asked, without preamble.

"We're ready to pull your baby out. John's checking the power supplies and running diagnostics on them. You shouldn't have any problems." Gordon dusted off his hands, then sauntered over to where his gloves, hat, and visor waited. "She should be ready to go on our end by the time we get there."

"Then we'll just get her ready on our end," Dianne said as she climbed up the few rungs to the single opened side door. She swung inside, and in a moment, the second door slid open, and the ramp began to extend. "C'mon, you two!" she called, looking out. "We've got work to do."

Posted by Tikatu on January 17, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:41:18 GMT

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Scott made sure to take a good, long look at the structure before settling Thunderbird One in the already completed parking lot. He noticed the height of the beams -- A good four stories -- and the lack of floor and enclosure on the upper stories. A cautious sweep or two over the venue showed the holes where floor slabs had fallen through.

"This won't be easy," he muttered to himself as he grabbed his hard hat and visor. He opened the lower hatch to let himself out of the cockpit, and was almost immediately assailed by a frantic man in torn work shirt and dirty jeans. He was followed at a distance by others, wearing hard hats, and similarly damaged clothing.

"Thank God you're here!" he cried, grabbing Scott's jacket with both grubby hands. "They're trapped under the mall! You've got to get them out!"

Scott put his hands firmly on his assailant's arms. "We'll get them out. But I need to get some equipment out of my Thunderbird, and I need to know who's in charge."

His firm tone seemed to calm the man. "In charge... in charge... Terry Nicks is in charge, but I haven't seen him since the first quake." He followed Scott to the central portion of Thunderbird One, where the IR operative opened the cargo hatch. Automatically, he started helping Scott wrestle Mobile Control out into the open. "Jim D'Angelo... he'd be in charge, too, but I haven't seen him, either."

Scott tapped his ear piece. "Thunderbird Five from Maverick." He began opening the Mobile Control unit open, his actions automatic.

Alan responded. "Thunderbird Five here, reading you five by five."

"Indy, who placed the first call?"

The space monitor referred to his data pad. "A Blake Marshall. He says he's trapped in the west stairwell with about twenty people. There are others trapped in pockets throughout the structure, and he gave me a general count of how many and where. There may be others."

"F-A-B, Indy, and thanks. Maverick out." He turned to the worker, who stood close, watching him boot up Mobile Control. Others stood in a semi-circle, not crowding, but within hearing distance. "What's your name?"

"Jareth, Jareth Martin."

"Well, Jareth, is there a plan to this place handy?"

Jareth thought for a moment. "There should be one in the supervisors' trailer."

Another worker, a woman, jumped as if stung. "Oh, but that's fallen off its supports! You can't get in."

Scott thought for a moment, then nodded. "Okay, thanks." He activated the communicator on Mobile Control. "Thunderbird Five from Maverick. Come in, Five."

"Thunderbird Five here. What's up, Maverick?"

"I'm going to need a site plan to this place, if possible." He glanced over at Jareth, then pulled a data pad from a storage drawer. "Here," he said, handing it to the worker. "Draw me a basic sketch of what's where. Until we get a more detailed plan, you're all I've got."

"Yes, sir!" Jareth said. He began to sketch, and others crowded in to make sure he got it right.

Posted by Tikatu on January 18, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:42:07 GMT

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It took Will a little while to return to the lounge after helping load the equipment. He felt that there had to be a better way to use the space in the pods. So after they left and he was able to return to the bay, he checked out each one, to see if they were basically the same inside.

He was thoughtful as he entered the lounge, and Jeff looked up. "I expected you back here sooner. Is anything wrong?"

"No, sir. Not exactly, anyway. I just got the feeling that ..." He hesitated, looking dubiously at his boss.

"Go ahead, Will. Feel free to give your opinion. And sit down, please. I promise I won't bite you."

Will grinned as he took a chair. "Well, I get the feeling that you all haven't been making full use of all the available space in the pods. It took a bit of finagling to get the equipment you wanted taken into the one pod. And since one is all you can take, well... There's gotta be a better way. So I decided to take a quick look at the interiors of the other pods before I came back here."

"I see. Did you come up with any ideas or suggestions?"

"It's not clear in my mind yet, but it seems to me that although the horizontal space is used well,

the vertical space is overlooked. Perhaps if there was some kind of light but strong platform for some of the equipment, that could be raised and lowered. And maybe moved forward, backward and side to side, so you could put more in and faster."

Jeff was intrigued. "Your idea may have merit. Why don't you - among your other duties - see if you can come up with a workable idea over the next week or two. Then you and I can get together with Brains to see if it can be reproduced."

"I'll do that, Mr. Tracy." He paused, then asked, "Did you need something else from me? You did ask me to return here."

"Yes, I did. I have two questions. First, did Tin-Tin get your measurements for your uniform?"

"She sure did. She's even having a couple of coveralls made in this new material for me, too. I believe the order for mine and Cassie's went out yesterday."

"Very good. I also wanted to know what code name you chose for yourself, assuming you did."

"Well, sir," Will rubbed the back of his neck. "That was a tough one. Everything I could come up with seemed to me to be a bit - well, showy. Or it would identify me to anyone who has known me before. So I finally decided that my code name should be what I'm here to do. I chose 'Mechanic'. Will that work?"

"That's fine, Will. 'Mechanic' it is, and I'll log it as such. I'll also let the rest of the team know."

"Okay, sir. Is there anything else?"

"Not at the moment. You go ahead; I'm sure you've got things to do. I'll contact you if I need you back."

"Thank you, sir." Will stood up and left the room.

Posted by hobbeth on January 24, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:42:18 GMT

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Wednesday, October 10, 2068, 12:45 p.m., local time. (6:45 a.m. Thursday, October 11, Tracy Island)

"Good to have you here, Frankie," Scott said as Elise approached Mobile Control. He nodded toward the far end of the parking lot, where the remaining building equipment was being moved by those construction workers who were still able-bodied. In comparison, the necessary equipment brought by IR was rolling out. "I've got a preliminary schematic of the place, and have been in touch with some of the groups trapped in the mall."

"Where do we start?" Elise stood at his shoulder, peering at the schematic he'd gotten uploaded to Mobile Control's screens.

He glanced up again to see the DOMO pulling Thunderbird Seven's medical cabin out of the pod. "Get Alpine working with... his dog." Luke's new code name felt weird, and he had no idea what to call Rommel that wouldn't give away anything. "Pair him up with Cousteau, send them to see if there's anyone trapped outside of these areas." He indicated the four spots where he knew people were trapped. "Excavator needs to find a way in here; the people inside have been getting quieter and quieter. It can go through the elevator shaft, here."

"HAZMAT suits? There was talk of methane..."

"Yeah. Sweet and Tynan should go in, taking oxygen containers with masks. Last count was nine people. Einstein and Ursa should follow; they can help get people out then work on finding a way to dissipate the methane so we don't have an explosion on top of everything else." He pressed a couple of keys, and the task list, with the schematic, was uploaded to the operatives' visors. "Take the DOMO to this stairway here." He indicated the west stairwell. "The biggest group is there, and if we can clear the debris before the first floor door, they should be able to get out."

"Quasar and I can take that."

Scott added it to the list, just as Thunderbird Seven was towed into position near Mobile Control. It had been decided en route that the best way to keep an eye on both Mobile Control and its operator, as well as the cabin -- should the operatives have to leave it, was for the two to be in close proximity.

John swung down out of the cab, and went to disconnect the DOMO from Thunderbird Seven. The doors to the medical cabin opened, and the ramp descended, barely clearing the caterpillar tracks. Dom, a medikit over one shoulder, came down the ramp. "I'll go back and get suited up, then," he said to Scott.

"F-A-B." Scott nodded, and Dom went off at a run. Gordon and Luke were already out, riding the hoverbikes. Gordon's had an oxyhydrite set up strapped to the back; Luke's had been altered, leaving room for Rom to travel on it. But Rommel wasn't secured to the back of the bike; he was ranging in front of them, his nose to the ground.

Scott checked the equipment manifest again. "Mobile Crane's left... hmm, who tucked the Laser Truck in there? Whoever it was, it was good thinking. We may need it." He glanced up again as the DOMO, now free of its burden, rumbled off, Elise and John in the cockpit. Another roar caught his attention as the Excavator, its drivers both in white HAZMAT suits headed out of the pod and to the area he'd specified.

With a nod, he toggled a switch. "Thunderbird Five and Base from Mobile Control. The rescue is now underway."

Posted by Tikatu on January 26, 2008

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:42:34 GMT

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Gordon guided the hoverbike through the wreckage, coming to a stop near where they were told there might be victims. He waved towards Luke and stopped his bike. Luke joined him a moment later. "Has Rommel found anything yet?" Gordon asked.

Luke shook his head. "Nothing." He glanced over at his dog. Rommel was cautiously picking his way through the rubble, sniffing as he moved.

"OK, let's see what we can find." Gordon started forward.

Luke grabbed his arm. "Wait. This area might not be stable." He whistled to Rommel, who came trotting over. Luke held his hand up, palm facing the dog, then sharply pointed forward. Rom "woofed" and stepped in front of Gordon. He moved ahead a few paces then turned and bared his teeth, growling at Gordon.

Gordon held his hands up. "Ah...Wanna help me out here?"

"Good boy. Stay back, that area's not safe," Luke told Gordon.

"No problem."

Suddenly, Rommel darted in another direction. He nosed around a moment, then looked up and started barking. Luke moved instantly moved towards him. "We've got something." Rommel was pawing at the rubble. "And whoever it is, they're alive."

Gordon quickly called Mobile Control. "Maverick, this is Cousteau."

"Go ahead, Cousteau."

"It looks like we've found someone. Not sure how many yet, but..." he glanced over at Rommel, "Sarge is going nuts and Alpine says that means they're alive."

There was a short pause on the other end. "Sarge?...Oh, Sarge! FAB, Cousteau, will you need medical assistance?"

"Not sure yet, I'll keep you posted." Gordon turned back to Luke. "Find them?"

Luke shoved another piece of debris out of the way. "Not yet. Give me a hand here." Together to two men lifted a large chunk of cement, exposing a hole. "Rommel!" The dog scurried over, sniffing at the hole. He gave two sharp barks.

"H-hello? Is someone there?"

Luke grinned at Gordon, then turned to the hole. "This is International Rescue."

"Oh, thank God! Can you get us out of here?"

"We're working on it. What's your situation?"

"There are four of us. We're trapped in a stairwell. What happened?"

Gordon leaned over. "There was an earthquake. Is anyone injured?"

"A few bumps and bruises, nothing serious."

"Hang on and we'll get you out of there." Gordon quickly relayed the information back to Mobile Control, as Luke and Rommel moved to another area. Suddenly Rommel shot ahead, Luke following at his heels. Gordon called back down to the victims again. "We've let the others know your situation. Help is on the way, just hang tight." He bolted after his partner.

Luke and Rommel were poking around what looked like the remains of a trailer. "C'mon, mutt, who's in here?" Luke muttered as he followed Rommel's agitated movements. He looked up as Gordon joined him. "This must be the supervisor's trailer that Maverick told us about. There's no answer to my calls, but Rom's going nuts so someone's still alive in there."

Together, the two men pried apart what used to be a door. Luke slipped inside and Gordon heard him swear. "I found him. It's not good. Looks like head injuries, at least 3 broken ribs, and most likely, internal bleeding. He's shocky too. You'd better get the medical team down here."

"FAB. Cousteau to Mobile Control, we need Doc and her crew here now. Alpine says the victim is critical," Gordon told Scott.

"FAB, they're on their way."

Gordon peered down into the trailer. "Is he stable enough for you to leave him?"

Luke nodded. "I think so, why?"

"We need to widen this hole to get him out."

"Right. Hand me my pack, would you?" Gordon grabbed the knapsack and passed it to Luke. "Thanks." Luke pulled out a blanket and tucked it around the victim. He whistled to Rommel. "Watch him, boy." The dog stretched himself out next to the fallen man, his eyes never leaving Luke.

The two men assembled their cutting equipment and began slicing their way through the walls of the trailer.

Post by Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:42:45 GMT

"Damn!" Dianne swore as she grabbed a medikit. She motioned for Nikki to take a stretcher and backboard, then picked up a scanner. "This is why we need this bucket of bolts back in working order! So we can move the whole damn thing to the victim if necessary!"

Three long strides and she was down the ramp. Scott downloaded the coordinates where Luke and Gordon were to her visor; a quick glance and she was off and running. Nikki overtook her easily, glancing back to see Dianne huffing along behind. I will get some more time in on the treadmill! Dianne swore to herself. As much as I hate running, I have to be fit enough to do it!

She took some time to catch her breath when she arrived at the ruined trailer. Luke glanced over at her with a concerned frown; Gordon kept his focus on cutting the aluminum walls, but once they'd finished cutting and had eased a good portion of wall and roof away, he put a hand on her shoulder. "You okay, Doc?"

By this time, she'd recovered her breath. "Yeah, Ah'm okay now. Just a bit winded. Need to get back into shape." She straightened and moved over to the victim, running the scanner over him. "Concussion, three broken ribs, two fractures. Fractured arm... lung collapsed. We deal with that first, and get him on a backboard. I need a chest tube; Angel, start cutting the clothes."

They worked furiously for several minutes with both Luke and Gordon lending a hand. Rommel moved away at Luke's command, sitting between the two hoverbikes as if on guard. Finally, they eased their patient onto an antigravity stretcher. Luke's eyes widened when he saw the stretcher float upward to an easy height for pushing.

"Angel, you take one of these hoverbikes and go on ahead to prep the surgical suite," Dianne ordered. "We'll come along as fast as we can with our patient here."

"F-A-B, Doc," Nikki responded. She chose the red hoverbike, started it up, and sped off in the direction they'd come.

"Let's move along an' get this gent to Seven," Dianne said, shouldering her medikit and taking hold of the stretcher.

"Doc," said Gordon firmly. "You'd better take the other hoverbike, especially after that last run."

"We're faster than you are, and we won't be jolting this guy any. You get back fast and get ready." Luke turned and motioned to Rommel, who trotted over.

"F-A-B," Dianne said, shaking her head. "But don't get used t' ordering me around, y'hear?"

"Never," Gordon said. He nodded to Luke, and the two took off at a run, the stretcher moving smoothly between them as they matched strides. Rommel ran ahead.

Dianne kicked the hoverbike into gear, and sped back to the medical cabin, passing her patient on the way. This is more like it! she thought. I'll have to see if I can get one assigned to Seven on a permanent basis!

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:42:55 GMT

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The plane slowly circled the small airfield, finally coming in for a landing. The young woman stepped out from under the hanger door and made her way towards the plane. She arrived as the steps lowered. A figure appeared in the doorway and she bowed.

The leader of the Tyrikalicans smiled as he placed his hand on her head. "Rise, my child." She looked up, devotion clearly evident in her eyes. "What have you heard?"

"Kylania, they are reporting on the news that the damage in the area was minimal. It should have survived."

"You have not been there yourself?"

She shook her head. "No, Kylania, I have not."

"You have acquired transportation?"

"Yes, this way." She led her leader and his attendants over to a van. "Many of the roads are closed, but we should be able to drive quite a ways before having to continue on foot." The leader nodded, and gathering his blue robes about him, settled down in the passenger seat. A few moments later they were driving towards the city.

One of the attendants held a small laptop. He was scanning data then looked up. "Kylania, they are here. The Jestreethzi n'Hildrathuk are here!"

The leader appeared unruffled. "Why do you sound surprised? It is their sacred duty, is it not? Did you doubt they would come at Undlieek's call?"

Chastened, the man shook his head. "No, Kylania."

"After we have surveyed the damage, we shall find our brothers and sisters and offer our support."

They drove in silence for a long while, gazing out at the damaged buildings around them. As they got closer to their destination, the roads became impassable with crowds of people. The young woman pulled the van over. "This is as close as I can get, Kylania. It is about a mile's walk to our Supreme Leader's house."

"Very well, then we shall walk." The group exited the van and started down the street. They often paused to help people; once to reunite a small child that had become separated from her family in the crowds, another to lead an ambulance crew to a group of injured.

Finally, they arrived at their destination. They paused and genuflected, their eyes closing.

"Prelishelvihamo, Supreme Leader, we have come." The leader stood and led his charges through the gate bearing the word: Graceland.

Post by Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:43:09 GMT

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The rescue site, 1:50 PM, local time....

Alan tapped his finger on the desk, his eyes never leaving the screens in front of him. He hated being stuck up on Thunderbird Five, more so in times like this. Now that three of them were sharing the rotation, instead of just himself and John, it wasn't so bad. He smiled as he listened to his brother issuing orders at the rescue site. Good old Scott, he thought to himself, keeping the troops in line.

A sudden beeping caught his attention and he turned and read the data coming in on the computer. "Damn..." He quickly hit the transmit button. "Mav, this is Indy. I've just gotten an alert from the Weather Service. There's a series of thunderstorms headed in your direction. They should be reaching you in less than an hour."

"Terrific, that's all we need." Scott sighed. "Got any more good news for me?"

Alan hesitated a moment. "Actually...have you had any aftershocks yet?"

"A few, nothing serious. Why?"

"Well, seismic scans indicate that you're either going to get another small quake or a big aftershock within the next couple of hours."

"You're just full of happiness and cheer, aren't you?"

"Just doing my job. How long until you wrap things up?" Alan inquired.

"Not sure. Alpine and Cousteau are still searching for victims; Frankie and Quasar are in the DOMO, clearing up some of the debris. They've managed to get a large group of people out and they're waiting to be checked out. Sweet and Tynan are with another group, giving oxygen and tending to the injured," Scott answered. "Ursa and Einstein are checking the area for methane. It used to be a landfill, so the danger of gas is a real possibility."

"Let's hope they don't find any. What about Angel?"

"She's with Doc. They have a critical and are working on him over in Seven."

Alan nodded. "I'll notify Base and update them on the situation." He glanced at the computer again. "Those storms are moving fast; you'd better try and step on it."

"FAB. Mobile Control, out." Scott cut the connection and Alan quickly got busy alerting his father.

Post by Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:43:21 GMT

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While Brains and Callie were getting the Laser truck ready for use, Scott looked up at the sky again, then at the group of people who were gathered around Thunderbird Seven's ramp. "I really hope those storms ease up by the time they get here. But whether or not they do, we're going to need some shelter," he muttered. Glancing around to see if any of the other operatives were available, he swore under his breath. "Thunderbird Five from Mobile Control," he called.

"Thunderbird Five here, reading you strength five. What do you need, Mav?"

Scott rolled his eyes at the new nickname. "I'm locking up Mobile Control for a bit. We're going to need some shelter over the victims before those storms arrive. Keep an eye on Mobile Control for me long distance, will you? And if there's anything urgent that needs my attention while I'm working on the tent, send it to my visor."

"F-A-B," Alan said. He called up a schematic of the rescue site, then pulled aside another window with just Mobile Control and its immediate vicinity on it, and zoomed in tight. A blue dot glowed brightly near the unit.

"Locking up... now." Scott flipped a switch and the screens powered down. The keyboard locked, and the mike switched off. "I'm off to get the Penelar tent."

Inside Thunderbird Seven's surgical suite, Dianne was just shucking her gloves after finishing a quick and dirty surgery on Jim D'Angelo. She glanced up at the scanner's readings; the broken bones still showed clearly, even though they'd been splinted. His vitals made her lips thin, and she shook her head slightly. She glanced up at Nikki. "Okay, Angel. Let's move him and make room foah some o' our other patients."

"F-A-B." Nikki brought the antigravity stretcher up to the level of the surgical scanner, and together they transferred Jim to it. "Where do you want him?"

"Neah the doah," Dianne said as she helped ease the stretcher out. "Ah'm gonna see if'n we can get an airlift foah this one. We just don't have the time to finish the job heah, an' Ah'm afraid he won't last."

"At least he was the first," Nikki reminded her. She and Dianne moved Jim to one of the biobeds, and she slid the doctor's chart into its slot to record his vital signs. "Now we can focus on the others. Alpine and Tynan have been helping to triage when they've brought patients back, so everyone should be tagged so far." She tweaked the blanket that covered Jim. "Want me to see if Tynan is available?"

Dianne sighed. "Just bring in the worst o' the red or yellow tags and we'll start working. Let Tynan finish what he's started. We can corral Alpine if'n he gets back heah first." She looked down at her bloodied scrubs. "Ah'd bettah change real quick. Don't wanna scare the patients."

Nikki smiled wearily, and Dianne headed for the door to the cockpit... only to pull up short as she remembered that there was no cockpit. With another sigh, she headed back towards the tiny storage area at the back... only to nearly collide with the next patient. "Bring her in heah, Angel," she said, dismissing her former problem. A glance at the doctor's station on the way to the surgery showed her Jim's bioreadings, and she touched her earpiece. "Mobile Control from Thunderbird Seven. Ah need an airlift, if it can be arranged."

Scott, who was carrying the backpack containing the large Penelar tent, answered her call. "I'll see what I can do, Doc, but we've got some storms approaching and we need to get the other patients under cover."

"Maverick, the medical airlift first, if you please," Dianne said with a scowl, as she cleaned her hands. "Theyah have got to be some able-bodied men out theyah who can help you put up a tent."

Scott was about to reply, when a big dark fellow came up to him, and offered his hand. "Uh, sir? I'm Terry Nicks, construction foreman. I heard that you folks found Jim D'Angelo, our architect. Do you know how he is?"

"I'm not the one to ask, Mr. Nicks," Scott said as he headed back to Mobile Control. He put down the backpack and spoke into his earphone. "Thunderbird Five from Maverick. Unlocking Mobile Control now."

"F-A-B," Alan replied, watching as the blinking letters "MCon" stopped blinking.

"Indy, I need a medical airlift. One critical patient at this location."

"I'm on it, Maverick." Alan's voice rang in one of Scott's ears as Terry's rang in the other.

"Would that be Jim?" Terry shifted from foot to foot, a frown of concern on his face. "I heard he was in bad shape."

"I'm not sure, Mr. Nicks." Scott kept his eyes on the screens; the weather screen concerned him the most.

"Well, is there anything my men and I can do?" The near plea in Terry's voice caught Scott's ear. "I know Jareth gave you a hand earlier. Is there anything else you need?"

Scott glanced down at the backpack, and back up at the foreman. "Y'know, I think there is something you could help me with."

Post by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:43:31 GMT

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Brains and Callie had gone on to try and find the recovery system that vented the methane gas away from the buildings. They located a stairwell that seemed to be going in the right direction, but it was blocked. A small aftershock then hit, and some of the material partly fell away, revealing an opening. So, carefully, they went down. They found a wide hallway, filled with debris, but negotiable.

Slowly they made their way, checking the rooms on either side, until they found what they were looking for.. But they instantly knew it was hopeless to try and get it going.

"I don't believe this, Ursa. This machine is a pile of junk. If I didn't know better, I'd say it was one of the original machines from the last century. It looks like someone was trying to save some money at the expense of people's lives. Or siphon off money for himself."

"I hate to think that of anyone, Einstein," Callie replied, "but I'd have to say that, in this instance, you're right. I can't imagine how they got this past the inspectors." She moved to one side, squatted down to peer past some of the debris. "But the beams and cement have crushed what looks like a very essential part of it, so old or not, it's useless. We're going to have to find another way of getting the methane out of here."

"What did the readings you took say again?"

Callie rechecked. "Very high. The last reading had it at 460 parts per thousand, and climbing rapidly."

"Then we need to act fast." Brains tapped his communicator. "Mobile Base from Einstein."

"Go ahead, Einstein."

"The device to vent the methane away is useless. It is both old, and badly damaged. We're going to need the Excavator to unblock the tunnels in as many locations as we can, and perhaps the Laser Truck to bore several holes into them from above. And we need to do it as fast as possible. Our readings indicate a high count of methane gas there, and it's rising rapidly."

"Tynan and Sweet have the Excavator and, I believe, have unblocked the tunnels in at least two locations already. The Laser Truck is standing by. Return here, and we'll figure out where the best places to poke the holes would be. We need to make it fast. Indy has informed me that both some thunderstorms and either another quake or a large aftershock is due within the next hour or two."

Damn! That's all we need. "F-A-B, Maverick. We're on our way." Brains cut communications, looked over at Callie and said, "Let's move. Every second counts."

As quickly as they could, they made their way back to the surface, then headed back to Mobile control.

Post by Hobbeth

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:43:44 GMT

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The rescue site, 2:15pm local time...

Elsie frowned in concentration as she maneuvered the DOMO through the rubble. She and John had opened up a stairwell, freeing the people trapped inside. They had continued on, finding other victims and getting them out as well. There had been one hairy moment when the wreckage they were moving shifted, nearly trapping them, but John's deft actions at the wheel got them out just in time.

She glanced over at John, who was peering intently at the heat sensors. "Finding anyone else?"

John shook his head. "Nothing. I think we've got them all. We should head back to Mobile Control."

Elise nodded. "We sure don't want to be out in the middle of this mess if and when those aftershocks hit." She turned the DOMO and started back. "I'll see what I can do about clearing some of this as we go. Make it easier for the local clean-up crew."

"Good plan." They had been traveling for a few minutes when they noticed Gordon and Luke off to their right.

"Hey, Quasar, you guys headed back?" Gordon asked.

"Yes we are, Cousteau. Everything OK?"

"We're fine. We'll be heading in shortly ourselves. Sarge is acting funny so Alpine and I are going to see if we can figure out what's bothering him."

"Sarge?" John asked, puzzled.

"The four-footed member of our team," Gordon replied. "We'll be in soon."

"You'd better be. We've got those storms on the way. Make sure you're out as soon as you can," John told him.

"FAB."

John turned to Elise. "Sarge? Where'd he come up with that one?"

Elise shook her head. "I have no id--" Then she burst out laughing. "Perfect! It's perfect!"

John arched an eyebrow. "Am I missing something?"

Still chuckling, she started to explain. "It's a military thing. All the dogs in the service are given an honorary rank of Sergeant. It goes back to World War Two and it's one of those things that just stuck. You didn't serve, did you?"

John shook his head. "Just the space program."

"That's why you didn't get it. Gordon was in WASP, so he'd have known. Same with Scott. In fact, the squadron stationed with us had a beautiful Doberman named Sarge."

John raised an eyebrow. "You military types are weird."

Elise grinned. "We could say the same about you space cases."

"Ha ha ha." They drove back to Mobile Control in good natured silence.

Post by Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:43:57 GMT

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Scott glanced up at the sky behind him. It was turning an ominous looking black, and the wind was starting to pick up. Alan's latest reports had the storm slowing, but not enough to give the crew enough time to finish. At least let it wait until we get most of the victims under cover, Scott thought to himself.

He checked the location of the rest of the team. Elise and John were on their way back in the DOMO. Looking up he could see the red vehicle moving slowly towards him. Brains and Callie were venting the methane, and should be finished shortly. Tin-Tin and Dominic had returned to Seven, and were tending to the least of the wounded. Dianne and Nikki were seeing to the more serious cases. The helicopter had left a short time ago, taking the wounded architect, Jim D'Angelo, to a local hospital. Gordon called in saying that he and Luke would be back shortly. Scott let out a sigh of relief. Things were going well. They were almost done.

A movement behind him caught his attention and he turned to see a white van pulling up. Figuring it was some of the locals finally able to get through, he turned back to Mobile Control.

"Greetings, Jhutu. We have come."

Scott turned, startled, then let out a groan. "Oh God, you've got to be kidding me."

"Maverick, is something wrong?" Alan's voice sounded in his headset.

"No, Indy. We've just got some...unexpected company," Scott replied.

The occupants of the van were all bald, with a ruby earring in one ear. Each was dressed in royal blue robes, accented by a burgundy sash. One man had a multi-colored sash, green, blue, burgundy, yellow and white. He stepped forward and bowed to Scott. "We are here, Jhutu, to assist you in whatever way you deem necessary." A second van pulled up, then a third, each full of more people.

For one of the few times in his life, Scott was at a loss for words. But the man didn't seem to notice. He gestured to his followers. "Spread out, do what you can." Most gave a bow and moved off towards the medical tent. Some went to comfort those not injured. A small knot gathered around Scott, the leader included. "We shall stay here and offer our prayers to Undlieek."

"Yeah, uh...that would be great...thanks," Scott stammered. "But, uh...please, stay back from the equipment."

The man nodded and moved his followers to a short distance from Mobile Control. Scott shook his head and turned back as the DOMO arrived. John and Elise stepped out. Seeing the Brethren, John did a double take as he and Elise hurried over.

"Is that the group from L.A.?" John asked.

Scott nodded. "Yeah, they're here to offer their 'support and prayers'."

Elise unsuccessfully tried to hold back a giggle. "How long have they been here?"

"Not long." Scott nodded towards the group. "That one with the colored sash appears to be their leader."

"All joking aside, I think we'd better keep an eye on this bunch. I've checked out their website, but maybe we should dig a little deeper," John said.

"Good idea," Scott replied.

Elise looked back towards the strange group. They all had their eyes closed and were chanting something she couldn't understand. "Why don't I go let Doc and the others know what's going on?" She then noticed the group near the tent. "Though at this point, I think they might have already figured it out." She headed off in that direction.

John glanced at them again and chuckled. "You've got to admit, they seem to be helping."

"Oh yeah, they're a big help," Scott muttered.

"That one on the left, the girl. She seems to like you. She keeps staring at you." John grinned at his brother's discomfiture.

"Shut up, John."

Post by Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:44:08 GMT

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Dom carefully ran the med scanner over the woman's arm, beginning at the wrist and moving upward, gently pulling the arm forward. His patient cried out, and he eased the joint back. "Sorry about that, miss," he said apologetically. "Looks like you may have torn a ligament in your shoulder, and sprained your wrist as well. We'll have to immobilize your arm and have the doc take a quick look." He turned to his right, expecting to find Tin-Tin there. His patient's sudden wide-eyed look didn't quite register as he asked, "Hand me a wrist splint, will you, Sweet?"

The hand that gave him the inflatable splint looked odd, too light to be Tin-Tin's, and the sleeve wasn't the bright fuchsia of his helper's uniform shirt (she'd shucked the jacket in favor of the vest, while he'd made a quick change into his scrubs). He turned his gaze completely to the right, and his own eyes widened to find a young, bald woman smiling softly back at him.

"Here, Pewoif. Is this what you require?" Her voice was quiet, and slightly accented, but he couldn't place the tone.

"Y-Yes, thank you." He took the splint and worked to regain his focus so he could properly wrap it around the patient's wrist. When that was done, he reached for the medikit himself, intending to get an immobilizing sling. But the bald woman picked the up the bag herself.

"Tell me what you need, Pewoif, and I shall help you find it."

"I'd rather find it myself, thank you," Dom said, holding out a hand for the bag.

A slightly hurt look that passed over her face, but it was gone in an instant. She bowed, and handed him the bag. "Yes, of course, Pewoif."

He pulled out the sling, and began to gently ease around the patient's arm. The woman he was helping kept staring at Dom's erstwhile helper, and he was thankful for the distraction.

"So," he asked conversationally. "What's this 'Pewoif' you keep on about? What does it mean?"

"It is your name," the bald woman told him. "It means 'he of the melodious voice'." She paused, then added with a smile. "You truly have earned such a name, Pewoif."

The woman patient locked gazes with Dom and let out a noise, almost a hiccuping squeak, then another one, then a third. He thought at first that she was in pain, then it suddenly hit him that she was trying to keep back a strangled laugh. He sighed, turned to his admirer, and said simply, "Thank you."

Post by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:44:38 GMT

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Nikki stepped out of Thunderbird Seven's medical cabin, antigravity float at her side. She looked up, and stood stock still with surprise. The white Penelar tent was full of... bald people. One of

them, a tall, middle-aged man saw her, and smiled, then bowed.

"Greetings, Aoethapot," he said in a deep voice. "It is an honor to meet you and see that you are well again. May I be of assistance?"

Nikki put up one finger. "Uh, wait just a moment, please." She left the stretcher hovering above the ramp, turned around, and hurried back to the surgical area, where Dianne was cleaning off the scanner bed.

"Doc," she said, her tones urgent. "There are... bald people outside. They're wearing these blue robes and sashes... one of them bowed to me and called me something I can't even pronounce! They look like those nutters who think we're from Jupiter!"

Dianne's eyes widened in disbelief. "No! You're kidding!" She left the surgical room for the little storage area, and peered out, trying hard not to be seen. Her eyes widened even more, and she began to laugh. "You're not kidding!"

"Shh! They'll hear you!" Nikki pushed Dianne back into the surgery and slid the door shut. "What do you think they're doing here?"

Dianne kept laughing, louder now, holding a hand over her abdomen. "Oh, God. That is so funny!" she said between gulping breaths.

Nikki shook her head. "I'm going to ask Maverick." Tapping her earphone, she said, "Mobile Control from Thunderbird Seven."

Scott answered promptly. "Mobile Control here. How can I help you, Angel?"

"Er, I'm not sure, Maverick." She glanced over at Dianne, who was trying to get herself under control. "There are a lot of unauthorized people in the med tent..." Her description set Dianne off again.

"Uh, yes, I know," Scott replied. "They're the people from Jupiter. They're here to offer their 'help and prayers'." He paused to listen. "What's that noise in the background?"

"Just Doc, laughing," Nikki responded. "So they're really those nutters who think we're from Jupiter?"

"Yes, Angel. Just... just let them help, but don't let them interfere." Scott paused, then added, "And tell Doc to go breathe in a paper bag or something. We don't need to antagonize or insult them."

Nikki blew out a breath. "F-A-B, Maverick. I'll tell her. Angel out."

There was a knock on the surgical suite's door. "Doc, Angel, are you all right in there?" Tin-Tin called. "Your next patient is waiting."

Dianne finally calmed, pulling off her visor and wiping her eyes. "Yeah, we're all right, Sweet. Be there in a tick." She glanced at Nikki. "Ah hope Ah can keep from laughing in their faces."

"I hope so, too!" Nikki replied. She opened the door to the surgery. "Let's go."

Dianne took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Her voice sounded steadier as she said, "Right. We've been too long in here as it is."

They left together. Nikki descended the ramp, making her way to where Tin-Tin waited with the stretcher she'd left. The middle-aged man was there, ready to help transfer the next patient to the float.

"Well met again, Aoethapot," he said with a smile and a bow. "I am honored to help you and Undlieek-asjaphe in your work."

"Er, thank you, sir," Nikki said, exchanging a bemused glance with Tin-Tin. Together, they helped the male patient onto the stretcher. "That word you called me..."

"Aoethapot?"

"Yes, that. What is it? What does it mean?"

The man smiled wider. "That is your name in the language of Tyrikalica, and it means 'she of the Golden Fist'."

Nikki winced. "Er, thank you for telling me. I'm not well versed in Tyrikalica." She moved to the head of the stretcher. "We'll take it from here."

"As you wish, Aoethapot." The man bowed again, then moved away to speak to another patient.

Tin-Tin pulled up beside Nikki. "And I thought 'daughter of the Golden Sun' was bad!" she murmured, grinning.

Nikki rolled her eyes, and gave Tin-Tin a hard nudge.

While Nikki brought in the next patient, Dianne busied herself by checking on the patients who were already settled in the biobeds, updating their doctor's charts, and making sure their vital signs were steady. As the stretcher bearing her next patient moved up the ramp, she moved to meet it in the doorway, and glanced out at those in the tent.

Suddenly, it seemed all faces were turned her way. A murmuring started amongst the robe-clad people, then they began to bow, murmuring, "Opalneio, Opalneio." A dark skinned woman raised her hands up and called out, "Praise Undlieek! Opalneio has returned to his service!"

The others took up the cry, while the construction workers watched with wide eyes and open mouths.

Dianne's jaw dropped for a moment, then she recovered her wits and held up her hands. "Please, please!" She wasn't getting the response she wanted, so she added, "Please, brothers! Sisters!"

The robed members of the crowd heard her and quieted, still looking her way. She took a deep breath and tried hard not to grin. "Thank you," she said, "Thank you for your help and your... prayers." The last word was hard to say, and sounded a bit strangled as she fought to keep from laughing again. "We appreciate them very much."

Motioning to the medical cabin behind her, she added, "I now must do my duty. Thank you again for your help."

With the last word, she turned and hurried to the surgery, where Tin-Tin and Nikki already had the patient on the scanner bed. She closed her eyes and shook her head, chuckling softly.

"Please! Don't start again!" Nikki cautioned her.

Dianne took a deep breath. "I'm okay. Really." She chuckled again, then took another deep breath. "Let me get to work here and I'll be fine. Really."

Nikki and Tin-Tin exchanged glances, and Tin-Tin shrugged. "You'd better go out and see what our Jupiterian friends are doing," Nikki said.

"Brothers and sisters, Angel," Tin-Tin corrected, with a sly glance in Dianne's direction. "Doc even said so." With that parting shot, she sidled out.

Dianne gave another strangled laugh, then took another deep breath. "I'll be fine. Really."

Post by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:44:51 GMT

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Luke looked down at his dog, a worried expression on his face. Rommel was pressed up close to his master, his tail between his legs, whining. "What's wrong, boy?" Luke knelt down and ran his hands over Rommel's legs and body.

"Is he OK?" Gordon asked. His voice low.

"He doesn't seem hurt, but..." Rommel whined again and stuck his nose under Luke's hand. "I've never seen him act this way before."

Gordon looked around to see if anyone could overhear. "Then let's get him back to Seven. Mom can put him on the scanner. She's no vet, but if there's something wrong, she'll find it." He put his hand on Luke's shoulder. "We'll take care of him, Luke. He's part of the team."

Luke nodded and stood up. He reached into Rom's pack and pulled out a short leash, snapping it to the vest. "Let's go."

They picked their way through the rubble, Luke casting anxious looks down at his dog. "Easy, boy,

almost there."

When they reached the edge of the debris, Gordon nodded towards the medical tent. "Go; I'll tell Maverick what's happening." Luke nodded and hurried off. Gordon started towards Mobile Control, then froze. An evil grin appeared on his face and he trotted forward. "Hey! Looks like we've got a party going on!"

Scott scowled. "Where's Alpine?"

"Having Sarge checked out." Gordon filled his brothers in, then nodded at the Brethren. "How long have our friends been here?"

"Long enough to make Maverick here go a little nuts," John grinned.

Gordon laughed. "I'll be right back."

Scott and John watched as Gordon approached the group. He stopped in front of the leader and bowed. "Greetings, Kylania. We are honored by your presence."

John and Scott's jaws dropped in surprise. "What is he doing?" Scott hissed.

"Shhhh!" John whispered back.

The leader had stepped forward and placed his hands on Gordon's shoulder. "No, Naoptap, it is we who are honored by you." He gestured to the others with open arms. "We are merely here to offer our support and prayers for your safety and those you are helping. You and your brothers and sisters, you are truly doing Undlieek's work. You of the Jestreethzi n'Hildrathuk are the real saviors of mankind." He smiled benevolently, then he and the rest of his followers bowed.

Gordon turned and walked back to his brothers. "That went well, don't you think?"

Scott grabbed him by the arm and dragged him further away from the Brethren. "What did you think you were doing?"

Gordon shrugged himself free of his brother's grip. "Just doing a little PR for our home planet of Tyrikalica." He grinned. "Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to check on Sarge. Vistoalpam, Jhutu, Xuadji." He gave a short bow, then wandered over to Seven.

Scott took a deep breath. "One of these days I'm going to kill him and Dad's just going to have to deal with it," he said in a low whisper that was almost a growl.

John laughed. "Come on, he's not that bad." At Scott's glare, he took a step back. "OK, maybe he is. Well, if you're under control here, I'm going to help load up. Watch your back there, Jhutu." Chuckling at another furious look from Scott, John hurried away.

Post by Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:45:15 GMT

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Luke made his way towards the white tent housing Thunderbird Seven. Rommel stuck close to his leg, whimpering and whipping his head back and forth. Luke stepped inside the tent and froze.

It seemed to be full of bald people wearing bright blue robes. Some were assisting victims, others seemed to be standing in a circle, chanting something he couldn't understand. Pulling Rom closer he sought out a familiar face. He spied Dominic off to one side and hurried over to him. "Hey, have you seen Doc?"

Dom looked up, then started at seeing Rommel. "Aye, she's out back. Everythin' all right?"

"I'll let you know." Luke quickly pushed his way through the crowd, stepping through the curtain separating the area. "Doc? Are you in here?"

Nikki looked up from where she was settling a patient in one of the last biobeds. She frowned a bit at seeing Luke with Rommel so close at his side, but something told her that the dog's demeanor was off. "She's in the surgery, Alpine. Is something wrong?"

"It's the mutt. He's acting really funny. Cousteau said that we could put him on the scanner." Luke's tone was full of concern.

"I'll let Doc know." Nikki finished her task, shucked her gloves, and headed back to the surgery. Just as she got to the door, she found Dianne escorting Dom's wrist and shoulder patient out. "See that she has a comfortable place to sit," Dianne instructed. "Her rotator cuff is torn, but if she can keep the arm immobilized, it should minimize the damage."

"F-A-B, Doc." Nikki glanced over her shoulder at Luke. "Alpine here has brought in... the dog. He says there's something wrong."

Dianne looked over to where Luke stood, trying to comfort Rommel. "Okay. I'll bring him in."

Nikki nodded and escorted the patient back out into the tent, while Dianne approached Luke. "What seems to be the problem, Alpine?"

Luke knelt down and unclipped Rommel's vest. He ran his hands over the dog's torso. "I'm not sure. We found that last group of people and got them out. Suddenly he started acting like this. All jittery like. He doesn't seem hurt, and he hasn't been out of my sight, but something's got him spooked."

"Have you found anything toxic out there? Something he could have eaten, drank, or breathed in?" Dianne asked as she guided both dog and trainer back to the surgical area. She was aware of eyes following them; the still-conscious patients were interested - make that very interested - in the dog's presence.

"No, nothing. He just started acting like this." He looked up at her. "You don't think he's been poisoned do you?" Luke swallowed thickly, his voice hoarse.

"Well, if he was, we'll find out," Dianne replied in a soothing voice. "Bring him in here, and lift him up onto the scanner bed."

Luke hoisted up the dog, and placed him on the bed. Rommel whimpered and Luke rubbed his head. "Easy, boy, easy." He took a step back, giving Dianne room to work.

She activated the scanner, and tapped her earpiece. "Doc to Indy. I'm going to need a long-distance vet consult. I think one of our agents is a vet. Can you get in contact with him or her and download these scans?"

Alan was surprised by the request. "F-A-B, Doc. I'll contact our vet right away."

"Thanks, Indy. Let me know when they're ready." She gave Luke a half-sympathetic, half-apologetic look. "I'm sorry, but I'm not a vet. Fortunately, one of our agents is and will be able to read these scans for me."

Luke had moved back to the dog's side. "Thanks, Doc." He lifted Rom's head, and peered into his eyes. "He's never been sick a day in his life." He bent down and pressed his forehead to the dog's. "You'll be OK, Rom. Doc here's going to take good care of you."

Dianne smiled at the sight of the pair, and stroked Rom's side gently. A sound in her earphone made her reach for her ear.

"Indy to Doc, I've got the vet online. You can upload the scans when you're ready."

"F-A-B." She watched as the scanner finished moving across the dog's body, then tapped a key. "Scans uploading now."

"Got 'em. I'm downloading them to the vet now."

"F-A-B." She turned to Luke. "The vet has the scans now. It shouldn't be too long before we get an answer."

"Thanks, Doc." He continued rubbing Rom's head. "By the way, what's with the pajama party outside? Thought I had crashed a costume party for a moment there." He frowned a moment. "Wait a second. Are those the kooks that were on TV a few months ago? The ones from Mars or something?"

Dianne chuckled. "Jupiter, actually. Yes, those are the same kooks." She raised an eyebrow. "Bet you get a Jupiterian name, too, now that they've seen you... you and Rom here."

"Terrific," he muttered. "See the trouble you get me into!" He ruffled the hair on Rom's head, causing the dog to lick his hand.

Dianne's earpiece sounded again. "Doc, patching the vet through."

A moment later a woman's voice came over the speaker. Dianne hit a button on the console so

that Luke could hear too. "Doc, this is Agent 610. I've looked over the scans you sent me and can find nothing wrong." Luke groaned. The woman continued. "His heart rate is quite elevated however, indicating stress of some kind. I assume you have Diazepam on board?"

"Yes, we do." Dianne went to the meds cabinet. "What kind of dosage are we talking about? And it is better for him to have oral or injection?"

"Definitely an injection. How much does he weigh?"

Luke looked up. "About eighty pounds."

The vet rattled off a series of amounts and Dianne got the syringe ready. "Inject him in the scruff of the neck. He should calm down pretty quickly, but I warn you, he'll be groggy for the next couple of hours."

"Groggy I can handle, these nerves I can't. You have no idea what's going on?"

"I'd have to see him for a complete examination," she replied.

Luke looked down at his dog again. "I may take you up on that."

Scott cut in. "All operatives on alert! We have an aftershock warning!"

Before Dianne could inject Rom with the sedative, the aftershock rumbled and rocked the medical cabin.

Luke automatically threw himself over Rom, bracing himself against the table. The shaking lasted only a few seconds, but seemed like forever. When things had settled down, he glanced up at Dianne. "This is why I lived in the mountains. Are you OK?"

"Yeah. I'm okay." She picked the filled syringe from the floor where it had fallen. "I'd better get another, then go out and see how everyone else is doing."

Luke watched as she refilled the needle and injected Rommel. Within moments, the dog stopped shaking and seemed to doze off. Luke let out a sigh of relief. "Scared me, mutt," he said softly. He looked up at Dianne. "Think he'll be all right here? I should get back out there too."

Dianne winced. "I have to move him, I'm afraid. Need the scanner for other patients." She shook her head. "Just watch this get out into the media. I can see the headlines now." She pulled a blanket from a cabinet. "Move him out by the back door. I doubt we'll be needing it."

"How is the patient?" The vet's voice sounded.

"I gave him an injection and he's asleep," Dianne responded.

"Good." She paused a moment. "If it won't be too much of a security breach, can you confirm that you are in an earthquake area?"

Dianne looked puzzled. "Yes, as a matter of fact we are. Just went through an aftershock. Why?"

"Tell me, how was the patient acting when you first arrived?"

Luke thought a moment. "Fine, nothing out of the ordinary. We found victims, both alive and dead, but that's never bothered him before. It's only been the last forty-five minutes or so that he's been off."

"Hmmm, I wonder...Animals sense things, far better than we humans do. Could it be he sensed the quake coming?"

Luke paused. "I suppose it's possible." He looked down at the sleeping dog. "Big goof. Is that what you were trying to tell me?" He shook his head and hoisted Rommel into his arms. "Thanks, Doctor. I'm sure you'll be hearing from me again soon."

"I hope so. Keep me posted."

"Thanks, Doctor. I appreciate the help," Dianne said as Luke eased himself and his burden out of the surgery. She pulled out some antiseptic and began to wipe down the scanner bed.

"You're very welcome. Glad to be of assistance. And it's nice to know that you've got a four-legged addition to the team."

"He's been a big help today, but I can see we're going to have some challenges with him, too."

The vet chuckled. "You'll be fine. I'd better let you get back to your specialty."

"F-A-B. Thunderbird Seven out."

The bed now clean, Dianne put away the medicines. As she did, Nikki appeared in the door.

"Alpine's gone out to help with the remaining yellow tags," she said as she helped another patient in. "That aftershock gave us a few more injuries."

"We'll deal with them, Angel. We'll deal with them."

Post by Tikatu and Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:45:32 GMT

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The rescue site, 3:05 local time...

Scott braced himself against Mobile Control as the ground shook around him. He blotted out the screams of the people nearby, knowing there was nothing he could do until the tremor stopped. After what seemed like forever, but in reality was only a few moments, things grew still. Scott

instantly snapped to attention, requesting an update on his team.

"This is Angel. Doc, Tynan, Sweet and I are in the med tent seeing to the victims. There don't seem to be too many new injuries, a few bumps and bruises, nothing major. Alpine is outside giving us a hand," Nikki told him.

"FAB," Scott replied. "Quasar, Frankie?"

"We're in Thunderbird Two, loading the equipment. Cousteau's here, giving us a hand picking things up. Things got a little shaky for a while, but no damage," Elise told him.

"How much longer?" Scott asked, looking up at the sky as it started to sprinkle.

"Less than an hour. We're waiting for Einstein and Ursa to come back with the laser truck."

"I'll see what's holding them up. Einstein, Ursa, do you copy?"

"We do, Mobile Control," Callie answered.

"What's your situation?"

"The tremor actually worked in our favor. It shifted some of the debris off of the draining pipes and the methane is venting freely. I would have to say the danger of explosion is passed, though someone should get out here and repair this correctly as soon as possible," she told him.

"That's the first good news I've heard all day," Scott muttered to himself. "Ursa, get yourselves back here ASAP. The storm is moving in and I want everyone, including the victims, under cover before it hits."

"FAB."

A whimper caught Scott's attention and he turned. The small knot of followers that had been praying behind him were in various forms of disarray. A few had fallen and were being tended to by their associates. Scott hurried over. "Is everyone all right?"

The leader looked up at him. "Jhutu, one of our sisters has been hurt."

"Let's take a look." Scott knelt down in front of the girl who had been staring at him earlier. She had a nasty gash across her forehead, and a dazed look on her face. "Hey there, can you tell me your name?"

She looked up at him and tried to smile. "Zyrethia, my name is Zyrethia. It means 'Devoted Follower'."

Scott nodded. "OK, Zyrethia, can you tell me where you're hurt?"

She brought a hand up to her forehead. "When the ground shook, I fell and hit my head."

"Relax, we're going to take care of you," Scott told her. "Doc, I need someone out here at Mobile Control. One of...our sisters...have been hurt. Head injury by the looks of it."

"FAB, Ah'm sending Tynan out," Dianne responded.

Scott turned back to the girl. "Hang in there, help's on the way."

The Tryikalican leader placed his hand on Scott's shoulder. "Undlieek blesses you, Jhutu. You truly are the Jestreethzi n'Hildrathuk."

Scott forced a smile. "Yeah, uh...thanks. Now, if you could gather your...people, we're trying to clear the area. There's a major storm approaching and we need to get everyone to safety."

The man shook his head. "There will be no storm, Jhutu. It has been taken care of. However, we will do as you ask and help you remove the others as well."

"Oh-kay..." Scott looked up as Dominic appeared at his side. "Thank God you're here," he said softly.

Dom chuckled. "What, you don't like our new friends?" He smiled to the girl. "Let's have a look at you." He ran the scanner over the girl, then peered into her eyes. "Well, it doesn't look like a concussion, but I'd like to take you over to the med tent, just in case."

"I shall do as you ask, Pewoif. And thank-you." Dominic helped her to her feet and together with some of her friends, led them to the med tent.

Shaking his head, Scott reached Mobile Control just as John reached him. "We've got everything secured, just waiting on the Laser Truck and Thunderbird Seven."

Scott nodded. "Good. Hold on a sec. Indy, I need an update on those thunderstorms."

"FAB, Mobile Control, checking now," Alan replied.

John looked around, watching as the Brethren seemed to be gathering up the uninjured and leading them to their vans. "I see you've mobilized the troops."

"Ha-ha." Scott followed John's gaze. "I'll admit they were more helpful than I thought they'd be. I'll be happier once we get everyone out of here. If we're still here when those storms hit, this place will turn to mud and be a nightmare."

John looked up at the sky. "It's not as dark as I thought it would be considering what's on the way." He wiped the rain off his visor. "Not raining as hard either."

Scott nodded in the direction of the Brethren. "The leader there claims it's been taken care of."

"Taken care of? What's that supposed to mean?"

"Beats me."

Alan cut in on their conversation. "Maverick, the storms have dissipated to the south of you. Looks like all you're going to get is a little rain."

"Say that again, Indy," Scott said.

"The storms have blown themselves out. You are in no danger. Also, the local authorities are on their way to help evacuate. Is there anyone needing emergency evacuation?"

"You'll have to check with Doc on that one. Indy, are you sure about the weather?" Scott sounded baffled.

"Absolutely, Mav. Want me to send you the scans directly?" Alan sounded testy.

"No, Indy, that won't be necessary. Mobile Control, out." Scott looked at John. "You don't think..." They both turned to look at the Tryikalican leader, who smiled. Scott shook his head. "Nah, he couldn't have....could he?"

John shrugged. "Who knows? Stranger things have happened."

They glanced over at the man again. He opened his arms, raising them over his head then bringing them down in front of his chest, bowing. Scott waved sheepishly then turned back to his console. "That's it. Get everyone together; we're going home."

Post by Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:45:44 GMT

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"How's he doing?" Luke asked, climbing through the rear door of Seven's medical cabin.

Dianne paused in her clearing of the doctor's charts long enough to toss her head in the direction of the biobeds. "Go see for yourself."

He nodded, and entered the near-empty cabin. Local ambulances and LifeFlight helijets had taken the patients on to local hospitals, as Thunderbird Seven couldn't make the trip in its current condition. Rom was on one of the biobeds, snoring, fastened in by a strap to keep him falling off. Luke went to his dog's side and stroked the sleek head. "You big goof," he muttered, a smile coming to his face. "You did good work today."

In Thunderbird Two's cockpit, the topic of conversation was their new-found "brothers and sisters".

"So, Brains," Gordon said conversationally, "Did you find out what your Tyrikalican name was?"

"No," Brains said. "I didn't have any contact with those posers."

"Posers?" Dom asked.

"Yes, of course," Brains replied, taking off his visor and replacing it with his glasses. "Nothing sentient could possibly evolve on Jupiter; it's a gas giant, made of hydrogen and helium. They claim that they -- and we -- are from Jupiter. Ergo, they are posers."

There was a ripple of laughter through the cockpit. Callie pulled off her visor, too, and rubbed at her eyes. "Man, I'm bushed." She sighed a little. "It would have been fun to know the name they gave me... if they gave me one."

Gordon gave her a small smile. "I overheard a couple of them talking as you and Brains hooked Thunderbird Seven up to the Laser Truck," he said smoothly. "They called one of you -- let's see if I can pronounce this right -- Bacqgiuy, and the other, Wamtopoe."

"Whoa! How do you spell those words?" Callie asked, a puzzled frown on her face. "And which one was me?"

Gordon shrugged. "I don't know which was which," he said, adding to his lie.

John glanced between Callie and Gordon. "There is a way to find out," he suggested quietly. "They do have a website..."

"Really?" "Where is it?" "Can you send me a link?" "That must be one funny site!" The chorus of comments made John put up his hands.

"Email me when we get home and debriefed. Then I'll send you a link and you can look at their site for yourself."

The matter more or less resolved, the conversation turned to other things as they winged their way home.

In Thunderbird One, Scott was going over in his mind what he wanted to say in the debriefing. Before he left, the big construction foreman, Terry Nicks, had a crew help him take down the Penelar tent.

"Looks like the rain didn't materialize like you thought it would," Nicks said.

"True, but it's always good to be prepared," Scott had replied as he pushed a button and telescoped the supporting rods back down to a size that would fit in the backpack. He slipped it into the pouch where it belonged, completing the set, and took the neatly folded tent material from Terry.

Terry smoothed a hand over it before handing the bundle over. "What's that made of, anyway? Feels so lightweight..."

"Trade secret," Scott replied. He zipped up the bag and held out his hand. "Thanks for your help today."

"No, thank you. If you hadn't come, there's no telling when we would have gotten out and how many more people would have died here." Nicks looked over at the half-standing mall, and sighed. He looked as if he were going to say something more, but thought better of it.

Scott nodded. "Well, goodbye." Then he headed for Thunderbird One and soon was airborne.

I have to wonder about that mall, he mused on the way home. Should it have collapsed like that? Don't they have to be prepared for earthquakes? Maybe I'll check up a little on that when I get home.

With that, he turned his attention back toward his destination -- Tracy Island. Home.

Post by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Regaining Momentum
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 00:46:00 GMT
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With that we end Chapter 11: Regaining Momentum
