
Subject: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 17:23:17 GMT

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Jeff is now home and safe, but his body still needs to heal, and he must catch up with the many changes that have happened while he was gone. Problems have surfaced that he must solve, and other matters will arise requiring his attention. By now, almost all of the new recruits have had a taste of what it takes to make the grade in International Rescue, both the exciting and the mundane. Training has begun, and the newbies and the Tracys now must learn to grow as a team, seeking to balance personalities and skills to make International Rescue even more effective.

Post by Tikatu on 16/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 17:24:50 GMT

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Monday, March 12th, 8PM; Tracy Island

That night, before Grandma Tracy went to bed, she pulled out her journal and wrote:

Well, we're finally home. And what a relief it is to be back in my own room again. New York is very cold this time of year, and always noisy. I prefer the peace and warmth of the island, now that I'm getting on up in years. I don't mind visiting cold weather places - briefly - but I've had my fill of living there. Jeff's island isn't so far south that the temperature varies much during the year.

When Jeff was declared well enough to travel, we all came home with him. But I'm worried about him. His body seems to be healing, and he put up a good front when he arrived, but his mental and emotional state isn't what it should be, as far as I'm concerned.

I think Dianne is worried, too. If he doesn't snap out of it in a few days, I'm going to have a talk with her. Maybe the two of us can put our heads together and come up with a way to cheer him up. Maybe we can find something he can do that won't tire him too much, but make him feel useful again.

I know he doesn't like being in that wheelchair. His father was the same way. Any time he injured himself and had to use some support device, be it crutches, a cane, whatever, his mood darkened considerably. I've said this before, and I'll say it again: Jeff is so much like his father.

Post by Hobbeth on 16/09/200

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 17:28:07 GMT

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Tuesday, March 13, 2068, 6:00 a.m., Tracy Island

There was already a flurry of activity in the kitchen when a refreshed Emily Tracy made her appearance. Delicious smells were coming from the oven and it looked like Kyrano was already preparing a salad for lunch. Lisa looked over at her from where she was mixing something and smiled.

"Good morning, Em! Did you sleep well?"

Emily returned the smile, pulling an apron out of a drawer and slipping it over her head. "Good morning, Lisa. Yes, I slept very well; it's nice to be back in my own bed. Thank you for asking. My, but you two are up early this morning. What's going on?"

"Well, when you all got back and we had that big party, I suddenly realized that yesterday was Alan's birthday! With all of the hullabaloo surrounding Jeff's homecoming, I'd clean forgotten about it. So, Kyrano and I are trying to put together a special party for him today," Lisa explained. "The birthday cake is in the oven right now. We thought we could have his favorite foods for all three meals today. Kyrano knows what they are. What else we can do on such short notice, I really don't know."

"Oh, land's sakes, I didn't even think of it myself! I have a gift for him somewhere; I'll have to find it and make sure it's wrapped," Emily said shaking her head. "Truthfully, I'm surprised that Alan didn't remind you himself! He's usually always 'reminding' people days and days in advance."

"Perhaps he felt it was inappropriate due to his father's hospitalization," Kyrano suggested.

"Perhaps, though I doubt it," Emily said dryly. "He's not one to let his celebration slide. Oh well, we'll do our best for him today. I hope that Dianne thought of a gift for him; I'm not sure that Jeff would have. Time just seemed to stop out there in New York, if you know what I mean."

Lisa nodded sagely. "Yes, I do." She sighed and continued soberly. "Thinking about time stopping reminds me that there'll be another anniversary coming up soon. I hope Dianne can cope with it this year."

"The memorial service?" Kyrano asked.

"Yes. She might decide not to go this year with Jeff convalescing and all. We'll see how it goes."

"Go where, Grammy?" A large yawn accompanied the comment from Tyler, who had suddenly appeared in the kitchen door. "Where is everybody?"

"Not up yet, Spud," Lisa replied coming from the food prep area to give her youngest grandson a hug. "What are you doing up so early?"

"Couldn't sleep too well," he said, yawning again. "My tummy was grumbling too much. Can I please have something to eat?"

"Hmph. Now that I come to think of it, this would be past lunch time for you if we were still in New

York," Emily commented. "I can see we'll be dealing with the effects of jet lag for a while, won't we?"

"This is true, Mrs. Tracy," Kyrano said simply. "Perhaps young Tyler would like some toast to tide him over until breakfast is ready?"

"Only if I can put cinnamon and sugar on it," Tyler replied cheekily. Lisa rolled her eyes and shook her head, while Kyrano chuckled, and Emily shook a finger at the boy who had become her youngest grandchild.

"Not too much now. You don't want to spoil your breakfast."

"I won't, Gramma. I promise."

The boy sat up at the kitchen table and waited patiently for his treat. Emily ruffled his stiff hair, and went to pow-wow with Lisa to find out what she could do to make her formerly-the-youngest grandson's belated birthday special.

Post by Tikatu on 16/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 17:30:08 GMT

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Tuesday, March 13, 2068, 7:45 a.m., Tracy Island

Jeff woke with a start. He looked around the room, trying to remember where he was. Then it hit him and he sighed contentedly. The sick room. At the Villa. I'm home.

He glanced at the bed next to him. To his surprise, it had been moved back into position and the sensors had been plugged back in. He frowned. Did Dianne sleep in here or not? His attention was caught by the infirmary door swishing open. Dianne stepped in, smiling when she saw he was awake.

"Good morning, dearest," she said, approaching the bed. "I was up obscenely early so I put the bed back where it belonged, got showered, and brought you some fresh clothes." She showed him the garments she had in her hands, then put them down on the counter and came over to him, leaning over for a kiss, and lowering the bars she had raised on her earlier departure. "You slept very soundly despite the time difference."

"The flight and the party wore me out," he said. She helped him to a sitting position, then they made a trip to the bathroom.

"Do you want to shower?" she asked. He sighed, and nodded. He knew he'd need a lot of help to wash himself, and her proximity would make things difficult. He wanted her so badly!

Dianne looked at him with concern. "What's wrong, love?"

"Here I am, unable to dress or shower by myself, and I realize that if you are the one to help me, I'd... just..." He sighed again. "I want you so much, Dianne. Just the sight of you last night made me so... aroused. And right now, there's nothing I can do about it."

"Ah. I see. Would you rather have Dom come down and help you?" Dianne asked, tamping down severely on her drawl, her professional mask sliding into place. She didn't want him to know how much his answer stung.

Jeff sat and thought. He was torn, so torn. Yes, he wanted his wife to help him; he was most comfortable with her presence. She had seen him naked time and time again. The thought of Dom helping him made him a bit uncomfortable; he barely knew the man after all. But... there was the sexual aspect of it, too. To have her touching him, rubbing him, bathing him as they often bathed each other... he knew he couldn't stand not being able to reciprocate. Not as he'd like to.

He looked up at her, took a deep breath, and nodded. "Please get Dominic."

Dianne nodded, and activated her wrist telecomm to call Dominic to the sick room. Then they waited together in silence, neither of them quite sure what to say.

Post by Tikatu on 19/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 17:32:05 GMT

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Tuesday March 13, 2068. 7:50 a.m., Tracy Island

The steady rhythm of footsteps quickened as Dominic received the call from Dianne. He headed towards the sick room, and when he entered, he said nothing about the apparent tension, and the slight awkwardness between the husband and wife. It's nothin' to do with me, he thought. He was professional as Dr Tracy told him what he was needed for, and he saw Dianne give Mr Tracy a small smile before she retreated from the sick room.

Sensing Mr Tracy's discomfort, and having dealt with it so many times before -- although not recently, considering he had been working as a surgical nurse -- he quickly set about his work.

The shower passed with discomfort on Mr Tracy's side, and Dominic worked as quickly as he could, helping as he was needed. Eventually, Mr Tracy was settled back in bed, and Dominic gave his hands another wash with the antibacterial/antiviral gel.

"Can I get you anything else, Mr Tracy?" he asked.

Jeff thought for a moment, before shaking his head slowly.

"No thank you, Dominic," he said. "Thank you for your help."

"It's all in the job description. If there's nothing else you need, I'll page Dr Tracy and then be on my way. Call me if you need anything else."

Jeff nodded, and Dominic contacted Dianne through her wrist telecomm. The two men were silent during the time it took Dianne to arrive, and Dominic stood by the door, his senses alert for any change in Jeff's condition. I wish there was something more I could do, but what would there be? I barely know the man. I can just do my job. That's what I'm here for, after all.

Dianne arrived, and Dominic gave both husband and wife brief nods, before turning and leaving, hoping that whatever was going on between the two would be resolved.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 20/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 17:36:44 GMT
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Tuesday 13th March 2068. 8am Tracy Island

Christopher felt something tickling his face as he tried to enjoy a wonderful dream. Opening one eye, he saw Asterix looking at him. The little cat was sitting on his chest.

"You want breakfast don't you?" He opened both eyes as Asterix started padding about on his body.

Asterix licked his face.

"Okay," Christopher shifted slightly, causing Asterix to leap off the bed and onto the floor.

He got out of bed, grabbing a towel from the rack and headed into the bathroom. After a quick shower, he dressed and went into the kitchen. Asterix was getting frantic. Christopher opened the fridge and got out a tin of cat food.

Getting the dish from the cupboard above his head, he opened the tin and spooned the smelly stuff into the dish.

"Mrraaowww!" Asterix was winding himself around Christopher's legs, and getting very impatient.

Closing the tin and putting it back in the fridge, Christopher knelt down to put the dish in front of his hungry cat. The little cat started to eat.

"Wait a min," Christopher opened another cupboard and pulled out a box of crunchy food, shaking some over the cat food.

"I don't know how you can like stuff like that," Christopher smiled as he replaced the box. "Then again, you always seem to be able to get some fish or chicken."

He reached down and stroked Asterix's head, the little animal purring loudly.

"I'm going to get my breakfast now," Christopher grinned as he walked towards the front door. "You have a lie-down and I'll be back soon"

"Mrrooooo," Asterix looked at his Master, then went onto the balcony.

Christopher smiled, then left the apartment.

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 20/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 17:39:34 GMT
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Tuesday, March 13, 2068, 8:30 a.m., the sick room

Dianne came close to the bed where Jeff reclined. He reached out his good hand to her and she took it.

"I'm sorry, dear heart," he said softly.

"I understand. And I forgive you, love." She squeezed his hand and smiled a bit. "Are you up to eating in the dining room? Or would you rather have breakfast here?"

Jeff's eyes widened, and he smiled widely. "The dining room?"

"Yes, the dining room," Dianne affirmed. "It's time you joined the rest of the waking world."

"Oh, by all means!" he exclaimed, grinning. Dianne activated his wheelchair and brought it around, helping him into it.

"Too bad Tyler's not here," Jeff commented. "I know he'd love to push me down to breakfast."

Dianne gave him a wink and said, "That could be arranged. Tyler? You can come in now."

Tyler, who had been cooling his heels outside the sick room while his mother and father settled things between them, now burst into the room.

"Good morning, Dad!" Tyler cried, giving Jeff a hug. "Can I push your wheelchair now? Mom said I could if you were going to eat in the dining room."

"Yes, son, you can push me down to the dining room," Jeff said with a laugh, reaching out with his good arm to gather his son in for a squeeze, then letting his fingers tickle the boy in the ribs. Tyler

folded up on that side, laughing.

"No tickles! Don't tickle!" he shouted through his laughter. Jeff stopped, chuckling. Dianne looked on, smiling.

"Okay, boys," she told them, garnering an amused look from Jeff. "Let's get to breakfast before it's gone. Oh, and Jeff? Be prepared for blueberry pancakes. We missed Alan's birthday yesterday with the dateline and all and so Kyrano and our mothers are making all of Alan's favorite foods today."

"Sounds good to me," Jeff said amiably. He gazed up at her as Tyler began to manfully push him out of the sick room. "Did we get him a gift?"

"Yes, we did. I hope he likes it. It will give him some time away from the island," she informed him. "I'd tell you what it is, but little pitchers have big ears... and big mouths!"

"Hey!" Tyler protested. Jeff and Dianne laughed, and Jeff took Dianne's hand in his as they turned the corner and saw the brightly lit dining room at the end of the corridor.

Post by Tikatu on 21/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 17:50:27 GMT
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Tracy Island, Tuesday, March 13th - 8:00 a.m.

"Hello, Miss Kat. Hi, Miss Elise," Cherry called as they sat down beside her.

"Mm, those pancakes do look delicious," Elise remarked.

"It's kind of funny, you know," Kat said. "Back home, breakfast for me would often consist of just toast and coffee, but now I am trying all sorts of different things for breakfast."

"You are becoming Americanised, Miss Kat," Kyrano said, as he offered her a plate with pancakes on.

"Do you two want another water fight?" Alex asked, hopefully.

"Oh, no, sorry, Alex." Kat replied. "Virgil has asked for a return fight, but I told him not until Callie is back. We need more females," Kat explained and she looked at Elise.

Conversation continued around the table with Cherry and Alex telling the two girls all about New York.

Scott came into the room as the girls were about to leave.

"It seems that in all the excitement of having Dad come home, we missed Alan's birthday."

"Oh, Scott!" Cherry exclaimed. "He must have a party."

"Yes, I agree," Kat replied.

Just at that moment Emily came in, followed by Lisa.

"Gramma," Alex said, looking at his grandmas. "We missed Alan's birthday! What are we gonna do?"

Emily looked at her second youngest grandson. "Don't you worry about that, Alex. Kyrano and your Grammy and I are making plans for a party later on today. We've got a birthday cake and everything."

"Where's Dom?" Kat asked.

Cherry shrugged. "I dunno." She half stood to see over Scott's head. "Hey! It's Dad!"

Everyone came forward to greet Jeff, as Tyler manfully pushed his father into the room. Dom and Nikki followed, Dom carrying a bright-eyed Joshua.

"Dad!" Cherry exclaimed, rushing to her father and giving him a huge bear hug.

Jeff looked around at the people gathered. True, they had all been there when he had first arrived, but it had been difficult to take everyone into account.

He recognised Kat. She smiled at him. "It's so nice to see you again, Mr Tracy."

Christopher and Virgil joined the group. Brains came in, escorting Lena and pulling out her chair for her.

"So, where's the birthday boy?" Virgil asked.

"I think Tin-Tin is keeping him away until everyone is gathered in the dining room," Dianne explained.

Just at that moment, Alan and Tin-Tin arrived.

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ALAN!" everyone chorused.

Post by Tawnyangel22 (with copious new edits by Tikatu) on 21/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 18:30:47 GMT

Tuesday, March 13th; 8ish; Tracy Island

"Well," Alan said with a grin. "This is a surprise!" He settled down in a seat next to Lena. "Blueberry pancakes! My favorite!"

"I'm sorry we missed your birthday, Alan," Dianne said apologetically. "But with the IDL and all...."

"Hey! Having Dad home was a great gift. And I knew you wouldn't actually forget...." Alan told her between bites of pancake.

Jeff looked down the table to where Lena sat. "Brains, is this our computer expert?"

"Yes she is. Lena Matumbo, I'd like you to meet Jeff Tracy, and his wife, Dianne." He then pointed to each of the younger children. "And those three rugrats are Cherie, Tyler and Alex Tracy."

Lena smiled as she swallowed the bite of pancake she'd put in her mouth as Brains started his introductions. "It's a pleasure to meet you all," she said.

"And to meet you, as well, Mrs. Matumbo," Dianne said with a smile. "Has Brains been keeping you busy?"

Lena chuckled. "Once he got me started, I was able to keep myself quite busy. It's taken a bit longer than I thought, but I think that I'll have the problem completely solved sometime today."

"That's wonderful!" Jeff exclaimed. "It would certainly be a load off my mind to know that our email communications are secure again." He took a sip of his coffee. "Has Brains taken you around to see the place?"

Lena glanced over at Brains, who had a guilty look on his face. "We wanted the problem to be corrected as soon as possible, to minimize the risk that someone else would find out about International Rescue the same way I did. So we've pretty much kept to the lab. But that's why I'm here, isn't it?" she replied.

"True," Jeff admitted. "You're here to work. Still, there should be some time for hospitality as well." Brains's cheeks flushed pink and he looked as if he wanted to slide under the table. Dianne chuckled a bit.

"Brains tends to get so wrapped up in his work that he'd forget to eat if my mother-in-law didn't pester him about it. I'm not surprised that you've kept to the lab. Perhaps after work today, one of us can show you around. Personally, I'd like to take a walk around and see what everyone's been up to while we've been gone." She finished her coffee and looked at her watch.

"Oh, my. Children, it's time for school."

The three little ones groaned, but began to pick up their plates and ask to be excused. Dianne gathered her own dishes, and kissed Jeff on the cheek.

"If you'll excuse us, Mrs. Matumbo, the teachers await," she said to Lena.

"Of course, Mrs. Tracy." She turned to Alan and said quietly, "Dere are teachers here? I haven't seen anyone like dat."

Alan drank some juice and smiled at Lena. "My brothers and sister are homeschooled using an interactive online program that beams actual teaching to the schoolroom computers via satellite. I haven't seen much of it myself, but from what I understand, the boys both have one or two teachers, just as if they were in a regular school, while Cherie has a whole battery of them, one for each course."

"Yes," Brains added. "They can ask questions of the teacher just as if she were there in the room. It's virtually real-time. I help supplement Alex's science courses; he's insatiable about the natural world."

"Dat's good," Lena replied. "I homeschooled my two, and dey continued wit deirs. Now my grandbabies plan to do it wit deir babies, when dey are old enough."

"Wow! You're a great-grandma? You don't look old enough to be one!" Alan exclaimed.

"I had my babies when I was 22, and dey found deir spouses when dey were even younger. I was not yet 40 when my first grandchild was born," Lena replied with a smile. "Tank you for de compliment, Alan."

Alan sat there trying to calculate how old his own grandmother was when she had his father, and how old she was when Scott was born. He gave it up and decided he'd just ask her when she came back into the room. Instead he asked, "How many grandkids and great-grandkids do you have?"

"Ah, don't get me started on my babies, or we'll be here all day," Lena replied with a grin. "I have five grandchildren, tree of whom are married, and tree great-grandchildren, de oldest of which is two-and-a-half." She took a drink of her juice. "But dis is your day, Alan. You don't want to spend it talking to an old woman you hardly know," she teased with a mischievous gleam in her eye. "I'm sure dere are lots of otter tings you'd ratter be doing."

Alan laughed as he finished his pancakes. "You're right, Mrs. Matumbo. But it was nice to get to know you a little while you were a captive audience, so to speak. And if you'll excuse me, I think I'll go off and find one of those other things." He stood and took his dishes with him. "Have a nice day, Mrs. Matumbo, Brains."

Lena chuckled, then took a sip of her tea. She looked at Jeff. "You have fine, strong, intelligent sons. You must be very proud of dem."

"I am," Jeff said simply. Then he smiled. "I'm a bit proud of my daughter, too, but most of her good qualities came from being raised by her mother."

Lena smiled, then glanced over at Brains. Seeing that he had finished his meal, she put her teacup down and stood up. "If you will excuse me, I have a program written by a talented but

overeager young man to finish modifying." Jeff nodded, grinning, and she and Brains left the table, heading for the lab.

Post by Tikatu and Hobbeth on 23/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 18:41:55 GMT
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*****Tuesday, March 13, 2068; Thunderbird Five; 9 a.m.*****

"Oh, that was good!" John said, patting his stomach. "Kyrano's pancakes are still delicious, even if they are flash frozen for reheating." He turned to Callie. "Would you mind if I took a couple of hours in the astrodome? We're in a perfect position right now for me to get some great images of Boötes for my next book."

Callie smiled. "Not at all, John. We've both been working hard. I'll stick by the monitors in case a call comes."

He smiled at her. "Thanks, Callie. I appreciate it. I'll take a turn on my own later on so you can have some time for yourself, okay?"

"Okay. Perhaps I can get an update on the Crimson Tide basketball team. They're supposed to be in the NCAA tourney, but we were so busy with the rescue, I'm not even sure they made it past the SEC tournament."

"Ah! A basketball fan! Well, we can trade off later when the games start, too. Right now, though, I'm off to the astrodome." John gave her a wave. "Call me if there's an emergency."

Back down at Tracy Island, Tin-Tin went over her formula for the Penelon/Kevlar blend again. She frowned at it, then turned to Brains. "I got another email from Kabul today. They're not having any luck with the fabric blend. I just don't understand why! Everything works out in the chemical formula!"

"I know," Brains replied. "It looks fine to me, too." He looked over at Lena, who was hard at work trying to improve his mail program. "Hmm. I have an idea, Tin-Tin. Why don't you ask Callie for a third opinion? She's a chemical engineer."

Tin-Tin's face cleared a bit. "That's a good idea, Brains. I'll get in touch with her now. The sooner I get another opinion, the better."

She went up to the lounge, where Scott was getting ready to sit behind his father's desk. "You'd better not get too comfortable there, Scott. Your father will want that chair back soon," she chided with a smile. "I need to talk to Callie and possibly upload a file. Can I do it from here?"

Scott offered her Jeff's chair with a flourish. "Your seat awaits, milady."

Tin-Tin laughed and sat down, toggling the switch that put her in contact with Thunderbird Five. "Thunderbird Five from Base. Come in, Thunderbird Five."

At the space station, Callie heard Tin-Tin's voice. "Base from Thunderbird Five, reading you, Tin-Tin, strength five. Is anything wrong?"

"Yes and no, Callie. I have a problem that you might be able to help me solve," Tin-Tin told her. "You know that I've been working on a Penelon/Kevlar blend fabric for our new uniforms." Callie nodded, and Tin-Tin smiled widely. Her discovery still delighted her. "Well I did it!"

Callie's eyes widened, and she clapped. "Congratulations!"

"Thank you! The problem is, even though everything checked out in the chemical equations, the plant in Kabul says it's having trouble with the manufacture and names the formula as the source of the problem. I'd like you to go over the formula for me and see if you notice anything wrong with it."

"I'll see what I can do, Tin-Tin. Upload formula and I'll bring it up on the screen." After receiving the formula, she opened the file and looked at it. She looked at each component of the formula at least seven different times and shook her head. "Sorry, Tin-Tin, but I don't see anything wrong in the formula, either. I wonder if perhaps there's an error happening at the Kabul plant, but they can't see it, either?"

Tin-Tin shook her head. "That must be it, Callie. Neither you nor I nor Brains can find anything wrong with it. I guess I'll be taking a trip to Kabul after all." She sighed, then smiled at the new recruit. "Thanks for confirming it, Callie. I appreciate your effort."

"Glad I could assist, even though I really wasn't able to help as much as I hoped." Callie sighed. "How are things going on the ground? John told me yesterday about Alan's birthday."

"Things are okay so far. Mr. Tracy was at breakfast, and there are plans for a birthday party this evening at dinner," Tin-Tin told her. Scott came up behind Tin-Tin.

"Callie, would you please tell John that I found the gift he had stashed away for Alan," Scott said. "And that I'll make sure the squirt gets it."

"I'll be more than happy to tell him," said Callie with a giggle. "If I had known it was Alan's birthday while I was up here, I would've gotten him something, too."

"Don't worry about it," Scott said with a smile. "He'll have one next year, too."

"Thanks again, Callie, for looking over the formula. You have a good day up there," Tin-Tin said.

"F-A-B, Tin-Tin. Take it easy on terra firma." After the connection turned off, Callie said to herself, "I'm glad I'll be back on terra firma when Joe's birthday comes up next month."

Back in the lounge, Tin-Tin looked at Scott. "I think I need to go to Kabul. Can I file a flight plan for

tomorrow? Take Ladybird and stay there a few days to iron this out?"

Scott nodded. "I don't see why not. I can run it past Dad if you like."

"Please do. I'd like to see him get back into the loop here at home," Tin-Tin said. She rose from behind Jeff's desk. "I'd better get busy packing and preparing. And let Kabul know I'm coming."

Post by Tikatu and TracyFan4Ever on 23/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 18:44:03 GMT

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Tuesday, March 13, 2068, 12:30 p.m. the dining room, Tracy Villa

Clink... clink... clink

Scott rose to his feet as everyone's attention turned to him. He cleared his throat and smiled a bit sheepishly.

"In honor of Alan's 24th birthday, Virgil and I would like to invite any of you who are interested to join us, and the birthday boy, of course, for a night on the town in Christchurch, New Zealand. We'd leave right after dinner, and return in the wee hours of the morning, having had a satisfying time hitting all the night spots there." Scott glanced over at Jeff and smiled nervously now. Jeff raised an eyebrow at his smile; it was obvious that Scott had not cleared this with his father. "We chose Christchurch because it's only a half-hour away by SST, just in case an emergency came up." He looked around the table. "Let me or Virgil know if you're interested in going. Everything will be on us."

"Everything?" Alan asked, a wide grin splitting his face.

"Yes, Alan," Virgil replied. "This is our birthday gift to you."

"Oooh! Too bad Gordon's not here!" Alan said eagerly, rubbing his hands together. Scott shook his head. Frankly, he was glad that Gordon wasn't there. Lucille Tracy's youngest boys were known for their antics at the expense of their brothers.

"What time are you leaving?" Brandon asked.

"Nine p.m." Virgil answered. "It will be earlier there because there's an hour's time zone difference between us and Christchurch."

"I'd love to go, guys, but I've got to fly to Kabul tomorrow," Tin-Tin said, making a face.

"Why don't you come and be our designated pilot back to the Island, Tin-Tin?" Scott suggested. "You could leave for Kabul in the afternoon."

"I suppose so...." she responded thoughtfully.

"Count me in," said Brains with a grin.

"I think I'll come, too," said Kat with a smile. "It sounds like fun!"

"Can I come?" Cherry asked hopefully.

"Uh, no, sis. This is for us adults," Virgil said apologetically.

Cherry hrmphed and folded her arms across her chest, scowling. "I'm always too young to do the fun stuff!" she groused.

"Cherie...." Dianne said in a warning tone. She turned to Scott and Virgil. "I hope that whoever goes remembers that rescues never happen at convenient times. And that I don't coddle hangovers, either."

"Uh, right, Mom," Scott replied. He looked around the table again. "Well, if any of you new folk want to come along, just let us know. The invitation is open." He sat back down, and the talk around the table continued over Alan's favorite Mexican food.

Post by Tikatu on 24/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 18:45:32 GMT
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Tuesday, March 13th, 2068; Tracy Island; 1PM

"I tink I have it."

Brains, who had just returned from lunch (Lena hadn't gone with him. She said she was still full from breakfast, and wasn't at a point in her work where she could stop.), hurried over to her station and looked over her shoulder at the computer monitor. She pointed at certain places on the screen. "See, here and here. I changed de program dere, and in tese otter places." She pointed them out, too.

Brains looked at them, and compared the places she showed him to the printout of his original program. "Of course! Why didn't I see that when I created this in the first place?"

"You were rushed. It's easy to miss tings like dat under dose circumstances. But we'll have to test it out from various terminals." She sat back and looked up at him.

"Let's try it from my terminal right now." They got up and went over to his terminal, where he was already connected to the IR server. He tried to access his personal mailbox. What he got

surprised him. Lena had programmed it to give a foghorn sound, then a female voice saying, "Ah, ah, ah." He laughed and looked at her to find grinning at him. "Hey, I like it. It's more human, less technological. I think the others will get a kick out of it, too. Okay, that's enough for now. We can test from the others later. You've worked hard on the problem, Lena. You deserve a break. Why don't you go relax by the pool or take a walk along the beach?"

Lena looked at him. "I don't have close for dose types of activities," she replied. "I didn't come here for a vacation, you know. I came to work."

Brains looked closely at her. She looked tired; she'd been working almost non-stop for the past several days; she'd created a program to divert all misdirected messages to one location, repaired the glitch, severed the link between the two servers and now improved his program. She'd had little contact with anyone else on the island, save during meals, and several of those they'd both had in the lab. He felt guilty for not insisting more often that she take breaks and get out of the lab, but he had enjoyed working with her. And his projects had fascinated him to the point of forgetting everything outside of the lab. He said, "Lena, I'm so sorry. I should have shown you around, shown you the amenities. I just get so absorbed in my work, sometimes ..." He paused.

"Brains, I didn't mean to snap at you. I guess I'm just tired. And I miss my babies, too," she admitted. "I didn't realize how much until I was at breakfast wit everyone dere saying happy birtday to Alan. And den meeting de young ones." She sighed. "But I understand what you mean about getting into de project and forgetting everyting and everybody. It's happened to me more dan a few times."

"Well, why don't we both knock off for the day and I'll show you around, inside and outside, if Mrs. Tracy is unavailable. But first," he said, glancing at the clock, "you should have have some lunch. You've got to be hungry by now."

"Dat sounds good to me. I'm not exactly hungry, but I feel I could eat someting, now." They went to their terminals, saved their work and shut down. Lena did her usual routine check of the electric outlets, then they headed back to the villa.

Post by Hobbeth on 25/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 18:48:01 GMT
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Dominic glanced over at Scott and shook his head.

"Thanks for the invite, but I don't want to leave this little guy," he said.

Joshua was sitting on his lap, varying between exploring and eating his peanut butter sandwich. Dominic shifted the toddler on his knee and tried to get him to do more eating and less smearing. The child tried to bat his father's hand away and staunchly ignored him.

"I'm sure someone would be glad to look after him," Dianne said.

Dominic, however, shook his head again and gave Joshua a warning look. The toddler once more ignored him, and continued to tear apart his bread.

"He's not on his best behaviour right now, and I wouldn't want to inflict that on anyone else."

His comment was rewarded with a wriggling little boy and a peanut butter-covered hand landing on his clean sweater.

"Joshua!" he admonished.

The toddler giggled, and then brought the hand to his face, and then up into his hair. Dominic gave the child another stern look, hooked an arm around the child's waist and stood up, shifting the child into a better carrying position.

"Thanks for the meal, and the invite," he added, looking at Scott and Virgil again, "but I don't think it would be a good idea for me to leave. You might come back to find that the island's been blown up by a toddler tantrum."

There was some laughter, and Dominic nodded his goodbye before leaving for the monorail back to his apartment.

"You, my naughty little man, are getting a bath."

From the dining room, those gathered heard a very loud and very angry, "NO!"

Post by ArtisticRainey on 25/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 18:50:32 GMT
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Christopher rubbed his hands. "Excellent!! An evening of revelry!"

"I'd like to come along." Christopher grinned. "Haven't been on a lads' night out for ages."

Virgil looked at his happy face. "Sure you are up to the challenge?"

"Definitely," Christopher said, "Although I need to do something first."

He got up from the table. "I need to make sure that Asterix is stocked up on food and water, and some nice comfy cushions."

He headed off towards the exit.

"Christopher!" Scott called after him.

Christopher turned around to face Scott.

"See you at seven for dinner." Scott smiled.

"Thanks," Christopher said. "I hope Asterix can amuse himself while I'm gone. "And with that, he left the dining room.

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 25/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 18:51:03 GMT
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"I'm up for going too." Nikki turned from Scott to Kat. "I mean, someone has to look out for Kat here. Keep her out of trouble."

Kat tapped Nikki's shoulder. "I think it's the other way round, since I'm older. I should be looking out for you."

Nikki smiled at her friend. But before she could say anything, Scott spoke up. "Are there any other takers?"

Post by Nikki-browneyes1 on 26/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 18:54:22 GMT
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Tuesday, March 13, 2068, 7 p.m. Tracy Island

The day had gone well. Alan had his fill of his favorite activities: fishing off one of the Island's reefs with Brandon and Scott; a late afternoon climb up the promontory with Virgil and Cherie, ping-pong and air hockey in the games room after school with Alex and Tyler. He was looking forward to the birthday dinner and for the soirée in New Zealand afterwards.

Elise had declined the invitation; she still tired easily and she didn't want to bond any further with the denizens of the island seeing as she would be going home soon. Dianne examined her that afternoon.

"I think you're nearly healed, Elise," she had told the chopper pilot. "By the end of the week you should be ready for discharge."

"That's great, Dr. Tracy!" Elise exclaimed. "I can hardly wait to get back to New York."

Dianne merely nodded and smiled.

Jeff napped during the early afternoon as the jet lag was beginning to catch up with him. But he made sure he had a little chat with Scott and Virgil concerning their planned excursion.

"I will let this ride... this time. Just please make sure you're back by 3 a.m. our time and that whoever is flying you back has not had a drink... not even one! And try to keep everyone from getting sloshed."

"Yes sir," Scott agreed. Virgil nodded. Jeff looked at the two of them and sighed, shaking his head.

Just before dinner, Alan got a call from Gordon.

"Hey there, birthday boy!" Gordon said with a grin. "How does it feel to be 24?"

"How should I know? I've been 24 less than 24 hours? How did it feel for you?" Alan quipped.

"Wonnnderful! Especially after that visit to...."

Alan cut in. "Shhhhh! You do not want Dad to know about that little excursion!"

"Oh, right!" Gordon continued to grin. "So, are they making things up to you for missing the actual date?"

"Oh yeah! Favorite foods all day long. I got to go fishing and rock climbing and played the arcade games with the squirts and no one talked to me at all today about maintenance or responsibility or asked me to do any work! We're having surf and turf for dinner with a cake and gifts for dessert and then Scott and Virge are taking me and anyone else who wants to go over to Christchurch for a night on the town."

"Whoa! Now I wish I were home! I do have a gift for you, Al, but I only ordered it last week so it's still en route I think. You should get it tomorrow or the next day."

"Hey, thanks, Gords! I'll admit I wish you were here, too. The night out won't be the same without you."

"When I get back, we'll go off and do something special, just you and me." Gordon made a face. "That is, if Mom clears my back for such shenanigans."

"Right. Well, it's almost time for dinner. Anybody else you want to talk to?"

"I'd love to talk to everyone, but since dinner is coming, I'd better just talk to Mom. I promised I'd check in every day. She called earlier, but I was out eating my own dinner."

"Okay, Gords. I'll give her a buzz." Alan lifted his telecomm to his mouth. "Mom? Gordon's on the vidphone. He wants to talk to you."

"Gordon? Okay, Alan. I'll be right there," came Dianne's voice.

Alan turned back to Gordon. "She'll be right here. How are things at corporate?"

"Scary. Scott was so very, very particular about everything. I mean, it's not like he didn't make friends or wasn't pleasant and all, but he ran things even tighter than Dad does, I think. They were really surprised to see how laid back I am."

"Laid back?" Dianne had entered the room. "You are the king of 'laid back', Gordon."

"Mom's here. I'll talk to you later, Gords. Thanks for calling me," Alan said as he got up from the desk chair.

"No problem, Al, and enjoy what's left of your birthday!" Gordon called. He then turned his attention to Dianne who had taken Alan's place. "Hi, Mom. How's Dad?"

"He's doing okay. Getting over some jet lag. Now, how are you and how is your back?"

And with that, Gordon proceeded to bring his stepmother and physician up-to-date on what was going on with him in New York.

Post by Tikatu on 30/09/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:02:22 GMT
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Tuesday, March 13, 2068, 7:50 p.m. Tracy Villa, the dining room

"That was fantastic, Kyrano!" Alan exclaimed as he finished the rice pilaf almondine that had been piled on his plate. "All my favorite foods all day long! You're spoiling me, really you are!"

"That's funny, I thought you already were spoiled," Scott quipped, to the groans of the others at the table.

"A person should always be spoiled on their birthday, isn't that right, Mom?" Cherie asked. Dianne nodded around a bite of scallop.

"Is that why I actually won a game of air hockey against the pinball wizard today?" Alan asked, hooking a thumb in Tyler's general direction. "Did he let me win just because it was my birthday?"

Tyler sat up straighter and directed his eyes to the ceiling, putting on as angelic a look as he could. "I'll never tell," he said with a smirk.

The people gathered around the table laughed, then Kyrano said, "I thank you for you compliments, Mr. Alan. But they should also be extended to your grandmothers, both of whom did much to create the meal we have eaten tonight and the cake we will eat in a few moments."

Alan got up from his seat and went around to kiss first Emily, then Lisa, on the cheek. "Thanks, Grandma. Thanks, Grandma P. You did a great job and I can hardly wait to taste this cake!"

"Speaking of which, we'd better bring it out. Give me a hand with it, Lisa?"

"Of course, Em." The two older ladies left the table for the kitchen.

Brains looked at Lena, who sat in the guest of honor seat to Jeff's left. "Did you enjoy your tour of the facilities this afternoon, Lena?"

"Oh yes!" Lena said enthusiastically. "Dis is a lovely place and Mrs. Tracy is a wonderful guide. I enjoyed de tour very much."

"Now, Mrs. Matumbo," Dianne began, smiling and her eyes twinkling, "Mrs. Tracy is my mother-in-law. If you really want to be formal, I am Dr. Tracy. However, I'd much rather you just call me Dianne."

Lena returned the smile. "Dr. Tracy? Dat's good. But if I am to call you Dianne, den you must call me Lena."

Dianne laughed. "Agreed... Lena."

The two grandmothers came in with the cake, an enormous four layer confection of dark chocolate cake with a white chocolate icing. It was decorated with a race car, red and white, the number twenty-four boldly emblazoned on the hood and door. Alan groaned.

"You couldn't have put confetti icing or something generic like that on it, could you?" he mock-complained. "You had to put a race car on it. Now I feel like a little kid!"

"Oh, don't complain, Alan," Virgil chimed in with a sly grin. "You know you love it!"

"Well, we'd better sing happy birthday before those candles burn down to nothing!" Scott rejoined. The group began the traditional song, very few of them on key and all of them at different tempos. Then Alan took a deep breath and blew out all the candles, moving around the cake to get the ones that he missed.

"See? I told you he was full of hot air," Alex quipped, to the laughter of his siblings and the groan of the adults and newcomers.

Alan pointed a finger at his younger brother. "You just wait, Bug Boy, until I get you at that ping-pong table again! I will whup your butt!"

"You can try," came the confident response.

"While we cut the cake to distribute it," Kyrano said, rising to perform that function, "Mr. Alan can open his gifts."

Tyler got up to help Alan by retrieving the gifts that were in a pile behind the table. One by one the packages were opened, and the givers were thanked. Finally, he came to an envelope with a card inside. The card felt thick and Alan glanced around the table.

"I wonder who this is from?" he asked. "Feels like a wad of money in there. Is it from you, Dad?"

"I don't know, son. Why don't you open it up and find out?" Jeff suggested.

Alan slipped his finger under the seal and opened the envelope. Inside was the obligatory birthday card and another plain envelope. Alan read the card, smiled, and said, "Yep. This is from Dad and Mom." He opened the inner envelope and pulled out the contents. His eyes grew wide and he grinned.

"Tickets to the Grand Prix of Malaysia? That's this weekend! Hotel reservations and everything! Wow!"

"There's more, Alan," Dianne said softly. He pulled out another piece of paper and grinned even wider, his jaw dropping a bit. He gazed up at the head of the table.

"Tickets to the Grand Prix of Monaco, too? The most prestigious Formula 1 race in the world? Wow! Thanks so much, Dad, Mom! This is going to be great!"

"One race for this month, and the other in May when you're back down from the station," Dianne explained. "A couple of long weekends so you can reconnect with some of your racing friends."

"This is awesome! Thank you so much!" Alan got up from the table and went down to hug Dianne and kiss her on the cheek, and give his father as much of a hug as Jeff's casts would allow. Then he sat back down to find the first piece of cake waiting for him.

As they ate their dessert, Jeff leaned over to Dianne. "Good call on the gift, love. It's unusual and will give him some time off, too."

"We need to do the same for each of the other boys. And factor in vacations for our new folks as well. I'm surprised our boys haven't burned out for lack of time alone to recharge," Dianne said as she sipped her coffee.

The dinner was winding down, and Scott finally rose. "All those going on tonight's expedition meet us in the aircraft hangar in 20 minutes!" He turned towards his father. "May I please be excused?"

Jeff nodded, and one by one, the table emptied of diners, all murmuring their pardons and telling Kyrano what a great job he did. Finally, only Jeff and Dianne remained.

"You were quiet tonight, love," she said as she rose to help him with his wheelchair.

"I was just enjoying being with my family," he replied. He caught one of her hands and kissed it. "Especially my wife."

"And I was happy to have you back at the head of the table, where you belong," she replied, leaning over to kiss his lips. Together, they left the dining room, warmed by the glow of the closeness their family provided.

Post by Tikatu on 01/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:04:24 GMT
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*****Tuesday, March 13, 2068; Thunderbird Five; around 8:10 p.m.*****

Callie paced nervously around the control room. "I don't know if Alabama even made it into the tournament."

John noticed her high-strung nerves. "Take it easy, Callie. Thunderbird Five does have Internet access."

"Oh, good. Perhaps we can also get info on your alma mater...um, it is Harvard, right?"

"Right. Just search for it on espn.com. When you find a printable bracket with all the listed teams, could you print out two copies, please?"

"F-A-B, John." She went to the sports-oriented website and found the brackets, she printed the two copies and handed one to John. "Hmm...Alabama is an 8th seed in the Midwest Regional. Their first tournament game will be on Friday in St. Louis against 9th seed Miami of Ohio."

John looked to see if Harvard had also made the cut. "Ah, there's Harvard--16th seed in the South Regional. Ooooooh...this isn't good."

"What's wrong, John?"

"Harvard has to play top-seeded Texas on Thursday...at the Birmingham-Jefferson Civic Center in Birmingham, Alabama."

"I know Texas has been a powerhouse this year. In the tournament, though, it means absolutely nothing. I've seen wild upsets before, but to this day no 16th seed has ever upset a top seed, at least not on the men's side."

"Really?" John asked, surprised. "There was one on the women's side?"

"Yes. My grandmother told me about the time the Harvard ladies shocked the women's tournament by defeating top-seeded Stanford by one point. It's the only time in the women's

tournament it's ever happened."

"Harvard did it? How come I never knew about it?"

"Perhaps you were too wrapped up with astronomy?" Callie joked.

"Yeah, I probably was, Callie. How did you keep up with the tournament and your studies?"

"Internet, TV, and the school newspaper. I got my Bachelor's Degree from the University of Alabama."

"Oh, yeah, I forgot about that. Anyway, I have a fun little idea. Let's have a bet, but not for money."

"What do you have in mind?"

"We'll each pick one team to take it all the way. Now, if the team chosen wins the championship, the winner is exempt from doing chores here and back on Earth for a month. The loser will have to pick up the slack."

Callie liked the idea. "Okay. If neither team gets that far, we'll go by which team went further and reduce the winning bet to a week. Now, if they both lose in the same round, nothing's lost and nothing's gained."

"Good thinking, Callie. I'll choose Kansas."

"Even though I'm for my beloved Crimson Tide, I know they can't get to the finals, so my pick will be Duke."

John shook hands with Callie. "Done and done."

Callie looked at the bracket again and noticed a score already done. "Hey, it looks like Alcorn State defeated Western Michigan to become the 64th team in the tournament. Too bad they have to play Duke on Friday in Syracuse, New York."

"I have to admit this, Callie. I've never really kept up with basketball, but with anything involving Harvard, I stay very close to the news."

"Back home, Alabama is run by three sports: NASCAR, college football, and college basketball. I'll be more than happy to help you understand the basketball terms."

"Okay, I have one question already: just where is Alcorn State University?"

Callie said, "It's located in southwestern Mississippi. One thing you'll have to remember is a lot of colleges won't mention state names."

"Like where?"

"There's Gonzaga in Washington state, Liberty University in Oklahoma, and thousands of others."

"Oh, boy, that's way too many to remember."

"Don't worry about it, John. Nobody on or off Earth could remember the names of every college team in the country, and some schools don't even offer all of the sports."

John sat down and shook his head. "That's what I get for studying too much. I was more into track and field in my college years."

"In that case, here's your chance to catch up. I'll bring up the highlights of this game, and I'll explain." Callie started showing John the various moves and terms used in the sport of basketball so he could understand it better.

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 02/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:07:00 GMT
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Tuesday March 13, 2068. 8:45 p.m., Tracy Island

"Ah, to be 24 again."

Alan turned to see who had spoken. He was making his way to the hangar, and was thoroughly excited about getting off the island. It wasn't often that he got to spend a night on the town with his brothers, and it would be even better because of the new people. He really wanted to get to know them.

He stopped and nodded as Dominic walked up behind him, and he put his hands on his hips, smiling at the young boy in the man's arms, who was more or less clean now after the earlier bath, although dinner had spoiled the cleanliness, somewhat.

"It's a pity you aren't coming with us," Alan said. "It's gonna be a great night."

Dominic shrugged with one shoulder and lifted Joshua a little higher up.

"I'm not normally one to turn down a bit of craic, but I don't want to leave the wee'n."

Alan glanced at his watch, but before he could say anything, Dominic started to walk again.

"I'll dander down t' the hangar with you. Josh likes planes."

As they walked, Alan glanced at the man and boy from the corner of his eye, and shook his head.

"I can't imagine being a dad, you know," he said as they neared the hangar entrance. "It just... It's

such a huge responsibility, you know? I really can't imagine having kids any time soon."

"I'm tellin' ya, it's not easy. But it's something that came naturally to me. You just see that...that tiny, red, screaming baby, and you just want to hold it tight and treasure it. You'll probably find that when you eventually have a kid of your own. But it's not all fun, as I'm sure you already know."

The two men chuckled, and Alan motioned to the door.

"Well, this is me."

"Have a nice time, Alan. Kiss a girl for me, eh?" Dominic gave the blond a cheeky grin.

"No promises," Alan said. "I might just keep her to myself!"

Dominic laughed loudly, and Joshua yelled, not knowing what was going on.

"See you tomorrow, Alan."

"See you, Dominic."

"Call me Dom, please, it's so much less...stuffy."

"All right. See you, Dom."

Alan grinned again and headed into the hangar, setting off for his night with an even lighter heart.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 02/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:09:45 GMT

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Tuesday, March 13, 2068, 9 p.m., Tracy Island

Everyone gathered in the plane hangar at 9.00 p.m. Nikki and Kat dressed very casually. Kat had put on beige cord jeans, chocolate brown T-shirt and chocolate brown cord jacket.

Virgil led them out to the plane. Tin-Tin asked for clearance and they took off for the short flight to New Zealand. It seemed like no time at all before Tin-Tin was asking for permission to land at Christchurch airport. A short taxi ride took them to the karaoke bar.

"Come on, birthday boy," Kat said as she and Nikki each took one of Alan's arms and led him inside.

"I think we shall have to watch those two," Scott remarked to Virgil.

"No, they'll be okay, I'm sure," Virgil replied.

"Where are Tin-Tin and Brains?" Christopher asked.

"They'll be along shortly," Scott replied. "I think they were paying the taxi driver and arranging for a time to collect us."

When Virgil and Scott, followed by Christopher and Brandon, entered, they saw Kat arguing with the man on the admission desk. She delved into her bag and produced her ID. "There," she said.

"Sorry, Miss," the attendant said. "But rules are rules and to be honest you don't look twenty-four." Red-faced, Kat replaced her ID in her bag and followed Nikki and Alan into the room.

Nikki waited for Kat and put her arm around her. "Don't worry about the attendant. Let's, as my mate would say, get this party started and have fun." Kat nodded and continued to walk with Nikki and Alan to the rest of the guys. Virgil looked at Kat with a suspicious look in his eyes.

"What was that all about?"

"The attendant just wanted to check my ID," Kat answered. She held her finger to Virgil. "And I don't want to hear any short jokes from you."

Virgil held up his hands. "I wasn't going to say a word."

"Mm," Kat said. "Maybe you weren't going to say anything, but I am sure that you were thinking it."

Virgil looked at Kat. "I said I wouldn't tease you, and I won't. Besides, you're the one who brought it up."

"Shush," Kat said. "That subject is taboo."

Scott found them a table close to the karaoke. Kat persuaded Alan to sing. Sadly, Alan was no singer and his attempts caused the others to dissolve into laughter. Scott and Virgil asked what everyone wanted to drink and battled their way to the bar.

Christopher sat at the table, scanning the list of songs before leaping up and crossing to the man in charge. After much chatting, Christopher crossed to the microphone. The music began, and a lot of other patrons looked round as the old 1930s rhythm swam around the bar.

"I hope you don't mind if I try something different." Christopher smiled, and clicked his fingers to the beat.

He began to sing, his rich voice wrapping around the lyrics of Cole Porter and Richard Rodgers, before ending with a rendition of "I've Got You Under My Skin".

People were clapping as he made his way back to the table. Alan looked at him in disbelief. Christopher shrugged his shoulders. "I used to sing in an amateur operatic society. Now, Alan, I was going to buy you a drink, wasn't I?"

And with that he went up to the bar.

Post by TheWrongTrousers, Nikki-browneyes1, and Tawnyangel22 on 05/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:10:15 GMT

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Brandon sat at the table drinking a beer. He had been asked to dance but declined the invitations. As he gazed out across the bar from his corner, he could only think about one thing, [What am I doing here?

Flashback: March 13th, 2068 1:00pm

Brandon had finished lunch and was jogging down to the beach when Kat came up and fell in beside him.

"So, Brandon, are you going to go to Christchurch with us?" Brandon shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't think I'm going, Kat. I don't dance all that well and I'm definitely not a good singer. I'd just be in the way of everybody else's good time. You go and enjoy yourself."

"Please come, Brandon. It wouldn't be the same without you. And anyway, I think we all could use a little break."

After arguing back and forth, Brandon gave in and agreed to go.

Post by MagicMaster8 on 05/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:36:10 GMT

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Kat said to Nikki, "How do you feel about singing a duet?"

Nikki smiled. "I don't mind. I've only sung on stage with a group of friends a couple of times, which was kind of funny. The guys were off key and tipsy verging on drunk, while the girls at times fell into a laughing fit. Including me."

Kat laughed before Nikki continued. "Not to worry though. I won't be giggling this time. I haven't even touched a drink yet." Nikki looked around the bar before turning back with a smile on her face.

When Kat looked at Nikki, the latter coughed slightly and hid her smile. "What was that about?"

"What was what about?" Nikki asked, looking innocent.

"That smile you were trying to hide." Kat looked around, trying to figure out what Nikki was smiling about.

"It was nothing. Just a random smile," Nikki replied.

"Sure." Kat narrowed her eyes, not believing what Nikki was saying. She wasn't too sure about singing at the moment. "Maybe we should put our duet on hold for the moment." She glanced at Virgil, talking to Scott and Christopher.

"Gosh," she said, looking hard at Virgil. "Just what does a girl have to do to get a fellow to dance with her?"

Virgil saw the look Kat gave him and rolled his eyes. "Kat, would you like to dance?"

Kat grinned at him and said, "Why, Virgil how kind of you to offer, yes please." She looked at Nikki. "That rather cute guy is staring so hard at you! If I were you, I would go over and put him out of his misery."

"How did you..." Nikki began. She saw Kat smile before she departed with Virgil. Nikki shook her head before turning back to the guys and joining in on the conversation. It wasn't long until she felt a tap on her shoulder. Nikki turned around to face the guy she was smiling at before. He held out his hand to Nikki.

"Hi, I'm Jake. Did anyone ever tell you that you have really beautiful eyes?"

Nikki accepted his hand and tried not to laugh at his line. "You noticed that from all the way over there?"

Jake laughed. "Ok, ok. I'll start again. Can I buy you a drink?"

Nikki held her glass up to him. Jake nodded and then continued, "Well, how about a dance then?"

"I would love to." Nikki asked for Brandon to look after her drink and then walked to the dance floor with Jake.

As they were dancing, Jake looked down at Nikki. "You know, you never told me your name."

"It's Nikki."

Virgil led Kat onto the dance floor. She kept looking back at Nikki.

"Why are you still looking at Nikki?" Virgil asked.

"I don't expect a man to understand, but that really good looking guy is interested in her."

Virgil raised a bushy eyebrow. "And why wouldn't I understand? I'm a good-looking guy and I've been interested in women before. I just hope he doesn't try any funny business, that's all."

"Oh, Virgil," Kat said. "Nikki is very discreet, she will not give anything away to a stranger."

Virgil looked down at her. "I trust Nikki. I don't trust him, whoever he is." He took in a deep breath. "Change of subject: where'd you learn to dance so well? Lady Penelope?"

Kat laughed. "No, I studied dance when I was young. I guess you never lose the touch."

Virgil agreed. They danced for quite a while. When the music changed to a slower dance, Kat thought that Virgil would take her back to the table, but he kept hold of her and they danced the next very slow dance. Kat looked around for Nikki and noticed that she, too, was still dancing with the guy who had been staring at her.

Christopher sipped at his Scotch. Time to take the bull by its proverbials.

Standing up, he walked over to where Tin-Tin was and held out his hand. "Would you do me the honour?"

Tin-Tin smiled as she took his hand, and he led her out onto the dance floor. Christopher looked a little nervous as he began dancing with her.

"What's wrong?" Tin-Tin asked.

"You look gorgeous," Christopher said. "And I get a little shy when I dance with beautiful women."

"You are an excellent singer." Tin-Tin changed the subject, moving a little closer to him.

"Thank you." Christopher smiled. He began to feel his temperature rising a little. "Do you like singing?"

As Nikki danced with Jake, he began to ask her all sorts of questions. "So, whereabout in England are you from?"

"London." Nikki smiled.

"Hmmm, London. I've never been to England. But I would love to go. So are you here on holiday with your friends?"

"Um, yeah. It's our last night here." Only part of that was a lie. It was really their last night there. But Jake wasn't to know that it was their only night. Jake nodded.

"That's a shame. I would've liked to get to know you better."

The music ended and Kat and Virgil returned to the table. Scott had bought another round of drinks. If I carry on like this, Kat thought, I shall be drunk. Christopher had been dancing with Tin-Tin and they too returned to the table.

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:41:06 GMT
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[size=2]Brandon continued watching the goings on, shaking his head and taking another sip of beer. Man, there is no way I am getting out there and making a fool of myself. He watched as Nikki danced a slow dance with somebody. As he took another swig of his beer, Kat came up to his table.

"Hey, Brandon, why aren't you out on the dance floor?"

"It's like I told you before we left the island; I'm not that good a dancer. I'm content just to watch." Kat sat down beside her friend.

"Have you ever tried?" Kat asked.

"I tried, once, and believe me, once was enough."

"Please, give it another try." Reluctantly Brandon stood up, and together he and Kat walked onto the dance floor. As they began to dance, one thought ran through Brandon's head.

What if I step on her feet? I'll never live it down. Unconsciously, he looked down at his feet, being careful to avoid Kat's toes. This worked fine until...

"Brandon, what are you doing? I'm up here, not down there."

"Sorry, Kat," Brandon replied sheepishly. He turned his attention to his dance partner instead of his feet.

"Brandon just re... ouch...relax. You're do...oww...doing fine."

"You're kiddin' Kat." Brandon pulled away from her, his face turning a bright red. "Look I'm sorry I stepped on your toes. I warned you I was a lousy dancer." Brandon started to walk away. Looking back at Kat he said, "Maybe you'd better find yourself another dance partner."

Kat gripped his right hand. "No, Brandon, wait. If I lead, and you follow, would you try again?"

"I don't know, Kat. It's the guys that are supposed to lead."

"That's true, but you need some help, and I do have dancing experience. Who's going to notice anyway?"

Brandon glanced around. Scott and Virgil were sitting at their table, talking between themselves. Of the birthday boy, there was no sign of him and the others were engaged in activities of their

own.

I guess no one will notice. "Okay Kat, I'll do it." He followed her back onto the dance floor and allowed her to lead.

After the song was over, Brandon escorted Kat back to her seat, thanking her for dancing with him and apologizing for stepping on her feet.

Kat smiled. "See, that wasn't so bad now, was it?"

"I guess not," Brandon replied, a relieved smile on his face. "I was just scared. When it comes to dancing, I've always had two left feet." His face brightened even more as he thought of something. "Maybe you can give me dance lessons when we get back to the island?"

"I wouldn't mind doing that during our down time. After all, if you want to attract women, you need to learn how to dance."

"That's true. And I appreciate you being my teacher."

"No problem, Brandon. It's what friends are for."

Brandon had reclaimed his table and was watching the others try their hand at karaoke. He couldn't help laughing at their singing attempts. Man, this is hilarious. If only I had an audio recorder.

"So, Brandon," a male voice said, coming from behind him, "you think you can do better?" Brandon turned around in his seat and looked up at Christopher.

"No, it's not that at all, Chris. It's just...just..." Brandon dissolved into another fit of laughter.

"Well then, how about you put your singing skill to use?" Christopher said, a wicked gleam in his eyes. Brandon wasn't one to back down from a challenge.

"You're on." Brandon got up, going over to the karaoke machine. He flipped through the song list, found a tune he liked and showed it to the DJ.

"This should be good," Christopher said as he took his seat. The others soon joined him and it wasn't long before the strains of the song began.

After a few opening bars, Brandon started singing.

"Get your motor runnin'
Head out on the highway
Lookin' for adventure
And whatever comes our way..."

Everyone was surprised at his singing voice. It was powerful, but not to the point that it overwhelmed. There was one point where Brandon's voice cracked slightly but he was so into the

song that he failed to notice.

At the table, everyone was talking at the same time. "Where did he get that singing voice?" "He told me he couldn't sing that well." "Well" what do you know about that" "You go, Brandon!"

Brandon finished his number with a flourish and went back to the table.

Christopher clapped Brandon on the shoulder. "Brandon, mate, you surprised me. For that performance, I'll buy you another beer."

Post by MagicMaster8 on 07/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:47:36 GMT
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"Kat," Scott asked. "Where's Nikki?"

"She was dancing with a very good looking young man," Kat answered. "But I don't know where she is. I can't see her at all."

Scott looked annoyed. "Damn."

Virgil looked at his brother. "I think we should look for her. It's nearly time to leave."

After the song had finished, Jake took Nikki to the bar to buy her another drink. "So what would you like?"

"I-I better not. I'm meant to be celebrating with my friends and I have a feeling that they would be missing me. But thanks for the offer."

Jake received a beer from the bartender. He turned to Nikki and smiled. "So, where are your friends?"

"Now that's a good question." Nikki looked through the crowds of people.

"Do you want me to help you find them?"

"You don't have to."

"It's okay. I want to. We have to make sure that you get back to them safely and in one piece." Jake held his arm out to Nikki to escort her back. They didn't get far before Alan found them.

"There you are. We were wondering where you'd disappeared to."

"I'm sorry Alan. I didn't realise I was out there for that long." Nikki answered. She looked between Alan and Jake who were looking at each other. "Oh, I'm sorry. Alan, this is Jake. Jake, this is my

friend Alan." Nikki said pointing to each person.

Alan took Nikki's arm and looking at Jake, said. "Thanks for seeing her safely back." Nikki tried to shake off Alan's arm, but he held her in a tight grip.

"Come on, Nikki," he said. "Scott was wondering where you were."

"Is this Scott your boyfriend?" Jake asked Nikki.

"No, no, I don't have a boyfriend," Nikki replied, wishing that Alan would go away.

"So, buddy," Jake said, looking at Alan, "if Nikki doesn't have a boyfriend, then why the protectiveness? Surely she can decide for herself whether she stays a little longer with me."

Alan looked round to see if he could catch Scott or Virgil's eye, but they were all talking together, heads turned away from him. Alan tried again. "Please Nikki, we have to go back to the others. We will be leaving soon."

Jake looked at Alan. "Say, buddy, why don't you leave the lady alone? Surely one more dance won't be that dreadful."

Nikki looked from Alan to Jake. She didn't quite know what to say or do. She took a few deep breaths and looked between Jake and Alan. She really didn't want to spoil Alan's birthday. Her gaze finally rested on Alan. "Alan, you don't need to protect me. I'm old enough to take care of myself."

Alan slowly let go of Nikki's arm. Nikki turned to face Jake. "I'm sorry, I wish that we weren't going. But if Alan says that we have to go, then we have to go."

Jake looked down at the bottle in his hands. "Yeah, I'm sorry, too. Hey, maybe if you ever come back here or if I ever pick up my butt and go to London, we could meet up again."

"Yeah, sure," Nikki replied. "I enjoyed dancing and talking with you tonight."

"Me too." Jake leaned down and gave Nikki a peck on the cheek. He then disappeared into the crowd.

Nikki turned back to Alan, who was looking at her arm. He finally looked up at her face. "Look, we better get back to Scott."

"I suppose." Nikki began to walk with Alan. "Look, I'm sorry about before."

"It's okay."

Nikki walked back with Alan to join the others.

"I hope you didn't talk too much to your friend." Scott demanded, looking hard at Nikki.

Nikki glared at him. "No I didn't," she retorted, and walked round the table to stand behind Kat. Kat stood up a little unsteadily.

"Hey, careful," Virgil laughed, "or we'll be carrying you out."

"I am quite okay," Kat replied, holding out her hand. "There, see, and steady as a rock."

Brains looked at Kat. "Mm, you don't look too steady at all."

"Well, I am not the only one," Kat responded, "I don't think Scott is all that steady."

Nikki looked over at Scott who was leaning slightly on Virgil. He immediately tried to stand up straight. The group began to laugh.

"Too late, Scott. We caught you already." Brandon put his hand on Scott's shoulder.

"Looks like you can't hold your drink, Scott." Alan teased his brother.

Scott glared at him as everyone once again laughed. He pointed towards Alan. "You're lucky that it's your birthday."

"Well technically, it's not." Virgil stated.

"Hmm," Scott looked like he was planning his brother's downfall. "Nah, I'll leave it until tomorrow. I'll let him have his night."

"Sounds like you'll have to watch your back Alan." Nikki said.

Alan shook his head. "Scott wouldn't do anything me. Especially when I have you lot to protect me." Everyone took a step away from him, much to the amusement of Scott. Alan looked around at everyone. "So much for my friends."

"Aww, poor Alan." Kat tried to hide her laugh behind her hand.

Post by TheWrongTrousers, Nikki-browneyes1, and Tawnyangel22 on 07/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:49:37 GMT
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Wednesday, March 14, 2068, 7:30 a.m., Tracy Villa

Jeff looked at Dianne with concern. She had barely touched her breakfast and had snapped at Alex when he asked for a third helping of Farmer's Scramble. Her apology to the boy was immediate and heartfelt, but Jeff could tell she wasn't acting like herself.

"So, what time did they get in this morning?" he asked, conversationally.

Dianne huffed. "Around 3:15," she said sharply. "Scott was so sloshed his brothers practically had to carry him upstairs. He'll be feelin' mighty sick this mornin'. An' it serves him right! Ah have no ideah what condition the new recruits were in, but Ah'm sure we'll find out."

Jeff listened to her, noting the blatant drawl. "Did you get any sleep at all?"

"Not much," she admitted. "And it wasn't all b'cause of the expedition t'Christchurch."

"Then what else was there?" Jeff asked, frowning.

Dianne sighed heavily. "Ah... got a lettah. From the committee handlin' this yeah's memorial service." She paused to take a sip of her coffee. "They... they want me to speak."

"Well, that's a big change of pace," Jeff commented. "Most years they'd rather have you stay home than attend the service. What do you think changed their minds?"

"Ah dunno." Dianne pushed her hash browns around on her plate. "Mebbe they want to look good in the eyes of the media. Ah wish Ah knew what their motive is, and where the catch is in it for me."

"Maybe there is none. Are you going to do it?" he asked.

"Ah haven't made up mah mind yet. An' I don't have much time to think about it either," she grouched. She glanced around the table, letting her eyes wander but seeing nothing. "Ah dunno... with everythin' that's happened recently...."

"Oh, no, you don't," Jeff said sternly, taking her chin in his hand and pulling her face around so their eyes met. "You are not using my accident as an excuse to get out of going to this service. You go or not go because you want to, or perhaps because you don't want to. You speak because you want to or not. But do consider the young ones in your decision. You know this means a lot to them. And know that whatever you decide, I'm behind you."

Dianne's gaze dropped and she smiled slightly. "Thank you, love. Your support means a lot t'me."

"Now, I'm going to ask Lisa if she'll oversee the schooling today so you can get some sleep. You put a call in to the committee chair when the time zones are favorable, and ask for more details. Then make your decision."

Dianne smiled widely at him, and he returned the smile. "You're gettin' back to your clear-headed self, Jeff Tracy. Takin' charge again like you always do. Pretty soon, you'll be back behind your desk supervisin' rescues."

"It can't be too soon for me, dear heart. I feel so helpless and useless the way I am now," Jeff said with a sigh.

"You won't be this way forever, Jeff. I promise you that," Dianne replied, putting her hand up to his cheek. He took the hand and kissed the palm, holding it tight for a moment.

"Now, go. No more coffee," he reached out with his good hand to whisk the cup away. "Go back to bed," he said in a mock-stern tone, feeling a sense of déjà vu as he did so.

"Yes sir," she said with a wink, getting up from the table. She gazed down its length. "Please excuse me, everyone, but I've been ordered back to bed."

There were murmurs of "sleep well" and "you're excused" from the other diners. Dianne leaned over and kissed Jeff on the lips, then left the room, yawning and stretching as she went.

Lisa came in with a fresh pot of coffee and watched her daughter go. "What was that all about?" she asked, refilling Jeff's cup.

"She had a rough night last night. Would you be able to oversee the schooling today for her, Lisa?" Jeff asked.

Lisa nodded. "Sure, Jeff. Just as soon as we clear the table."

"Thank you, for being willing to do it. And for the coffee," Jeff said with a smile. He sipped some more, and looked thoughtful. I hope you do this, Dianne. The public needs to see that you're beyond the pain that the bombing, and its aftermath, caused you for so long.

Post by Tikatu on 07/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:52:54 GMT

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Wednesday, March 14, 2068, 10:30 a.m., Tracy Villa

Tin-Tin loaded up her luggage into the cargo hold of Ladybird. Her father was on hand to help her.

"How long must you be gone, my daughter?" he asked solemnly.

"Hopefully just a couple of days," Tin-Tin said with a sigh. "It all depends on what the situation is when I get there."

"I wish you were not going alone, Tin-Tin," Kyrano told her.

"Father, there is no one else who can be spared. All of the new recruits need to get into their training and since it's the Tracy boys who are teaching them... well, you get the picture. Dianne is busy taking care of Mr. Tracy. And though I know you'd love to go, you've been out of touch in New York for a while. You can't be spared either."

"But I can!" said a cheery voice. Both Kyrano and Tin-Tin looked up to see Emily coming along, a small suitcase in her hand.

"Mrs. Tracy?" Father and daughter asked in unison.

"Yes, of course it's me! You don't think I'm going to let my unofficial granddaughter go off on her own, do you?" She handed her suitcase to Kyrano, who automatically put it in the hold. "Lisa is here to help with meals and other housework. And something tells me, Tin-Tin, that you are going to need someone there to look after you."

"But, Mrs. Tracy...." Tin-Tin tried to protest.

"Don't you 'But, Mrs. Tracy' me, young lady. I am coming along, and that's final! I've already cleared it with Jeff."

"Well, if Mr. Tracy says it's okay...." Daughter looked at father and they both shrugged.

"He does. Now, help me up into this jet of yours. My knees aren't as young as they used to be, you know."

Kyrano handed Emily up into the plane and Tin-Tin helped her to strap in. "We'll call when we get there, Father," Tin-Tin said as she fired up the Ladybird's engines.

"Please do, my daughter. Fair winds and safety to you both."

Tin-Tin taxied her jet out to the air strip. "Ladybird requesting permission to depart."

Alan's voice came over the airwaves. "Permission granted. Have a safe trip."

"Thank you." Tin-Tin said nothing more, just pushed forward the throttle, letting the little jet gain speed until it sailed out over the Pacific, winging its way to Afghanistan.

Post by Tikatu on 07/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 19:56:09 GMT

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Tuesday, March 13, 2068, 10:00 p.m., Dover, England

The shapely blonde poured herself another libation. "How late is he going to be this time?" she asked the man in the room with her.

The dark-haired man stirred the fire in the grate again, then sat down on one of the comfortable sofas that dominated the high-ceilinged room. The firelight glinted on the patches of silver over each temple, and he reached out with a long, lazy arm to hold his glass out to the woman.

"Pour me another, would you, Dez?"

She did as he requested, then joined him on the couch, tucking her long legs under her. Her smooth golden hair was swept back in a bun, and she put down her glass on a small table to unfasten and shake loose her locks.

"I don't know why we rely on him at all, Jacques," Dez grouched, sipping her highball. "He very seldom comes up with the goods."

Jacques sighed. "I know, Dez. But he assures me that, this time, he has a lead on François Lemaire's fabric, Penelon. No one else has been able to get even the slightest peep at the formula for that. I hear it's manufactured in only one place and security there is tighter than tight. No one even knows who has the rights to it. This might be the only chance we have to get our hands on it."

"Hmm. I hope he's..." Dez's voice trailed off as the door opened and a thin, blond man wearing a sharp suit and small round spectacles entered. His long face had the hint of a smile on it.

"Well, Giles. I thought that perhaps you weren't coming," Jacques commented as the newcomer poured himself a stiff drink.

"I was just getting confirmation on a few details," Giles explained.

"So? What news?" Dez asked impatiently.

"Oh, it's all good. Seems that a manufacturer in Kabul was given an order for a new fabric blend. My sources say it's a merging of Penelon and... get this... Kevlar."

"Kevlar? Who in hell would want something like that?" Dez asked, creasing her beautiful features with scowl.

"The word is that some offshoot of Tracy Industries has sent the order. My sources say that the manufacturer is having trouble getting the blend to specifications, and that they've asked for the brains behind the formula to come out and troubleshoot." Giles claimed an overstuffed, leather chair and stretched his lanky frame out in it.

"The sources, I suppose, have been causing the trouble?" Jacques asked, kicking back his drink.

"Precisely. This particular informant knew that Penelon was one of the items we were interested in, and so created a little havoc to draw out the fabric's designer. She figured that whoever created this blend, has access to the Penelon formula."

"And?" Dez prompted.

"And the creator of the Penelon/Kevlar blend is due to arrive in Kabul any time now. She is one Tin-Tin Kyrano." Giles pulled a thin envelope from his jacket pocket, and handed it to Dez. She looked over the materials, giving them to Jacques as she finished with each item.

"Pretty thing," Jacques commented. "I've always liked Asian women." He glanced sharply up at Giles. "So, she will be in Kabul soon?"

"According to my sources, yes."

Jacques sighed expansively. "Well then. It looks like it might be worth our while to have a little chat with Ms. Tin-Tin Kyrano."

Post by Tikatu on 07/10/2004

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

life?"

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

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

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

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

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

"And what did you find?"

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

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

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

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

"True," she replied. "Having to type a code like de one Brains came up wit can be annoying, but it

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jeff chuckled again. "I've found, Lena, that age has nothing to do with usefulness or ability. I should introduce you to Sir Jeremy Hodge or Jeremiah and Maudie Tuttle just for a couple of

examples." He held out his good hand. "I think we can make this work, Lena. You and I and Brains can sit down and put all the details together... after dinner."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Post by Tikatu and Hobbeth on 08/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:08:10 GMT
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Lena had just walked out of the lounge when she remembered she hadn't told Jeff which server his modem was connected to. She turned back and entered the room just as the sounds she'd programmed emerged from the speakers. She saw the stunned look on his face, then watched him slowly turn and look at her.

Mischief appeared in her eyes, as amusement appeared in his. "Sorry, I forgot to tell you your computer was still connected to de IR server. Dat's why I came back."

"That's okay, Lena, but why did you choose that way of reminding people to switch servers?"

She slowly grinned. "It seemed like a good idea at the time. Less annoying than some technical sound."

His grin matched hers. "Much," he replied, as he deliberately hit the "Enter" key, causing the foghorn and the "Ah, ah, ah," to play a second time.

The laughter from the lounge was heard by those who were nearby, causing them to smile.

Post by Hobbeth on 08/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:09:36 GMT

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Tracy Island; Wednesday, March 14, 2068; 3:00PM

"De diagnostics on Mr. Tracy's computer is complete, and shows dat everything is in optimum condition," Lena told Brains when they met once again in his lab. "And so is yours," she added.

"The other terminals are also in perfect shape," he replied with a relieved look on his face, "so the only one left to check is the one aboard Thunderbird 5."

"Tunderbird 5?"

He looked surprised. "Oh, that's right! You know that the Tracys are the founders of International Rescue, but you don't know about our vehicles. We call them Thunderbirds. Thunderbird 5 is our space station. It monitors the transmissions from Earth, and alerts us here when we are needed."

"Den I presume it is in geostationary orbit wit dis island, so it can contact you at any time of day?"

"That's correct."

"Den how does it get transmissions from de otter parts of de world? Satellites?" She stopped him from answering with a gesture. "No, I don't need to know dat. And unless it's someting I need to work on, I don't want to know."

Brains smiled at her. "Well, it could happen some time in the future, you know." He looked at her speculatively, then seemed surprised that she didn't react. She grinned at him.

"I've already had a conversation wit Mr. Tracy." She filled him in on some of her chat with Jeff.

Brains nodded. "I understand. Interesting, the ideas you gave him. I've had a few notions along those lines, but the time never seemed right to bring them up. I guess I'll be trotting out those designs and ideas very soon. He isn't one to put something like that off for very long."

"Dat's good. Your luck in not having to rescue a disabled person can't hold forever. Well, I tink I should upload your program back into de system now." She turned to her terminal. "I doubt dat dere's any problem wit Tunderbird 5's computers, so it should be okay."

Forty minutes later the program was uploaded and tested. There were no hitches anywhere, and both of them breathed a sigh of relief. "Lena, you're a wonder. You've done a terrific job, and I'm glad to have you on the team." He sighed. "But now I've got to come up with a new code for people to use to switch from one server to the other."

"I've had an idea about dat. What if instead of a series of digits, we used a word or a phrase for each user? Dat way, it will be easy for each one to remember and, in case of any problem, you could identify which terminal was having it, just from de code used."

Brains looked thoughtful. "That's worth considering. What kind of phrases did you have in mind?"

Lena grinned. "Well, I'm sure each user would like to come up wit deir own, but I could see some song titles, or phrases describing de person."

"Such as?"

"Did you ever see any of de original Star Trek television show from de 1960s?"

"Yes. It fascinated me, especially since NASA adopted some of the helm and navigation control configurations for their space vessels."

"Well, I keep tinking dat Dianne could use de phrase 'I'm a doctor, not a space jockey!'"

Brains laughed. "That's a good one. And for me, 'Highly illogical.'"

They started trying to come up with funny descriptive phrases for different people, topping each other until they were breathless from laughter. "Ah, dat was good. I'm as refreshed by all our laughter as if I'd just had a nap," Lena said, wiping her eyes.

"Yes, me too, but will people want to type a phrase each time they want to switch?"

"Dat wouldn't be necessary. I can write a program trough which dey can 'record' it and have de computer type it for dem just by hitting one or two keys whenever dey need to switch."

"Really? I've heard of something like that being used in some companies, but never saw a need for it here, until now. That's a good idea. And it sounds like it wouldn't take long to show everyone how to use it."

"Right. Den I'll get to work on de program now."

They each turned to their computers and, re-energized, got back to work.

Post by Hobbeth on 08/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:10:41 GMT
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Tracy Island, March 14th, 3:30pm.

Jeff Tracy had been home for three days. Three days of bliss as far as his family was concerned. Elise thought back to what she'd seen over the last few days. Lots of love was what she mainly saw. Two happily in love parents and a slew of doting kids!

She smiled at the memories of seeing how the Tracy clan ate a meal together, how they joked around with each other. But somewhere deep inside her stirred a sadness. She'd never had the opportunity to share moments like these in her own family. Losing her parents when she was nine put an end to that. Her aunt loved her and raised her but it wasn't the same.

Elise turned away from the window of the guest room. This part of the house was quiet. John, her immediate next door neighbor, was gone away on duty, and unless she ventured out and mingled in the chaos of the rest of the house, she was alone. She was used to the feeling so it didn't bother her so much. Her ribs hardly gave her any more pain, the bruise on her face had faded, but the cheekbone was still very tender. Dianne had told her it may be that way for a few months yet.

She walked to the closet and took out some more of her things. She'd been here long enough, and now that Jeff had returned, she felt she was overstaying her welcome. New York will be a welcome change from all this tropical weather! At least she knew all of her personal things were safe, thanks to Scott and Gordon.

Scott. I need to talk to Scott about getting me home.

She continued to pack some things and make mental notes to herself until she heard a knock on the door. Laying down the clothes she was holding, she opened the door to find Scott standing there. "Well, hi! I was just thinking about you!" She smiled.

Scott smiled back. "All good thoughts I hope?" he joked good naturedly.

"Would there be any other kind?" She grinned and welcomed him in.

Scott noticed the packing and cringed inside. This was not going to be easy. He'd spoken to his Dad earlier that morning and both of them had agreed they would 'interview' Elise together... today. She had no idea, and was looking forward to going home.

She noticed him looking at the mess of clothes and the suitcases.

"It will be so nice to get back to New York, Scott. Don't get me wrong, I've enjoyed being pampered here, and everyone has been so good to me, but I need to get back to work, to flying. I

miss it. You know how it is."

He nodded, "Yes, Elise, I do. I know you're chomping at the bit, but I came to see you to ask you if you would stop by Dad's study today?" Elise started to look a little unsure.

"Is he okay, about the crash, I mean?"

"Yes, he just wants to have a one on one with you, without all the others fussing around him!" He noted the relieved look on her face.

"Sure, I'd really like that."

Boy, I hate it when she gives me that totally trusting look! "Okay, then, I'll let Dad know, and, we'll say... 30 mins from now?"

"I'll be there." She smiled at him.

She followed him to the door and as he started to leave, he turned back to her.

"I'm glad you've enjoyed staying with us. Virgil said you'd like it, remember ...when we first arrived?"

Elise laughed "Yes! I do, I'll have to tell him he was right about that. That'll make his ego inflate a little more!"

They both chuckled as he departed. Elise closed the door and resumed packing.

At the sound of her door closing, Scott let out the breath he'd been holding.

How in the heck I'm gonna explain this to her? She's going to explode when she finds out we want her to stay.

Scott started towards his father's study. He was not looking forward to this. During the time he spent training her and the other pilots in her 'Flight', he'd come across that fiery temper more than once. Only once or twice had it been directed at him, and heavens did that girl get passionate about flying when she got all fired up! He recalled having to pull rank on her to calm her down and keep her in check on one occasion!

"Well, son?" inquired Jeff as Scott walked into the study.

"She'll be here in 30 minutes." Jeff smiled. Scott didn't.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 10/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:12:00 GMT

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Wednesday, March 14, 2068, 7:00 a.m., Vele, in the Ural Mountains, Russia

It was a special day for the children who lived at the orphanage in Vele. Today was the day they would get to see the doctor in the small city of Ust'-Uls. It meant a 25 kilometer drive along the narrow winding road that followed the Vishera river and then crossing the suspension bridge that brought them into the city itself. The trip would take all day and the earlier their start, the earlier they would return.

Vladimir, the driver of the ancient school bus, watched as the twelve children, aged from six months to fourteen years, filed into the vehicle, taking their places in the worn bench seats. The babies were cradled in the arms of two of the younger caretakers, Ivana and Galina, while the older Yulja sat with the toddlers to try and keep them in line. Yulja's husband, Fjodor, sat with the older children. At the front of the bus was a paying customer: Ilya had a job interview in Ust'-Uls and asked if he could ride with the orphanage bus to the city.

There was a definite air of excitement among the coughing of the older children and the crying of the babies. Vladimir took one last look around, and, satisfied that his charges were ready to go, started up the bus. The engine puffed out black smoke as the engine gave a deep rumble, and with a noisy clashing of gears, the expedition took off.

The road was narrow, barely wide enough for two vehicles passing side by side. The bus hugged the side nearest the mountain, making Vladimir feel safer, for the roads were slick at that time of morning. Traffic was light; the few autos that were on the road moved at the same snail's pace that the bus did. But things changed once they got to the next small town, Ust'-Garevaya. This small town was larger than Vele, and more traffic flowed southward towards the bigger city. More autos, more trucks, and more impatient drivers. Finally, just before the bridge that crossed the ravine, a driver who could not contain himself pulled out from three places behind the bus and tried to pass. And, as karma would have it, a truck appeared, coming from the other direction.

The impatient driver never stood a chance. He couldn't turn without going into the ravine. He couldn't pull back into the traffic. The road was slick, and though he put his brakes on and skewed his car around, and though the truck driver, in a panic, swerved to his right, the two vehicles collided with a sickening crunch, followed by an explosion. This created a chain reaction, as the cars nearest to the wreck tried to avoid it, and instead, crashed into each other.

Vladimir, always cautious, turned the bus to the left, trying to pull into the now empty lane to avoid smashing into the vehicles before him. But the other lane was less traveled at that time of day and was slicker. The vehicle began to slide, and the truck behind them, whose driver had a similar idea, bumped heavily into its back corner. The children screamed and the women clutched the little ones tightly as the bus slipped and skidded along the edge of the old wooden barrier at the edge of the road. It finally gave way, and the nose of the bus protruded over the edge of the ravine. The truck, as helpless on the slick lane as the child-laden transport, smashed into the back end again, rendering the emergency door useless. The front door was shattered by the broken barrier, but it kept the bus from going forward any farther... for now. In back, Yulja wailed, crossing herself and praying out loud. This added to the confusion and panic of the young passengers.

But the worst was yet to come. The noise of the explosion echoed and re-echoed in the ravine, disturbing the snows that still lay on the side of the mountain peaks. The snow began to slide downward, picking up speed and finally rolling down the steep side and spilling over the cut of the road, burying one car and half burying another. Fjodor cried out, "Avalanche!" and crossed himself, too, as the road behind them disappeared under tons of snow, rock, and trees.

Ilya took stock of the situation. The explosion meant that any help coming from Ust'-UIs couldn't get through. Nor could anyone from Ust'-Garevaya come to their aid. The bus creaked and groaned and threatened to fall into the ravine. While Vladimir coached the children and their caretakers to move to the back of their transport, Ilya pulled out his cell phone. He kissed it, crossed himself, and placed a call to the authorities in Ust'-UIs. With a deep breath, he asked them to call for the only people he thought could help them... International Rescue.

Post by Tikatu on 11/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:13:35 GMT
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Elise took a deep breath as she stood before the study door. She hadn't seen Jeff Tracy since the homecoming party and was a little nervous as to what this meeting would entail. She raised her hand and knocked softly.

"Come in." The reply was in a clear, sturdy voice.

She opened the door and gingerly stepped in. She noticed Scott to her left and had a fleeting moment of being puzzled. Jeff remained seated, still needing to rest his body. She smiled as she approached Jeff at his desk.

"Hello, Elise." Jeff's warm smile and soft tone conveyed his understanding of her uneasiness to Elise.

"Hello again, sir."

"Please, have a seat."

Jeff indicated with his hand and Elise parked herself in the nearest chair, glancing quickly at Scott who had now moved closer to his father.

"How have you been, Elise?"

"Fine, sir, thank you. Your family has been very kind to me, since the... well, since the accident." Elise wasn't sure if Jeff wanted to talk about the crash or not.

"From what I understand Elise, I owe you my life." Jeff didn't waste any time getting to the point.

"I just did what I had to do. I, er, don't really remember a lot of what happened that night, but, um... it seems I 'stumbled' across your secret organization and managed to get us both rescued," Elise replied awkwardly.

She averted her eyes briefly and Jeff knew she was uncomfortable so he tried to be a little lighthearted about it all.

"Well, I for one AM definitely grateful you did 'stumble', as you put it, across my organization. We both might not be here if you hadn't."

He paused for a moment before continuing.

"Elise, I understand that your injuries are healed enough for you to have mentioned going back to New York?"

"Yes, sir, I need to get back to a normal routine. Your family has been wonderful, and I've really enjoyed being here, but I think it's time we all got back to our lives. Besides, I've taken up enough of your hospitality and now that you're home, I'm just going to be in the way. I was planning on leaving within the next day or so."

She looked at Jeff, then at Scott when they both remained silent. Scott had been dreading this. He stood stoically, but inside was wringing his guts into pieces.

Jeff looked down at his desk, then back up to Elise.

"What did you think when you saw Thunderbird 3 launch? Quite a sight, isn't she?"

Elise was thrown off for a second and answered,

"Excuse me?"

"Thunderbird 3? I was told you saw her launch and saw John and Callie heading off to Thunderbird 5."

"Yes... I did, it was quite amazing."

Something inside Elise triggered a warning signal. She didn't like the way this conversation had suddenly taken a turn, but she wasn't sure why. Gut instinct maybe, but she didn't like what she was feeling and looked over at Scott. Nothing. His face showed no emotion. Not a good sign.

"What you saw Elise, was awesome, but it was also top secret. No one outside of this outfit knows about International Rescue, except a chosen few, and now you are one of those. But, you are also a TI pilot, one I would like to keep close."

Elise was a little confused "What are you trying to say Mr. Tracy?"

Jeff inhaled, glancing at his son as he did so. Immediately Elise caught on that whatever was going to be said... Scott was in on it. She tried to catch Scott's attention, but now he was looking

down.

"Elise, I can't promise that you won't be hounded by the press and media when you return to New York, and if they get the smallest inkling that you're aware of our operations, security would be breached. I don't want to see that happen to you. I'm asking you, Elise, if you would stay and become a pilot for IR. We could have the rest of your stored things sent here, so there'd be no need to return to New York. I need capable "Top Gun" pilots and I'm offering the job to you."

Elise wasn't sure she'd heard quite right. Her? A pilot for IR? She slowly stood up.

"Sir, with all due respect, I already have a job. One that I like and would like to return to."

She was looking directly at Scott when she'd finished talking. He acknowledged her look with his own and knew he was going to fry in hell. It was obvious she'd figured out that he was a major part in this whole 'security issue' conversation.

"Yes, you do have a job, but I'm offering you a better one. A chance of a lifetime. Scott has highly recommended you, and he has every confidence you will be an asset to the team."

"Does he now?" Elise's anger was starting to build.

Jeff heard the stiffness in her voice and looked to his son for answers. None were forthcoming.

"Mr. Tracy? May I have a word with Scott in private please?"

Jeff looked back and forth between them, sensing something, and agreed.

"Certainly. You two can remain here in private, I'll be in my suite. Call me if you need me Scott."

"Thanks, Father." Scott watched his father leave, and the second his head started to turn back to Elise, she pounced.

"WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE! How dare you set me up, Scott Tracy!"

He drew in a deep breath before answering.

"Elise, you're a damn good pilot and my father is serious about wanting you on the team. I've known you long enough to know letting you go back to flying choppers would be a mistake. We need you Elise."

"So you tricked me into coming here?"

"NO! That's not how it happened; I'd mentioned to dad before the accident that I thought he should seriously consider taking you on board at IR. It just turned out that you found out sooner about us and we didn't want the media to get to you while you were in hospital."

She looked at him incredulously.

"Oh, I see, you whisked me out here to your tropical paradise because I was a security risk? My God, Scott! Did you think I'd blab all to the Press? What? Did you think that by bringing me here I would 'make nice with the natives' and never want to leave?"

Her voice was getting louder and angrier and Scott had no choice but to hear her out and bear the brunt of it all. She turned away from him and started to pace back and forth.

"I can't believe this! I can't believe YOU!" She pointed at him. "I trusted you Scott, and this is how you treat me! What if I don't want to join IR, hmm? Did'ya ever think of that! What about what I want? When were you going to ask me that?"

She was now looking straight at him, eyes blazing pure anger, and beneath it all Scott saw the hurt and that got to him more than her tirade.

"Elise, listen to me... please." She cut him off quickly.

"Please what? Please stay, please forgive me? Please let me ship your stuff out here so you'll stay and keep your mouth shut?"

As Scott was carefully planning his next words, Virgil and Alan were on their way through the lounge and heard the loud voices coming from the study.

"What's going on in there?!" asked Alan.

"Dunno, but it doesn't sound good."

As they neared, Virgil recognized the voices.

"That's Scott and Elise in there."

Virgil thought for a moment and realized what Scott was trying to talk to Elise about. Alan started to laugh silently.

"Sounds like she's tearing him up one side and down the other! Whad'ya suppose that's all about?"

"Haven't a clue, bro," Virgil lied to his brother. What Alan didn't know wouldn't hurt him.

Virgil started to leave but Alan grabbed his arm, pulling him back. "Wait, I want to see what happens!"

Virgil gave him one of 'the looks' and Alan merely smiled widely.

They both positioned themselves away from the door but not so far to where they wouldn't hear what was being said, or shouted as the case may be. Alan leaned back and folded his arms across his chest. He planned on enjoying every moment!

Inside the study, the anger hadn't subsided and Scott's voice and temper were now both rising.

"For the LAST time Elise, I did NOT set you up! I have NOT kept secrets from you while you've been here! You know damn well how security works; you got enough of it thrown at you in the Air Force!"

"Oh, so you're going to throw that in my face now? The whole "Classified Information" incident? Well, let me tell you this 'Captain' Tracy, I NEVER once broke a security code, regardless of the write-up of that incident."

Scott locked angry gazes with her. He knew she was well and truly riled now; she'd called him by his Air Force rank, and had done so with loathing. The incident they were referring to had long been cleared up by the Air Force, but it still rankled both of them. It had been one of the times he'd pulled rank on her, and she'd never forgotten or forgiven him for it.

Scott drew himself up to his full height and walked towards her. He was merely inches away, when he looked down at her and spoke.

"For your information 'Lieutenant' I'm fully aware of what happened, and you know it. As for IR, the same rules apply. Saving lives is what we do, and we damn well take it seriously. Being a pilot for this organization is way above what being a pilot in the Air Force is. I take my role seriously and my father does not offer jobs here lightly. I suggest you take that information and remember it well."

Outside the door, Alan and Virgil both winced at hearing their brother's tone. They were expecting to see Scott exit the study but instead heard Elise fire back at him.

"I won't forget a thing! And let me tell you this, Scott Tracy, I will never, ever let myself be taken by you or anyone in this family again!"

Scott started to interject but Elise raced on,

"And another thing, if being a pilot for IR is such a thrill, you can just climb aboard that International Rescue plane of yours and fly it STRAIGHT TO HELL!"

Virgil and Alan both jumped to attention as the study door flew open and Elise stormed out. She glanced angrily at each of them, and marched away, not saying a word. Scott appeared moments later looking extremely worn out and slowly shaking his head, looking angrily in the direction that Elise had gone.

"You okay?" Virgil asked.

Scott nodded slowly. "Yeah, I guess."

Alan let out a low whistle. "Man, I think the 'Great Scott Tracy' just got his ass kicked!"

His statement was met with a reply in unison:

"Shut-up Alan!"

The blond just grinned and started to laugh.

"I'll go check on her, Scott." Virgil offered as he walked by, giving Scott a brotherly pat on the shoulder.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 11/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:14:21 GMT
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*****March 14, 2068; Thunderbird Five; around 3:30 p.m.*****

John and Callie were running systems checks on the controls when they heard something on the radio. They listened carefully to the voice. "Wait," Callie said, "it's Russian! I heard the man say 'International Rescue' in Russian!"

"You're right, Callie. Let's get the details. How's your Russian?" John asked.

"Decent. I worked in Moscow just before my last trip to the International Space Station."

"Then go ahead and answer it, Callie. If there's anything you forget to ask, I'll clue you in."

Callie spoke in Russian to the man, asking him to explain what had happened. After making out the details, she turned to John. "There's been an avalanche in the Ural Mountains. School bus hanging on edge of slick road, bus filled with children and some adults. An explosion and fire are also occurring in the area. Conventional rescue will be impossible."

"Get some coordinates for me and I'll call base," John said, moving over to the panel that would connect him to the lounge at Tracy Island.

"F-A-B, John."

Post by TracyFan4Ever and Tikatu on 12/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:16:09 GMT
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Tracy Island,4:15pm.

Virgil found Elise out on the balcony of her room. The door had been left open and he'd called out to her, but she hadn't answered. He noticed the clothes strewn around the room, and the

suitcases on the bed and chair. He approached the balcony, calling softly,

"Elise?"

He noticed how she stiffened when hearing her name, yet she didn't turn around. He also noticed how hard she was gripping the railing with her hands. She was still very angry and upset.

"Did Scott send you?" she suddenly asked.

"No, he didn't," Virgil replied as he casually leaned back on the railings, tilting his head so that he could see her more clearly.

"Then why are you here?" She avoided looking at him, keeping her eyes focused ahead, looking at the ocean.

"I came to see how you were, and if I could help."

She gave a small sarcastic chuckle.

"Yeah, right. More like help your brother by convincing me to stay here."

Virgil didn't appreciate her snide remark, but refused to be baited by it. Unlike Scott, he could remain passive and let things slide, to an extent anyway.

"My brother's too old to need my help. Besides, he likes to think everything is his idea, so why would I help him?"

He smiled as she shifted her gaze sideways to meet his eyes. Her expression softened a little.

"So you here on a mission of your own then?" Elise questioned.

"Sort of." Virgil drew in a breath before continuing. "Look, Elise, I heard what was said between you and Scott. I know he can be a real jerk when he gets fired up, but what he said about IR and our dad is true. We need pilots Elise, and good ones."

She remained silent, and watched Virgil. He was so different from Scott, so much more calm and laid-back. She wondered how two people so different in personalities could be such close brothers.

"You may need pilots, Virgil, but the way Scott and your father went about it irked me. I'm not a commodity, I'm a human being, with thoughts and feelings, and right now, I'm not sure what I think or feel about this whole situation."

Virgil could sympathize with her on that. "Yeah, I know. Dad and Scott can sometimes get so wrapped up in something, it's hard to make them see any other way but theirs!" Virgil laughed a little, causing Elise to smile and emit a small chuckle of her own.

She looked at him thoughtfully. "Sounds like you speak from experience?"

He rolled his eyes mockingly. "Yeah, you could say that."

Elise became serious once more. "Look, Virgil, I was all set to go back to New York, and back to my job, and now all this has been sprung on me, I feel like I'm in a whirlwind, and I don't like it. Be honest with me, were you in on this too?"

He took his time answering, and she knew from his silence that he was part of it. She shook her head, and turned away to look back out over the ocean. Virgil suddenly felt like he'd betrayed her. Why, he wasn't sure, but he felt it none the less. He liked her, and having heard her scream at his brother, knew she had a temper, one he hoped would never be directed at him. He decided to play safe and attempted a little lightheartedness again.

"You know, I honestly don't know of anyone who's told Scott to fly his precious Thunderbird One straight to hell, and lived to tell about it."

He had said it so 'off the cuff' that Elise couldn't help but laugh and as she turned back to him, noticed the twinkle in his eyes.

"Thanks, for trying to help," Elise said.

He smiled. "Sure, no problem. Just want to keep the peace around here!"

Elise started to say something else but was suddenly interrupted by the emergency signal going off. Virgil instantly became serious. "That's a call coming in from TB5, time for action."

He started walking away, and then as if having an afterthought, turned back to Elise.

"Do you want to see how a rescue gets set in motion?"

"Okay, I guess." Her reply was hesitant, knowing that Scott and his father would also be in the lounge, but she followed Virgil anyway, curiosity getting the better of her.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 12/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:26:52 GMT
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Tracy Island; Wednesday, March 14th, 4:30PM

Lena had just clicked on "Save" when the loudest noise she ever heard caused to jump and nearly fall off her chair. "What on earth was dat?" She turned to look at Brains, only to see him hurriedly shutting down his computer.

"That was the emergency alarm. Thunderbird 5 is contacting us about a rescue. Come on, let's go. You can see what we do when we get a call."

Lena shut down her computer and did the fastest check of all the electric plugs she'd ever done in her life (it was too much a habit for her to stop doing it now), then grabbed her ever-present needlework bag and followed him out of the lab

Post by Hobbeth on 12/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:29:54 GMT
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Wednesday, March 14, 2068, 4:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Scott found himself behind the desk, speaking with John as the other IR operatives quickly began to file into the lounge. Looking around briefly, he was surprised to see Virgil followed by Elise, who would not meet his gaze, and Brains followed by Lena, who looked around with curiosity. Dom brought little Joshua with him, and held on tight to the toddler. And following Dianne was Jeff, his wheelchair humming along. He could tell that his stepmom was not happy about Jeff's presence in the lounge, not one bit. The crowd parted for Jeff, and more than one of the operatives looked surprised to see him there. They were even more surprised to see him approach the desk.

"What do you have for us, John?" Jeff asked. John looked surprised as well, especially since Scott had already asked that question.

"Well, Father, as I told Scott, there's a multi-car pile up on a narrow two-lane road outside the small city of Ust'-UIs in the Ural Mountains. A truck and a car have collided with each other and the resulting explosion and fire are stopping rescuers from the city. An avalanche has blocked the road to keep rescuers from an adjacent town in the opposite direction. And there's a bus full of children perched at the edge of a ravine. Someone on the bus called the people in Ust'-UIs, who called us."

"This sounds like an 'all hands on deck' situation," Jeff said. "Scott. Off you go."

"But, Father...", Scott protested.

Jeff turned to him. "Scott, we have no time for arguments. People are relying on us. Now go."

Scott locked eyes with Dianne, who, with a sour expression, nodded her head slightly. Scott shook his head and went to the light sconces. Truth be told, he was partially glad to get out from behind the desk and into the cockpit of his rocket plane. But he wasn't too sure that his father was up to the task of directing rescues just yet.

"Virgil, take pod six with the extra-strong magnetic grabs. I think you'll need one of the recovery vehicles, and the Firefly, which can take care of the fire and probably the avalanche as well." He paused as Scott asked for launch clearance and he gave it. "I also think you'll need Thunderbird Seven... with a full medical complement."

"Jeff...." Dianne began in a warning tone.

"Dianne, you know that Dom and Nikki still aren't as familiar with Thunderbird Seven as you are. You need to go on this one," Jeff said hotly, his tone defensive. He glanced over at Virgil, who hadn't budged. "Well, what are you waiting for, Virgil? Thunderbirds are go!"

"Father," Virgil began. "I'd like Kat along with us on this one. To check the winch's performance in the field and be on hand if there are any problems with it."

"You expect problems?" Jeff asked.

"No, but I didn't expect problems with it last time either. Having her on hand will mean that any problems we might have will be nipped in the bud."

"Okay. Kat, you're going. Brandon, Christopher, Alan, go with him." Virgil now moved over to his portrait and let it flip him up and out of sight. An excited Kat followed the three men named out of the room.

Dianne looked over at Dom and Nikki. "You two go ahead. Ah'll be down presently."

"Can Mrs. Parkhurst look after Josh for me while we're gone?" Dom asked, a concerned look in his eyes.

"Sure. Ah'll call her up here." Dianne activated her telecomm. "Ma, please come to the lounge right away. Kyrano, please join us in the lounge. Cherry, Ah need you in the lounge, sweetie."

Lisa was the first to arrive, followed quickly by Kyrano. Dom handed Josh over to Lisa, then nodded at Dianne and he and Nikki left. Dianne approached the desk while Jeff maneuvered himself behind it. She beckoned to Brains and Kyrano as Cherry entered the room.

"Cherie, come over heah, sweetheart. You, too, Ma." Grandmother and granddaughter approached the desk, little Joshua on Lisa's hip.

"Now, heah's mah ordahs. If any of you see him gettin' tired, or his energy flaggin', you are undah mah ordahs t' take him t' the sick room t' rest. Brains, should that happen. you are in chahge. Y'all unnerstan'?"

"Yes, Mom." "Sure thing, darlin'." "Of course, Dr. Tracy." "I understand, Dianne."

"Now, suh." She turned her attention to Jeff. "You've heard theah orders. Here are yoahs. If you feel tired at all, if you yawn even once, you are t' GO TO BED! Doctor's orders'. You are heah by mah sufferance, Jeff. Ah think it's too soon foah you t' be directin' rescues but Ah don' see how Ah can stop you entirely othah than strappin' you down in the sick room. If you don' cooperate this time, next time Ah will strap you down an' Scott can take the desk. D'you unnerstan', Jefferson Tracy?"

Jeff looked at her stubbornly for a few long moments. What he saw in her face must have convinced him that going along was better than bucking her, for he finally sighed and said tersely,

"I will cooperate."

"Good. I'm holdin' you to that." Dianne pointed at him then she turned and ran from the room. Jeff looked up at his interim caretakers. Cherry stood there gazing at him severely, her arms crossed. Kyrano and Lisa exchanged glances and Kyrano left, while Lisa sat down with Joshua beside Lena on Thunderbird Three's couch. Brains sat down at the chess table and set it up for a solo game.

The silence in the room was almost deafening. Jeff looked around.

"I said I would cooperate. And I will."

"Good, Dad. Because I'm watching you," Cherry said, a serious look on her young face.

"So I see," Jeff muttered, turning to the communications station to give Virgil the go ahead for launch. He happened to glance up to see a bemused John looking back at him.

"What are you grinning about?" Jeff asked testily.

"Doctor's orders," John returned succinctly.

"Don't you have something to do?"

"F-A-B. Thunderbird Five out," John replied as he cut communications with his father, and opened them with Scott and Virgil.

Post by Tikatu on 14/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:31:09 GMT
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Wednesday, March 14, 2068, 10:20 a.m. local time, Ust'-UIs, the Ural Mountains, Russia

Scott took a turn over the site that was now the Danger Zone.

This is not a good scenario. There's more snow down, blocking the other side of the road, nearer to the bridge. At least the bridge itself is empty, and there are only a few cars left near the upper avalanche. That wreck is still burning; looks like those poor devils never had a chance. The bus is in a pretty precarious spot. There seem to be people on the snow at the upper part of the zone; digging out a car? Wonder if they could use some help? My VTOLs would do the job quickly. But first, I need to see where Virgil can put down Thunderbird Two. Not on the road for sure. Maybe there'll be a place up at that small town.

"Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One. I need the name of the small town to the north of the Danger Zone."

Callie's picture entered the frame of his telecomm. "Ess, it's called Ust'-Garevaya. Jay is onto the powers that be there, but it might be easier for you to find a spot in Ust'-Uls. It's closer."

"F-A-B, Cee. I'll find a good spot for the big green beetle. As for me, I'm going to need some translation. If you can hear it, can you respond to it? I can put your voice out over my loudspeaker."

"F-A-B, Ess. Can do."

Scott made a slow pass over the Danger Zone again and then a quicker one over Ust'-Uls. The stadium looks big enough. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One. I think that the stadium is going to have to do for Thunderbird Two. The bridge looks wide enough for Seven. Can you or Jay have the authorities seal it off for us?"

John's voice answered and he appeared onscreen. "I'm working with them on it. Our nearest agent is in Perm, which is quite some distance away, but she's on her way now. Don't know if she'll get there by the time we need her, but she's going to try anyway. What's the ETA on Two?"

"They're about fifty minutes behind me now. Listen. I'm going to deploy the metal spears into the hillside to hopefully limit any more snow and debris from coming down, then see if I can help melt some snow and free some trapped motorists. Then I'm going to do to that bus what I did to Eddie Houseman's vehicle until Vee gets here. I don't think I'll be setting up Mobile Control this time."

"F-A-B, Ess. Sounds like a plan. Let us know when you need translation services. Cee here has fluent Russian, too."

"Great! I'm sure I'll need all the help I can get! Thunderbird One, out." Scott had been flying back to the Danger Zone all the time he had been talking, and now was facing the cliff above the narrow stretch of roadway. He toggled a switch, and the rack holding the tough calcium spears lowered from the belly of his Thunderbird. He targeted a specific height at which he wanted to place them.

"Narrow pattern and spread," he breathed to himself, taking aim and then squeezing the trigger as if he were shooting a gun. The spears shot out and buried their pointed ends into the hillside, spaced no more than three meters apart.

"Reload," he murmured as he brought the rack back in. He only had enough of the spears to do two rounds, thirty-two spears in all so he had to be choosy about where to put them if they were going to do the job right. He targeted again, this time to the right of his previous target, and without hesitation, he fired again.

He smiled. The spears were right where he wanted them. The coverage wasn't complete, but there would be no boulders or trees falling on the cars below in case there was another avalanche.

A few able-bodied people from the cars that had collided were standing on the roofs of their ruined vehicles and waving at him. He wiggled his wings at them, then made his way to the upper

avalanche, where people from Ust'-Garevaya were trying to dig out the buried motorists.

It may be too late here, he thought, but I must try. "Thunderbird One to Thunderbird Five, I need some Russian here!"

"What do you need to say, Ess?" Callie asked.

"I need to tell the people to move aside so I can melt the snow with my VTOLs," Scott said. He turned on his loudspeaker and patched her through. "Any time you're ready, Cee."

"Thanks a lot, Ess," she responded wryly, her voice echoing in English. He grinned, knowing that she couldn't hear it. Then in Russian, she politely asked the people to move so he could melt the snow with his jets. The workers looked startled to hear a voice speaking Russian, and a female one at that, but they obliged and moved far enough away so that they could watch, and still move in quickly when the time came.

Scott lowered to within just a couple of meters of the car's roof, and positioned the VTOLs so that they were at an angle that fired beside the car, but not on it. Five minutes with the hot exhaust was all it took to clear a deep trench beside the buried car. He lifted up, and the workers moved in quickly, waving at him in thanks. He wobbled again, then went off to repeat his actions twice more at the snow spill on the other end of the Danger Zone.

Now came the tricky part.

"Cee, I need for you to speak to these children and their caretakers and have them move to the back of the bus and stay there!"

Callie gathered up her thoughts and let the Russian tongue flow through her and out into the air. Scott, who had gotten down to the level where he could see the figures inside the bus, watched as they moved even farther back. One little boy's eyes widened, and he tried to come forward to see the silver rocket, but he was grabbed by a man and thrust back. Carefully, Scott maneuvered the red tip of his craft beneath the nose of the stricken bus.

"Damn!" he swore quietly as he realised that the thinnest part of the nose was threatening to bury itself in the dirt below the bus. There was no way he could get the fatter part closer to move the bus back up onto the road itself.

Well, I guess at least I can catch it, or try to, if it shifts any further, he thought. As if in answer to his unspoken musing, the bus shifted forward a bit, and Scott swore again. Hurry up, Virgil! This bus isn't going to stay put forever!

Post by Tikatu on 14/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:36:28 GMT

[size=2]Tracy Island, March 14th, 6:10 p.m. Island time, somewhere over Russia

Kat couldn't believe it when Virgil had stated that she was needed on the rescue. Sure, it was to see that the winch was working okay, but still! It was her first rescue! As she followed the others down to the passenger lift to Thunderbird 2, she had grinned with delight as she watched Virgil go to his picture, and tilted backwards and out of sight. She had remembered when she had used that form of transport to Thunderbird Two.

Soon she was seated in one of the passenger seats. Suddenly, she started to look feverishly in her pockets.

"What have you forgotten, Kat?" Christopher asked in a concerned manner.

"Nothing, Christopher," Kat replied. "I was just making sure that I had my glucose tablets. With my low blood sugar problem, I don't want to have any incidents on my very first rescue."

"But you have eaten recently?" Christopher persisted.

"Yes, but I don't know when we shall eat again," Kat remarked.

Brandon came and settled in a seat beside her. "Well, rookie," he joked, "how does it feel, going on a rescue?"

"Absolutely great!" Kat replied, returning his grin.

"Ready for take off, are you all strapped in?" Virgil called to the recruits.

"FAB," they chorused back.

They all settled down to a long flight.

Kat got up on at least two occasions just to look at the winch; she was taking no chances.

On the second trip to the winch, Alan joined her.

"I am just making absolutely sure that everything is okay," she explained to Alan.

"I hear you did a very good job when you worked with Virgil." Alan said.

"It was so interesting, actually working on Thunderbird Two." Kat spoke in a faraway voice, remembering how she and Virgil had worked together, forming quite a good partnership.

"From what Virgil has said, he was very pleased with how professional you were."

"Was he?" Kat replied. They walked back to the passenger seats together.

"We are getting close to the danger zone," Virgil remarked. "Better fasten your belts."

"Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird One." Scott's voice crackled over the airways. "How close are you, Vee?"

"About ten minutes away, Ess," Virgil answered.

"Good, Vee, that won't be a moment too soon, I can't hold this bus steady for much longer."

"Kat," Virgil called, "Will you see that the winch is ready? I want you to winch Christopher down as soon as it is safe to do so."

"FAB," Kat replied as she unbuckled herself from her seat.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 14/10/2004[/color]

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:42:35 GMT

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"Well, here we are again, Nikki."

Dom glanced out of one of the large windows of Thunderbird Two and felt a lopsided grin spread across his face. He loved flying. Nikki craned her neck to look out as well, at the clouds that were zooming past at, quite frankly, ridiculously high speed. It was just another reminder of how incredible International Rescue's machines were.

"Yes. But I'm feeling more confident than the last time, especially now that we've been trained up on Thunderbird Seven. How about you?"

"Definitely more confident. But I'm a bit worried, too. They're kids...you know?" He glanced at her and tried to convey to her the feelings he could not quite voice.

Nikki seemed to understand; she had seen the same sort of worry in the eyes of fathers when their children were undergoing surgery. When it came to kids, she knew that many peoples' worry spiked, including her own.

"I know. But I guess you've just got to put it at the back of your mind. If you worry too much, then it might affect your performance."

Dominic nodded, and smiled at the pretty young nurse beside him. He had found that she was an excellent colleague, and he knew he couldn't have asked for anyone better. He turned back to the window. He supposed that it was the case for everyone in International Rescue. They were all excellent, hardworking, not afraid to take risks. And take orders, he thought with a small grin.

He brought a hand up to rub his chin; the stubble told him he needed to shave. Scott's voice resounded in the cabin from the radio. He heard Virgil telling him their ETA. Ten minutes, he thought, and then we're getting down to it. I hope there aren't too many casualties. They're just

kids... Soon enough they would be down there, and Dom was determined to do as damned good a job as he could. It's what I'm here for.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 14/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:45:27 GMT

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"Ess, where do you want me to drop the pod?" Virgil asked.

"Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird Five. Vee, the stadium at Ust'-UIs is ready for you. Downloading coordinates now." Callie's voice cut in from the orbiting space station.

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Five and thanks!" Virgil replied.

"Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Two. Ess, I'm going to drop the pod, unload it, and come back. We'll need the grabs in the base of the pod and I'll have more power to hold on or pull up if the pod is empty. Besides, it will get Seven and the auxiliary equipment out faster if we do it this way."

"Sounds like a plan, Vee. Just get a move on," Scott called.

"F-A-B." Virgil turned to speak over his shoulder. "CJ, you and Kay are with me. Aye, take Bee back. Have you been showing him the ropes on the recovery vehicle?"

"Yes, Vee. I think he's got the hang of it," Alan responded as he rose with Brandon to head back to the pod.

"Doc... oh, she's already gone, and Dee and En with her." Virgil shook his head. "She doesn't waste any time."

Back in Thunderbird Seven, Dianne was giving Dom a crash course in powering up procedure.

"You've got flight experience, so you should be able to do this pretty easily. Just remember that it's a hovercraft and needs something to push against. It doesn't do too well in open sky," she explained.

"I remember some of these procedures from the last rescue. Brains went over them with us after we cleaned and disinfected," Dom told her. Dianne nodded.

"That's good. And the two of you did a great job in cleaning things up after the last rescue. Thank you for your efforts there."

"You're welcome," Nikki responded.

Dianne turned to her. "We're going to get you into the simulator as soon as we can, Nikki, and

give you flight training as well. It's imperative that all of our operatives know how to fly. But for now, let's get strapped in. I think this is our stop."

The three could feel the vibration of Thunderbird Two stop as the chassis was lifted from the pod. The door opened and daylight flooded the garage-like compartment.

"Looks like Alan and Brandon have point for the moment. We'll pull out and follow but once they start to work, we can go ahead and see if there's a place to land in the Danger Zone. One good thing about having a hovercraft: there aren't too many obstacles we can't get over," Dianne said with a smile.

"Thunderbird Seven to Thunderbird Two. Ready to move out," Dom said, his voice steady despite a bit of nervousness. After all, he was flying a Thunderbird today.

"F-A-B, Dee. Good luck," Virgil's voice returned. They could hear the smile behind it.

Carefully, Dom guided the Thunderbird out of the pod and between the hydraulic legs of the massive green machine. He kept his eyes on the retreating auxiliary vehicles and followed them as, behind him, the engines and cockpit of Thunderbird Two settled down over the pod once again and took off, headed for the Danger Zone.

Post by Tikatu on 14/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:46:05 GMT

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As the bus tipped forward slightly, the women and children screamed and the babies cried more loudly than they had before. Vladimir snapped, "Quiet! All this caterwauling isn't going to save us!"

Ivana was hysterical. "We're going to die. All of us we're going to die! I'm too young!" Galina reached out with a free hand and slapped her.

"Stop it, Ivana. Stop thinking about yourself and think of the children. We need to keep them calm and do what needs to be done to stay alive. Your screaming isn't going to help us one bit!" Ivana subsided into snuffles, and wrapped the baby more closely in the blanket that had threatened to fall off her.

Yulja cried out, "My husband, my Fjodor. He's unconscious. I can't wake him!"

Vladimir made his way to the couple and checked the older man. "He seems to have a concussion. There's blood on the back of his head and a lump is forming. I can feel it. But he isn't dead, Yulja. And he's a stubborn man, a fighter. If we can get him medical attention, I think he'll be okay."

"From your mouth to God's ears," she replied, crossing herself once again.

Vladimir stood up. "Now, we need to put as much of our weight as close to the back of the bus as possible. I've put blankets back there. I want all the adults to go back there and sit on them. Ilya, come help me move Fjodor back there." When they hesitated, he shouted, "Move!"

The two men carefully dragged Fjodor to the back of the bus and propped him up with his head against the door. Then the five remaining adults settled themselves the best they could. "Yorgi, you are the biggest of the children; come sit in my lap." The boy did so, then Vladimir had the next five oldest children sit in the other adults' laps. Finally he had the babies in the arms of the two older girls and the other four in the laps of the rest of the children. The rest of the blankets they placed over themselves with difficulty, but successfully.

Vladimir, who was on one side of Fjodor, checked the man again. He seemed to be breathing normally, and his heartbeat was steady. I wish I knew more about first aid. I hope we haven't done any more damage to him by moving him. But I couldn't leave him there. "Now we all know that International Rescue is here. They will get us out soon. But it's up to us to hold out until they can. We have been lucky or," he glanced at Yulja, who was sitting on the other side of her husband, praying, "God is indeed watching over us. Let's help Him out by staying close together for warmth and moving as little as possible."

There was some sniffing and shuffling, and whispered words soothing the babies and younger children, then quiet as everyone sat there with their thoughts and prayers, hoping it would be over very soon.

Post by Hobbeth on 15/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:51:29 GMT
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*****Wednesday, March 14, 2068, Tracy Villa Lounge, around 5:30 p.m.*****

Jeff sat at his desk, listening to the goings on with the latest rescue mission in Russia. One thing that kept troubling him was the code name problem. There's Callie, Christopher, and Cherie. Fortunately, Christopher would like to be referred to as CJ, so that does solve one part of the problem. And Cherie won't be a part of IR for several years. That solves another problem. The initials idea fell through, particularly because of Alan's initials.

Cherie sat on the sofa, reading the latest teen magazine. Lisa looked at Jeff. "I'm going to feed Joshua. Lena, would you like to come?"

"I would love to." She noticed Kyrano walking into the lounge. "We'll be back to help wit dinner in a little while."

"Thank you, Lena." He turned and noticed the look on Jeff's face.

Brains stood next to Jeff but noticed Kyrano's look and left the room. Kyrano said, "Something troubles you, Mr. Tracy."

Jeff snapped back into reality. "Oh, sorry, Kyrano. I'm just trying to figure out the right code names we can use."

"Well, I have noticed each of the recruits have different hobbies and interests. When I last took mail to Callie's apartment, I saw memorabilia from the...University of Alabama."

"The Alabama Crimson Tide. Callie graduated with a Bachelor's Degree from there. Perhaps I could call her Roll Tide."

"May I make a suggestion?"

"Of course, Kyrano. What is it?"

"Why not let the new recruits choose their own code names? Allow them to recognize each other without revealing who they really are."

Jeff pondered on his manservant's idea. "Kyrano, I think you've come up with the solution."

"I am glad I could help, Mr. Tracy. I shall return in an hour with your dinner on a tray."

"I appreciate that, thank you."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 15/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:54:04 GMT
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Kat and Christopher were the only ones left on the flight deck. They glanced at each other, then Christopher asked the question that was on both of their minds.

"What do you need us to do, mate?"

Virgil didn't turn around. He was flying slowly over the Danger Zone, trying to decide what to do about the bus and the other smashed cars and trucks that littered the road beneath them.

"Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird One," Scott's voice came over the radio. "Have you had enough of a look, Vee? Things are getting hairy down here. The bus is still shifting, even though everyone is sitting in the back."

"I've been looking things over to see how best to use the manpower I still have, Ess," Virgil replied, trying not to get annoyed at Scott's slightly sarcastic tone. "I think I've got it. We'll be with you in a few minutes."

He spoke to the two sitting behind him. "CJ, I want you to winch down in a harness and give me a report on the bus. See if you can get inside and assess any injuries. Kay, you'll have to winch him

down."

"A little reconnoiter? I can do that," Christopher said. He stood and motioned to Kat. "Let's get going, Kat. There's no time to lose."

The two hurried to the lift that took them to the lower level. Christopher remembered where the harnesses were kept from when he did maintenance on Thunderbird Two and went unerringly to the small closet where they were hanging up. He chose one that looked like it was his size and began to put it on.

"How do I attach this to you?" Kat asked, looking dubiously at the harness and then at the winch.

"Here. You thread the clips through the loops on the harness and the loop of the cable," Christopher demonstrated. He double-checked all of his fastenings to make sure they were tight.

"Why can't you just take the rescue capsule down?" she asked as she began to fasten him to the cable as he had shown her.

"I think Vee wants to put me on the roof of the coach for a moment or two so I can look at things from that angle," he replied as he prepared to step out. "Then I'll get on the ground and unfasten myself and have a look-see." He smiled at her. "Are you ready?"

"I suppose so," Kat said quietly.

"Then start the winch and open the doors!" Christopher cried.

The doors opened beneath his feet and Kat slowly played the cable out, watching as Christopher grew smaller until he reached the top of the bus. She winced at every gust of wind that seemed to throw him off target, but at last he made it to his goal.

"Vee? I'm on top of the coach. It's pretty precarious here. Even my weight made it shift a bit. The end is too high in the air for anyone to climb into without help, and the only opening I see is too small for me to climb through." He gave Scott a jaunty wave as he walked gingerly towards the nose of the bus.

"It's caught by a wooden guard rail, but that could give way at any moment," he explained to Virgil.

"Okay, CJ. I get the picture. Could someone smaller get into that opening? Say... Kay?" Virgil asked.

"I think she could," Christopher agreed.

"Then that's what we'll do," Virgil explained. "Kay, finish lowering CJ to the ground so he can take a look at the rest of the mess down there. Then bring the cable back up. You're going down to get on the bus."

"I am?" Kat squeaked, even as she fed out more cable to bring Christopher to the asphalt.

"You are," Virgil confirmed. "I'm putting Two on auto-pilot and I'll be down there in a few minutes."

"F-A-B," Kat responded.

Meanwhile, Christopher disengaged himself from the cable and took off at a run. He peered inside cars, swallowing sometimes at the carnage that he saw.

"Thunderbird Seven from CJ," he called into his communicator. "I've got an idea of who needs help first."

"F-A-B, CJ. We're having a bit of trouble with this bridge," came Dianne's voice. "Try it again, Dee. Just a straight shot and close to the road so that the wind doesn't buffet us. CJ, we'll be with you in a few moments."

"F-A-B, Doc," Christopher replied. "Vee, I'll wait for Kay over by the coach." He began to move over towards the bus.

"F-A-B, CJ," Virgil answered. "I'll lower the big grabs once she's on the ground. You'll have to be the one to position them onto the front of the bus so make sure you secure yourself to the main cable by your harness. We don't need you falling into the ravine."

"No, indeed!" Christopher replied. "Message received." He stood by the bus and looked up at the green cargo carrier, waiting for Kat to be winched down to his position.

Post by Tikatu on 18/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:56:09 GMT

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Virgil put Thunderbird 2 on automatic pilot and helped to strap Kat into a harness attached to the winch. When he was happy that she was secure, he slowly lowered her down, down to the stricken bus. She stood beside Christopher; the air was cold and she drew the hood of her warm jacket closer over her head, pulling it down, almost covering her eyes.

Christopher pointed to a small broken window at the back of the bus.

"That's the only entry I could find that is big enough for a small adult," he told her. "I can boost you up there." He cupped his hands like a stirrup, his fingers intertwined. Kat took a breath, stepped into his hands, and found herself propelled upwards, headed for the small aperture. Squeezing and wriggling, she managed to get inside the bus. She was very careful, for the slightest movement could make the bus move precariously. She looked around her, a sea of anxious little white faces turned back to look at her.

Softly she asked, "Does anyone speak English?"

A light brown haired young man replied, "I speak English, but not good. My name is Ilya."

Kat nodded at him. Gently she said, "I am with International Rescue. My job is to find out what the situation is here on the bus."

Ilya attempted to translate this back to the frightened children and adults. One small toddler spoke in Russian and his friends giggled nervously.

Ilya turned to Kat. "They want to know if you are an angel because you came from the sky."

Kat laughed and pushed her hood down off her face. "No, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I am just an ordinary young woman."

Ilya looked at Kat, a warm expression in his eyes. "No, you are special. No one from International Rescue can be... how you say?... ordinary."

Kat looked around her. There was a man slumped against the back door. She moved carefully among the children. There were two babies, no older than six months. Four or five youngsters appeared to be under the age of seven, and the remaining children ranged from eight to fourteen. The girls were very frightened, some crying, some moaning. The boys were obviously trying to put on a brave face, but Kat could see that they were also very frightened.

Kat asked, "What injuries are the children suffering?"

Again Ilya attempted to translate, but Ilya's English was not as good as he had led Kat to believe. The children stared back at Kat, blank looks on their faces.

Okay, Kat thought, this is not going to be easy.

At that moment, Virgil contacted her. "Kay, what is happening? Are you okay?"

Kat replied. "It's not going to be easy, Vee. I have an interpreter but he is not too fluent with his English."

Virgil groaned, then he added, "Maybe Jay or Cee can help you."

"Leave it to me for the moment, Vee. I have an idea," Kat said quietly.

Kat looked at the adults. Using sign language, she indicated on herself, a sore head, sore tummy, and by making her arms floppy, broken limbs. Then she pointed to the children and adults. One of the adults seemed to realise what Kat was trying to do. She smiled and told Kat, through Ilya, that she was called Yulja. She spoke to Ilya slowly, indicating on herself certain problems and pointing to one of two of the children. Ilya glanced at Kat. In slow, halting English he told Kat that one of the young toddlers had a broken arm, one of the older boys seemed to have broken his jaw, and that the rest of the passengers were suffering cuts and bruises. Kat pointed to the man on the floor. Ilya indicated that they believed he had a concussion.

The children were all shivering and Kat could see that if they panicked there was a very real danger of the bus sliding over the edge.

"Vee?" she called.

"Hello, Kay. how's it going?"

"Tell Doc we have we have at least two broken bones and a concussion. The rest appear to just have superficial cuts and bruises."

"F-A-B, Kay," Virgil replied. "Doc reports an ETA of ten minutes. The suspension bridge is slowing them down. Christopher will be putting the magnetic mega grabs on the front of the bus to stabilize it."

"F-A-B, Vee," Kat responded. "I shall try to keep them occupied so as not to panic them."

Kat felt someone tugging her trousers. She looked down and saw a small boy, his gappy smile proclaiming his tender years. He put his arms out to her. Instinctively she picked him up. He cuddled into her and spoke to Ilya. "He says you are pretty." Ilya said.

Kat smiled at that remark. "Won't their parents be worrying about all this? I suppose they have been notified?" Kat asked Ilya.

Sadly, Ilya shook his head. "No parents," he replied.

Kat spoke to John. "Jay?" she asked, her voice sounding tearful. "What's the Russian for 'orphan'?" John told her. Kat asked Ilya if the children were orphans. He nodded.

"Kay, is everything all right?" John had noted the tremor in her voice and was concerned.

"Oh, Jay," Kat answered him, "all these children are orphans. There will be no one to hug them when they are rescued, no one to kiss them and tell them how brave they have been. It is so very sad."

John spoke again to Kat. "Kay, I am so sorry about the kids. I will relay that message back to the Doc.." He added, "Are you quite sure you are okay? Do you need any help with any more translations?"

"Yes," Kat replied, "Can you let me know how to say, 'I am going to sing some songs and I hope you will join in', in Russian. I think it is the only way to distract the children."

"Gosh! Kay, what a clever idea." He told her and made her repeat it back to him. When she did, she seemed fairly fluent. "Good luck, Kay," he remarked.

"Thanks, Jay," Kat replied.

Kat looked at the children. Turning to Ilya, she said in halting Russian, "I am going to sing a song. I hope they will join in." Ilya looked again at her with admiration in his eyes. Turning away from him to face the children and putting her fingers to her lips to indicate that they sing softly, she began.

Twinkle, twinkle little star
How I wonder what you are
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky

The children all began to smile, momentarily forgetting their dangerous situation.

Above in Thunderbird 2, Virgil heard the singing over the radio. He grinned and remarked to no one in particular, "Sounds like Kat has got things under control."

Back in the bus, several of the children said something in Russian. Ilya interpreted for them. "They want more singing."

Kat sighed. What on earth can I sing? She began to go through her repertoire of nursery rhymes. Just as she was at a loss what to sing next, Virgil's came over the radio. "Kat? Doc, En and Dee are at your position."

Kat silently prayed, Thank goodness!

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 19/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 20:58:52 GMT
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Thunderbird Seven was now perched on a small patch of clear tarmac in the Danger Zone. Before the engines were shut down, Dianne was out of her seat, beckoning Nikki to follow her.

"Nikki, take this med scanner and triage the people on the bus first. I understand that there might be a concussion patient there. As long as there's no one else as bad as that, bring him or her in first. I'll have Dom begin triage of the people in the cars and I'll check on whoever they pulled out of the avalanches." She sighed. "We may be too late in some cases, but hopefully not for the children on that bus."

"F-A-B Doc." Nikki replied as she ran out of the Thunderbird. She had never run so fast in her life. Nikki thought that maybe the fact that there were mostly children on the bus gave her the extra burst of speed she needed. As she reached the bus, new thoughts were flowing through her mind, about how she was going to communicate with them. That's when she remembered John and Callie up in Thunderbird Five. Nikki lifted her arm and activated her watch, "Thunderbird Five from En. Come in, please."

"Go ahead, En," came the familiar voice of Callie.

"Cee, I may need a translator. I need you to let them know who I am and what I'm about to do. I need to find out what sort of injuries I'm going to be dealing with on this bus." Nikki explained to her.

"Ok, En. Let me know when you're ready."

"F-A-B." Nikki answered.

Kat heard someone speaking English outside the bus. A very familiar someone. "En, is that you?" she called.

Nikki was surprised to hear Kat's voice. "Kay, thank goodness you're in there already. Do you know what injuries we'll be dealing with?"

"I've been talking with Ilya, who speaks English. So far I've found out that we have an adult male with a concussion, a toddler with a broken arm, and there's a possibility that one of the kids has a broken jaw." Kat paused for a few seconds. "Most of the kids and adults are pretty shaken up and have a few minor cuts and bruises."

"F-A-B, Kay."

Nikki passed the word onto Dianne, who was busy trying to resuscitate an avalanche victim.

"Any way you can get in there, Nikki?" she asked between chest compressions.

"I'll have to wait until CJ has finished stabilizing the bus. He then has to open the back door with the laser. Stand by, Doc."

The nose of the bus came upwards, and Nikki made a call to Christopher before getting back to Dianne. "Doc, CJ has just finished stabilizing the bus."

"Good," Dianne said, panting slightly. She had finally raised a heartbeat and breathing in the person she was trying to bring back. "Here comes Bee with the recovery vehicle. Between him and CJ, they should be able to get that bus back on terra firma." Then she added, "Wait until they've got the bus back on solid ground and out of danger. Then we can haul the children out the windows if we need to."

"Ok, Doc." Nikki signed off.

Brandon's voice came over Nikki's hands-free set. "Nikki, warn the people in the bus to move up a bit and don't leave anyone by the back wall of the bus, then clear out! I'm going to shoot the magnetic grapple and between me and Virgil, we'll get the bus on the road again."

"F-A-B." Nikki did as she was asked and stood back as the bus began to shake. "Hang on, Kay. They pulling the bus back onto solid ground." The children began to scream as they felt the bus move. Nikki watched the bus shake again as Brandon and Virgil in Thunderbird 2 slowly pulled it back onto safe ground. Nikki contacted Dianne when the bus came to a standstill.

"Doc. The bus is safe now. I'm about to get to the kids."

"Good, En," Dianne replied. "Have CJ and Bee give you a hand with the concussion patient once

the door is open. Do you need a stretcher? I'll have Bee pick one up for you."

"I will need a stretcher, for our unconscious patient. As soon as we get the back door open, I'll be removing him first, then the toddler with the broken arm, and then the child with the broken jaw. After that I'll get the rest of the kids out, starting with the younger ones and lastly the adults."

Nikki was soon joined by Christopher and Brandon. "Here, you go, En," Brandon said cheerfully as he held out an anti-gravity stretcher to her. He carried two, and between them they got the first of the stretchers open.

"Shall we transfer your patient for you, En?" Christopher asked. Nikki nodded, and the two men gently moved Fjodor to the floating gurney.

"En, this is Yulja. Fjodor there is her husband. I am told she would like to go with him," Kat explained. Brandon helped the older woman down from the bus.

"Here's another stretcher, En," Christopher said as he opened it up. "Who is next to go?"

"The toddler with the broken arm and then the boy with the broken jaw."

Christopher nodded as the screaming child was brought towards them, followed by the elder child. Nikki was careful not to knock the toddler's arm as she was passed to her.

After the seriously injured were removed, Nikki asked for the children to be brought to the exit starting with the younger ones first. Seeing that the children were leaving the bus, Ivana began to get hysterical again and tried to push her way to the front of the queue to get out.

"No! Not yet!" Kat called, trying to hold the larger woman back. Galina reached out again and slapped her colleague, angrily saying something in Russian. Kat turned to Ilya.

"What did she say?" she asked.

Ilya unaccountably blushed. "You do not want to know. It was... how you say?... insulting."

Nikki who was outside, heard the commotion on the bus. Using her hands-free set, Nikki called Kat. "What's going on in there?"

"One of the adults tried to push their way to the front to get out, totally disregarding the children. Don't worry, En, she has been taken care of."

"Thanks, Kay," Nikki answered. She was glad that Kat was in there to help.

"It's not me who you should thank. I'll explain later," Kat responded.

As Nikki turned to follow the antigravity stretchers back to Thunderbird Seven, she glimpsed Dianne and Scott bringing in a patient from somewhere, and Dominic pushing a stretcher along with Alan's help.

Nikki rushed the crying little girl back to Thunderbird Seven. As she quickly looked back at the bus accident and the rest of the cars, she realized that their work had just begun.

Post by Nikki-browneyes1 and Tikatu on 19/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 21:01:47 GMT

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Christopher clung onto the struts connecting the grabs to Thunderbird Two.

"CJ to Vee," he said over the combined sounds of the ship's engines and the biting wind, "move right a few degrees"

"F-A-B, CJ." Virgil's voice echoed in his ear. "Right a few degrees."

Christopher looked down; he was getting closer to the roof of the bus. The wind and the wash from the retros were buffeting things a little.

"Left a bit!" Christopher shouted, as he unbuckled his harness so he could ease himself onto the roof. Jumping down gently, he guided the grabs onto the roof.

"CJ to Vee and Bee." He smiled to himself. "Grabs are attached!"

"Thanks, CJ," Virgil said as he flicked the switches to activate the magnetic grabs.

"Thanks also, CJ." Brandon's voice issued from his communicator. Christopher looked and saw a figure waving from a recovery vehicle a little way away.

He heard some frightened whimpers from within the bus. Maneuvering himself to the back window, he looked inside.

"Nothing to worry about, we have attached magnetic grabs so we can lift the bus to safety." Christopher grinned, the grin drooping when he didn't get a response from those nearest him. He saw that Kat was helping to move the passengers away from the back door and didn't see or hear him over the noise of Thunderbird Two's engines.

"CJ to Thunderbird Five." He sat up on the roof again. "Come in Cee, I need your help."

"Go ahead, CJ," Callie answered.

Christopher repeated what he wanted to say to the passengers. "I'm afraid I only know a few words of Russian. Da, Nyet, and Russian for 'Can I have a Vodka, please?'."

Callie stifled a laugh, then gave him the translation.

"Thanks for that," Christopher said gratefully, as he leant back down to the window and repeated

Callie's words to the scared group in the bus.

Then after looking up at Thunderbird Two, he slid off the bus.

"CJ to Vee and Bee," he said, "they are ready to go!"

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 19/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 21:05:36 GMT

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Alan laid back in his seat, arms resting behind his head. He was used to this, being a passenger on Two while his brother flew them to the Danger Zone. He looked around at the others. Kat and Brandon were quietly talking, and he'd noticed once more that Kat was about to leave her seat with the same look of worry that she'd had the first time he saw her leave. This time he decided to tag along. He didn't have to go far; Kat had gone back down to the winch again to check on it. She was taking her role on this rescue very seriously.

Alan hunkered down beside her, smiling. Kat smiled back and said, "I'm just making sure that everything is okay."

"Haven't you already checked this?" Alan asked.

"Yes, but I want to make sure it's safe."

Alan nodded his understanding, and praised her work. He'd heard from Virgil how good she'd been working with him, and how impressed Virgil was with what she knew. Their conversation was stopped when Virgil's voice announced they were approaching the DZ and everyone needed to be in their seats. Here we go! thought Alan as he took up his seat again.

Virgil landed TB2 with his usual finesse, and Alan was immediately out of his seat.

"Brandon, let's go."

Brandon complied and they headed towards the lift that would take them to the ground level pod door. Alan walked behind Brandon hoping the confidence he saw in him would still be there out in the field.

I told Virgil I thought Brandon could handle the equipment. I sure hope he can. I'm in the Firefly and I won't be able to help him.

Alan pushed his worries aside as he climbed into the Firefly, but not before telling Brandon to stay in touch and good luck. Brandon had smiled and winked before disappearing into the Recovery Vehicle. Alan got himself comfortable, and adjusted the seat.

Virgil, why do you always leave the seat so far back? he mumbled to himself.

Switching on the radio link, he called his brother.

"Firefly to Thunderbird Two, ready to proceed."

"Firefly from Thunderbird Two, F.A.B. Proceed as normal."

"Recovery Vehicle to Thunderbird Two and Firefly, ready to proceed," came Brandon's confident voice.

Virgil responded by giving him clearance and as the pod door lowered, the two vehicles descended onto the snow covered ground. Alan immediately made radio connection with Brandon.

"Okay, Bee, I'm going to go as far as I can by just pushing through the snow. I want you close behind me all the way. We're approaching from the town of Ust'-Uls so we'll be heading into the vehicles that crashed first. We should be able to see the bus once we're through, but I'm taking it slow at first. Don't want to have to deal with any more snow than we've already got."

"FAB. Understood loud and clear."

Alan powered up the Firefly and it surged forward. He positioned the heat resistant shield low enough for it to become an effective plow. Using the Nitro-glycerine gun was out of the question, one shot from that gun and the rest of the mountain would dump on top of them. Alan chugged along until he reached the area where the snow had cut off the road.

"Okay, Bee, we're here. Thunderbird Two and Mobile Control from Firefly, ready to begin pushing through."

"FAB Firefly, proceed with caution," replied Scott.

"Will do," Alan replied.

Like I can go faster than a snail in this thing and all this snow! he thought as he rolled his eyes at his brother's remark. Even now, Scott thinks I'm going to floor this machine like a race car!

He turned his thoughts to the task at hand and felt the Firefly shake as the shield encountered its first batch of heavy snow. Brandon kept up with the Firefly, staying on Alan's heels, and before long they were half way through.

"Mobile Control from Firefly, I'm switching on headlights and remote control searchlight. It's not too clear under all this snow, and I'll be using the warning klaxon as we're breaking through on the other side, so let everyone who needs to know, know."

"Okay Firefly, will relay message. What's your ETA on the other side?"

"I'd say about another 15 minutes or so. I've managed to clear most of the heavy stuff already."

"Good job Firefly, relaying message. See ya soon."

Alan smiled to himself. Scott got on his nerves sometimes, but he was always grateful to have his big brother on hand and in charge in situations like this. All this snow was starting to make Alan feel claustrophobic. Finally, the snow became lighter and Alan broke through on the other side. He let out a slow whistle at the mess of twisted vehicles and carnage. Brandon pulled up the recovery vehicle alongside and spoke to Alan.

"I'm going to push on ahead. Hopefully Thunderbird Seven will be here soon, and it looks like the bus will need help, too."

"F-A-B, Bee, I'll stay here for a while, looks like they may need help shifting some of these vehicles. Catch up with you later."

Alan watched as Brandon maneuvered the Recovery Vehicle and departed. Brandon had handled himself and the machine very well. Alan made a mental note to mention this at the debriefing. If a guy deserved a pat on the back, Alan was willing to give him one.

After helping move some of the vehicles on the road, Alan was able to get a clearer picture of what was going on with the bus and when Thunderbird Seven came on the scene, he ran over to help.

"Where do you want me?" he yelled as he trotted up to Dominic.

"Here, you can help me with this stretcher," Dominic replied. Alan grinned.

"Sure, no problem!" he answered as he reached out to grab the stretcher.

"Thanks!" Dominic smiled his reply.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 19/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 21:06:44 GMT

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Beneath his skin, Dominic could feel a strange mixture of anxiety and excitement spreading through his body. It kept him sharp and wary of any dangers around him. There were many lives at stake. The trail of destruction around him, the backed up cars and the bus, oh, the bus... Every sight he saw made him more determined to give 110%, or more, if he could.

He and Alan manoeuvred the stretcher, upon which they had placed a middle-aged gentleman who had been removed from one of the car wrecks, back towards Thunderbird Seven. He was grateful for the well-gripped boots he had been issued with. The ground was icy, even where snow had been cleared away. Alan gave him a slight nod as they began to load the man into the medical cabin.

"How're you doing?" The blond asked.

"Fine." Dom answered, backing up into the cabin. "You?"

"Fine."

Together they transferred the man onto a biobed, and Dominic reached for the diagnosis chart, and he began to log in the man's condition. He replaced the medical padd and, grabbing another anti-grav stretcher, headed out of the cabin and out into the cold once more, following Alan.

The two men went quickly back to the car wrecks, where people were being extricated as quickly as possible. Alan was familiar with triage, although perhaps not on this scale. Dominic was impressed at the other man's efficiency and professionalism. It was a blessing to have someone experienced to work with.

He jogged towards one of the freed victims, and put on fresh gloves and gel. The middle-aged man, whose shirt was soaked with blood, began to hack and cough. Dominic did what he could, trying to assess the injuries and providing what emergency treatment he could. But the man's injuries were just too bad, and within minutes, he was dead.

Dominic shook his head and screwed up his mouth. 'We may be too late in some cases,' he remembered Doctor Tracy saying, 'but hopefully not for the children in that bus.' Sighing, knowing, as an experienced nurse, that death was an unfortunate side affect of his job, he put a black tab on the man and pulled the thermal blanket up over his head, and then conveyed the stretcher to the, thankfully tiny, morgue area.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 19/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 21:07:34 GMT
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Dianne glanced over to the still, covered, black-tagged form that Dominic brought into the tiny morgue and sighed.

"Another one? That's four so far. Two of suffocation, one of internal injuries, and this one...?"

"Another 'internal injuries'," Dom said, raising sad eyes to meet Dianne's. "I tried, but he was too badly injured."

"Ah know, Dee, Ah know. Jus' get out there and do what you can. Any ID?"

"I didn't look, Doc."

"Well, the local authorities will have to sort this all out. We don't have time."

The roar of motors diverted her attention. "Hmm. Looks like we're finally gettin' some help from Ust'-Uls. Good. Most of th' children are fit enough to ride out with them. Just a couple that Ah'd like to keep on board Seven. Them and Fjodor here." She beckoned to Ilya. "Ilya. Please run and ask if they can take the less injured into the city."

"Da, Doctor. I will ask," Ilya said as he began to walk toward the incoming vehicles, then broke into a run.

"That boy has been a Godsend today. Ah'm sure mah tongue would twist around that Russian so hard they'd never understand me," she murmured wearily. Nikki and Scott came up with another stretcher, and another patient, and Dianne's attention suddenly focused on them. "What do you have for me, Nikki?" Inside, she sighed. The long rescue had just gotten a little bit longer.

Post by Tikatu on 20/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 21:09:08 GMT
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Wednesday, March 14,2068, 7:55 p.m., Tracy Island

"Dad?"

"Yes, Princess?"

"You yawned."

Jeff shot a look over at his daughter, who now stood before him, hands on hips, looking very, very serious.

"Did I?" he asked ingenuously.

"Yes, you did. I saw it. Brains saw it. Didn't you, Brains?"

Brains's eyes flitted between father and daughter. He almost didn't dare to speak; Jeff was his employer, after all. But he had heard the yawn, and the thought of what Dianne would say to him if he didn't tell the truth made him shudder.

"Well, actually Cherie, I didn't see it...."

Jeff smiled at this daughter. Cherry turned to Brains, crossing her arms, and glaring at him.

"But... I did hear it."

Jeff scowled at his engineer. Cherry's face took on a smug smile.

Brains looked at the scowl and shrugged apologetically. "I'm only telling the truth, sir."

"Hmphf," was all that Jeff would say. Cherry turned her attention back to her father.

"You know what Mom said. If you yawned even once, you were to go to bed. She was really emphatic about it," Cherry reminded him.

"I... remember, Cherie," Jeff admitted.

"And you said you'd cooperate..."

"I remember, Cherie," Jeff said with a warning tone. "Please get Kyrano. He can help me dress for bed. But..." here he shook a finger at his daughter, "I am sleeping in my own suite and in my own bed! No sick room!"

"But Mom said...."

"I know what your mother said. But I am sick of hospital beds. I'm willing to cooperate, but you've got to be willing to meet me halfway. I want to sleep in my own bed. Is that so unreasonable?" Jeff smiled at Cherry. "You can tell your mother that I insisted and threw a fit if that makes you feel better...."

Cherry looked at her father intently, then laughed. "Okay. I wouldn't want to sleep in a hospital bed either when I knew my own comfy bed wasn't too far away."

"Good girl," Jeff replied with a grin. "Now, please tell Kyrano that I'll meet him in my suite. Brains, if you'd give me a hand with the stairs to the study?"

"Of course, Mr. Tracy." Brains pulled the wheelchair up over the two steps that separated the lounge and the study, then Jeff took over, maneuvering himself out into the hall. Cherry watched her father head down the hallway towards the master suite then lifted her telecomm to her lips.

"Kyrano? Dad is going to bed. He'd like you to meet him in his suite and help him."

"I will come presently, Miss Cherie," Kyrano replied. Just then, Lisa put in appearance in the lounge, followed by Lena.

"Where's your father?" Lisa asked.

Cherry replied, "He yawned."

Post by Tikatu on 20/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 21:10:52 GMT
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Wednesday, March 14th, 2068, 8:00 p.m. Tracy Island.

Elise had smiled as she watched Jeff Tracy being playfully bullied by Cherie. The gutsy little teen had actually ordered her father to bed, with some help from Kyrano and Brains, and Jeff Tracy had actually gone! She'd been sitting on the far side of the lounge, watching and listening to as much of the rescue as she could. She'd heard bits and pieces of the radio conversations and been able to see and hear John and Callie on the live feed from space.

So this is what its all about, she thought as she tried to imagine what was going on halfway round the world.

One thing she'd heard kept coming back to the front of her thoughts, over and over. It had happened when John was on live feed talking to his father, and Kat had called in from the rescue site. Elise had heard Kat talking about the children on the bus. The same phrases penetrated her brain and would not settle.

"All these children are orphans." "There will be no one to hug them... no one to tell them how brave they had been... no one to hug them..."

Elise was so lost in her thoughts she hadn't noticed Brains walking back into the lounge. He went over to his employer's desk and resumed contact with John and Mobile Control. He looked up at one point and saw how far away and almost sad Elise looked.

"Elise? Are you okay?" She didn't reply.

"Elise?" he asked, a little louder this time.

She looked up at him. "Oh, um... I'm sorry... what did you say?"

"I asked if you were okay?" he softly replied, realizing something was obviously troubling her.

"Not really, no. I was thinking about those poor kids, and what Kat had said."

Before Brains could ask anything further, John beeped in on the live feed. "Thunderbird 5 to base."

"Go ahead John," replied Brains.

"Oh, Hi Brains! Where's Dad?"

Brains smiled as he recounted to John the events of Jeff's dismissal. John laughed lightly. He gave Brains an update, but did not disconnect, instead remaining on live feed so Brains could immediately help if needed.

Brains glanced over once more to Elise asking, "You said that you were thinking about what Kat said? About the orphans?"

She stood up and walked over to the desk, and sat down, so that she was now facing Brains directly. She sighed, heavily.

"It's just that she said there will be no one to hug them, tell them how brave they are." She paused and then added,

"I know how that feels... and I wish could be there to hug them."

She looked away, suddenly stood and announced she was going to get a drink. Brains watched her walk solemnly away.

"Brains? Was that Elise with you just then?" John asked concern evident in his voice.

"Yes John, it was. Did you hear what she said?"

"Yes, I did." Both men wore looks of puzzlement.

"I wonder what she meant when she said 'I know how they feel'?" Brains asked.

"I've no idea, but it's really eating her up," replied John.

Before they could ponder anymore, John was buzzed by Scott, and all thoughts returned to the rescue at hand.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 21/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 23:57:17 GMT

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Wednesday March 14th, in the Ural Mountains

Kat had watched as the children one by one had been checked over by the Doc and Nikki, and allowed to board the local rescue vehicles that had managed to get through. Cries were heard from inside one of the rescue vehicles. An angry voice let forth a tirade of Russian. Ilya came forward.

"It's little Yuri. He wants to say goodbye."

A tiny figure came to the door of the vehicle. Kat saw it was the little boy that she had picked up and cuddled in the bus. Without a backward glance, she hurried over. Yuri held out his arms. Kat picked him up, held him close, gave him a kiss and said to Ilya, "Please tell him he has been very brave."

One of the rescuers gently pulled him away from Kat's arms and took him inside. Kat left without turning back; she couldn't bear to see the look on the child's face.

Dr. Tracy had been watching this little scene. As soon as Kat returned, she remarked, "Are you okay, Kay?"

"Yes, I am," Kat replied. "Is there anything else you would like me to do?"

"Yes, join Alan and Dom to check out the smashed vehicles. Start with the driver of the truck that smashed into the back of the bus."

The driver was slumped over the steering wheel. The front of the cab had been severely damaged, to the extent that any attempt at opening the door would be futile.

"Kay," said Alan, "I'll give you a boost. I think you can scramble through the window."

"Okay, but it doesn't look too safe."

Kat put her foot in the stirrup formed by Alan's hands. She managed to wriggle through the broken window. The driver was moaning softly.

"Dee, it looks like he is just unconscious..." Kat's breath hitched and her eyes widened. From the knees down, the man's legs were a mangled mess of blood and flesh, with the whiteness of a bone sticking through. She fought the nausea, and returned to the window.

"Dee, I think..." Her brief victory ended; she vomited over the side of the truck.

"Kay!" Both Alan and Dom reached for her, helping her out.

"Is he dead?" Dom asked, holding her head as she heaved again. She shook her head.

"N-No. His legs... I think his legs have been crushed."

Dom patted her on the back. "Bee!" he called.

Brandon, holding a tire iron, trotted over. "Yeah, Dee?"

"I've got to get in there! Can you widen the hole?"

Their conversation faded into the background as Alan smoothed a hand over Kat's back. "Let me take you back to Seven."

She shook her head and breathed deeply. "N-No. I can manage." Straightening, she took a few more deep breaths. "I've just never seen anything like... that."

"I know. It's hard to deal with that kind of trauma, especially on your first rescue." Alan gave her a sympathetic smile. "There are some water bottles in Seven's control cab. Why don't you grab one so you can rinse out your mouth. Then we can check out some more cars."

She nodded. "I... I think I will. I'll be right back." Alan patted her shoulder, and she trudged off.

Back at the truck, Dom was inside and already hard at work. He called out. "Bee! We'll need cutting gear to get him out of here."

"Where can I find it?"

Alan trotted up. "Find what?"

Brandon turned. "Cutting gear."

"Let me." Alan lifted his wristcomm to his lips. "Aye to Mobile Control."

Scott was busy coordinating things between the various groups coming up from Ust'-Uls. "Mobile Control here. What do you need, Aye?"

"We need cutting equipment over here in order to free the truck driver."

"F-A-B," Scott replied. "I have the oxyhidnite gear right here."

Alan glanced at Brandon then over at Seven. Kat was already on her way back. "I'll send Bee over for it." He pointed at Brandon, who nodded and hurried off. Then he approached the truck, getting as close as he could to the opening Brandon had widened. "You okay in there, Dee?"

"I will be once we get this man out of here! Kind of cramped at the mo."

"I've sent Bee for the cutting equipment. He should be back any minute. Kay and I are going to check for more victims."

There was a heavy exhale of breath. "F-A-B."

"Right." Alan got down and intercepted Kat, picking up the tire iron on the way. "Let's go."

Dom listened to the sound of their footsteps on the icy snow and sighed. "Dee to Doc. Come in, Doc."

"Doc here. Go ahead."

"We have a bleeder here..."

Post by TawnyAngel22 (with copious recent edits by Tikatu) on 21/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 01:15:35 GMT

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There was blood everywhere. He was glad he had been able to get in. For once, I'm glad I'm so damn skinny. The thought merely flitted across his mind, and he turned his attention to a more important issue: how he was going to help this man. He was lying back in the seat, and, thankfully, he was not jammed against the steering wheel. The air bag that had inflated had prevented that. The man's left leg had been hanging on by a small amount of muscle and skin, and

the rest had been sliced through by a thick shard of metal; Dominic could see the blood-soaked piece of the cars interior lying to his side.

Dom clambered over to the man; he took a scalpel from his medical bag and jabbed the airbag to pop it, to get it out of the way. Then, testing his footing, he twisted his body in a way not many people could, and managed to wedge himself almost underneath the front seats of the car in order to attend to the man. Blood was truly everywhere, but luckily, where the blood vessels in the severed part of the leg had retracted, the flow was lessened. He checked through the wound for any debris, of which there were, luckily, none. It was hard going, trying to manoeuvre in the tight space. Dom took a wad of bandaging from his med bag and pressed it down on the gaping wound.

This is bad. Just have to stop him from bleeding out until we get him out of here, and then I'll deal with the rest of the injuries.

He spared a glance down at his watch. He had been applying pressure for just over five minutes, and the bandage was quickly becoming soaked. This guy needs to get out of here!

"Doc!" He called into the headset communicator, for which he was very grateful, just then.

"Dee? Status!" Doctor Tracy's voice was terse; no doubt she was up to her eyeballs in a trauma of her own.

"The man's left leg has almost totally been severed below the knee. I'm attempting to staunch the flow of blood, but I don't know how effective it will be. He needs your hands as soon as possible."

"FAB, Dom, the cutting gear is on its way. Hold on, we'll be through soon."

The communication cut off, and Dominic waited for the cavalry to arrive. He glanced at his watch again and grunted. It had been fifteen minutes; it was time to remove the pressure. They need to get in here, fast!

Post by ArtisticRainey on 21/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 01:17:19 GMT

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*****Wednesday, March 14, 2068; Thunderbird Five; around 9 p.m.*****

Callie listened nervously as she and John heard to the intensity of her fellow workmates' voices. She heard Dominic and Doc's conversation about the "black tag." Hearing that sent a chill down her spine. "John, can I ask you something?"

He turned to face her, her complexion turning pallid. "Callie, are you okay? What's the matter?"

"Have you ever, you know, have anyone die on you while you were out on a rescue?"

"I have had a couple of cases. Why?"

"I haven't heard the words black tag since I was a kid. A boy was riding a bicycle when a drunk driver slammed into him. I was the only person who saw it, so I ran to the fire house just down the street. They ran to the scene immediately and did the best they could to help him. The boy had been killed instantly, and I noticed one of the paramedics putting a black blanket over him, along with a black tag."

John knew Callie had been emotionally shaken by the events of the latest rescue. "I'm sorry, Callie. I didn't know this would bring back such a painful memory. However, there's something you need to know about--"

"You don't have to tell me, John. I figured that out the moment I joined International Rescue. We won't be able to save everyone involved, no matter how hard we try. It'll be hard, but somehow I've got to work through it."

"Callie, that will take time, but always remember you've got friends you can talk to when you need to. From what we've been hearing, some of us are going to need our friends when this is over."

The pair went back to listening to transmissions as the long rescue lingered on.

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 22/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 01:29:56 GMT

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"Doc to Ess. Where the hell are you?!" Dianne growled into her hands-free communicator. "Dee's got a red tag in that smashed truck! He needs you now!"

Scott, who found himself giving Brandon a crash course on the oxyhydrite cutters, called back, "F-A-B! We're on our way, Doc. CJ, I need you here! Vee! Status!"

Virgil's voice cut in, "I've set Two down at the stadium and am enroute on a hoverbike and with another oxyhydrite cutter. ETA, two minutes."

"F-A-B, Vee. When you get here, look for CJ and finish getting the yellow tag patient out of the car. Bee and I are going to help Dee."

"F-A-B, Ess. Will do."

Scott then called, "Aye. Status!"

"Aye here, Ess. Kay and I are checking out some of the cars that were in the end of the pile up. So far we've got one yellow tags and four green. One black tag. I think we can get the yellow out onto a stretcher with little trouble."

"F-A-B, Aye. Don't hesitate to use the locals to pull the green tags out. And leave the black tag for now."

"F-A-B, Ess. Understood."

Dianne muttered under her breath as she carefully pulled slivers of glass from the face of the young English woman that had been pulled from the wreckage.

"Cee or Jay?" she called.

Callie answered. "Yes, Doc?"

"Get onto the authorities in Ust'-Uls for me, please, and see if they've got a plastic surgeon available? I've got a young lady here who is going to need one."

"F-A-B, Doc."

"Oh and Cee?"

"Yes, Doc?"

"While you're at it could you teach me some good Russian swear words? I feel the need to let loose."

Callie chuckled. "No can do, Doc. You'll have to get them from a national."

Dianne sniffed loudly. "You're no fun, Cee." She examined the girl's face carefully, and irrigated the wounds, beckoning Nikki over.

"En, is there an ambulance here from Ust'-Uls that could take her right away? Her and the two children? We need to free up some room in here."

"I'll ask Ilya, Doc," Nikki summoned the young man who had become their translator and asked him Dianne's question. Dianne put light bandages on the girl's face and jumped a bit when Callie's voice came in, loud and clear.

"In answer to your question, yes, Ust'-Uls has a plastic surgeon. She's being called to the hospital even as we speak.

"F-A-B, Cee. Thanks," Dianne replied.

Nikki came back. "Ilya says that an ambulance is just pulling up from Ust'-Uls. They can take the children and the woman."

"Excellent. En, can you see to it? I've got to get out and help Dee with that red tag. Then prep the OR. We're going to need it."

"F-A-B, Doc. Consider it done."

Shucking her soiled gloves, Dianne picked up the nearest antigravity stretcher and hurried out of Thunderbird Seven, heading for the smashed truck where Dom fought a battle for the life of its driver.

Post by Tikatu on 22/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 01:33:21 GMT
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"Doc to Dee; come in Dee."

Dominic, up to his elbows in blood now, tossed his head to get some hair from his eyes. There was a splash of blood on the left lens of his glasses, and he knew that a generous amount had gotten onto his face, and guessed that it was all over him.

"Yes Doc?"

"I'm on my way. So is the cutting gear. Not long now, just hold on."

"I don't know how much time this man has." The words were futile; they all already knew.

Another five minutes passed, and Dominic glanced at his watch. Soon enough, he could apply pressure again. 'I hope Doctor Tracy will be here by then. We're going to have to get him into surgery ASAP.' There was a knock at the driver's-side car window, and Dom glanced up, and his heart leapt as he saw Scott giving him a thumbs-up.

"Just a few minutes Dee."

He disappeared, and Dominic sighed. 'That could be all we have.' He heard the equipment being set up, and when Brains' revolutionary cutting gas began to slice easily through the crumpled metal of the car wreck, Dominic glanced at his watch again. 'Time for pressure.' With a fresh wad of bandaging he had managed to take from his medical bag -- which was a miracle in itself, considering the confined space -- he pressed down on the wound once again.

Soon enough, Brandon and Scott had taken off the side of the car, and part of the roof, in order to allow the man to be removed. Dianne knelt over the man and checked his vital signs; she frowned.

"Pulse is thready. Let's get him out of here, stat."

It was hard work, trying to extricate the man from the wreck. Each of them was full of relief, because he hadn't been crushed and wedged into the car. There was still hope. Scott brought the anti-grav stretcher in as closely as he could, and together, they carefully extricated the man.

Dominic slithered out from beneath the seat, keeping pressure on the man's leg until Dianne could take over.

"How long?" she asked.

Dominic knew what she meant, and glanced at his watch.

"Just over ten minutes, Doctor Tracy. This is the second time pressure has been applied."

"All right. Let's get this gentleman back to TB7, and fast!"

Dominic hurried alongside the stretcher, and shared a significant look with Dianne; with the damage, and the blood loss, there were no guarantees about the man's survival. He only hoped that they weren't facing another black tag. They made it to TB7 in record time; Scott and Virgil bid them farewell, and the two medical professionals rushed the man into the surgical bay, and prepped him as quickly as they could. It was all about time, and it was something they knew was running out.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 22/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 01:55:58 GMT

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Alan looked into the window of the next car, scraping snow away with his arm. They were coming up on fewer and fewer survivors. The last ones had been several cars ago: an English woman and her father.

"Well?" Kat asked. She had been holding back a bit; more and more the bodies and injuries unnerved her. I've never, ever seen anything like what I've seen today. I'm sure to have nightmares for weeks!

Alan glanced at her and shook his head. She sighed. Another life lost.

"C'mon, Kay. There are still a few more."

Just as she turned to follow him to another stricken vehicle, she heard a slight cry from the back of the vehicle. She stopped and headed back, peering through the rear window.

Alan stopped, looking back at her in irritation. "Come on, Kay!"

She motioned to him. "Aye, There's a baby in here!" She tried to get the door open, but it was stuck fast.

He trotted back, peering in much as she had. The baby cried again, louder this time, and Alan chuckled.

"Well, I'll be damned." He hefted the tire iron he was still carrying. "Stand back, now." He smashed the rear window.

"Can you manage to squeeze through, Kay?"

Kat clambered in through the tiny space. Landing on the back seat, she saw a very young baby, wrapped in blankets and strapped in. The baby stopped crying for a moment, and then realising that Kat was not its mother, started to howl again. She struggled with the straps holding in the baby seat and finally managed to free it.

"Aye, I am going to pass the baby to you."

Alan took hold of the baby seat and smiled at the tiny baby. The baby stared back at Alan for a long minute before opening its mouth to scream again.

Kat scrambled back out, grinning. "Shall I take it back to Doc, or do you want to?"

Alan handed the baby back to Kat. "You can take him... her... whatever. Just let Doc know about these two." He turned to look at the short line of cars still waiting. "I'll keep going for a bit."

Carefully treading over the icy road, Kat carried the baby back to Thunderbird 7. Poor little thing, she thought, one more for the orphanage, I guess.

Post by TawnyAngel22 (with copious recent rewrites by Tikatu) on 21/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 02:02:22 GMT

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With the help of Nikki, Dominic transferred their surgery patient to a biobed in the main cabin. They set up the monitoring equipment and drips, and Nikki gave Dominic a small smile.

"There was no more we could have done for him. His leg was beyond saving, from what I've been told."

Dominic avoided her eyes and, without real reason to, checked the flow from the blood pack down through the clear tube into the man's arm.

"I know. He's lucky t' be alive." He glanced over at Nikki. "Dr Tracy is a damn good surgeon." He paused. "But this man's not out of the woods yet. But then, he'll be out of our hands."

He cast an eye over the man again, before turning to Nikki, and folding his arms.

"I've assisted dozens of amputations, but ne'er one that bad. And the level of polytrauma," he whistled softly through his teeth, "uh uh. One of the worst auto accidents I've seen."

Nikki shook her head.

"I know. But that's what we're here for."

"I know."

Dianne walked in from the surgical bay and nodded at the two nurses.

"All right, we have more wounded to attend to." They could both hear the tiredness, but determination in her voice. "Let's go. And Dominic?"

"Yes Doctor?"

"You might want to get cleaned up some." She gave him a small smile. "Don't want to frighten the victims, do you?"

Dominic looked down at his blood splattered skin and clothing, and then nodded.

"Yes Doctor."

Post by ArtisticRainey on 22/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 02:05:46 GMT

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While Dominic cleaned himself up, Dianne made her rounds of the patients in the medical cabin, pulling out the medical charts to add her own observations. I'll have to run these notes through the translation program and just send along data cards. Hopefully they have PDAs that will take the data cards we use. We haven't had any problems so far, but then we haven't had to translate extensive notes into Russian either.

A moan drew her attention to one of the beds on the lower tier. She hurried over to Fjodor, who was finally showing signs of consciousness. As she leaned over him, he opened blue eyes slightly, and spoke haltingly in Russian.

"En? Where's Ilya?" Dianne asked quickly.

"He went with the ambulance that took the English woman to the hospital," Nikki explained.

Dianne swallowed a swear word, and went to fetch her wrist telecomm. "Thunderbird Seven to Thunderbird Five, come in, Five."

"Thunderbird Five here," came Callie's voice in Dianne's ear. "How can I help, Doc?"

"I've got a patient just coming to and he's saying something. I have no Russian and need to know what he's saying," Dianne explained. By now, Fjodor's eyes were fully open and he looked around, a panicked expression on his face. Dianne held the wrist telecomm close to him as he

muttered in his mother tongue.

"He's asking 'Where am I?'... uh... 'Where is Yulja?'... 'Are... are the children safe?'...." Fjodor reached out a weak hand to grasp Dianne's forearm, then he tried to sit up.

"En! An emesis bowl and hurry!" Dianne shouted, but it was too late. Fjodor had realized what was about to happen and had turned, vomiting all over the side of the diagnostic bed, the floor, and Dianne's scrubs and clogs. Nikki rushed over with a kidney-shaped bowl, and Dianne held it as Fjodor vomited again, trying once more to push himself into a sitting position.

"Cee! How do I say, 'Lie back, lie still?'" Dianne cried. Callie gave her the words to say and she repeated them. Fjodor lay back, his eyes focused on her again.

"Sounds like he's asking the same questions again, Cee," Dianne told her interpreter.

"He is. How do you want to answer him?"

"'The children are all safe.' " Dianne repeated Callie's words. " 'Yulja is with them.' 'You are in a... treatment center.' "

"You aren't going to tell him that he's in a Thunderbird?" Nikki asked.

Dianne shook her head. "It would take too long to explain. No!" she said quickly as Fjodor tried again to sit up. "Nyet!" she reiterated, gently pushing down on his shoulders.

The man lay back again, and closed his eyes. Dianne checked the biobed readings. "Good. He's still conscious. Just resting... I hope!"

Nikki glanced from Dianne to the puddle of vomit and back. "Would you like me to clean it up for you while you get changed?"

"No, En. I'll do it. You prep the surgical bay again for me, please. I know that there's a yellow tag coming in with Kat and Alan and we need to be ready for it."

"F-A-B, Doc. Will do."

"Everything okay down there, Doc?" Callie said suddenly.

"Oh, Cee! I forgot you were listening in. Yes, everything's under control now. Thanks for your help."

"If you need me again, just holler."

"F-A-B, Cee. Thunderbird Seven out."

Dianne stood up with a sigh and went to get the materials she would need to clean up the mess that Fjodor had made. Good thing my stomach's empty right now, she thought as she dealt with the vomit. Her stomach gurgled in response. Wonder if Virgil thought of bringing along any MREs.

We sure could use them about now. I'll have to ask. Once I'm clean again.

Post by Tikatu on 23/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 02:19:19 GMT

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Wednesday, 14th March, Ural Mountains, Russia

Having handed the baby over to Nikki, Kat rejoined Alan to continue checking the casualties.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Alan asked.

Kat looked around her, at the carnage, the crashed vehicles, and the injured passengers. In the distance, she saw the teams of Virgil and Christopher and Scott with Brandon using their cutting equipment. She swallowed hard.

"I guess so. It is quite a lot to take on board. I've always had an image of International Rescue being able to fly in and save the situation. But in reality, although you save lives, sometimes lives can't be saved."

Alan nodded.

"Ala... I mean, Aye," Kat asked, "how do you cope? Okay, I know you have done it for a long time, but still there must have been occasions when you must have found it hard to come to terms with some situation or other."

Alan watched Kat as she looked around, obviously trying very hard not to be affected.

"It's never easy. We all are affected by what we see. There have been rescues when even the best laid plans have gone wrong. And sometimes things have happened that were out of our control. We talk. And talk. And put up with nightmares. And sometimes, once in a while, something wonderful happens and we hold onto that with all we've got."

"It's those children that get to me the most. The fact that they are virtually alone. Oh, yes, they have carers, but it isn't the same as having loving parents," Kat explained haltingly.

"True enough. Still, they're alive. They have a chance. It could have so easily gone the other way."

This conversation was abruptly brought to a close, as they came across a young man wandering aimlessly. He had a cut on his head, and was staggering about. Kat tried to help him, but he brushed her aside, talking in rapid Russian.

"Aye, I wonder where he has come from? He looks as if he has been knocked out and has come round completely disoriented."

"Ess," Alan called to his brother on his communicator, "could you come and help Kay and me?"

Scott came over. "Oh, I see you've found our wandering driver. He came to as we were trying to get his passenger out, and just rushed away."

Alan and Scott took the man's arms, and tried to lead him to Thunderbird Seven. The man was very agitated and struggled to free himself from them.

"Doc," Kat spoke into her communicator. "There's a badly disoriented man that Ess and Aye are trying to bring to you. Can you give us some help?"

"En is on her way, Kay," Doc replied.

Post by Tawnyangel22 (with copious recent edits by Tikatu) on 25/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 02:25:32 GMT

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Wednesday, March 14, 2:05 p.m. local time, Ust'-Uls

As Nikki moved out to help Kat and Alan with the disoriented man, several things happened at once. An ambulance came up from Ust'-Uls, carrying Ilya back to the Danger Zone. A short, dark-haired, middle-aged woman also rode with the ambulance and climbed out, gazing around her as if looking for someone. And a young man, around Alan's age, came up from the city on foot, a camera around his neck. He peered out from behind the ambulance and surreptitiously took pictures of the rescue operations.

The woman followed Ilya up to Thunderbird Seven. The young Russian man called out, "Doc? I am returned."

Dianne turned from recording her doctor's notes to smile at Ilya, then she frowned to see the woman behind him.

"Welcome back, Ilya," she said, distracted. She came closer and spoke to him personally. "Please go and help out Aye, Kay and En. They are dealing with a disoriented man who might respond better to a Russian speaker." She pointed in the direction that Nikki had taken.

"Da, Doc. I will go." Ilya nodded and headed off to where Dianne had indicated. The woman stepped up and met Dianne's gaze frankly.

"I am IR Agent 36," she said in a low voice, pulling a small badge from her pocket. "I am from Perm. Agent 83, from Ekaterinaburg, is in Ust'-Uls, standing watch over Thunderbird Two. How can I help you?"

Dianne's frown cleared as she saw the badge. "Welcome, Agent 36. We're almost done here, I

think. Perhaps you'd better ask Ess if he needs anything in particular. He's over in that direction. Dark hair, blue sash."

"I will ask." And with that, Agent 36 turned on her heel and went off to find Scott.

Dianne sighed, and went back in to finish her notes. She turned and looked outside again when she heard a shout.

"Hey! Oy! You there! Nyet!" Christopher shouted, running after the photographer, Virgil at his heels. The young photographer ran some distance, heading back towards the city before he was intercepted by a fine football tackle from Christopher. Alan stopped on his way to the medical cabin, turned, and ran towards the growing altercation. Nikki and Kat came up, watching the situation unfold as they guided their charge to Thunderbird Seven. Dominic took over for Kat, who nudged Ilya and together they hurried to the scene of the brouhaha.

"Take him into the surgery so I can give him a complete scan," Dianne directed the nurses. She went into the driver's cab. A light was blinking and a chiming was sounding off. She flipped the switch that turned off the automatic camera detector and pressed the button next to it that would obliterate the photos that had just been taken. Then she went back to see to her latest patient.

Meanwhile, Virgil had pulled Christopher up off the photographer. Ilya and Kat hurried up.

"You'd better ask him what he's doing here," Christopher said to Ilya. "I don't know much Russian."

Ilya spoke sharply to the young man, who had pulled himself up from the ground, his shirt filthy and his hands, elbows and knees skinned and bloody. He answered Ilya back with an angry tone.

"He is a journalist from Ust'-Uls. He said he came to report on the rescue," Ilya said flatly to Virgil. Virgil's wrist telecomm crackled.

"Thunderbird Seven to Vee."

"Go ahead, Doc."

"I've activated the photo fogger." Dianne's voice sounded weary. "The camera detector went off, but it doesn't register in the medical cabin."

"F-A-B, Doc. Shall we bring our photographer friend to you? He's pretty skinned up."

A sigh. "Go ahead. En or Dee can clean him up. Then you can hand him over to Agent 36. She's with Scott right now. She can take him to the relevant authorities."

"F-A-B, Doc. Vee out." Virgil turned to Ilya. "Please tell our reporter that his photographs have been dealt with and will not print. Alan, could you, Kat, and Ilya take him over to Thunderbird Seven? En or Dee will clean him up, and then we'll turn him over to... the proper authorities." His gaze turned to the pile of wrecked cars. "CJ and I still have some work to do."

"F-A-B, Vee," Kat assured him. Ilya spoke to the man sharply and Alan took him firmly by one arm, while Kat did the same from the other side. The reporter looked over one shoulder and shouted at Christopher, his face angry and red.

"I don't need to know Russian to figure out what that was all about," Christopher said mildly as he dusted himself off. He nodded to Virgil. "Shall we?"

"Let's go," Virgil agreed, and the two men walked off to continue their search.

Post by Tikatu on 31/10/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:00:47 GMT

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Wednesday, March 14, 1:35 p.m. Kabul, Afghanistan

Tin-Tin sat in a deep tub of hot water, covered to her shoulders with bubbles. The suite that she and Grandma Tracy had taken on their arrival in Kabul was luxurious and had every amenity. Emily was taking a short nap, while Tin-Tin relaxed in a bubble bath, letting the hot water wash away her weariness.

Tomorrow will be a difficult day. I'm glad I got here when I did. Some rest and relaxing will give me a clear head to fix this problem. I hope we can get this fabric moving. We need those new uniforms. The ones we've already ordered will be arriving soon, but we need the tougher cloth to help keep our operatives safe.

She drained the water and stepped from the tub, wrapping a thick towel around her body. Her face took on a thoughtful expression as she sat on the edge of the tub.

International Rescue has developed some bitter enemies over the past three years, not least of which is my own uncle. He's gone underground right now, but who knows when he'll surface again? We have to be prepared. Brains and I will have to look over our security procedures when we get back. Perhaps Lena can help us on the computer side. From what I understand, she's been instrumental in keeping the Tracy Industries computer network tightly guarded from outside hackers and viruses. Hopefully we can work together to make IR just as safe.

She finished toweling off and put on a thick bathrobe, then left the bathroom to get dressed.

Outside, in a building across the street, a non-descript man in native clothing opened a cell phone. He speed-dialed a number and spoke in accented English just three words.

"She is here."

Post by Tikatu on 01/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:01:35 GMT

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Wednesday, March 14, 9:30 a.m., Foxleyheath, England

"Your morning tea, milady," Parker intoned as he brought a Wedgewood tea service into Lady Penelope's sitting room. He poured the tea for his employer, who sat calmly, dressed in cool pink slacks and a pale pink angora sweater, her trademark pink pearls gracing her lily-white neck. She had a PDA in one hand, and picked up her teacup to sip it while she perused the data on the tiny computer link.

"Let's see. Agents 36 and 83 have been dispatched to help with the rescue in the Ural mountains. Hmm. It might be wise to put those agents in Moscow and Volograd on alert. They are quite far away from the action, but one never knows."

She used a stylus to add those agents to the roster and put them on 'alert' status, then she scrolled down on the tiny screen.

"Here's an email from Tin-Tin, giving me her itinerary in Kabul. Agent 104 is already on the case and reports that she is safely at her hotel. Oh! That's interesting! Mrs. Tracy is with her. How farsighted of her!"

Another sip of tea, and some more scrolling down. A title blinked at her, and she clicked her stylus on it, opening up an email file.

"This is interesting. The Hightower cartel is setting its sights on Penelon again. My friend inside Interpol says that the Hightowers have found a possible place to get the formula outside of the tightly guarded manufacturing plants that have the formula under secure lock and key." She smiled. "How kind of Mr. Southern to remember that I was interested in anything to do with Penelon." She looked up from the email and her face took on a thoughtful mien. "I wonder where? And I wonder if this has anything to do with Tin-Tin's trip to Kabul?" She looked down at the PDA. "I'd best put Agent 104 on high alert for anything suspicious." She opened another small portion of her computer link and scrolled down. "Hmm. The nearest fellow agent is 116 in Islamabad. I'll put her on alert as well."

She took another long sip of tea, then smiled at Parker. "Have you made arrangements to visit the Tracys yet, Parker? I wish we could have been there when Jeff arrived home, but we had that bit of trouble to the North to smooth over. Really, that journalist should not have tried to get the one of the oil riggers to sketch Thunderbird Two for him. I hope he has learned his lesson!"

"Oi shall make h'arrangements h'at h'once, milady," Parker said. "When would you loik t' visit Tracy h'Island?"

"Perhaps early next week would be best. Give Jeff some time to get back into the routine of life and hopefully Tin-Tin will have returned by then as well. I am looking forward to seeing Kat again and observing how she is doing there with the Tracys."

"Yus, milady." Parker turned and left the room while Penelope poured herself another cup of tea.

She sighed contentedly, and turned her attention back to her PDA, looking it over to see if there were any other items that needed her immediate attention.

Post by Tikatu on 01/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:04:04 GMT

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After the altercation with the photographer, Christopher and Virgil were scouting around the wreckage composed mainly of badly wrecked cars. Christopher was walking past a particularly mangled old vehicle, when he heard whimpering a short distance away.

Running over to the car, he looked inside. An older man was slumped against the steering wheel. Moving around, he checked for a pulse. Unfortunately he couldn't find one; the man's neck was broken.

"Help me please," a female voice came from behind him, shaky with pain.

Christopher moved to the back of the car, where he saw a pretty young woman lying on the seat.

"You are going to be fine," he said tentatively, not knowing how much English she knew or how much translating he was going to ask for.

"I don't feel fine!" the girl said before crying out.

Christopher looked and saw that she was very much pregnant and very much in labour. He also noticed rivulets of blood streaming down the inside of her right leg. There was also blood on the seat underneath her.

"CJ to Doc!" Christopher spoke into his headset. "I've got a patient here who is pregnant and seems to be going into labour, and I need someone here right away!"

"F-A-B, CJ," Dianne's voice came back. "We are a little stretched at the moment but we will send someone as soon as we can."

"I can see blood on the seat underneath her abdomen," Christopher turned away so he could whisper, "and blood running down the inside of her right leg. What should I do?"

"Hold tight, CJ," Dianne said as she was performing treatment. "Someone will be with you soon."

Christopher shrugged his shoulders. "CJ to Virgil, I've found another person to be extricated."

"F-A-B, CJ," Virgil said.

Christopher saw him rushing over with the cutting gear. Christopher leaned inside and took hold of one of the girl's hands.

"My colleague is going to cut the roof off of the car," Christopher said as he saw her worried face. "Just stay still and you'll be fine."

Virgil proceeded to remove the roof of the car. The girl whimpered with a mixture of fear and pain, as the roof peeled away with a screech of metal. Christopher momentarily let go of the girl's hand to help Virgil pull the roof away.

"Vee," Christopher moved closer to Virgil. "Could you possibly try and hurry one of the medical team up please? I'm going to stay with her to keep her mind off things."

"I'll try my best," Virgil said before heading off towards Thunderbird 7.

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 01/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:05:04 GMT

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Brandon was getting tired. It had been over three hours since they had arrived at the Danger Zone, and he had been going non-stop since they rolled in, helping out where needed. Not too far ahead, Scott had located another crushed car.

"Why do these things have to be so blasted heavy?" Brandon grunted as he carried the oxyhydrite tanks to where Scott was waiting. "Here they are, Ess," he replied as he set the tanks down.

"Good," Scott replied. "Let's get a move-on. We need to get these victims out and to Doc as quickly as possible."

"FAB," Brandon replied. He slipped the tank on his back and both men went to work cutting the car.

As he cut through the twisted metal, Brandon tried to concentrate on what he was doing but he kept thinking of the carnage that surrounded him.

I've seen pile-ups on the freeway back home but never to this extent, Brandon thought as he continued cutting the car. It took them almost 15 minutes to cut through the car, 15 minutes the victims didn't have.

"That's it," Scott said as they cut through the last of the metal. Brandon hurried to the passenger, feeling for a pulse, Scott doing likewise to the driver. After a few seconds Scott looked at Brandon, shaking his head.

"Same here, Ess. I couldn't find a pulse." Brandon's voice was shaky and when he looked at his hands they were trembling. Scott noticed the look on his partner's face and took him aside.

"Bee, remember what Doc told us at the beginning of this mission. We won't be able to save everybody, but we can save most of them. Please, Bee, don't lose it now. The team needs you."

Brandon took a couple of deep breaths, willing his hands to stop shaking. "I'm okay, Ess."

Scott gave him a sharp look, then nodded. "When we get back to base, you make sure you talk to someone about this. Me, Doc, it doesn't matter who."

"I will, I promise." Grabbing the gear, Brandon started walking away from the car. Without turning, he called to Scott. "Come on, Ess. There are other people who need our help."

Scott looked at Brandon and, after black tagging the two victims, he hurried to catch up with him.

Post by MagicMaster8 on 02/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:06:22 GMT

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Christopher sat next to the girl, who was pale and clammy. Squeezing her hand, she looked round at him and smiled wanly.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Belinda," the girl said shakily before crying out in pain once more.

"Shah, shah." Christopher tried to calm Belinda down. "You can call me CJ."

"CJ." Belinda nodded her head.

"You speak very good English." Christopher smiled. "Actually you sound like a native."

"I should do," Belinda said. "I've been living in the UK since I was 6."

"Really?" Christopher looked surprised. "Where do you live?"

Belinda shifted her body so she could be more comfortable. "I live with my mother in a nice house just outside of Canterbury in Kent."

"I used to live up the A2 from there in Chatham," Christopher said. "Been a long time since I have been there though."

"Why is that?" Belinda seemed to be relaxing now, only wincing when she moved.

"After my parents died," Christopher said, then paused, "I went off the rails. I didn't want to go back because of the sad memories."

"My father left my mother when I was five years old," Belinda said with tears in her eyes. "I moved to the UK with mother because she had family there, and then she remarried."

Christopher squeezed her hand. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be." Belinda smiled weakly. "I am happy. Father remarried, too and I came over to see him and his new family."

"Are you happy?" Christopher asked.

"Yes, I am," Belinda said. "I have my career, my fiancé, and we are buying a new house for ourselves."

Belinda suddenly wailed with agony, blood streaming down her legs.

"Hurry up, Virgil!!!" Christopher hissed under his breath.

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 02/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:09:09 GMT
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"Damn!" Dianne swore as she read the surgery's scan of the disoriented man.

"What's wrong, Doc?" Dom asked.

"This guy's higher than a kite!" Dianne replied. "No wonder he's disoriented!"

"What's he on?"

"Looks like Ecstasy or some form of it." She shook her head. "Dee, see if that ambulance is still available. I'll send him down to Ust'-Uls in it. The sedative has at least made him less combative."

"Right, Doc," Dom said, nipping out to the ambulance that stood waiting.

Dianne helped the man off the surgical table and out to the ambulance. On the way out, she checked on Nikki, who was cleaning up the photographer. Alan stood by, looking tough and impassive. She beckoned to the paramedic who had come up from Ust'-Uls. Agent 36 joined them.

"This man needs to be in a detox center," Dianne said to the paramedic. Agent 36 translated for her. "I need to know what level of trauma center is at the hospital in Ust'-Uls. I have three or four patients that need the highest level of trauma center that we can get."

A few minutes of translation and Agent 36 turned to Dianne, shaking her head. "The medic says that the Ust'-Uls hospital is not set up to handle a lot of polytrauma and that the emergency

department is overwhelmed right now by the patients that have already come in." She leaned close to Dianne. "If I may suggest? The hospital in my town of Perm has an excellent reputation...."

"I'll take it up with our site commander," Dianne said. She turned and indicated the reporter. "He was discovered taking photographs of our operations. The photos have been dealt with, but he needs to be taken to the proper authorities. Could you handle that?"

Agent 36 smiled widely. "It would be my... how you say? very great pleasure."

Just then Virgil came running up. "Doc, we have a pregnant woman in labor. A definite red tag. I've come to show you the way."

"I'm on it. Dee! Bring a stretcher! We have another red tag! En, get the surgery ready! Hand our reporter over to this woman. She'll deal with him."

Dom brought a medikit along and handed it to Dianne, and the two medics sprinted off after Virgil.

Agent 36 gazed up at Nikki. "Go about your work. Leave this one... to me."

Post by Tikatu on 02/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:26:46 GMT

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"Come on Belinda!" Christopher said through gritted teeth as she grunted and groaned in pain. Mopping her forehead, he looked around for any sign of Virgil and a member of the medical team. Eventually he saw his colleague running towards him with Dom and Dianne right behind.

"Thank God you're here!" he exclaimed. "She is having trouble here!"

Dianne put her bag down on the ground, pulled on fresh gloves and started to examine the exhausted girl.

"Her name is Belinda," he said, mopping the girl's forehead again.

"Belinda," she smiled at the girl, "I would like you to start breathing gently while I examine you." Belinda looked at Christopher, a frightened look on her face.

"You'll be fine," Christopher reassured her. "She is marvellous at what she does."

Dianne continued her examination carefully, her face darkening slightly when she saw the blood on the inside of Belinda's thighs. Moving her fingers beneath the girl, she felt around, eliciting a hiss of pain from her patient. "Where does it hurt, Belinda?" she asked.

"My back hurts," Belinda said with tears in her eyes.

Dianne got up and went over to Virgil, who was standing near Dom. "She is haemorrhaging very badly," she said to them under her breath. "We need to operate quickly in order to save both her and the baby."

Virgil got the anti-grav stretcher, and with Christopher's help got Belinda onto it. Dominic connected the girl up to a monitor and a drip. They started moving towards Thunderbird 7.

Christopher smiled at Belinda. "You will be fine, they are going to take care of you and your baby; you hang on in there."

"Thank you CJ," Belinda said. "You have been very kind to me."

"Thank you." Christopher chuckled.

Suddenly Belinda went into spasms, and the monitor was sounding an alarm. "Belinda!" Christopher screamed, as Dianne tried to stabilise Belinda's condition.

"Dee!" she said, "go into my bag and get the hypo of adrenalin!"

Dominic did so, passing the hypo to Dianne who administered the dose. Belinda's condition stabilized for a moment, before another alarm sounded.

"She's going into cardiac arrest!" Dianne shouted. "CJ! I have to get her inside!"

Christopher just stood there, a look of horror on his face.

"CJ!" Dominic shouted, "Let go of her hand!"

Christopher dumbly complied, and watched as Belinda was rushed inside Thunderbird 7.

Post by TheWrongTrousers on 04/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:28:41 GMT

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With her thumb, Dianne rolled the tiny ball on the thin cable that lead to the EKG defibrillator. She watched as the numbers of the voltage display climbed to the desired number.

"150! Clear!" she cried as her thumb moved up to the plunger at the end of the cable. She pressed down on it, hard, as if the extra force would somehow translate into a life-giving charge for Belinda. The jumping lines on the EKG display evened out into a sinus rhythm for a moment; a moment that Nikki and Dom seized to move Belinda onto the surgical table. The built-in scanner began its sweep of her body, and Nikki took a pair of scissors to Belinda's clothing.

Suddenly, the steady rhythm destabilized, and Dianne took the cable up again, cranking the

voltage even higher.

"200! Clear!" Belinda's body spasmed with the energy that flowed through it, but this time there was no change. The piercing alarm kept up its wail and Dianne grimly brought the voltage up higher still.

"250! Clear!" Dom and Nikki both stepped back as the electricity surged through Belinda again. Dom glanced over at Dianne.

"She's still in v-fib, Doc," he warned.

"Ah can't go any higher," Dianne replied, her voice tense. "There's a baby to consider."

She watched as the scanner reached Belinda's abdomen and slowed. A separate window popped up on the screen, and the scan of the baby's body was shown there, while Belinda's form still dominated the scanner's display.

Suddenly, the EKG flatlined, one wailing alarm replaced by another. And Dianne, her eyes on the scanner's display, made the choice every doctor hates to make.

"The baby's in distress. Ah have to do a c-section."

Dom, his face paler than normal, swallowed hard, then nodded his agreement. Nikki's eyes flicked back and forth between her colleagues, then she moved from where she had been cutting off Belinda's blouse to the other end of the body, and began working on Belinda's skirt.

Dianne ripped off her bloodied gloves, rubbed her hands quickly with an antibacterial/antiviral gel, then drew on a clean pair. She palpated Belinda's abdomen carefully.

"The baby's not far into the birth canal. We can do this," she stated flatly.

Dom cleansed his own hands and put on fresh gloves, then pulled out a sterile tray of instruments. Once Nikki had cleared away Belinda's clothing, he smeared the mother's swollen abdomen with some of the cleansing gel. Dianne glanced over at Nikki and caught her eye.

"En, set up an incubator. We're going to need it."

"Yes, Doc," Nikki replied. She left the surgery and went out into the main medical cabin. As she was pulling out the collapsible incubator unit, Christopher called from outside, where he and Virgil stood.

"En, how is Belinda?" he asked.

Nikki turned to him, and the sorrow on her face told him the truth more clearly than words could.

"Belinda's heart stopped, CJ. She... didn't make it. Doc is trying to save the baby now."

Christopher's face paled and he looked at Nikki with a lost expression as the words sank in. Virgil

glanced up at the nurse and gave her a solemn nod.

"Thanks for telling us, En. We were very concerned." He gave a tug on Christopher's sleeve. "CJ. Come on."

CJ rounded on Virgil, prepared to shout at him, scream at him about how insensitive he was, but he saw the sorrow on Virgil's face, and suddenly his anger dissipated.

"You don't get used to it, do you, Vee?" he said sadly.

"You never get used to it, CJ. But we can't give up trying. Not ever. Now, come on. Let's finish the job. There are others who need our help."

Virgil began to walk away from Thunderbird Seven, back the way they had come, the oxyhydrite tank over his shoulders. Christopher looked back at Nikki, who was setting up the incubator, then shook his head slowly and turned to follow Virgil back into the pile of wrecked cars.

Suddenly, a sharp, squalling cry pierced the air. Christopher wanted to turn back, but Virgil kept on walking.

"Time is against us, CJ. We can't stop to smell the roses right now," he said as he picked up his pace. "Though I must admit, that's got to be the best sound I've heard all day today."

Christopher nodded wordlessly and matched his stride to Virgil's as they plunged back into the pile of cars to look for more signs of life.

Post by Tikatu on 04/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:30:10 GMT

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Dominic crossed his arms and watched the tiny baby inside the incubator, attached to the monitors beeping softly outside, asleep after its traumatic delivery. He watched the slight rise and fall of the baby's chest, and smiled a little when the petite fingers flexed and relaxed a few times.

Nikki came up beside him and crossed her arms as well, and they watched in silence for a few seconds, before Dominic sighed, let his arms fall, and looked at his colleague.

"It's such a shame, isn't it? That something so beautiful should be brought into the world in such a tragic way." He sighed again, and spared the baby another glance.

"I'd better get back out there. There could still be people trapped."

Nikki nodded, and rested one hand on the top of the incubator.

"She's beautiful," she said quietly. "It's such a pity that her mother passed away." The two nurses

shook their heads at the thought of their latest, and hopefully last, black tag. "I wonder what she would have called her."

Dominic shrugged.

"Something English, probably. Christopher said the mother was English. Belinda, right?"

"Right."

Dominic reached for his medical bag, and set about quickly replenishing the supplies. Nikki kept her eyes on the tiny baby girl in the incubator. Suddenly, she looked up with a small smile, and called over to Dom.

"Hey, Dominic? How about, just for now, we give the baby a name? It'll be better than just calling her 'she' or 'the baby'."

Dominic shouldered the bag and pushed his glasses back up his nose.

"Why not? What have you got in mind?"

Nikki glanced back at the little girl, and smiled.

"Chris."

Dominic smiled himself, and nodded slowly.

"Yeah, that's a good idea." He knew they were both thinking of Christopher. "So long, Chris. See you soon."

He nodded at Nikki, before leaving Thunderbird Seven and heading back off to the wreckage. Nikki glanced at the little girl, Chris, once more, and then went back to her work.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 04/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:36:56 GMT
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Wednesday, March 14, 2068, 3:12 p.m., local time, Ust'-Uls

Scott stretched his back and rubbed his neck. He glanced over at Brandon, who was leaning wearily against a car. It was the last one in their section. The occupants were lucky; they had only minor injuries and one had even managed to climb out through a broken window. They thanked Scott and Brandon in fluent Russian as the pair pried open the door on the other side for the remaining passengers to get out. Callie translated for them, and Scott, who had been picking up various Russian phrases all day, told them, "It's all in a day's work" in their native tongue. They

chuckled, a reaction that Scott had encountered time and again that day.

"Is my Russian that bad, Cee?" he asked the fledgling space monitor.

"No, but your accent is," Callie replied, grinning.

Scott sighed, then activated his wrist telecomm. "Vee, status."

"We're done here," Virgil answered. Christopher nodded. Virgil noticed, not for the first time, that Christopher looked haunted, and that he kept looking down at his hands, arms, and clothes, all still spattered with Belinda's blood. He resolved to get their new pilot alone after they'd debriefed and had a good rest and get him to open up about the rescue.

"F-A-B, Vee," Scott acknowledged. "Status, Aye?"

Alan's face, weary but cheerful, filled the screen. "We've double-checked all the cars, Ess. All are clear. The locals have taken care of most of the black tags."

"Do we have idents for our own black tags and the patients in Seven?" Scott asked.

"Yes, Ess. We do. All papers are now matched with patients... or bodies," Alan informed him.

"F-A-B, Aye. Doc, status?"

Dianne's face replaced Alan's. "All personnel present and accounted for. We have two class three concussions, one with a skull fracture; one amputee that is still touch and go; two cases of polytrauma, one of them an adolescent; one green-tagged infant with no ident, and one preemie in an incubator." She sighed heavily. "All of our black tags have been matched with idents and have been removed by the locals. We still haven't gotten an ident on the baby Kay brought in." She paused. "I'm told that the Ust'-Uls hospital is full and can't take our new patients, particularly our polytrauma and amputee victims. Agent 36 suggested Perm...."

"F-A-B, Doc. I'll get Jay or Cee on that. Let's get our equipment together and head back to Two. Kay?"

"Yes, Ess?" Kat replied, her tired face coming up on his telecomm screen.

"Can you remember which car you found the baby in?"

"Yes, I think so, Ess."

"Good. Take Aye and find the car, then get the license plate number and the Vehicle Identification Code. Those will help the authorities to place the baby's family."

"F-A-B, Ess."

"Aye, as soon as you have that, give it to Doc and head out in the Firefly. Take Kay and the hoverbike with you. Vee, you ride with Bee and CJ in the recovery vehicle right now so you can

get Two warmed up and ready. Aye follows in the Firefly. Doc, do you need a chauffeur today?"

"No, Ess. We can handle it. We're to come last in the procession?"

Scott smiled at his stepmother. "Yes, you are. How'd you guess?"

Dianne smiled back, a small, weary smile. "Simple. When we reach Perm, Seven's going to be the only one getting out. Last in, first out. Plus, we're the one with the photo disrupter."

"F-A-B, Doc. As far as our operations here are concerned, I'm calling stand down. Time, 3:20 p.m. local time. Did you get that, R&D?"

Brains's face appeared on his screen. "F-A-B, Ess. Give me an ETA once you're done at Perm and we'll have dinner ready when you all arrive."

"F-A-B, base. Sounds like a plan. Though I think that a few of us will be scarfing down some MREs on the way home. Myself included." Scott clapped Brandon on the shoulder and indicated he take the oxyhydrite tanks and cutter with him. Brandon nodded and wearily headed over to the idle recovery vehicle. He could see Virgil approaching with his cutting equipment and a disconsolate CJ following close behind.

The two men joined Brandon in the cramped cab of the vehicle. "You want to drive, Vee?" Brandon asked.

Virgil shook his head. "I'll be flying home soon enough. So I'll just sit back here and be a backseat driver." He tipped Brandon a wink, which garnered a small smile and rolled eyes. Then Brandon brought the vehicle to life, the engine first roaring and then settling down to a steady chug-chug.

"Recovery vehicle to Thunderbird One. Ready to move out," Brandon informed Scott. The three men looked out of the windshield to see the silver rocket rise slowly into the sky.

"F-A-B, Recovery vehicle. Move 'em on out. See you back at base," Scott replied.

Brandon put his ride into gear, and, passing the damaged school bus and the smouldering wreck that started the whole chain reaction, headed back to the stadium in Ust'-Uls.

Post by Tikatu on 04/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:41:17 GMT

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"Oh my!" Kat exclaimed as she looked out the window of the Firefly. "I never thought I'd see this!"

Alan smiled. "Well, usually we don't have to make a trek through city streets to get back to Thunderbird Two."

What Kat was amazed at were the people. The people of Ust'-UIs who lined the street on the way to the stadium, waving kerchiefs and throwing flowers and generally cheering as the International Rescue machinery came through. Alan was amused, even though things like this had happened very infrequently during the three years that he'd been part of his father's dream, he still got a kick out of it.

He looked ahead to where the Recovery vehicle was preparing to make a wide left hand turn. To his consternation, there was a television camera waiting for them at the entrance to the stadium. But the light was red on top, which meant it wasn't filming, and the operator was having a heated argument with a tall, blond man whose thick mustache almost entirely hid his mouth. The tall man finally threw his jacket over the camera's lens and a police officer, who had been drawn to the altercation, listened to the two arguing and took away the camera operator to give him a good tongue lashing.

"Make sure you're strapped in, Kat. We're entering the stadium now."

Kat indicated that she was strapped in, and Alan expertly swung the Firefly in a wide turn and through the doors of the stadium. There was a military presence there, for which Alan was glad. He knew that there would probably have been pictures taken, both conventional and digital of the Firefly as they went through the city streets, but Thunderbird Seven would take care of those. The range of both the photo detector and the photo disrupter had been increased, and it had been altered to deal with all image types, from silver backed films to the most sophisticated digital recorders. No one who tried to take photos of the IR teams would get good shots.

The stadium itself was empty of all save Thunderbird Two... and Agent 36. The tall blond man had joined her, and Virgil, who had gotten out of the Recovery Vehicle to raise the chassis of Thunderbird Two from the pod was shaking hands with him. Alan grinned, and turned back to Kat.

"Hmm. That must be the other agent that was called in. Hey, look, there's your friend, Ilya."

Indeed, Ilya stood by Agent 36 peering into the Firefly. Alan could almost feel the warmth of Kat's blushing behind him.

"Would you like to get out here? I need to wait on Brandon to put the Recovery Vehicle in the pod...." Alan suggested in a seemingly off-handed way.

"Well, I guess so," Kat said, hesitantly. Alan pulled up next to Virgil and the small company he kept, and Kat climbed gingerly from the height of the Firefly's cabin. Alan couldn't help but notice how eagerly Ilya moved forward to help Kat down. He chuckled, remembering the many times that lovely young things had snuggled into his grasp if he had to carry them, or made their injuries look worse than they were so he would have to do just that. Occupational hazard, he thought, smiling.

The Firefly had been loaded, and Thunderbird Seven was now resting on the floor of the pod. The door swung upward and shut with a decisive clang. The sound of Thunderbird Two's chassis lowering over the pod could be heard, then Virgil's voice came over Dianne's headset.

"Are any of you coming forward?" he asked. "If so, you'd better hurry."

Dianne looked at Dom and Nikki, both of whom were busy either tending to their patients or starting to clean up. She said to them, "You could go up to the flight deck if you like. You don't have to stay down here."

The two nurses looked at each other and both shook their heads.

"We'll stay here, Doc, and help you look after the wee little one," Dom said in his Irish brogue. He smiled, his first smile in hours. "And the other patients, of course."

"And get a head start on cleaning this beast," Nikki said, patting the wall inside the medical cabin. "She's a real mess right now."

Dianne glanced from one nurse to the other and shook her head, smiling. "Virgil, we'll all be staying down here for the duration," she responded to Virgil's query. "We have patients to tend to."

"F-A-B. ETA to Perm, 20 minutes. Vee out."

"I have a feeling," Dianne said, looking at her two nurses with a twinkle in her eye, "That this has just cemented us as a team."

The nurses looked at each other again and nodded. "Yeah. I think so, too," Nikki observed.

Post by Tikatu on 05/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:44:03 GMT
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Wednesday, March 14th; 11 PM; Tracy Island

It was late when Lena returned to her room in the Round House. She'd fed Joshua while Lisa and Kyrano prepared dinner for those still on the island. Then, once they'd put the toddler down for the night on a cot set up in Lisa's (and Kyrano's) bedroom, they went to feed and check on Asterix. Lena smiled, remembering the cat's reactions to her.

He'd hissed at her from his perch on the kitchen counter then, when she said to him, "You tink you're a tough one, little Simba, do you? And de only reason I'm here is to see dat you are safe and to help Lisa bring you your dinner," he mewed at her and purred loudly. The sound of her voice must have appealed to him - or was it the word "dinner"? But they were fast friends when she and Lisa left Christopher's apartment.

She, Lisa, Kyrano, Alex, Tyler, Elise and Brains had dinner at the table; Cherie insisted on staying with Jeff, so Kyrano had prepared two trays. Brains and Elise were the first to leave, and headed up to the lounge. Lisa took the boys to their room and stayed with them for a while, so Lena

helped Kyrano clean up. While doing so, they got to know each other a little better, and their respect for each other grew.

They had finished when Lisa returned, so the women headed up to the lounge. Lena smothered a smile at Cherie's response to Lisa's question, and continued over to the couch, where she'd left her bag of needlework. Brains filled them in generally on what had happened so far.

"I don't have too much. They're keeping Callie busy asking for translations. It seems very few of the victims know any English. And I tried to find something about it on the news, but nothing has been reported."

"I'm not surprised," Lena replied. "De Russians have a long history of keeping de bad tings to demselves, whenever possible. Dey don't like de idea of de world knowing dey have such tings happening in deir country." Lisa, who had sat next to her, looked at her in surprise and she continued. "My fadder worked at de Kenyan embassy in Washington D.C. and I grew up in a neighborhood nearby. It wasn't difficult to learn tings like dat, when you're in dat environment. De Kenyans had dealings wit Russians on several occasions. Sometimes Fadder would explode in frustration and talk to my modder about dem. We all knew dat when he did dis, it was not to leave de house. But we heard what he said, and remembered."

Just then, John called in with an update. By the time Lena went to bed, she'd heard enough to keep her mind whirling with images of crushed vehicles, orphans, people injured or dead, tag colors and more. She undressed and got into bed, but her thoughts wouldn't let her sleep for a long time. She prayed for those who had died, for their families, for the orphans, including the new ones, but especially for the team members who were at the site.

Finally she slept, but her dreams kept her from getting much rest.

Post by Hobbeth on 05/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:46:42 GMT

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Ilya stopped in at a shop on the way to his hotel room. As a thank you for his services, International Rescue had paid for a room in the best hotel in Ust'-Uls. He had a phone call to make to the man with whom he was supposed interview. The agent who was still in Ust'-Uls, the dark haired woman, said she would vouch for where he was all day long in hopes that the interview could be rescheduled.

He looked around the shop, and made a few selections. A pad of good drawing paper, pencils in both hard and soft leads, and a soft blue eraser. He took his purchases to the clerk, who, as she rang them up and made change for him, chattered on and on about the excitement of the day. Had he seen the Thunderbirds? Weren't they wonderful? They had saved a whole busload of children!

Ilya nodded and said the proper things, then left the shop with his purchases. He went to a public

phone and called the office of his interviewer. International Rescue had already been there: his appointment was cheerfully rescheduled for the next morning. He groaned inwardly when he realized that he'd probably be interviewed more for his experience with IR than for his experience at the job he coveted.

Once in his hotel room, he noticed that a clean set of clothes waited for him "with thanks for your help, International Rescue". He looked at himself in the mirror, realizing for the first time exactly how dirty he really was. A hot shower relaxed him as well as cleansed him, and once he was clean and dry and clad in clean boxers and t-shirt, he sat on the bed, thinking over the day's events. Then he took out the pad and the pencils and began to sketch.

He smiled softly as the vision in his mind's eye took shape on the paper before him. It took time to get it just right, but when he was through, he smiled wider, and satisfied, signed both his own initials and the only name he knew his subject by... Kay.

Post by Tikatu on 05/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 03:58:47 GMT

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Christopher walked slowly into the main bay of Thunderbird 7. His head was still spinning, but he wanted to have a good long look at the little one. Washing his hands, he walked over to the little incubator.

"You have your Mother's nose," he smiled, the waves of sorrow hitting him.

"She's gonna be a beauty," came a voice from the monitoring station. Christopher looked up to see Dianne observing him.

"I wish I could have done more for Belinda." Christopher sat down gently. "I feel so helpless right now." He rested his head in his hands, quiet sobs beginning.

Dianne glanced at Dom, who nodded and took over for her at the monitor station. She got up and approached Christopher, reaching out with a hand to his shoulder.

"You did everything you could have done for her, Christopher. She knew that someone cared about her there at the end, and that always means a lot."

Christopher looked up at her, his eyes red. "I couldn't do anything though. I watched her die while the people who had the skills to save her...." His voice tailed off as he turned to look at the sleeping baby.

"While the people had who had the skills to save her'... what? As we what, Christopher?" Dianne prodded.

"Let her die," Christopher muttered, his mind elsewhere. "She had a fiancé. She was buying a house. She had a blossoming career."

Dianne sighed, a large breath taken in and let out through her nose. "Christopher, have you ever been through anything like this before?"

"My parents died in a car crash," he said as he looked up. "We weren't speaking, so I didn't really feel much when it happened. I guess my answer would have to be, no, I haven't been through this before."

"Ah thought as much. Christopher, we did everything we could for Belinda. We used all the tools at our disposal to save her life. But there came a time when her heart stopped, and when trying to restart it would have been, one: very likely futile, and two: harmful to the baby. Ah had to make a decision, a decision that Ah hate making at the best of times. Which one do Ah save? The mother or the baby?"

"Ah had to think, which one is more likely to survive? And when Ah looked at all the facts, sir, Ah saved the baby. She was the one most likely to survive. Did Ah, did we, let Belinda die? No. We did all we could for her. But in the end, it was a whole lot better for one to die so that the other lived. Otherwise, Ah might have tried to save Belinda and, in doing so, failed to save either."

She cocked her head as she looked at him keenly. "Do you understand?"

Christopher looked at Dianne, her eyes flashing. He bowed his head, tears coming down his cheeks again. "I understand," he said,. "Part of me doesn't want to, but I do." He looked up again at the baby. "I have a lot to learn, haven't I?"

"Yes, y'all do have a lot to learn. Let me ask you this one question, an' maybe all parts of you will understand," Dianne said gently. "If Ah was able to ask Belinda which one of them to save, which do you think she'd say?" She paused, then said softly, "Ah'd like t' think that she loved that little one there more than herself."

Christopher shook his head in agreement. "I think she would ask you to save the baby." He sighed deeply. "Thank you for listening."

"That's part of what Ah'm here for," Dianne reminded him. "Now. Ah've got some questions for you about Belinda so that Lady Penelope can get to work findin' that little one's daddy."

Christopher sighed again and nodded. "I'll give you what information I can."

"Good. Let's get this done quickly, Christopher. We'll be arriving at Perm any minute," Dianne said, looking at her watch.

"Right," said Christopher, a resolute expression on his face as he began to repeat what Belinda had told him about herself.

Post by TheWrongTrousers and Tikatu on 06/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:00:24 GMT
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Wednesday, March 14, 2068, 11:10 p.m., Thunderbird Five

"Whew!" John leaned back and swiped a hand across his brow. "Finally! All of Doc's notes are translated and downloaded to data cards." He glanced over at Callie. "Thanks, Callie, for handling the live translations while I dealt with the rescue coordination and translating the doctor's notes. I don't think I could have handled it all without your help."

"Hey, that's what I'm here for," Callie replied, smiling. "Or at least part of the reason."

"Right." John stood and stretched.

"So, where is Thunderbird Two now?" Callie asked, peering at the screen where the markers for each Thunderbird were displayed.

"In Perm, waiting for Thunderbird Seven to return from the hospital run. Won't be much longer before they're airborne again and on the way home. I got those data cards done just in time. Seven should be at the hospital now."

Callie shook her head. She leaned back against a console and folded her arms. "How have you done this all by yourself for so long?"

John smiled wryly. "Well, this situation, with all the doctors notes that needed to be translated into Russian, hasn't come up before. We've been able to get away with the languages in the translator program up until now." He rubbed the back of his neck, and stretched again. "I think it's time to upgrade the translator, and maybe try to build it into the new hands-free communicators that Brains has been talking about. Perhaps an uplink to the computers here or something. I'll have to talk to Brains about it."

Both heads turned as they heard Dianne's voice. "Thunderbird Seven to Thunderbird Two. We've offloaded our patients and are on our way back to you. ETA, seven minutes."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Seven." Virgil replied.

"Thunderbird Seven to Thunderbird Five," Dianne now said. John reached over and opened communications.

"Thunderbird Five here. Go ahead."

"I've got some information for you on our premature baby, Jay. Dee will upload it. Pass it on to the Pink Lady for us? That li'l one needs her daddy ASAP so she doesn't get lost in the system."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Seven. What's the status on your other infant?"

"Good news, of a sort. She was riding with her aunt and uncle and her parents are on their way to Perm to pick her up."

"That is good news. Thanks for the update, Doc."

"And thank you for the stellar job on the translations, Jay. The doctors in both Perm and Ust'-UIs were impressed."

"All in a day's work, Doc. Talk to you when you get back to base."

"F-A-B, Jay. Thunderbird Seven out."

John turned to smile at Callie, who returned the favor. Then he yawned.

"You hungry? We haven't done anything more than snack during this rescue."

Callie nodded. "Sure am. Let's get a meal while the crew is on the way home. Do we need to be available for the debriefing?"

" 'Fraid so. But after we eat, we can get our thoughts together to make the debrief go as smoothly as possible." He rose and followed Callie to the galley. "I have a feeling that this in going to be one intense debriefing."

Callie nodded. "I think so, too."

Post by Tikatu on 06/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:02:35 GMT
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Tracy Penthouse, New York, Wednesday March 14th, 6:45a.m.

Gordon sank down onto the soft leather sofa, propped up his feet on the ottoman, and clicked on the TV. With the remote in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other, he made himself comfortable as he began to surf the channels. He had worked late last night, so decided to have an easy morning and go into the office later.

Freshly showered, with boxers and an old t-shirt on, he was looking forward to a few hours of downtime, the only problem being that there was no fun in hanging out on your own. He missed the island, missed the action of a rescue, and missed his family. The last time he'd talked with his dad had been brief as Dianne wouldn't allow Jeff to be worn out with worrying about Tracy Industries business. That's what Gordon was there for, she had reminded him. That and the fact that he needed to rest his back. Dianne had then bullied (as Gordon thought of it) truthful answers from him about how he was really feeling.

He clicked onto the 24 hour news channel. Might as well see what's happening in the world, he

thought. He leaned forward and turned the volume up as a story caught his attention. The words "Breaking News" flashed up on the screen as the newscaster proceeded.

"Local authorities are blaming poor road conditions and lack of driver attention for a fatal car pile-up early this morning on the mountain roads just outside of Ust'-Uls, Russia. It is believed at least 7 people are confirmed dead, with the numbers expected to rise as rescuers continue to pull victims from the wrecked vehicles."

Gordon watched intensely, waiting for the pretty blonde to confirm what he already knew in his gut.

"...Authorities called International Rescue for help when they were unable to get to a group of stranded children whose bus had swerved off the edge of the road and hung over a ravine. Reports so far have confirmed that the children were removed safely. We will keep you updated as further details come in. In other news, French Prime Minister...."

"CLICK"

Gordon switched off the TV. He should have been home; he was probably needed with a rescue this large. He glanced at his watch and decided to call John. Gordon needed to go home, and the sooner, the better.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 07/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:05:51 GMT

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Thursday, March 15, 2068, 1 a.m., Tracy Island

The weary, hungry rescuers filed into the dining room, where the beginnings of a satisfying dinner were set out. Brains was setting up a large screen at the head of the table and more than one of the new recruits looked at it and him, puzzled. When everyone was seated, and Kyrano and Lisa were bringing in hot dishes full of appetizing food, Brains explained.

"Since it's so late, Scott wanted the debriefing to take place over dinner. This screen is set up so that John and Callie can take part from Thunderbird Five." He turned to the screen. "Thunderbird Five from base. Do you read?"

John answered. "This is Thunderbird Five, base. Reading you strength 5."

"F-A-B, Five. Tell us when the call came in and the details," Brains said, then he moved to a seat near the screen and sat down.

Callie said, "We received the call on March 14th at around 3:30 p.m. There was a serious multi-vehicle accident with a truck crashing into a bus loaded with children. The noise created an avalanche, thereby blocking conventional rescue from being able to reach the scene."

Scott now took up the tale. He swallowed a bite of salad and said, "By 4:30, we had coordinates and an overview of the problem. Thunderbird One was dispatched immediately and arrived on the scene by 10:20 local time and I scouted the situation. I deployed three sets of calcium spears into the area above the cars to keep them safer in case of another avalanche. Then I used the nose of Thunderbird One to keep the bus from falling any farther while waiting for the arrival of Thunderbird Two with the grabs."

"Scott contacted me here to translate a message into Russian, telling everyone trapped not to panic and that rescue was coming. I also gave Virgil the coordinates to land at a nearby stadium in Ust'-Uls," said Callie.

"Yes," Scott added. "Before moving Thunderbird One to the bus, I used my VTOLs to melt some of the snow away from a couple of the buried cars, helping the locals to dig them out of the avalanches."

Brandon sat picking at his food. How can Scott be so calm? Especially after what we went through. Brandon thought to himself.

Virgil spoke up. "Thunderbird Two arrived on the scene at 11:10 a.m. local time. We first went to the stadium and lowered the pod. Then we returned to the site. We lowered Christopher down onto the roof of the bus to assess the situation."

Christopher looked up from his plate where he had been pushing his food around. "Kat lowered me down to the roof of the bus. I couldn't find any way to get in, but thought some one smaller could, and I reported such."

Kat stopped eating. "Christopher called through his communicator that there was a small opening into the bus, which could be accessed by a very small person, and so Virgil told me that he would put TB2 on automatic pilot and help winch me down. I scrambled in through a tiny broken window and faced a sea of white frightened children. Some were crying and some were trying to put on a brave face. I asked if anyone understood English and one young man, a passenger on the bus, I believe, said that he could speak a little English."

Nikki soon took her end of the story. "Dom and I were ready with Doc to take Thunderbird Seven to the Danger Zone and assist as many of the injured as possible."

"We set up shop close to the danger zone," said Dominic. He took a bite of salad, before setting down his fork. He wasn't very hungry, anyway. "Doctor Tracy and Nikki went to deal with the bus, and I went to start triaging the car wrecks."

"Dom drove Thunderbird Seven into the Danger Zone," Dianne said quietly. "I sent Nikki to the bus, and Dom to begin triage of the cars while I went to one of the avalanche sites."

Kat added, "After I had found out the injuries sustained and had reported back to Doc Virgil reported that TB7 would be some time arriving so, to keep the children from panicking, I started to sing. I went through my entire repertoire of nursery rhymes."

"I made sure the clamps were in position before Virgil activated them," Christopher looked up from a sketch he was doing. "I then informed those inside of what was about to happen," he continued, his voice a monotone.

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:09:12 GMT

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Nikki spoke up again. "There were three badly injured people on the bus, two children with broken bones and an adult with a concussion. Once the bus was stabilized, they were removed to Thunderbird Seven for treatment. The other children had only minor injuries."

"Doc asked Alan and Kat to ascertain the other injuries, starting with the driver of the truck that had crashed into the bus. I then proceeded to examine the vehicles with Virgil when he arrived," Christopher said, sipping his tea. He had not touched his food.

Alan took up the narration. "When we left the bus, Kat and I found the truck driver alive, but slumped over. I helped Kat climb through the window to check how bad he was. His legs were crushed and he was in a bad way, so I called Scott for the cutting equipment," he added.

"Ah, the amputee. Boy, was that a fun experience." Dominic was conscious of being sarcastic at time when he would seem insensate, but it was just his way of dealing. He tried not to show any of the fear he had felt. "I don't know how, but I managed to squeeze in there and tried to staunch the bleeding." He closed his eyes for a moment. "I got soaked in blood. I think it's still all over me. It was hard. Virgil and Scott got him out, thankfully, and he was rushed back to Thunderbird Seven, where we operated on him." He grinned a little. "Doctor Tracy's magic fingers managed to save him." He turned to Dianne. "That was some great surgery."

"Thank you," Dianne murmured almost inaudibly.

Scott continued, "I assigned Alan and Kat to work together in determining where the cutting crews were needed first. Then I worked with Brandon while Virgil, when he arrived, worked with Christopher using the oxyhydrite cutters."

Kat said, "I found a couple in a car who had not made it. As I was leaving I heard a baby crying, calling to Alan and he managed to smash the rear window, I scrambled in and managed to free the baby in the baby seat, and took the baby back to Thunderbird 7.

"All in all, Thunderbird Seven processed seven black tags, 6 red tags, 12 yellow tags and 19 green tags. We took 2 red tags, 4 yellow tags, and one green tag on to the hospital at Perm, when we were informed that the local facility could not accommodate them," Dianne said succinctly.

The very mention of the words black tag sent chills down Callie's back

"Virgil and myself managed to prise a number of roofs from some of the cars," Christopher said. "I

passed a car that had had a serious crash, and heard a young woman's voice calling out. I went round and checked on the driver, a white male in his late fifties." Christopher looked down. "Unfortunately the force of the impact had thrown him forward abruptly." He looked around. "Broke his neck straight away, I would imagine. Then," Christopher rubbed his eyes, trying not to succumb to emotion, "I saw a young woman in her mid twenties in the back seat. She was heavily pregnant but I also noticed a lot of blood."

Brandon was the next to speak up. "When Thunderbird Two arrived at the Danger Zone, I took the recovery vehicle and followed the Firefly to the scene of the pile-up. Once there, I went on ahead to see if I could help out with the bus. After helping to pull the bus back and making sure everything was secure, Scott and I proceeded to look for more victims." Brandon took a sip of water before continuing. "We came upon a severely crushed car containing two victims and started to cut the car open. But, by the time we finished doing so, both driver and passenger had..." Here he stopped, unable to continue.

Scott looked over at Virgil. They could both see that the new recruits were beginning to show signs of the stress from the rescue. The look between his brothers didn't escape Alan's notice. He too could see the strain on their faces.

Maybe it's time to stop talking about what happened and time to start talking about how they feel about what happened, Scott thought.

Alan glanced at Kat, whose eyes were on Christopher. Here we go. Alan could tell that emotions were going to be let loose. Kat was only moments away from it, and he knew she'd been feeling this way for some time.

John, too, noticed the looks on the faces of the people far below him and Callie. He said, "How about a break for a few minutes. Scott?"

Scott glanced over at John. "Okay, John. Everyone get a drink or something and come back in ten. I think we've rehashed the actual events enough and now it's time to get down to the hard part. Expressing just how you felt about this rescue."

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:12:10 GMT
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Virgil made a mental note to thank his space-bound, mind reading brother when he came back dirtside. A break would give everyone a few minutes to get it together.

John looked at Callie. "Want anything in particular?"

"A glass of skim milk. It always helps soothe my nerves."

Christopher looked around, a dazed look on his face. Picking up his drawing, he walked away and sat down in a corner.

Scott stood and stretched, and leaned his head over towards Virgil. "I don't know about you, but I'm wiped. But it's really important that we get this out in the open, or we'll be dealing with the aftermath twice as long."

Virgil looked thoughtful for a few moments, then replied, "You know, we're all so tired, there are going to be things said that wouldn't ordinarily. We may have to deal with them, even into the days to come."

Dianne was about to get up when she felt warm hands on her shoulders. She turned her head to see Lisa behind her. Her mother's hands massaged her neck and shoulders, relaxing her. "How's Jeff?" she asked.

"Cherry send him off to bed around eight," Lisa informed her. She leaned in closer and confided, "He yawned." Dianne chuckled. "I'll warn you, though. He insisted on sleeping in your suite," Lisa said quietly. Dianne's chuckle turned into a groan.

"It's gonna be a bear t' get him out of bed later this mornin'," she said with a sigh.

Callie breathed deeply as John returned with a big glass of skim milk. "Thanks, John."

"You're welcome." He helped himself to his glass of water.

Christopher looked up. "I want to get this all over and done with."

"We will, Christopher," Scott assured him. "But it's a good idea to let people get their thoughts together and maybe steel themselves for this. It won't be pretty."

"I can't believe that you are being calm!" Christopher cried as he returned to the table.

All too soon, the ten minutes were up and everyone reassembled in the dining room. None looked like the break had done much good, but they all looked resolute, as though they wanted to get this over with.

"Who is going to start?" Christopher asked, cradling a fresh cup of tea in his shaking hands.

"Why don't we let the ladies go first?" Scott suggested. "Callie? Do you want to begin?"

"Okay, Scott. Even though I wasn't down there at the actual rescue scene, some of the events did shake me up. Hearing 'black tag' just... made me shiver. I never thought I'd have to deal with that again in my lifetime."

After explaining to the others of her childhood experience, she continued. "I admit that being the interpreter was a bit more challenging than I thought, but at least I was able to translate as quickly as I could. What worries me now is how I'll be able to handle the situation when I'm back on Earth helping with the rescues in person. What if I panic?"

Nikki spoke next. "I've been in situations as bad as this before. Being a trauma nurse makes you a bit more... dispassionate about such things. But I felt frustrated at times. Even with Callie's and

John's help, it was difficult to communicate with the patients. The language barrier made it difficult to find out what was really wrong, or to comfort them.

"Plus, when patients usually came into the hospital from such an event, they had already had some treatment in the field. For the first time, I was the one treating them in the field. It was different... and sometimes overwhelming. There were only three of us, and so many to treat."

Kat took a deep breath, wanting to spill it all out at once, yet not really wanting to say anything at all. "I guess I never knew what real fear was until I climbed into that bus. All those little faces, wide-eyed and so scared. I felt helpless, I wasn't prepared for this."

"If it wasn't for John and Callie, I wouldn't have known what to do or say to those poor children," added Kat. She blinked away the tears that were threatening to spill. "And so many to comfort. Those kids had no one. No parents, no Grandmas... no one! They all needed to be hugged and loved and told how brave they were. I just wish I could have done more." Kat's tears had overflowed and she couldn't stop them. "I wanted to just hold them all, hold them and never let anything hurt them again! They were so frightened." She sniffled.

Heads turned to Dianne.

"Ah'll put in mah two bits when y'all have talked," Dianne said, her drawl heavy. "Mebbe Christopher should go next."

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:15:16 GMT

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Christopher swallowed. "I spoke to the girl, found out her name, where she lived, hobbies, her career. I stayed with her until help arrived. She was telling me all her plans before she started screaming in pain." Christopher was stony-faced. "Then as we were getting close to Thunderbird Seven, her heart failed. After much coaxing, Belinda stabilised, then her heart failed again," Christopher paused, remembering every detail, "I just stood there as she was taken inside. I've never felt so helpless before."

"Chris, what could you have possibly done that Doc and the others hadn't already tried?" Brandon asked softly.

"It's okay, Chris. Tell us what you really feel. No one is going to admonish you for it," Virgil gently prodded.

"I wish we could have saved Belinda." Christopher looked around. "I wish we had more time to do so. I feel like I let her down."

Callie thought, I can't understand how he feels because I wasn't there, but I want to help him as best I can, too.

"We need rescue equipment at the scene a lot quicker," Christopher said, "A smaller version of

Thunderbird 2 with all the essentials onboard ready to go at a moment's notice." He looked around the table. "And then if we need the heavy gear the Big Beast can bring it."

"The point I'm trying to make is that we need to give ourselves more time." Christopher blushed.

John spoke up next. "That's just it. Sometimes time is not on our side, either. We never know how long it can be before it's considered too late."

"Ah agree that time was against us in this emergency," Dianne said quickly. "An' I've said before that Thunderbird Two needs a refit t' make her faster. But anotheah vehicle isn't the ansah. All the equipment's gotta get there at the same time as th' operatives. We can't go out in another vehicle an' then sit around waitin' for the Mole or Thunderbird Four t' be brought t' us."

"I flew an experimental cargo jet in the RAF that would have made a good rescue vehicle," Christopher mused. "It was smaller the T2 and faster, but it had a lot of room AND it was modular in design. Oh well," he shrugged, "just a thought."

If only we could try what that old show Star Trek did, Callie thought. Too bad that was just a cheap special effect.

"Dom?" Scott said quickly, before Dianne could continue. "What about you?"

Dom sat for a few long moments before answering. "I've been in similar situations before. Having multiple victims with polytrauma. Considering that we didn't have medical personnel swarming all over the scene like there would be in the UK or US, I think we did a damn good job."

"Since I have been in similar situations, it's easier for me to be more dispassionate about things. And Dr. Tracy told us right up front that we were not going to be able to save everyone. We were called out to save the bus full of kids. We did that, and did it well. Look at the successes we had, and not the failures."

"I'll never forget that amputee. He was a critical case. Under any other circumstances, he would have died. But, because we were there, he didn't." Dom caught the eye of each and every one of his new teammates. "We made a difference."

"Never a truer word spoke there Dom, me old mate." Christopher smiled for the first time in a long time. "I have to think about that lovely little one in the Sickbay."

Scott sat back. "Y'know, when International Rescue was first started, most of our rescues involved people who either could help in their own salvation or, with a little bit of reviving, were able to assist us in getting them out. But as time went on, things got tougher. And it affected us. We felt like failures. But our commander kept reminding us not to give up. And that's what happened today. None of us gave up."

"We kept at it, despite what we saw, despite the death and pain. And as the site commander, I am proud at the way you all upheld our motto."

"Um, what is the motto?" Callie asked curiously.

The Tracys looked at each other, and in near unison, said, "Never give up. At any cost."

"Then I guess that's something I need to remind myself when it's my turn to help with a rescue when I return."

"Callie," Brandon remarked to his friend, "if you're as skilled on the ground as you were on this assignment, you'll have nothing to worry about."

"Brandon?" Virgil asked. "What about you?"

Brandon grew thoughtful, thinking about what he had seen. "I admit that I was shaken when Scott and I got to the victims and they were already dead. I nearly gave up right there, thinking it was pointless to continue looking. But Scott encouraged me to keep going. And it wasn't easy to keep going lugging that oxyhydrite tank on my back."

Brandon winked and smiled, letting them know he was joking with them. "Seriously, without Scott, without all of you, I don't think I would have pulled through this."

"I was glad to help, Brandon," Scott replied. "And FYI, the tanks are heavy because the gas needs to be heated. As Virgil and I found out the first time we used it!"

"What happened?" Brandon asked.

Virgil smiled wryly. "During testing, we both passed out!"

"You what!?" Callie asked in shock.

"Yeah," Alan added. "Later, as they bravely used it during a fire situation, they weren't affected at all. That gave Brains the clue about heating the gas."

Nikki turned to Dianne. "I guess it's your turn. How did you manage to cope with all of this? Especially since you had Mr. Tracy to worry about here. If I had all that on my mind, I might not have done as good a job as you did."

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:18:07 GMT

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Dianne shook her head slightly. "Ah had to put Jeff out of my mind. Ah knew he was in good hands here and it made it easier to focus on mah patients. An' really, theah was too much work to do for me to think about anything more than what Ah was doing just then. When yoah at a rescue like that, you live in the here and now." Her voice dropped. "Ah must admit that makin' the call on Belinda was hard. But then, it's always hard."

"How long are we going to feel like we do? I mean, how long will it take us to get used to feelings like this?" Kat asked.

Alan looked at her and replied, "Like I said to you before, Kat, you never really get used to it. But, with time and experience, you learn how to deal with it and manage it the best you can. That's why it's so important for us to have these debriefings."

"That's right," Dianne agreed. "An' if any of you need t' talk to someone, Ah'm available. So are the older boys. They've been through this before an' can help you put things in perspective."

Nikki yawned hugely, trying to hide it behind her hand. She looked around, blushing slightly. "I'm sorry," she said. "But I don't think I can keep my eyes open much longer. Do you think we've said everything we need to say?"

"John? Callie?" Scott asked. "Anything else from you?"

John said, "Actually, there is one important thing. Our translator needs some serious upgrading. It didn't work as well as we thought it would."

"I'll discuss that with you, John, when we're both coherent," Brains said, hiding a yawn.

"I need to find my wee one," Dom reminded them.

Callie said, "And I really need to get some sleep. Just doing all the translating got me exhausted."

"Do you guys need anything else from me?" Brandon asked sleepily.

"Nothing else?" Scott asked. The people around the table shook their heads or murmured "No." He yawned. "Okay then. This debriefing is adjourned."

Lisa just then walked into the dining room to see if the debriefing was about over. She said, "Dominic, Joshua is fast asleep in my room. Why not leave him there until tomorrow? And you all should get some rest."

"I'd like to take a quick look in at him, if you don't mind, Lisa," Dom said with a wry grin. "Over anxious father, don't you know."

"Of course, Dominic. And don't worry about him in the morning. Sleep yourself out. Cherry will help me keep an eye on him until you get up."

He followed Lisa out of the room, while the others, sleepily murmuring their goodnights, headed to their beds.

Post by ArtisticRainey, FrankieCTB2, TheWrongTrousers, Hobbeth, MagicMaster8, Tawnyangel22 and Tikatu on 04/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:19:18 GMT

While the debriefing was going on, Lena and Elise were in Thunderbird 7. They had been awakened by the roar of the engines of the two ships as they returned to base, and found themselves unable to go back to sleep. So they dressed and arrived in the kitchen as Kyrano and Lisa were getting the food ready to take into the dining room.

"Why don't you two go back to bed," said Lisa. "You won't be needed for the briefing."

"I'm not sleepy now," Elise answered and Lena nodded agreement.

"Dere must be someting we could do to help. Someting physical, so dat when we go back to bed, we will sleep."

Kyrano and Lisa looked at each other. "Well," she said, "Dianne mentioned that Thunderbird 7 would need to be restocked as soon as possible, in case of another emergency. I suppose you could do that, if you want to."

Elise and Lena looked at each other. "If we have access to it, but I don't know how to get dere, do you?" Elise shook her head.

"Once we have served the others their dinner," offered Kyrano. "I would be more than happy to take you two there, if you still wish to do that."

"Dat would be fine."

"I'll help, too."

Half an hour later, they were standing inside Thunderbird 7, looking around. "It sure looks clean for something involved in a rescue where there were victims of a crash and an avalanche," Elise remarked.

"I believe that Dominic started cleaning procedures, once they had left the site," Kyrano answered. He began to open some of the cupboards to see what needed replenishing. He frowned and said, "This is not good. They used a lot of black tags."

"Black tags?"

"It is what is put on people who have died."

There was silence as the two women thought about what Kyrano had said. Then Lena mentally shook herself and said, "Well, dis Tunderbird isn't going to restock itself. Kyrano, please show us where we can get de supplies. And," she added, looking at the biobeds, "de sheets to make up dose beds."

Soon they were hard at work. Lena had managed to bring up the inventory list on an onboard computer and they carefully and thoroughly went through it. By the time they were finished, the medical vehicle was stocked and ready for another rescue.

"I hope this isn't needed very soon," Elise remarked, as they left to return to the Villa.

Lena smiled tiredly at her. "Dat's a hope everyone shares, young lady. But isn't it good to know dat if it is needed, it's here. And so are de people. It's too bad more people aren't like dis - willing to help in any way dey can, to save otters. It must be frustrating, but very rewarding."

Elise looked sharply at her, but didn't see any sign that Lena was directing the remarks at her personally. But what Lena had said gave her food for thought. They arrived back in the Villa's kitchen and parted, each heading in a different direction to get back to bed and get some sleep.

Post by Hobbeth on 08/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:21:38 GMT

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Thursday, March 15, 2068, early morning, Tracy Island

Jeff woke suddenly, the feeling of pressure in his groin alarming him with its urgency. He turned his head to see Dianne sleeping in the king-sized bed next to him. She hadn't disturbed him when she came in; he had no idea when she had come home and come to bed. Another turn of his head and he saw the clock; four a.m.

Reaching out with his good arm, he shook Dianne by the shoulder. "Dianne? Dianne, honey? Please wake up. I need to go! Please wake up!"

With a groan she stirred and rolled over to face him. "Whust th' matta, Jeff?" she slurred, half asleep, her eyes still closed.

"I've got to use the toilet, Dianne. Right now!"

Her face screwed up into an almost painful grimace, and her eyelids parted fractionally. With a loud sigh, she turned on the light on her night stand. Then she threw back the covers and stumbled out of bed, putting a hand down on the bed for support as she made her way around to his side. Jeff pulled off his covers and tried to lever himself into a sitting position with his good arm. He managed to swing his left leg off the bed, followed by his right, but there was no rail to grip with his right hand so he couldn't pull himself up fully.

Dianne faced him, squinting. "Give me your hand," she said, her voice sounding scratchy. He did so, and she pulled him into an upright sitting position. "Jeff, this is why Ah insisted you sleep in the sick room. It's a helluva lot easier t' get you out of bed!"

"I'll remember that for tomorrow night, I promise," he said as he reached out to put his arm around her shoulders. She dipped down, bending her knees, and then stood, bringing him into a standing position with her and then pivoting him around and into the wheelchair. He activated it, and wheeled it into the bathroom. Dianne followed, stumbling a bit. She knew he'd need help on and off the toilet.

Jeff sighed heavily as Dianne helped him sit on the commode. This was not what he was used to; he was a stand-up kind of guy and could hardly wait for the day when he could do target practice in the bowl again. But finally the crisis was over and Jeff sighed again, this time from relief. Dianne, who had gotten herself a quick drink of water, came back to help him rearrange his pajama bottoms and get him back into the chair. Then he made a multi-point turn to get headed back out in the right direction and followed his wife back into the bathroom. Neither of them worried about the lights; they were on a motion-sensitive switch.

He maneuvered his chair back to his side of the bed and put on the brakes. Dianne stood before him, ready to help him up and over onto the mattress. She got him up out of the chair, and took two steps backwards. Suddenly, she stumbled and fell back onto the mattress, with Jeff landing right on top of her, his face buried in her cleavage!

"This is a pleasant surprise," he said, smiling to himself. He began to kiss whatever of Dianne's skin he could reach with his lips, and, with his good hand, stroked what he couldn't kiss. Using his good right leg, he pushed himself up along her body some more and felt a welcome warmth that he didn't try to squelch.

"Jeff," Dianne moaned, "Ah've only had two hours of sleep, an' you want t' get all amorous? Y'know Ah'll probably fall asleep on you."

"I most certainly hope not," Jeff said as he continued trying to arouse his wife. Of his own arousal, he had no doubt; it was in full swing.

"Ah suppose that if'n Ah don' satisfy you, Ah'll be helpin' you change yoah pajamas, won't Ah?" Dianne groused as she tried to sit up.

Jeff wouldn't let her sit up, instead positioning his body across hers so that she had no choice but to endure his advances. He continued arousing her with his lips, and hand, and despite her body's pleas for sleep, Dianne found herself responding to him. She moaned softly as her hands wove themselves through his hair and held him closer. It had been too long.

Jeff knew he should slow down, but he couldn't. He knew his wife needed to sleep, but he also knew her body well. The more he thought about how delicious she was, lying beneath him, the more he suddenly realised he wasn't going to be able to wait. Dianne moaned as her lips softly touched his skin. It was all he needed.

He tried to hold back, tried to mumble something to his wife, but it was too late. He gasped, his breath coming quickly. Then his breathing slowed and Dianne felt him relax. She knew immediately what had just happened.

"Honey, it's okay. Ah understand." she said with a sigh.

He looked at apologetically and kissed her. "I'm so sorry, I just..."

She held a finger to his lips. "Shhhh... Ah said it was okay." She smiled then added, "Ah suppose Ah'd better get those clean pajama bottoms for you after all! Especially if Ah wanna go back to

sleep!"

Jeff Tracy smiled at her. God how he loved this woman!

Post by Tikatu and FrankieCTB2 on 08/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:45:35 GMT

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Thursday, March 15, 2068, 9:30 a.m., Tracy Island

Dianne picked up the letter and read it again. Do I really want to do this? There was so much hurt, so much anger and even hatred. Things are finally cooling down after so long; the mail screening service says they haven't seen one of those awful letters for a while now. She shivered as she remembered the threats and the hate mail that came her way in the wake of the bombing.

She looked at the letter again. What time is it in Greenville, anyway? Four thirty yesterday I think. Reaching out, she dialed the phone number on the stationery. Maybe this will be a final healing.

The phone rang twice and was picked up by a smart looking secretary.

"You've reached Martin and Freeds. Good afternoon, how may I direct your call?"

"Ah'd like t' speak to Mr. Boyd Martin. Is he available?"

The secretary unconsciously wrinkled her nose a bit at Dianne's drawl. Dianne had to wonder if the woman knew that she had that unbecoming tic.

"Who is calling, please?"

"Dr. Dianne Tracy."

"One moment, please."

Despite her attempts to appear cool, the secretary's eyes widened a bit at the Tracy name. Dianne had gotten quite a bit of press on her marriage to Jeff, exposure that she had hoped wouldn't impair her functions as an IR operative. So far, so good, she thought. No one has connected IR's 'Doc' with Dr. Dianne Tracy. In the meantime, my married name seems to carry a little bit of clout, even now.

The muzak that had filled her ear while she was on hold ceased, and Boyd Martin's silver hair and pudgy face filled her screen.

"Good day, Dr. Tracy. I'm gratified to hear from you. I wasn't sure I would with your husband's accident and all. How is he doing, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Hello, Mr. Martin. He's doing well, especially since he's back home. Thank you for askin'. Ah'm calling about this... invitation you sent, t' speak at the memorial service. Ah'm sorry for not getting back t' you sooner; Ah didn't even see the letter 'til we'd arrived back home." She looked down at the letter again and back up at Mr. Martin. "Is it too late t'... accept the invitation?"

Boyd Martin looked as if he'd been stung, then he smiled. "Oh, no, Dr. Tracy. It's not too late. We were about to ask someone else to speak if we hadn't heard from you by the end of the week, but... no, it's not too late at all. Thank you for accepting our invitation."

"Thank you for inviting me," Dianne returned. She frowned a bit. "Ah am curious, howevuh, as t' why yoah committee chose me. In years previous, y'all'd rathuh Ah an' mah children stayed home altogethuh."

The man on the other end of the vidcall sighed heavily. "I know, Dr. Tracy, and I apologize for that attitude. I don't know if you've heard, but... La Fontaine has been convicted. And both Homeland Security and the FBI have officially closed the case. They issued a statement saying that La Fontaine worked alone."

Dianne swallowed hard at the name La Fontaine. Charles La Fontaine had been a close co-worker of her first husband, Rick, and had even dined with them from time to time. To discover, months after the bombing, that La Fontaine, presumed dead, was hiding with the members of a confirmed terrorist cell in Los Angeles, had been a hard blow for Dianne and her children. But his capture was the one thing that had cheered her as well. She knew that eventually the whole story of the bombing would come out, and her Richard, suspected and reviled, would have his name officially cleared. Now it had happened.

"Thank you for thet news, Mistuh Martin. Ah hadn't heard with all the anxiety surroundin' mah husband aftuh the crash. Ah feel like mah Richard has finally been vindicated."

"He has, Dr. Tracy. Most decidedly so. And as a gesture towards healing, the memorial committee unanimously decided to ask you to speak." Boyd lowered his gaze for a moment, then looked up. "We'd also like permission for something else."

"For whut, Mistuh Martin?" Dianne asked, a hint of suspicion in her voice.

"To move the memorial to your husband...."

"What? Why d'you want to do that?" Dianne cried. "Aftuh all the hassle we went through t' get it anywhere on the grounds at all... now y'want t' move it?!"

"Dr. Tracy! Hear me out, please!" Boyd called out loudly. When Dianne subsided, still glowering, he put a finger under his collar to loosen it. "We want to move the memorial to its proper place, Dr. Tracy. To ground zero, where your husband was standing when that bomb went off. And we wish to dedicate it to his memory, something we never did for fear of stirring up more... unrest." He paused for a moment. "Please, Dr. Tracy. I know we can't make up for what you and your family went through while the whole investigation dragged on and on. But please let us make what overtures we can to apologize for, if not actively participating in your pain, turning a blind eye to what was going on." His voice took on a note of pleading. "Please... let us make what amends we

can."

Dianne took a couple of deep breaths to calm and compose herself. "Ah will nevuuh unnerstan' why mah Richard was suspected in the fust place. Nor will Ah evuh unnerstan' why people hated me and mine so much. We didn't deserve the hate mail and the threats. But we endured. Mistuh Martin, if'n 'twill make you feel bettuh, please, go ahead. You have mah permission t' move the memorial. You can clean it off while yoah at it; Ah'm sure it's been defaced agin. Ah look forward to see it finally in its rightful place."

She swallowed and brought her voice, which had been rising in volume, back down to a normal level. "Ah won't apologize for gettin' hot, Mistuh Martin. This has been a long time comin'. Now, when d'you want me there?"

"If you could be here next Wednesday for a run-through of the program, we'd greatly appreciate it," Boyd Martin replied. "The run-through would be at 10 a.m. I will email you with the particulars."

"Ah will be there," Dianne told him. Her voice was steady now, but she knew it wouldn't be for much longer. "Could someone please make sure that there will be a chair for mah husband?"

"Yes, Dr. Tracy. I'll make sure of it myself." He scribbled down a note. "Will you need anything else?"

"Nothin' Ah can think of," she replied. Except a whole mess of courage.

"Then we'll see you Wednesday at ten," Boyd Martin said, a tone of relief in his voice. "Goodbye, Dr. Tracy."

"Goodnight, Mr. Martin." She deactivated the call. Looking at the now-silent vidphone, she felt her tears, held back by sheer determination to not cry in front of the man she faced, slide down her cheeks. And in the privacy of her suite, she cried, shedding tears of sorrow, anger, and relief that a painful chapter of her life was about to come to a close.

Post by Tikatu on 09/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:47:00 GMT

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Thursday, March 15, 2068, 8 a.m. local time, Kabul, Afghanistan

Tin-Tin adjusted her head scarf as she stepped from the taxi. She had opted for a long, traditional Malaysian batik blouse with coordinating slacks and a head scarf, in accordance with the local traditions. Behind her, Emily Tracy wore a nearly ankle-length skirt and a white blouse under a coordinating jacket. She, too, wore a head scarf, though she had grumbled about it.

"Why can't the locals let their visitors dress as they please? If they visited the States, they wouldn't have to change their clothes to match our traditions!"

"Mrs. Tracy, the United States does not have a single religious tradition," Tin-Tin had said with a sigh. "It's much more open. Here, we do not want to offend, and so 'In Rome...!'"

"Do as the Romans do," Emily finished the old saw and sighed.

The manufacturing plant looked very modern and up-to-date. They were met at the security gate by a Mr. Fudail al Kadar.

"I am so happy to meet the creator of such a unique fabric, Ms. Kyrano," Fudail said, bowing to her.

She returned the bow, and introduced Emily as her chaperone. "I hope we can discover why there has been such trouble manufacturing my fabric."

"Truly, we share the same goal." His gaze shifted from Tin-Tin to a tall, thin blond who had come up behind her. "Ah, Mr. Tallman. You are in good time." Fudail smiled widely. "Mr. Tallman is considering placing a large order at our plant."

"Giles Tallman," the blond said, taking Tin-Tin's hand and bowing over it.

"Tin-Tin Kyrano," she answered graciously. She indicated Grandma Tracy. "My chaperone, Emily." Emily glowered at him.

Giles smiled toothily. "Charmed, I'm sure."

Fudail rubbed his hands together, then presented each of the visitors with security badges. "Now," he said, his dark eyes shining eagerly. "Let me show you the jewel of our company." With that, the foursome entered the building proper.

Behind them, a small man, dressed in native garb, watched them enter. Satisfied, he climbed into his ancient car and drove away.

And outside the gates, another man, large and dark and dressed in shirtsleeves and jeans, watched the small party go inside, and then the other watcher drive away. He got back into his own truck and pulled out a small, sophisticated computer. Typing quickly, he sent an email message.

"Our pigeons are being hunted."

Post by Tikatu on 10/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:49:27 GMT
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Thursday, March 15, 2068, 1 p.m., Tracy Island

Christopher finished his mopping of the deck plating in Thunderbird 2. Wiping his forehead, he looked around. "Come on, Christopher," he muttered to himself, "pull yourself together."

Virgil, who was restocking the oxyhydrite tanks, was also keeping an eye on the new recruit. He noticed that Christopher was vigorously working on Thunderbird Two's maintenance duties. Working a little too vigorously.

Time for that talk I promised myself I'd have with him, Virgil thought as he stowed the last tank. He pulled two bottles of water from the newly-stocked fridge and headed out to the flight deck.

"Here, Chris. Time to take a break," Virgil said with a smile, holding out the bottle of cold water.

Christopher's head whipped round, startled. Then he saw his colleague approaching, and Virgil saw him visibly relax.

"Thank you, Virgil." Christopher accepted the bottle, then sat down. He opened the bottle and took a long swig. "That is good stuff, what do you put in it?"

"Nothing, really. We import it from New Zealand," Virgil said before taking a drink. They sat quietly for a moment, then Virgil asked, "What's that floor done to you lately? You seem to be giving it a brutal mopping."

"Was it that noticeable?" Christopher looked at Virgil. "I've seen things that would make your Grandma's hair curl, but death is something I've never experienced before."

"Hmm. It's hard, isn't it? Especially when it's someone you've tried your damndest to save," Virgil observed, his voice full of understanding.

"Maybe it's the stereotypical British reserve." Christopher looked at his feet. "But I was always taught not to express my feelings. It was a hangover from my father's upbringing."

"A military man?" Virgil asked.

"No!" Christopher laughed. "He was a bank manager. But his dad was in the RAF, so was his dad before him."

"Ah. I see now. I do understand. My dad was military. Air Force and Space Agency. He brought us up with that 'stiff upper lip' attitude, too. Especially after our mother died. He grieved silently for years," Virgil said, sitting back against a bulkhead. "He expected us to suck it up, too. And to some extent, we do. Or we did. Now our stepmother makes sure we have an outlet when we need one."

"Can I ask you something?" Christopher took another swig. "What did Scott think of us RAF people? You know, when he came over for an inspection tour?"

"I don't know. He never really talked about it. At least not to me. He might have talked about it to Dad, them both being Air Force and all," Virgil said mildly. "And even if he did, he'd probably not

have been uncomplimentary. Our grandmother has drummed it into our heads that if we're not going to say something nice, we're not to say anything at all." Virgil rolled his eyes and took another mouthful.

"Belinda and me had a lot in common." Christopher's eyes misted over. "We knew the same parts of the world. Probably knew all the same places to get a good bag of chips, or the best pubs. I wish I could have gone back there with her." He smiled faintly. "I wonder if I can ever learn to be detached and in control like you established people." Christopher wiped his eyes. "Kat was beside herself about those orphans."

"What would you have done if you had gone back into the surgery with Belinda?" Virgil asked.

"I wouldn't know anything to do," Christopher admitted. "All I'd be good for was to hold hands and try and encourage her, but that wouldn't have been very good at the time."

"You're right, there. There was nothing you could have done but encourage. Which you did before she got there. But it wouldn't have changed the outcome, would it? And you might have even... delayed things. So, it was best that you didn't go back." Virgil sighed. "As far as being detached and in control? You'll learn, through practice. You'll learn that in a rescue, you live in the here and now. Get out the next victim. Follow the plan. You can't take time for grief or even joy until it's all over. And you do learn to count your successes, like Dom said. Otherwise, you get overwhelmed by the loss."

Christopher sighed. "You are right. It will take me some time to get used to." He looked at Virgil. "I'd better get on with learning to fly this craft, and looking after Asterix. I won't let any of you down." He finished his water. "I'm feeling rather peckish."

"You should be," Virgil said, looking at his watch. "It's past time for lunch. C'mon. Let's get something to eat and I'll schedule you for the simulator at four. Will that work for you?"

"Perfect." Christopher got to his feet. "Thanks for the talk. I needed it."

"You're welcome. Anytime," Virgil said, meaning every word.

Post by TheWrongTrousers and Tikatu on 10/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:51:59 GMT
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Tracy Island; Thursday, March 15th, 2068; 4:30PM

Lena opened the French doors to the balcony and walked over to a chaise. The record-a-line program had been perfected and installed, and she had shown Brains, Jeff, Dianne, Scott, Alan and Virgil how to use it. It had been a long day, and she hadn't gotten that much sleep the previous night. She was tired - too tired to do any more of her needlework. Besides, she was running out of thread. She had a photo album in her hand that she wanted to look at for a while.

She sat down and opened the album. It contained pictures of her family, and as she looked at each picture, she thought, I miss my babies. My work here is done, so it's time for me to go home. I was only supposed to be here for a few days and it's been over a week. I must talk to Mr. Tracy about dat tomorrow. But I...

A knock on the door interrupted her thoughts. She got up and went over, opening it. Lisa was outside, holding a tray with two cups of tea and some cookies. "Jeff reminded me that we haven't been very sociable, and I thought you'd like some tea and company before dinner."

"Tank you, Lisa. Dat's very thoughtful. But I don't know what kind of company I'd be right now. I'm ratter tired and..." She paused.

"Homesick?" Lisa nodded at the album in Lena's hand. "I imagine that contains pictures of your family."

"How did you know?"

"If I took a picture album with me when I went away from home, that's what would be in it."

Lena smiled. "Okay. Please come in. Let's go onto de balcony. It's pleasant out dere and I feel de need for some fresh air." She turned and led the way. Lisa went over to a small table between two chairs and put the tray on it. The ladies sat down and began to sip their tea.

Lisa indicated the album. "May I have a look?"

Lena handed it over to her. She opened it and slowly turned the pages. "You have a fine looking family. Oh, is this your husband?"

Lena leaned over to look. It was a wedding picture, and she and her husband were obviously very much in love in it. They were smiling, but not at the camera. She remembered that just after the picture was taken, he kissed her. In fact, he made a habit of kissing her after every picture that was taken, not just on that day, but during their entire marriage. She imparted that tidbit to Lisa, who smiled and sighed, "How romantic."

Lena chuckled. "Sometimes de kisses weren't very romantic. He would get in dese silly moods and just as he moved in for de kiss, he would cross his eyes."

Lisa laughed. "Love and humor. An excellent combination in a marriage."

"Yes, exactly."

Lisa continued to turn the pages. She stopped at a single large picture of a young Lena holding a baby. It appeared to be slightly scorched around the edges. The child didn't look like any of the ones in the other pictures she'd seen. "Who is this, Lena?" She turned it to the other woman.

Lena looked up and her face saddened. "Dat was my first-born son."

The other woman looked startled. "I thought you only had one son."

"I do. Dis one was killed when de house we lived in caught fire."

"Oh no. How horrible. How old was he?"

"Ten monts and tirteen days." Lena looked off into the distance, as memories flooded her mind. "My husband and I had gone out to celebrate our anniversary. We had a sixteen year old daughter of a friend as a sitter for my Daniel. When we returned tree hours later, de firemen were dere and de house was engulfed. De sitter was getting oxygen at an ambulance, but when I asked where my baby was, she just looked blankly at me. I pulled de mask off her face and grabbed her by de shoulders, lifting her to her feet. I screamed at her, "Where is my baby?!?," and she started crying and pointed to de house.

Lisa stood up and put the album on the seat. She went over to Lena and knelt beside her, putting her arms around her. "Oh, Lena, I'm so sorry."

Lena returned the hug. "It was over forty years ago. I don't know what I would have done witout my husband. He was so supportive. I was pregnant again wit twins and Mark reminded me dat I had two more to tink of and said our son would not want me to neglect dem, because he was gone. And he held me and grieved wit me at night, which drew us closer to each otter."

"Did they ever find out what caused the fire?"

"Yes. It was a frayed lamp cord. It had shorted, which caused de curtains to catch fire. De sitter had fallen asleep, even dough it wasn't late. She'd inhaled a lot of smoke and was unconscious when de fire department got dere. Dey had been called by neighbors. She'd just regained consciousness a few moments before we arrived."

"How terrible for you, Lena. I can't even begin to imagine how I would have reacted if that had happened to one of my children when they were that young."

"Well, dey told me afterward dat he never felt any pain, since he actually died of smoke inhalation, which was some comfort. Then my twins were born five and a half monts later, and during dat time we had to find a new place to live, buy new close, new furniture, everyting. But dat picture is de only ting of my son's dat survived de fire."

"I'm sorry if talking about it has caused you any pain, Lena." Lisa stood up.

Lena looked up at her and smiled. "No, not much. It is good to remember. Daniel Abayomi brought us much joy and love while he was wit us. I don't ever want to forget him.

"That's a good attitude to have." Lisa looked at her watch. "Goodness, the time flew. How are you in the kitchen?"

Lena laughed, a sound that pleased both of them. "I don't burn anyting, if dat's what you mean."

"Then you've just volunteered to help Kyrano and me. Shall we?"

Lena nodded and, after she put her album on the nightstand, opened the door for Lisa, who had the tray in her hands once again. The two women left the Round House and headed to the Villa's kitchen.

Post by Hobbeth on 11/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:54:15 GMT

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Thursday, March 15, 2068, 11:30 a.m., local time, Kabul, Afghanistan

Tin-Tin was getting antsy. Mr. al Kadar was taking them systematically over the entire plant, pointing out every little detail of the operations. She had to admit that she was impressed by the quality of the equipment they had available, but she was anxious to get down to work on finding the root of the problem with her fabric blend. And so far, there had been no mention of her particular problem. She hoped that after Mr. Tallman had been shown the plant, they could break for lunch and then Tin-Tin could get down to brass tacks.

Giles pretended to be interested in the manufacturing plant and its equipment, but he was much more interested in watching the two women, especially Ms. Kyrano. He could see her growing agitation, her itchiness to get down to business. He surreptitiously watched Emily, too, trying to discern her real purpose in following the young woman around. She couldn't be an intelligence agent... or could she? Her stated purpose of chaperoning the younger woman just didn't ring true to him. But he couldn't figure out any other reason for her presence.

Emily was bored. She had been interested in the plant and the equipment at first and had approved of Tin-Tin's choice of manufacturer for her new fabric. But after having been shown the sanitary facilities (of which there seemed to be many), the offices of every junior executive (and been introduced formally to each and every one), and even the heating and cooling controls, her feet hurt and her head swam with all the unfamiliar terms and names. She wanted nothing more than to return to the hotel, put up her feet, and have a nice lunch. And she didn't trust this Mr. Tallman, either. She caught him gazing at Tin-Tin when he thought she wasn't looking, and she knew he most certainly wasn't as interested in the equipment and facilities as he was in Tin-Tin. She had also felt his eyes on her from time to time, and wondered just what he thought of a young woman having a chaperone in this day and age.

Finally, they had returned to the foyer from whence they had started the long tour.

"And here we are, back at our beginning," Fudail said with a toothy grin. "Have you any questions?"

"Yes, Mr. al Kadar. As you know, I am here to discover why my new fabric formula is not working. When can I speak with your engineers and begin the process of finding out what is going wrong?" Tin-Tin asked bluntly.

Fudail looked at his watch. "I understand your concern about your creation, Ms. Kyrano. We are now at the lunch break and our workers will go home for their meal and afternoon rest. They will return at two. Perhaps if you could return then as well? I will have our head engineer ready to assist you at that time."

Tin-Tin sighed. "Of course, Mr. al Kadar. I will make arrangements to return then."

"If I may make a suggestion," Giles said with a charming smile. "Why don't we three share a taxi back to the city and have luncheon together? I am very fascinated with your project and would like to hear more about it."

Emily sent a warning glance to Tin-Tin. The Malaysian girl smiled apologetically.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Tallman. Perhaps some other time. My employer is very anxious that this project remains under wraps for the time being. For security reasons. I hope you understand."

Giles smiled again, and Emily noticed that the smile didn't extend to his eyes. "Of course, Ms. Kyrano. I understand your employer's concern. Perhaps some other time, for purely social purposes. Where could I reach you?"

Tin-Tin glanced quickly over at Emily, who shook her head just the tiniest bit. "I hope to be leaving by tomorrow, Mr. Tallman. I'm afraid I won't have time to have dinner with you."

"Ah!" Giles exclaimed, still smiling, but not quite as eagerly as before. "Well, then. It has been a pleasure meeting you, Ms. Kyrano, Emily. Mr. al Kadar, I will be in touch." He shook hands with each of them, and left the plant. Emily's eyes followed him as he was picked up by a car and driver, not a taxi.

"I shall summon a taxi for you, ladies, and I shall expect you back at two this afternoon, if that is suitable," Fudail told them.

"Thank you, sir. That will be fine," Tin-Tin replied. She and Emily stood quietly waiting for the cab, not wanting to talk about what they had seen and heard until they were in private. Emily turned over the encounter with Giles in her mind and she frowned.

There's just something about that boy that I don't like. I can't put my finger on it, but I'd better keep him away from Tin-Tin!

Post by Tikatu on 12/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 04:57:45 GMT
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Tracy Island; Thursday, March 16th; 7:30 PM

"Lena," Jeff said as he wheeled himself into the lounge after dinner, Brains and Lena following him, "I'm sorry we didn't get to chat the other night like I said we would, but..."

"Dere was an emergency, a rescue to be done, and dat must take precedence. Now dat tings are back to normal, so to speak, it's as good a time as any to have our talk." She grinned. "Especially since you don't know when de next call to action will come."

Jeff chuckled. "You are so right. So let's get down to business."

They spent the next hour going over the details of Lena's becoming an agent for International Rescue. They decided to upgrade both her home and office computers, and give her a state-of-the-art laptop. Brains pointed out that it meant her home would also have to have a security system installed. Lena wanted to protest, but realized that it was necessary. But it doesn't mean dat I have to like it. She sighed as they continued.

One point of contention was his insistence on paying her extra for her services as an agent. Lena was adamant, stating that she didn't need more money, nor did she want it. Finally, an idea came to her, to establish a trust fund for her grandchildren and great grandchildren. Jeff like the idea and agreed to set up an account in the bank of her choice. The money would go directly into it.

Finally the details were worked out, and they shook hands. Jeff asked, "Is there anything else you need?"

"Well, my work here is done, and..."

"And you want to go home."

"Not dat I haven't enjoyed being here and working wit Brains, but I miss my family."

"Of course. I understand. Well, we do have to go to New York to pick up Gordon."

He noticed Lena's inquiring look, and added, "Another son. He stayed there to look after the business, while the rest of us came home." He fell silent for a moment, remembering how he felt upon returning to Tracy Island. "Yes, I really do understand your desire to go home.: He suddenly remembered an earlier conversation with his wife. "A thought just occurred to me. Dianne will be going to South Carolina for a memorial service and I'm going to accompany her. Perhaps we could all go together. We could spend a few days in New York before heading south. And stop in DC to drop you off when we go."

"Dat brings me to anotter concern, Mr. Tracy. De employee dat had been taking charge of de DC group in my place sent me a few emails telling me dat de I&M supervisor in your New York offices has been complaining vociferously dat he wasn't informed, or kept informed, about what happened wit de glitch."

"Should you have, prior to coming here?"

"No, sir. I tought de problem was limited to de D.C. offices."

"Then there was no reason for him to be notified, and none for him to be complaining."

"Well, perhaps I could go see him in person, to explain to him why he wasn't notified and maybe smooch things over."

Jeff turned to his computer and brought up the employee roster. "Here he is. Leonard Peterson." He read the reports on him. "Do you really want to talk to him, Lena? From what I've read here, he isn't the type to be easily appeased. He may even be jealous of the fact that you came here to fix the problem, and not him."

Lena hesitated. "Well," she mused, "if I go, I might be able to make him realize he has nothing to be jealous about."

"I doubt it. You're far more qualified than he is to do such work. He is an adequate supervisor, good for going to meetings and taking care of his department. His computer skills are fair, but not out of the ordinary; in fact his people do all the work in that area. He seems to use his terminal mostly for writing his reports, and sending out memos via email. He doesn't seem to have any initiative." He looked at her. "In fact, I'm beginning to think he would be better used in another department. The problem would be replacing him."

"I'm sure one of the people under his supervision would do very well in his job. There usually is one who would qualify. And I think that I should be the one to talk to him. It might be easier all around if he hears about what happened with the glitch from a peer, instead of higher up. So I'll talk to him."

"Okay, then. You have my approval. And I'll take your suggestion under advisement, Lena. Thank you."

"Once I get things straightened out with Mr. Peterson, I could hop a commercial plane. I am anxious to get back home, to my family and my," she grinned, "regular job."

"You wouldn't mind? You would be welcome as our guest."

"Not at all. But thank you for the offer."

"All right, then. I'll arrange for transportation to the airport, a first class ticket - no arguments, Lena," he added as she began to protest, "and transportation from BWI to your home. I always take care of my agents."

She was chuckling. "Apparently you do. But I'm not about to take advantage of it. Even though it wouldn't be hard to get used to that kind of treatment."

He laughed along with her. "Okay, then. I'll make the arrangements. We'll probably be leaving in the next day or two." He sobered and said, "You know, I'm going to miss you around here. I've enjoyed our talks."

"So have I. Well, I'm sure this isn't the end of them. We'll be seeing each other again."

Jeff smiled. "I'm sure we will."

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 05:01:04 GMT

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Thursday, March 15, 2068, 6 p.m., local time, Kabul, Afghanistan

Tin-Tin dropped her small briefcase on the suite's sofa and sighed. She flopped down into a chair, kicking off her shoes and unwrapping her head scarf, then leaning back and closing her eyes. Emily shuffled in behind her, immediately removing the offending cloth and moving quickly to her own room. Tin-Tin rubbed her temples. A headache was coming on: a headache born of frustration.

Her afternoon at the plant had not been productive. The engineer she had been assigned to work with, one Siddig al Bashir, was by turns arrogant, patronizing, and desultory. He could not believe that a person as young as she was, and a woman to boot, could come up with a formula as complex as the one they were working with. Tin-Tin bit her tongue and worked as fast as she could. Emily had been sitting in the corner, doing a crossword puzzle from a book she had brought along, but Tin-Tin could almost feel the heat of Emily's silent seething. To her credit, she kept silent, allowing Tin-Tin to deal with this man in her own way.

Every time Tin-Tin felt that she had the answer to the problem, her "colleague" dismissed it as being impossible or improbable. At last, Tin-Tin saved her work and closed her laptop with a decisive snap! She stood regally and regarded the other engineer coolly.

"Mr. al Bashir. Your conduct here has been unbecoming a professional. Rest assured I will be reporting it to Mr. al Kadar. And I will also tell him that your inability to work with me on the problem has made me reconsider doing business with this firm. Now, you will escort me to Mr. al Kadar's office so I can speak with him immediately on this matter."

Al Bashir looked mutinous, and Tin-Tin was afraid he was going to refuse. Then Emily got up out of her chair and faced the younger man. She silently glared at him, daring him to show her any disrespect. Then she said very quietly, "You'd better hop to it or believe me, you'll be out of a job tomorrow."

It seemed that Emily's intervention did the trick. He turned and said sullenly, "Follow me." The two women looked at each other and gathered up their things to follow the sulking engineer to his superior's office.

"There is a problem," he said bluntly.

Fudail looked up at Tin-Tin and asked, "So, have you discovered why your formula is not working?"

"I believe I have. But Mr. al Bashir does not concur. In fact, he has been of little help at all. I have

found him to be arrogant and patronizing, constantly insinuating that because I am a young woman, I cannot have developed such a formula," Tin-Tin said coldly. "Every time I have suggested a possible cause for this problem, he has dismissed it. His behavior is making me reconsider doing business with your firm."

"What have you deduced the problem to be?" Fudail asked.

"Temperature. For some reason, the temperature of the mixture has fluctuated from the very specific parameters I set in my formula," she explained. "Either your equipment is at fault or your employees aren't monitoring it well enough."

Fudail turned to Siddig. "Your opinion?"

"Her formula cannot be produced," the engineer stated flatly.

Tin-Tin and Emily gasped at this bald-faced lie. The older woman's face took on a stubborn expression, but a touch from Tin-Tin's hand stayed her angry words.

"Since your engineer seems to think this cannot be produced, I will have every copy of my formula, digital or hard, removed from your premises," Tin-Tin said resolutely. "Now. I am withdrawing my order."

Fudail looked surprised at her forcefulness. He thought about who she was rumored to be representing. I cannot afford to alienate such a powerful possible client. He looked over at Siddig who stood stoically, as if daring him to contradict his conclusion.

"Ms. Kyrano. If before you pull your order, let us give your idea a trial run. Tomorrow we will set up the equipment for mixing your formula. You may be on hand to see our operations, and to oversee the manufacturing process. We will take every care to adhere to your specifications. If it should happen that under ideal circumstances, the formula cannot be manufactured, then you have every right to cancel your order. I shall gladly hand over every piece of documentation surrounding it. And I will purge our files of it as well. But, if it turns out you are correct and temperature is the issue, then would you please reconsider pulling your order?"

Tin-Tin looked from Siddig to Fudail and back again. "All right. I will be here tomorrow to oversee the mixing of the formula. But if I will not work with this man again."

"Agreed," Fudail said, smiling. He rose from his seat and shook Tin-Tin's hand. "Please, let me escort you out."

Emily came out of her room and sat down in a chair across from Tin-Tin. She regarded her "adopted granddaughter" with a critical eye.

"You need a good meal, and hot bath, and some sleep, child. I've ordered room service."

"Oh, thank you, Mrs. Tracy," Tin-Tin sighed gratefully.

Emily shook a finger at her. "I've told you time and time again, Tin-Tin. It's either Grandma or

Emily. Your choice."

"Okay... Grandma," Tin-Tin said with a slight smile.

As the room service came, Emily's sharp eyes noticed a small man, dressed in native garb, cleaning the inside of the windows at the end of the hall. This is an odd time to clean windows. It's dark outside. I think I've seen that little man before, following us. And that Mr. Tallboy was in the lobby, too. I'm sure he was waiting for us. Something's going on here and Tin-Tin's at the center of it all. I'm glad I came along to help protect her!

Post by Tikatu on 12/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 05:02:32 GMT
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Thursday, March 15th, 2068, 7:30 p.m, Tracy Island

After dinner, Nikki decided to take a walk on the beach on her own. Images of last night's rescue were playing on a loop in her mind. She had to admit she was surprised that she managed to sleep through the night after the rescue with those haunting images plaguing her mind. In the end, she put it down to major exhaustion. She came to a stop and sat down on the sand with her back leaning against a rock.

Her hand roamed in the grainy sand, picking up small pebbles and shells. When she had a good group of them in her hand, she stood up and began skimming them into the rushing ocean.

She turned when she heard footsteps crunching on the dry sand towards her. "Hi."

"Hey. I saw you from the balcony and thought you'd might like some company."

Nikki glanced at her hand and dropped what pebbles and shells that remained to the ground. "Thanks, Alan." She sat back down in her previous place.

Alan sat beside her. "You seemed pretty quiet today."

Nikki smiled slightly, keeping her eyes on the waves. "I'm always quiet."

"Not this quiet. Are you okay?" Alan watched her face to see what emotion she was showing.

Nikki nodded. "I was just thinking about last night's rescue. I'm used to seeing injuries and worse, but never on such a grand scale."

"I know. It took me a long time to get used to seeing what we saw last night. In a way, I'm still not used to it," he commented.

She looked down at the sand as she trailed her finger in it. "I must have sounded a bit cold

hearted during the debriefing. Seeing those people didn't affect me in the same way as it did everyone else."

"That's not your fault. You were a trauma nurse before you came out here. Seeing injuries and death like that was an everyday thing for you. No one thought of you as being cold hearted. They understood why you would feel how you felt. Just remember, you're not the only one who had feelings that might've been seen as dispassionate."

Nikki turned to Alan for the first time since they sat down. "Thanks, Alan."

"Any time. If you ever you need to talk, you can always come and find me or Mom." Alan advised her.

Post by Nikki-browneyes1 on 12/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 05:06:22 GMT
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Friday, March 16, 2068, 8 a.m., Tracy Island.

"Kat," Jeff called down the table to the mechanic. "I've got an assignment for you today."

Kat looked up sharply. "You have Mr. Tracy? Do you want me to report to you in the lounge for instructions, or down in the Thunderbirds' hangar?"

Jeff chuckled. "I can tell you about it right here, Kat. Besides, I'd rather make only one trip down to the hangars today in this thing." He indicated the wheelchair and took a sip of his coffee. "Are you familiar with pre-flight check procedure?" he asked.

"I am very familiar with pre-flight procedure check. I often carried out that procedure for Lady Penelope. If you would tell me what time the flight will be and which plane you are using, I will carry out all the required checks. If everything is in order, I will leave to make a start. These checks cannot be hurried in any way, and as you know, there are no short cuts."

"My, you are an eager one," Jeff commented with a smile.

"We'll be using Tracy Three and we'd like to get airborne by eleven this morning. Dianne, as pilot, would normally do the pre-flight checks, but she'll be doing our packing. We're taking Lena home, then Lisa, and staying for the memorial service in Greenville later next week."

He sipped his coffee again. "Our procedures may differ a bit from what you're used to, but there's a data pad in the hangars that will tell you what we require."

Kat sat finishing her breakfast, taking in what Mr Tracy had said. There shouldn't be too many differences between what she had done for Lady Penelope, and what would be required here.

Having finished her breakfast, she stood up. "With your permission, Mr. Tracy, I would like to make a start."

Jeff nodded.

"One more thing, Kat. Alan will be taking Tracy One this afternoon for part one of his birthday present. He might ask for your help with the pre-flight checks there too."

Kat grinned. "I shall carry out the pre-flight checks on Tracy Three first. When I am absolutely satisfied, I will go and find Alan to see if he needs any help." And with that Kat left the room.

Smiling to herself, she thought, This is really why I am here. Sure, I was helpful on the rescue, but to be honest, this is more my forte. This is what I imagined it would be like being here on Tracy Island, helping with the many different planes.

Jeff shook his head, smiled, and finished his coffee.

Post by Tawnyangel22 and Tikatu on 15/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 05:08:00 GMT
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Tracy Island Friday March 16th, 8:15 am.

After Scott had showered and dressed he finally managed to track down his father's whereabouts and told him of the decision Elise had made.

"Scott, that's wonderful news! How did you manage to convince her we needed her?" Jeff was curious.

"Well, actually Dad, it was more Virgil's doing than mine," Scott confessed.

"How's that?" asked a puzzled Jeff.

"We didn't see eye to eye on a few things, and well, after she left the study, Virgil went after her."

At his father's bemused look, Scott added, "He and Alan had heard the end part of our conversation."

Scott cleared his throat, obviously a little embarrassed about telling Jeff that he and Elise had been in a screaming match. The look on his father's face told Scott that this wasn't news to Jeff. The Tracy patriarch had a knack for knowing when the Tracy temper had reared its ugly head in the house, especially when Scott was involved!

"Well, son, I suppose we need to get Elise set up here. Aren't her personal belongings still in New York?"

"Yes. We put them in safe storage. I guess she would need to go back and sort them out and have them sent here."

Jeff thought for a moment then said,

"We're leaving around 11 this morning. Do you think she would want to go now? The quicker it's done the better everything will be."

Scott nodded in agreement. "I'm sure she'll go Dad. I'll go talk to her now."

They exchanged the same warm-hearted smile, then Scott left to find Elise.

Stuffing the remains of a donut in her mouth, and licking her fingers was how Scott found her. She looked like a hamster with its cheeks stuffed and Scott started to laugh.

"Mop!" came a muffled reply.

Somehow the word 'stop' just didn't come out right. She made a production of swallowing the last bites and glared at Scott.

"What now? Can't a girl eat in peace around here?"

"You call that eating?"

She shot him a look of total disbelief that he, ex-Captain of her Flight, would make such a comment.

"I'm teasing!" Scott quickly rectified the situation.

"I just wanted to let you know that I talked to Dad, and he is thrilled that you've decided to join IR. He wanted to know if you wanted to fly to New York with him and Dianne this morning to take care of shipping your belongings here?"

"This morning as in...TODAY?!" was the question she barely squeaked out!

"Yes, today. Dad thinks the quicker you do it, the quicker we can start with your training."

Elise didn't hear the last thing Scott said, she was still trying to digest the part about going to New York TODAY!

"Let me get this straight... Just this morning, I told you I wanted to stay and now you want to ship me off to New York?"

Scott exhaled slowly. Did she just not hear everything I said? Why does she make my life so difficult sometimes?

"Elise, I'm not 'shipping' you off anywhere. Did you not hear me? Dad thought you just wanted to

get your stuff here as soon as possible, that's all!"

She remained silent for a few moments, then spoke softly. "Okay, fine, I'll go. I'll meet them in the hangar at 10.30 am."

"Good. I'll let Dad know."

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 16/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 05:38:06 GMT
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*****Friday, March 16, 2068; 9 a.m.; Thunderbird Five*****

Things had quieted down since the rescue. Callie was working on the daily diagnostic check on the computer when she felt some discomfort and pressure in the area just below her stomach. She adjusted position a few times, attempting to make herself comfortable again.

John entered the control room and noticed her shifting several times. "Is anything wrong?"

"No, not really, John. I'm feeling a little uncomfortable. I think something I ate doesn't agree with me."

"Well, just take it easy. If the discomfort persists, let me know and I'll get you something for it."

"Thanks, John." She went back to work, the pressure subsiding. I just hope this doesn't turn into something worse.

*****About 20 minutes later*****

Callie's discomfort progressively worsened, despite her best efforts to make herself comfortable. I knew it, I just knew it...

John returned to the control room and noticed Callie fidgeting badly. "Callie, are you--"

"No, I'm not okay, John!" she snapped. "This is the last place I wanted to have cramps!"

"Cramps? Oh, no..."

She realized what she had done. "John, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to blow up at you. Why did this have to happen now?" She blushed with embarrassment. "Have you ever had to deal with this situation?"

John had to blush himself. "Uh, you mean dealing with a woman having cramps?"

"Uh, yeah," said Callie, her blush becoming a deeper shade of red.

"To be honest, no, and especially not here." He raised an eyebrow, a look of rising alarm on his face. "Do you need anything for--"

Callie laughed at his reaction. "Relax, John. When I spent time at the ISS, I made sure to pack the things I needed. I remembered to bring everything here, too. You'd better watch your back today because I'll be a mean bear at times."

He swiped a hand dramatically across his brow, wiping non-existent sweat from it and dashing said invisible perspiration to the floor. "Whew! Here I thought we had an unscheduled visit from Thunderbird Three in our future."

She rolled her eyes and shook her head. The clock caught her eye and she cried, "John! The tournament! We forgot about the tournament!"

"The rescue kept us away from what's been happening with the tournament. We'd better check with espn.com and see who advanced and who went home." He brought up the website on the screen and shook his head. "I knew Harvard didn't stand a chance. How'd Alabama do?"

"They're playing right now, but we can't--"

"See the game?" John pressed a button on the panel. "How's this for live?"

"Perfect! Want some popcorn?"

"Sure, I'll get it. Don't want you being cranky and miss your team."

Callie grabbed a copy of The Tracy Quasar and threw it at him with a grin on her face.

John ducked to avoid getting hit with the book. "Okay, Callie, okay. I'm going."

She checked the website scores to see how their chosen teams did. She smiled wickedly. "Looks like John's going to do the chores. Kansas lost to Manhattan, and Duke crushed Alcorn State."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 16/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 05:39:20 GMT
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"To be honest, no, and especially not here." He raised an eyebrow, a look of rising alarm on his face. "Do you need anything for--"

Callie laughed at his reaction. "Relax, John. When I spent time at the ISS, I made sure to pack the things I needed. I remembered to bring everything here, too. You'd better watch your back today because I'll be a mean bear at times."

He swiped a hand dramatically across his brow, wiping non-existent sweat from it and dashing said invisible perspiration to the floor. "Whew! Here I thought we had an unscheduled visit from Thunderbird Three in our future."

She rolled her eyes and shook her head. The clock caught her eye and she cried, "John! The tournament! We forgot about the tournament!"

"The rescue kept us away from what's been happening with the tournament. We'd better check with espn.com and see who advanced and who went home." He brought up the website on the screen and shook his head. "I knew Harvard didn't stand a chance. How'd Alabama do?"

"They're playing right now, but we can't--"

"See the game?" John pressed a button on the panel. "How's this for live?"

"Perfect! Want some popcorn?"

"Sure, I'll get it. Don't want you being cranky and miss your team."

Callie grabbed a copy of The Tracy Quasar and threw it at him with a grin on her face.

John ducked to avoid getting hit with the book. "Okay, Callie, okay. I'm going."

She checked the website scores to see how their chosen teams did. She smiled wickedly. "Looks like John's going to do the chores. Kansas lost to Manhattan, and Duke crushed Alcorn State."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 16/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 05:47:39 GMT

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Tracy Island, Friday 16th March, 9.30 a.m.

Phew, that is everything checked. Kat pushed her hair out of her eyes, and surveyed the data pad. The young mechanic had worked for just over an hour, making absolutely certain that all the pre-flight checks had been carried out, in some instances going over things a second time, just to make perfectly sure.

I must go and report to Mr Tracy that everything is in order for their flight, she thought as she headed out of the hangar. Coming in to check his plane was Alan.

"Hi, Kat," he called. "What are you doing down here?"

"Carrying out pre-flight checks on Tracy Three for Mr. and Doctor Tracy," she replied. "While I am down here, Alan, do you want any help?"

"Why, if you're offering, then yes, please," Alan said as the two wandered over to Tracy One. "You are looking better now, compared to last night."

"Yes, that debrief was very traumatic, having to re-live the rescue, but I have talked with Doctor Tracy and have been reassured that what I felt was normal. Although she did say that you never get used to it, but it does become easier to cope with as time goes on." Kat said with a sigh.

"Which is exactly what I said, both at the rescue and last night, if you'll recall."

"Yes, that is very true, Alan." She sighed, then brightened. "Anyway that is enough talk about the rescue. It's history now. I bet you are excited about going to watch a grand prix. I am sure I would be."

Alan smiled at Kat. "Yes, I am. It's a terrific present. I can't wait to get there! I'm meeting a old friend of mine, Kenny Malone. He was my mechanic when I was on the racing circuit."

"You used to race!" Kat exclaimed. "How wonderful!"

Alan smiled. "Yep, I raced in a few grand prix myself back in those days. Different division, though."

"Wow!" Kat went on. "Dad and I went to the British Grand Prix when I was younger. It was so thrilling! I used to have a 'thing' about Johnston O'Neill, the British driver. He was so cool and so good looking."

"Well, I think he's still racing." Alan told her. "Kenny has a pass to the pits and if he's there, I'll get his autograph for you."

"Ooh, Alan, would you? That would be awesome. Thanks a million."

"Sure, no problem!" Alan glanced over at the jet he would be using. "Well, I'll take you up on your offer to help with my pre-flight checks."

Kat laughed, "After what you have offered to get for me, I should do it alone."

"Nah," Alan replied, shaking his head. "I'd rather keep my hand in, so to speak."

With that, they began the process of going through the pre-flight checks together.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 16/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 05:50:16 GMT

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Friday, March 16, 2068, 8:00 a.m., local time, Kabul, Afghanistan

Tin-Tin walked along behind Fudail al Kadar and his production manager, Fatma Khalil, all three of them dressed in protective garments, heading for the first step of the manufacturing process. The two women had hit it off right away and Tin-Tin was relieved to see that Siddig al Bashir was nowhere to be found.

"Your chemical formula is mixing at the moment," Fatma told her. "I will show you where and we will watch it carefully, especially the temperature."

"Thank you, Fatma," Tin-Tin said. The production manager had insisted that she be called by her given name, and Tin-Tin reciprocated.

Emily had decided to remain at the hotel; she said she had not slept well and wanted some extra rest. Tin-Tin understood; she had also had a restless night, tossing and turning, worrying about

her formula. Would it be successful? Or was it, as al Bashir had said, impossible to manufacture.

International Rescue needs this fabric! I just don't know how to protect our operatives if it doesn't work.

"See, over here, Tin-Tin," Fatma said, directing her to a series of large vats. "This vat has your formula in it. And, as you can see, the temperature is the one you noted. Let us see what happens."

They waited for the mixers to finish, and then the focus was on the machines that drew the blend out into thin threads.

"Hmm," Fudail said, a look of curiosity on his face. "This is where we had difficulty before. The threads were brittle and would break. These seem to be strong." He looked up at Tin-Tin. "It seems that your investigations brought you to the proper conclusion, Ms. Kyrano. We will have to investigate further to determine how this happened."

Tin-Tin relaxed and smiled. Fatma saw this and cautioned her, "We are not, how do you say, out of the woods yet. We must see how this thread stands up to the rest of the manufacturing process."

"I have every confidence in it, now that it's gotten out of the first stages," Tin-Tin said.

And indeed the thread was woven into cloth, a gray cloth that was both lightweight and durable. Fatma tried to cut it with a pair of scissors, only to find that it was next to impossible.

"This is a very tough fabric, Tin-Tin. For what do you intend to use it?" she asked.

"It's going into uniforms," Tin-Tin said, and added nothing more. "We still have to see how it takes a dye, don't we?"

"Yes," said Fudail. "A second mixture is in the process of threading and small spools will be dyed with all the colors we can provide. Then we will weave the cloth and test it for color fastness. Still, I wonder why we had such trouble with the temperature?"

"At least we know that it's possible to manufacture the fabric itself," Tin-Tin replied. "I'm sure you'll discover the reason for the earlier problems. How is this batch coming?"

"Very well," Fatma responded. "I foresee no more problems in the manufacture of the fabric. The dyeing will take the rest of the day, and then we may color test tomorrow. Is that satisfactory?"

"Yes, it is," Tin-Tin said. "I was hoping to leave Kabul today, but I see no reason why I can't stay longer in light of our success today. I'll call my employer and let him know."

"Excellent!" Fudail said happily. "It is near lunch time. Let me summon a taxi for you and escort you out, Ms. Kyrano. You may leave your project in Fatma's capable hands."

"Thank you, Mr. al Kadar. I'll return tomorrow morning for the colorfastness testing. I'm very

anxious to get this fabric into full production," Tin-Tin said. She turned to Fatma. "It was a pleasure to meet you and to work with you. I'll see you tomorrow."

"Likewise. I will see you tomorrow," Fatma said, shaking Tin-Tin's hand and smiling. The Malaysian girl returned the smile, and followed Fudail out.

As soon as they had left the manufacturing floor, Fatma went to her office and closed the door. She pulled out a cell phone and speed dialed a number.

"Sir? It is Fatma. She has left. Yes, I followed your instructions. The fabric is viable, but I cannot separate the chemical formulas of the two components. There is a catalyst in there somewhere on top of the temperature specifications. No, she will be back tomorrow. She said it was for uniforms. No, sir. No more than that. I see. Then I will continue with the manufacture and dyeing and let you handle Ms. Kyrano. Yes, sir. I will expect your bonus. Goodbye."

Fatma ended the call. She spared a thought for Tin-Tin; she had liked the young engineer. But the prospect of a bonus from her employer for both the information she had given and her earlier sabotage was of more importance than her new acquaintance. She regretted that she was unable to give her employer what he desired, but she knew that he would find his own way to get what he wanted. With a smile, she headed back out to the manufacturing floor to resume her duties

Post by Tikatu on 17/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 05:54:57 GMT

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Friday 16 March. 8.15am. Tracy Island.

The cheery sound of baby talk filled the air, and Joshua Kelly was one happy little boy. His daddy was back! And he was spending lots of time with him. Not that his daddy didn't usually. But it seemed like he had been away for ages, and now he was back, and hadn't left him alone! The little boy could find it in his heart to forgive him; he always did. Of course, he was only two years and three months old, and couldn't really understand things, but all he cared about was that his daddy was back, at last!

Dominic sat, cross-legged on the balcony outside his apartment, on a folding chair he had found in a closet near the sliding glass door. The sun was shining -- as it tended to do on a tropical island, he thought with a smile -- and the view of the morning sea was fantastic. From his vantage point in the cliff house he could see right down the sweeping runway and out to the expanse of sea that went on for miles without fail. What had made the morning extra special was that he had his little son on his knee, who had been enjoying being read to very much. All the child seemed to need to hear was, 'Once upon a time', and he was perfectly attentive, and calm, ready to listen to his father's gentle tones.

Unfortunately, the story was now over, and Joshua was clamouring for attention and squirming around. He wrapped one little fist around a strand of Dominic's middle-length hair, and kept babbling in his pseudo-English. By now, of course, Dominic could discern what his son was saying -- most of the time, anyway. Joshua was getting better every day, which unfortunately meant getting louder every day, too. But that was just what kids were like, it seemed.

Dominic palmed one of his eyes tiredly and stifled a yawn. He hadn't slept very much since they had gotten back from the rescue, partly because of Joshua, and partly because, well, he didn't know exactly. It was how he had always been after a particularly harrowing experience with LifeFlight. Like after searching for hours in the cold and wet looking for that teenager a few months ago. Boy, that was tough. I didn't sleep well after that for about a week. I guess I'll have to get over this. Ah, well. Joshua tugged harder on the fist-full of hair he had grabbed, and Dominic scolded him gently.

"What have I told you about pulling hair?"

Joshua, after a moment's thought, relinquished the hair, and flung his arms around Dominic's neck, jumping up and down and saying, "Walk, walk!" Dominic unfolded his legs and got up off the chair, supporting Joshua in his arms. He glanced at the chair, but decided it wasn't worth putting Josh down to put it away; the kid would only yell, or run away. Either option was not something he particularly wanted to deal with. So, he left it, and made his way back through the apartment and towards the elevator, to catch the monorail over to the villa. Perhaps there, Joshua could find some entertainment.

Jeff idly flicked through one of the magazines that he had plucked from the rack beside one of the lounge couches, wondering why the place was so empty. The villa was quiet; it seemed as if everyone was off doing other things. Scott had left not long ago to find Elise. He smiled. He was very glad she had decided to stay with them, and hoped she wouldn't have a problem with going for her things so quickly. We need to get her trained up as soon as possible, and get on with training all our new recruits. They've shown how good they are already; with more experience, they'll be one crack team, all right.

He looked up when he heard voices coming up from where the monorail came in from the Cliff House. He guessed it would be one of their 'newbies', and was proved right when the little blond child, Joshua, toddled in, with Dominic close behind. The young man took his gaze from his child for a moment to give Jeff a courteous nod; morning sunlight glinted off his glasses. Jeff smiled back; now would be the perfect time to start to get to know all the new members of IR better.

"Good morning," he said, and he watched as the little boy, ever inquisitive, edged his way towards him. He's probably more interested in this chair than me! he thought, fond memories of his own boys as children coming back to him.

"Good mornin', Mr Tracy. How're you gettin' on?"

"Excellently," Jeff said. "I'll be out of this thing in no time."

"Good, good."

Their conversation stalled, and Dominic stood by, somewhat awkwardly, watching the child. Joshua walked shyly up to Jeff, and stared up at him through his large, well-smudged glasses. Jeff looked from Joshua to his father, and back again. The kid must've got his looks from the mother's side. He's blond, Dominic's dark-haired. Joshua looked down again and retreated to safety behind his father's leg. Jeff chuckled.

"They don't stay that shy for long."

Dominic shook his head.

"Tell me about it. This'un's already starting. Just wait till he gets t' know you a bit better. He'll not leave you be."

The young man stifled a yawn with one hand, and shook his head, as if trying to rid himself of his weariness. Joshua reached his arms up, wanting to be held, and Dominic obliged, only to be asked, "Juice?"

"Alrighty, young man. How's about we get you some breakfast, huh?" He smiled at Jeff and shrugged. "You know what it's like."

Jeff nodded.

"Oh yeah, I know."

The two chuckled, and Dominic headed towards the doorway that led to the hall, and would take him downstairs to the kitchen. Jeff smiled fondly. The little blond reminded him a lot of Alan when he was a tot, all cherubic with big blue eyes. It brought back memories, all right, the majority of which were indeed, very happy.

Post ArtisticRainey on 17/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 05:59:06 GMT

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Malaysian Grand Prix, Kualar Lumpar. March 16th/17th (Part 1)

Alan had been given the all clear by Virgil to take off. Smoothly the plane ascended into the clear blue sky. His thoughts went back to his family. What a splendid birthday present his Mom and Dad had given him. He couldn't wait to arrive. He had hoped that Gordon would have been home to come with him, but Gordon was still in New York, and not expected home until after the memorial service. He felt relaxed for the first time since his birthday, if truth be told.

After he had touched down on the landing strip at the edge of the Grand Prix complex, Alan headed for the Arrivals lounge. Waiting for him was his old friend, Kenny Malone. The two young men embraced.

"It's great seeing you again, Kenny," Alan said.

"Yeah, it's been too long," Kenny, replied.

"Hey, here's someone I think you would like to see again," Kenny said as he waved to a tall, dark-haired young man.

"Well, I'll be," Alan gasped. "If it isn't Tom Jackson! How are you these days?" Tom Jackson had been a racing driver in Alan's early racing days.

"I'm just fine. Say, what are you doing now?" Tom asked.

"Oh, I work for the family firm," Alan replied.

"What? Has your old man let you out for good behaviour?" Tom joked.

"Nope, this is a birthday present." Alan nearly said from Mom and Dad.

"Say, how old are you now?" Tom asked.

"Twenty-four," Alan replied.

"Then you ought to let Kenny take you to the Lotus Flower Night Club," Tom suggested, winking at Kenny.

"Yes, I've already planned to go there," Kenny said, returning Tom's wink.

"So, then Tom, what brings you here? Don't tell me you are still racing!" Alan said.

"Yeah, Tom's racing here tomorrow," Kenny replied.

"I'm just on my way to start the qualifying laps for positions for tomorrow's race," Tom explained. "Want to come and watch?"

Alan nodded and the three young men headed for the pits and the other contestants. He and Kenny watched as Tom set out on his first lap. Unfortunately Tom didn't do too well and ended up at the end of the session as fifth behind the defending World Champion, who had had a disastrous few laps.

"Tough luck, Tom," Alan said. "Those chicanes are hard to drive around."

"I know," Tom replied. "Coming off the straight and driving through them is tricky. As you could see, a few never made it."

"Say, Tom, is Johnston O'Neill driving this weekend?"

"Yeah, that's his team over there, why?"

"Oh, I promised someone back home I'd try and get his autograph," Alan answered.

"Come, on then. I'll introduce you to him."

"Hey, Johnston," Tom spoke to a tall, thin, dark haired man. "How's things?"

"Oh, so-so, you know, didn't do too well in the qualifying. The car seems to be playing up. The mechanics are working on it at the moment. How did you do?"

"Not too good either," Tom replied. "Say, I have an old racing colleague who would like your autograph for a member of his family."

"Sure," Johnson smiled. "What name?"

"Kat," Alan replied.

"Who's Kat?" Kenny asked.

"Oh, just someone working for the firm," Alan replied.

"To Kat," Johnston wrote, "with all my best wishes, Johnston O'Neill."

"Thanks, Johnston," Alan said. "Kat will really love that."

"Happy to oblige," Johnston said as he walked away.

"Well, I need an early night before tomorrow," Tom said. "See you, guys." And he headed back to the competitors' quarters. Alan and Kenny headed back for the luxury hotel at the far end of the complex.

Once Alan was in his room, he suddenly felt tired. He showered, changed into his pyjamas. and getting a beer from the well-stocked fridge, settled down to enjoy a quiet evening watching the television. Later he put a call through to Tracy Island to let them know that he had arrived safely.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 17/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 15:26:21 GMT
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Friday, March 16, 2068, 12:45 p.m., local time, Kabul, Afghanistan

Tin-Tin entered the cool lobby of the luxury hotel, sighing with relief at the air conditioning as it hit

her face. The taxi ride from the plant had been hot in more ways than one. The taxi had been an older model, at least 20 years old from the looks of it, and its air conditioner was broken if, indeed, it had ever worked at all. The gap-toothed driver with the wildly curly black hair had leered at her, and had deliberately misconstrued her request, taking her miles out of her way, so that the ride which usually took twenty to thirty minutes became thirty to forty. It was only when she pulled out her cell phone and calmly began to dial the police that the man made a wild U-turn and headed back the way he was supposed to. Now the driver was dealing with the local law enforcers outside the hotel, while Tin-Tin, having given her statement, was finally cooling off, physically and emotionally.

Still, she was not cool enough, for when she was bumped while waiting for the elevator and her briefcase was knocked to the floor, she sharply scolded, "Why don't you watch where you're going, you clumsy, insolent lout!" To which she received the reply, "Oh, Mademoiselle Kyrano, you cut me to the quick! Here, let me help you retrieve your luggage." A pale hand raced her tanned one for the handle of the briefcase, and reached it just before she did, and as the clumsy, insolent lout stood with her attaché in his hand, she found herself meeting the pale blue eyes and the sardonic grin of Giles Tallman.

"Your portfolio, Mademoiselle," he intoned politely as he handed the case over to her.

"Oh, Mr. Tallman! I'm so sorry! The past hour has been very frustrating, and... well, I shouldn't have taken it out on you," Tin-Tin said in a hurry.

Giles shook his head. "No, my dear, the fault is all mine. I was not looking where I was going, for if I was, how could I miss someone as lovely as you standing there? No, Ms. Kyrano, mea culpa and I apologize profusely for bumping into you."

Tin-Tin looked at his now solemn face and laughed. "I accept your apology, Mr. Tallman. But in the future, please be more careful."

Giles smiled, his eyes twinkling behind his round-lensed glasses. "I shall." He hesitated, and then asked, "When do you and your escort leave today?"

Now it was Tin-Tin's turn to hesitate. She knew of Emily's dislike of the Englishman, and was wary of his motives, especially when he showed such a keen interest in her project. But she also abhorred lying; it reminded her too much of her father's half-brother and all of his deception.

"We are not leaving today," she said simply. "My project requires that I stay another day."

"Ah!" Giles said, a non-committal sort of exclamation. Then, as if weighing his words carefully, he asked, "Might I... might I make up for my insolent loutishness by inviting you to lunch?" He added hurriedly, "And your chaperone, too, of course."

Tin-Tin regarded him carefully. He really did seem to be a nice man, and since her break-up with Alan, she had longed for a little masculine attention. Christopher was nice, and she liked talking and joking with him. Perhaps there was even a possibility of romance there in the future. But he was on Tracy Island, and Mr. Tallman was here, and... it had been a long time since she had been out to eat with a handsome man.

"I think I'd like that, Mr. Tallman," she said with a smile.

His thin face lit up with delight. "Oh! Well. I'm so pleased. Shall I meet you both down here in say, a half hour?"

"Yes, that would be fine. I would like to freshen up." I hope that Grandma Tracy will allow us to go. If anything, we can find more about him and why he is so interested in my project. Perhaps if I put it to her that way....

"Well, then. You toddle off and I'll wait here and try to find the London Times," Giles said with a grin. Tin-Tin returned the smile, and headed off to the elevator.

At least he didn't insist on coming up to our suite. I think that's a point in his favor, Tin-Tin thought as the elevator rose smoothly to her floor. She slid her key card into its slot and the door slid open obediently.

The suite was quiet, and there seemed to be no sign of Emily. "Grandma?" Tin-Tin called, pulling off her headscarf and heading to her room to put her briefcase away. When she had washed her hands and freshened up her make up, she returned to the sitting room. "Grandma?" she called again. She made her way over to Emily's bedroom and quietly opened the door. Grandma Tracy was lying on the bed, sound asleep.

I am not going to wake her, Tin-Tin resolved. I'm sure the change of time and of climate have made her feel poorly and she's sleeping off that headache she had this morning. I'll leave her a note and bring my cell phone with me.

Tin-Tin took a piece of hotel stationery and wrote a quick note to Emily, folding it and standing it up on the desk in the common area. Then she grabbed her cell phone and slipped it into her purse, adjusted her headscarf, and went back downstairs. She felt a tad guilty, but much more excited about going off on the luncheon date without Grandma Tracy.

I appreciate her motives in wanting to keep an eye on me and protect me if possible, but I am a grown woman and can take care of myself.

The elevator door opened, and Tin-Tin stepped out. She looked around for Mr. Tallman, and found him sitting in a comfortable armchair, reading the Wall Street Journal. He rose quickly from his seat when she approached.

"There you are! And you look lovely, too." He craned his neck to look around her. "Where is your chaperone, the scintillating Emily?"

"She's feeling indisposed, so I came by myself," Tin-Tin replied, raising her chin regally.

"Oh, I'm so sorry to hear she is ill, but frankly, and between us, I should think we'd have much more fun without her," Giles said in a confidential tone. Tin-Tin giggled. He formally offered his arm. "Shall we?"

"Oh, yes!" she replied, and they left the hotel together.

Their movements did not escape the notice of a well-dressed man sitting in a corner, seemingly reading a magazine. He frowned as Tin-Tin and Giles left, then got up to follow them. The two found themselves a taxi right away, but the well-dressed man was unable to hail one. Instead, he ran to his dusty truck, and got in, pulling out into traffic to follow the cab.

Post by Tikatu on 18/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 15:29:10 GMT
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Thursday, March 15, 2068, 3 p.m. local time, somewhere over the Pacific (having crossed the IDL)

"How's everybody doing back there?" Dianne called from the cockpit.

"Fine!" Alex replied, not looking up from his computer game.

Tyler sighed. "I'm bored!" he whined.

"Well, then. Read your book!" Cherry chimed in.

"I already did," Tyler continued.

"Shhhh!" Lisa cautioned in a low tone. "Don't wake your father!"

"Too late," Jeff muttered from the chair where he had been napping. "Tyler, find something to do. Take out your computer game, your music player, whatever. But find something to do."

"Young man, perhaps your grandmother and I could play cards with you," Lena suggested, catching Lisa's eye and winking.

"I think that's a fine idea!" Lisa said with a grin. "I think we have Dutch Blitz back here." She got up to find the game.

"Dutch Blitz? I don't think I know that one," Lena said.

"Oh, you'll like it! It's lots of fun!" Tyler eagerly assured her.

"Can I play, too?" Cherry asked, moving to one of the four seats that now faced each other.

"I guess so," Tyler replied, less than enthusiastically. He leaned over to confide to Lena, "She always wins."

"Not today, Spud. Grandma Parkhurst is in the house!" Lisa said triumphantly as she brought back

the card game. Sitting down, she began to explain the rules of the game to Lena, Tyler and Cherry jumping in to help, until poor Lena was totally confused.

"Don't worry. We'll play a couple of practice hands and help you learn," Lisa said hastily. She dealt out the stacks of cards and the game began.

Elise smiled as she watched the game progress. She was not very comfortable, not because she was feeling any pain, or because the Tracys hadn't made her welcome, but... well, she didn't really know. Jeff had gone back to sleep and was snoring slightly. Alex was totally absorbed in his computer game, and this left Elise at loose ends and with time to think.

"You're mighty quiet back there, Elise," came Dianne's voice. "Why don't you come on up here and keep me company?"

"Sure," Elise said. But as relieved as she was to have something to do, part of her was reluctant to make her way to the cockpit.

This is ridiculous, she thought. Dr. Tracy's not going to bite you! So get up and go!

With a deep breath, she heaved herself out of her seat and slowly made her way to the cockpit. As she stood between the pilot and co-pilot seats, she looked out the windshield to see the light, fluffy clouds ahead, floating in a peaceful blue sky. Suddenly, they weren't light and fluffy anymore; they were gray and threatening in a rapidly darkening sky. Elise gasped sharply and closed her eyes, and when she opened them, the clouds were back to being white and benign.

Dianne had not missed the gasp and turned to see the sudden paling of Elise's face and the wild look of terror in her eyes. Then the eyes closed and when Elise opened them, blinking, the look of terror faded.

"Are you okay, Elise?" she asked gently.

Elise gave her head a little shake and smiled wanly at Dianne. "I'll be okay. Just... just it's been a while since I've been in the cockpit of a plane."

"You're sure you're all right?" Dianne pressed.

Elise nodded. "Yes. I am." She moved forward and took the co-pilot's seat, putting the headphones on and strapping herself in.

"We're really glad you decided to come on board with IR," Dianne said with a smile. "We really need more pilots. And from what Scott tells us, you're a crackerjack one."

Elise snorted a laugh. "He's a bit biased, I think. I was in his flight and he'd never say that anyone under his command was less than the best. Something to do with his ego...."

Dianne laughed. Elise looked at her carefully. "I seem to remember saying something about going home the last time you examined me and all you did was smile. Was recruiting me some sort of conspiracy or something?"

"Wellllll," Dianne drawled, "I knew that Scott was pushing for you to be asked and frankly, I was hoping you'd accept. But I wasn't going to say anything one way or another until Jeff and Scott had had a talk with you. If you had said 'No', we wouldn't have kept you from returning to New York, really we wouldn't have. But Scott was certain you'd say 'Yes'. Personally, I'm glad you did. It's good to have someone on board who keeps their head under pressure."

Dianne's offhand comment silenced Elise for the moment. Behind them in the cabin, Jeff stirred and made a sound. Elise looked back, and suddenly, she saw him as he was in the helijet, gray and lifeless, buried under debris. A whispered, "No!" rose from her lips and she shut her eyes tight, wrapping her arms around herself and shivering as if she were cold again. Dianne shot her a keen, concerned glance. Then Elise opened her eyes again and drew in sharp breath. Jeff was now just sleeping, looking healthy beneath the blanket. She let out the breath in a shuddering, relieved sigh.

"Elise?" Dianne prodded.

"It's nothing," Elise lied. She smiled shakily at the physician. "Just... a memory."

Dianne didn't press the issue again. She suspected that being in the cockpit was triggering flashbacks in the helijet pilot.

Elise unbuckled her safety straps, removed the headphones, and rose. "I... I think I'm going to go back to the cabin and try to get some rest. How much longer to LA?"

"Three and a half hours," Dianne replied. "I think you've got a good idea there. Get some sleep if you can."

Elise nodded and carefully made her way back to the cabin. Dianne turned back to watch the gauges before her and listened to the air traffic talkback. But her mind was on what she had just seen. I'm sure she's suffering from PTSD. There's nothing I can do about it right now, but later... later it will be time to put on my psychiatrist hat again. Been doing a lot of that lately with the rescue and all. Not to mention Jeff's own flashbacks to the crash. She sighed internally and called back to Alex. "Son, why don't you bring that game up here and keep your mother company?"

"Sure, Mom," Alex said agreeably as he rose to join her in the cockpit.

Post by Tikatu on 18/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 15:30:55 GMT
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Friday, March 16, 2068, 3 p.m., local time, Kabul, Afghanistan

Tin-Tin sipped the strong coffee, and smiled at her luncheon companion. Their meal had been satisfying in more ways in one. Giles had been a fascinating conversationalist, and it turned out

that they knew many of the same places, Tin-Tin having grown up in Paris, and been educated in England and the US. Giles, for his part, gleaned much more from her conversation than she suspected. Every bit of information that he got from her gave him a better picture of who she was, what she did, and what place she occupied in her employer's company. He refrained from talking directly about her project; he knew that if he did she would clam up and there would be nothing more to be gained from dealing with her so carefully.

"Oh my!" Tin-Tin said suddenly, looking at her stylish watch. "It's nearly three-thirty! Emily will be very anxious about me!" In fact, Emily had tried to contact her through her telecomm watch and it had vibrated. When Tin-Tin looked at her watch, she pressed a hidden stud on it, sending an acknowledgment of Emily's silent message.

"Oh, well, we mustn't have your chaperone worrying, no indeed," Giles said amiably. Then he frowned. "It does beg the question of why an intelligent, poised young woman like yourself needs a chaperone in this day and age."

Tin-Tin blushed. "My father is a very staid, old-fashioned gentleman and he understands the mindset of the culture here. He felt I would be better able to deal with the men here if I had someone... grandmotherly... along to keep an eye on me. After all, it wasn't too long ago that women weren't able to go anywhere without a male member of their family accompanying them." The story that the two women had previously agreed upon tripped glibly off of Tin-Tin's tongue. Father was concerned about my going alone, she rationalized.

"Ah, I see. He is a wise man," Giles commented. There was a moment of silence between them, then Giles sighed heavily. "I suppose I should return you to her. But it has been a marvelous time. I don't often have the opportunity for such fascinating conversation with a lady as lovely as you are, Tin-Tin."

"I have enjoyed myself as well, Giles," Tin-Tin admitted. "But you are right, I do need to get back to my hotel."

"All right. Let me take care of the financial end of things here and I'll have the doorman summon a taxi for us," Giles said, smiling widely. "Then I can escort you back to your hotel, and I can return to mine."

"Just be careful about the cabbie!" Tin-Tin warned. "I had a horrible experience with one this afternoon."

"I shall."

The waiter came by and Giles used a card to pay for the meal and gave him instructions about the cab. Tin-Tin sipped her water and studied her companion. Really, he's been the perfect gentleman. I've had such a good time! I hope Grandma will understand.

Giles rose from the table as the waiter returned. He offered an arm to Tin-Tin as she rose and she took it, blushing unaccountably. Then they left the elegant restaurant, heading for the entrance where a cab awaited them. Giles gave the driver the name of Tin-Tin's hotel. As they drove through the streets, Tin-Tin marveled at the city. "It has made a wonderful comeback from the

war-torn years near the beginning of the century, hasn't it?"

"Yes. The city has become a good place to do business. I feel this will be a very fruitful visit for me," Giles said, smiling.

After just a little bit, the cab pulled up in front of Tin-Tin's hotel. The doorman opened the door, but before Tin-Tin could climb out of the car, Giles suddenly took her hand and kissed it gallantly.

"Until we meet again, my dear."

Post by Tikatu on 18/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 15:31:29 GMT
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*****Friday, March 16, 2068, Thunderbird Five; 8 p.m.*****

John and Callie had completed watching the tournament games for the day, but she didn't tell him what had happened until...

"John, I hate to break this to you, but remember that little bet we had for the tournament?"

"Yeah. How did our two chosen teams do?"

"Duke had no trouble with Alcorn State, but I'm afraid you'll have to do the chores for a month. Kansas was upset by Manhattan."

"The Jayhawks lost in the first round? You're kidding!"

Callie, though, felt sorry for John, seeing he had to deal with these tasks all the time. "Wait a sec. You've got all the experience here and on the island, and it's not fair for me to sit around. I'll reduce that month to a week, okay?"

"A bet's a bet, though."

"I don't care, John. I'm gonna be fair to you and drop it to one week. Now take it before I change my mind."

John backed away slightly and smiled. "Okay, Callie, okay, you win. I'll do the clean-up around the station starting tomorrow. How about we tune in SportsCenter and see all the highlights?"

"You got it." Callie turned the channel to ESPN so they could see the highlights from the games of the day.

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 22/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 15:33:45 GMT
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Los Angeles, Ca. March 15th 2068, 7:00pm.

After finally touching down at LAX, the Tracy entourage had arrived at the very expensive, very exclusive Concordia Hotel. As they proceeded to the check-in desk, bellboys scurried around to get the luggage all sorted and sent to the appropriate rooms.

"Wow, Grandma! Look at that!"

Tyler was staring at the lavishly decorated fountain that took up most of the center of the main lobby. Lisa looked down at the child whose hand was firmly gripped in hers.

"Yes, it's wonderful!"

"Can I throw some money in it?"

Lisa smiled at Tyler's excitement. "Maybe later. We need to get checked in and up to our rooms first. I don't know about you, but I could do with some food and some nap time!"

"Aw, Grandma, I'm way too big for naps!" protested the little boy.

"No, you're not!" Alex couldn't help but start teasing his brother.

"GRANDMA!"

Tyler's loud request for help from his grandma echoed around the lobby, and got him instantaneous glares from his parents. He became quiet and tried to shrink behind his grandmother. Cherie just rolled her eyes, and Lena and Elise tried to smother some smiles by looking elsewhere in the lobby.

"There you are, Sir, Ma'am," said the bellboy, nodding as he opened the door to the suite Jeff had reserved.

Dianne pushed the wheelchair into the lounge area of the suite, followed by Alex, Cherie, Tyler and Lisa.

"Thank you." Dianne smiled to the young man as she handed him a tip.

As soon as the door clicked shut behind them, Tyler was off and running all over to check everything out.

"That boy has too much energy some days!" commented Lisa. Jeff and Dianne chuckled.

As Alex and Cherie went off to explore, Lisa decided to depart. "Well, I'd best be leaving you all to settle in. I'll be just next door if you need anything."

"Thanks Mom."

Dianne hugged her mother and after seeing her out, walked back to Jeff.

"Ah suppose Ah'd best be gettin' you ready for bed first. Those three in there can bounce on the bed 'til Ah'm done, and Ah'll pretend Ah didn't know what they were up to!" She smiled at Jeff deviously and he laughed.

"Ah, sweetheart, if only we were alone. Do you know how much we could enjoy this suite?" he implied.

"Mr. Tracy! We are here for only one night, and Ah intend to get some sleep! Which is exactly what you need, and so do mah children, who seem t' think beds were made for bouncin'!"

The noise from the adjoining bedroom was getting louder. Thumping and giggles and loud bangs were enough to make Jeff wonder, Is bouncing all they are really doing in there?

The atmosphere in the suite next door was somewhat calmer, as Lena, Elise, and Lisa settled in.

"Goodness! Wat is all dat racket comin' from over dere?" laughed Lena as the thumps became louder.

"My grandkids! I'll bet money on it!" replied Lisa, shaking her head and smiling.

Although a little smaller than Jeff and Dianne's suite, the room was still quite breathtaking and more than what the ladies were used to.

"I can't believe we're only here for de night. Shame we can't stay de whole week!" Lena was laughing as she unfolded her nightgown and laid it across her bed.

As Lisa and Lena fussed about, Elise quietly got out her toiletries and asked if she could use the bathroom first.

"Sure honey, go right ahead," replied Lisa.

Putting her things down on the counter, Elise took a deep breath as she looked at herself in the mirror.

What the hell is wrong with me? It's not like I've never flown before! Come on Collins, pull yourself together!

Her mind thought back to her reaction on the plane and Dianne's concern. Why? Why would I react that way? I've never done it before, and I've been in other bad flight situations. She found no answers in the bathroom so, after going through her personal care routine, she returned to her bed.

Lisa noticed how quiet the girl was. "Everything okay, Elise?"

"Oh, yes, just tired I guess. Glad to have a nice bed for once! Beats layovers in the crew lounge that's for sure."

"I can imagine dat!" added Lena.

Shortly all three women were comfy and relaxed in bed, each looking forward to a good night's sleep. Lena and Lisa had no trouble falling asleep, but for Elise sleep was a while coming. She lay awake in the stillness, the thumps from next door having subsided a while ago, and thought about tomorrow's flight. She only hoped she wouldn't have a repeat performance of today. Tossing onto her side, and fluffing the pillow, Elise forced herself to sleep.

Dianne finally climbed into bed, feeling the warmth of her slumbering husband next to her. The kids were finally settled down, but not until Dianne had mockingly threatened to give them extra homework assignments upon returning to the island. She positioned herself on her side and reached out a hand to softly touch Jeff's cheek. She leaned forward and gently kissed him.

"Goodnight, love."

Her soft whisper stirred him and his eyes fluttered open. He smiled, and whispered, "Goodnight, love," and tenderly returned the kiss.

He sighed as he resumed lying on his back.

"Try not tah need anythin' before mornin' honey. Ah need mah beauty sleep!"

Jeff turned his head to look at his wife. "You're beautiful enough already, Dianne."

"If that's your way of telling me you're gonna wake me up later, forget it mistah!"

They both laughed and then let sleep claim them.

"GRANDMA!" Tyler stood outside Lisa's room and yelled. Knocking hadn't worked so, he did what he thought was next best. The door flew open and there stood his grandma.

"Child, what are you yelling for out there in the hall?" Tyler skipped into the room talking non-stop.

"Grandma, you said we could look at the fountain downstairs, you promised and then we have to go to breakfast because I want to get there before Alex does as he'll eat all the good stuff, and then can we throw money in the fountain and..."

"Goodness, Tyler, slow down and take a breath!"

"But Grandma..."

"But nothing, young man. Does your Mother know you're here?"

"Yes, she told me I could come get you while Dad and her finished getting ready."

The innocent little eyes gazed up at her. Lisa didn't fall for it! "Hmm, I'm sure she did! Well, now that you're here you can help an old lady with her bags."

"You're not old, Grandma!" Tyler giggled as he hugged her.

Minutes later, Lena, Elise, Lisa and Tyler were heading to the elevator, along with a bellboy and their bags.

"So, did you sleep at all last night dear?" Lena asked Elise as they rode the elevator down.

"Yes, finally, I did, once I got comfortable."

"Good ting you did, it's a long flight to New York."

"Hmm, I know," Elise replied more to herself than to Lena.

In the dining room, Lena and Elise were shown to the table reserved for Jeff Tracy. Lisa and Tyler were off looking at the fountain so Lena ordered coffee for all three of them and chocolate milk for Tyler.

"Hope de little one likes it."

"I'm sure he will."

As the coffee was being served, Dianne, Jeff, Alex and Cherie came in. Having a large round table made it easier to pull the wheelchair up to, so Dianne was glad she'd reserved it when they'd checked in.

"Good morning everyone," Jeff said with a smile. "I trust you all slept well?"

"Oh yes, tank you very much," Lena answered.

"How about you, Elise?" inquired Dianne as she sat down next to Jeff.

"Can't complain. I got some sleep."

Dianne smiled, though it didn't reach her eyes. She knew something was wrong, but it would have to wait. It wasn't something to be discussed at breakfast. As they all began ordering, Tyler and Lisa returned and took their seats.

"Order whatever you want, it's a long way to New York." said Jeff.

Alex, Tyler and Cherie took that statement literally and piled their plates. Once breakfast was over, it was on to the airport. Everything had gone smoothly and upon arrival, the aircraft was fueled and ready to go.

"I want everyone in their seats with safety belts on, and ready to go, please," Dianne informed her passengers.

She completed her pre-flight checks and radioed the tower. Once permission was given, she lifted the plane smoothly into the air and climbed to her set altitude. A little while later, she thought about asking Elise up to the cockpit. Now would be a good time to talk to her, and she hoped being up here wouldn't terrify the new recruit again.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 22/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 16:25:55 GMT
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Malaysian Grand Prix (Part 2)

The next morning, feeling refreshed, Alan wandered down to breakfast and met up with Kenny.

"Did you sleep well?" Kenny asked.

"Like a log," replied Alan.

After a leisurely breakfast, the two men headed for the Grand Prix circuit and went to find their seats in the stands. As the race was not due to start for another hour and a half, they wandered back down to the pits. Kenny, being a mechanic and also a friend to some of the drivers, had a pass. They walked among the mechanics of the various teams, met the girls who held the umbrellas over the drivers to keep them cool once they were in the cars, and some of the commentators. It was very busy. It brought back memories to Alan of the days when he was racing. He didn't think he had missed it until now.

"The race will start soon," Kenny reported. "We'd better get back to our seats."

Alan settled down in his seat, prepared to enjoy the race.

Once the green light was on, the cars roared down to the first corner where there was a dreadful accident! No one quite knew actually happened, but as the cars all tried to navigate the corner, two cars spun off, one landing on its roof, while another clipped the side of a competitor, taking off part of its bodywork. It was chaos. The safety car was brought on and the cars all formed in a procession behind it, completing two laps, while the stewards tried to clear the course of all the wreckage.

"Is Tom okay? I can't see him," Alan asked Kenny

"Yep, there he is in number 10, the dark blue car," Kenny replied.

Eventually the safety car was called in and the race continued. It was very exciting! The defending World Champion gradually worked his way up through the vehicles, eventually leading the race. Tom made an early pit stop, but his mechanics couldn't seem to get the fuel in quick enough. He

lost valuable time and came out, joining the race one place down from when he had entered the pits. There were a few thrilling overtakings by some of the drivers but no further major mishaps. However, Tom would only finish fourth, just off the podium.

Kenny and Alan struggled to get down to the podium in time to see the first three placed drivers, sluicing everyone with champagne.

"Hey! That was some race!" Alan laughed. And to think I have the Monaco Grand Prix to watch as well, care of Mom and Dad.

"How about we have a night on the town?" Kenny asked his friend.

"Mm, sounds good to me," Alan answered.

They headed back to the hotel for a much needed shower and change of clothes.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 22/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 16:30:31 GMT

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Friday, March 16, 6 p.m. local time, Kabul, Afghanistan

A subdued Tin-Tin sat across from Emily Tracy in the hotel restaurant. The old woman had given her a serious talk about "gallivanting about with strange men in a strange city" that had Tin-Tin's cheeks flaming red with a mixture of anger and embarrassment. It didn't seem to matter to Emily that Tin-Tin returned safely, having had a stimulating conversation with a well-traveled and genteel young man. Grandma had taken a dislike to the man, one that she couldn't explain beyond, "He makes my skin crawl" and once Grandma Tracy had done that, there was no gainsaying her.

Tin-Tin was very happy that they would be leaving the next day after the colorfast testing. She knew that Mr. al Kadar was hoping that she would consider having the plant do more than just manufacturing the new fabric; he all but counted on their plant dyeing the cloth as well. But Jeff Tracy had left specific orders about that: Tin-Tin was to note down all the dye lots that did well on the new blend, and then he would make arrangements for two different plants to color the fabric. His reasoning was that having one place dye the fabric for both the uniform pants, in their distinctive light blue, and the jackets and waistcoats, in the new dark navy hue, would cause suspicion in the minds of the cloth manufacturer once it became apparent that IR had new duds. However, depending on how the fabric took the dye in the colors that the team members had requested, Tin-Tin had the authority to have bolts done up in each color for the trim on the uniforms.

She looked over her PDA while absently sipping her wine. Let's see. According to the messages I've received, the interim new uniforms are en route and should be at the pick-up point by Monday. The places that have been doing the separate uniform pieces are all equipped with laser cutting

systems and the latest in sewing technology. They should have the specialized needles already. And some are on their way to us so that we can sew on the logo patches. I'll have to ask if this stuff should be sent to a hat maker to make the baseball caps. It might be helpful.

A waiter approached the table, bearing a portable vidphone in his hand.

"Ms. Kyrano? Ms. Tin-Tin Kyrano?"

"Yes, I am Ms. Kyrano."

"Vidphone call for you."

"Thank you." The waiter put the phone down at the table and Tin-Tin rewarded him with a tip. Emily frowned as Tin-Tin pulled out her cell phone's earbud/microphone combination and plugged it into the phone.

"Hello?" Tin-Tin said hesitantly. The picture of Giles Tallman appeared on the screen and she smiled. "Oh, hello!"

"Hallo, hallo. How are you this evening? Did you get in trouble with the ever-watchful Emily?" Giles returned the smile.

"Yes, a bit," Tin-Tin replied, thankful that Emily couldn't hear his part of the conversation. "I am having dinner right now."

"Oh! Then I shan't keep you. What are your plans for tomorrow?" he asked, sitting forward. "I should like to take you to lunch again. With your chaperone, if she is feeling well."

"I... I don't think I can. We're leaving as soon as the dye testing is complete," Tin-Tin explained. "My employer is anxious to get the results of my trip here."

"Oh, that is too bad," Giles said mournfully. "Perhaps I might call you? Once you return to your home?"

"I would like that," Tin-Tin said with a soft smile. "Could I have your number? And your email address? I would like to stay in touch."

"Of course, my dear. I shall send it over in the morning. Though we may be seeing each other again anyway. I'm to be at the plant to do some haggling with old al Kadar sometime during the day. In any case, do expect my card in the morning."

"I shall."

"Then I will say goodnight. Until we meet again, my dear."

"Until then. Goodnight."

The vidphone's screen went blank. Tin-Tin slowly disconnected the earbud jack and sighed

heavily.

"Who was that?" Emily asked sharply.

Tin-Tin raised her chin in a show of defiance. "That was Mr. Tallman. He wanted to take us to lunch tomorrow. But as you heard, I've told him it's quite impossible."

"Why did you want his number and email address for?" Emily queried. "You're not thinking of contacting him, are you? There's just something about that boy...."

"...That you don't like. Yes, Grandma. You've made that very clear. But to me, he was a gentleman and an excellent conversationalist. And it's been a long time since a handsome young man has admired me and taken me out to dinner." Tin-Tin looked down. "Don't you remember how it was when you were a girl?"

Emily's severe face softened. Of course she remembered. And she had always thought that her fifth grandson, youngest of Jeff and Lucille's boys, had made too much of his "My work is too dangerous for me to share my life with anyone" while dangling this pretty girl on a string with hope.

Alan was a fool and he drove her away. And being the stubborn people they both are, they'll probably never see eye to eye long enough to get back together. I don't suppose there's any harm in her corresponding with him. After all, he won't be nearby but that sharp young man Christopher will, and he's got his eye on Tin-Tin if I know anything about it! I'd better back down and just keep an eye on her.

"Of course I do," Grandma Tracy said, much more kindly. "If you want to correspond with him, I guess I don't see any harm in it. I couldn't stop you if I wanted to. But as far as luncheon goes, that's out of the question. I want to get home to my own bed and to help your father since Jeff and Dianne have left for the States."

"I understand, Grandma. I'll be glad to get home, too," Tin-Tin replied. Though my lunch with Mr. Tallman has made what would have been a very frustrating trip a touch less frustrating.

At his hotel, Giles poured himself a generous libation. He picked up the phone and dialed a secure number he knew very well.

"Jacques? I don't think I'm going to have the Penelon formula for you this trip, old boy. Why not? Because I'm cultivatin' a little 'friendship' with the lovely Ms. Kyrano. She's high into the hierarchy of Tracy Industries, and I think she'd be of more use to us as a conduit that way. Don't worry, Jacques. We can wait. We've time. By the time I'm through, not only will we have the formula for Penelon, but a wedge into Tracy's secrets that we've not had before. Yes, I'm sure. All right. Goodbye."

He thought a moment, then made another call.

"Fatma, love, it's me. Anyway you could... draw out the dyeing process? No? Ah, a pity, that. Well, it won't matter. Yes, love. Tomorrow. Ciao, dear!"

Giles sat back and turned on the television. He sat back and began to watch a soccer match, sipping at his scotch. He smiled to himself when he thought of the possibilities that Tin-Tin Kyrano could provide.

Yes, Giles old boy, we can afford to wait. Get the girl well and truly on the hook. Then... use her to penetrate Tracy's security and get his secrets.

Post by Tikatu on 23/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 16:32:07 GMT
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Friday, March 16, 11:00 a.m. PST, somewhere over the US

"Do you need something, Di?" Lisa asked, making her way to the cockpit. "Something to drink?"

"That would be good, Ma, thanks."

Lisa made her way back to the small galley and returned with a can of soda. Dianne smiled as she turned to accept it, then her eyes fell on Elise and her smile faded a bit.

"Elise? How about coming on up and keeping me company again?"

The sound of Dianne's voice startled Elise and for a split second, Lisa thought the girl had the look or a terrified deer on her face.

"Um, okay... sure. I'll be right there." Elise replied trying to sound confident.

As she made her way to the cockpit, her hands began to feel clammy. She breathed slowly and prayed her fears wouldn't surface.

"Thanks for coming up here. It gets lonely pretty quick when I'm by myself," said Dianne.

Elise half smiled as she sat in the co-pilot's seat. Dianne immediately noticed how edgy Elise seemed.

"So, are you looking forward to New York? I know you hadn't been living there long before the accident."

Dianne did her best to make the last two words flow with the rest of the sentence. She herself had to get past the events of nearly four weeks ago. She glanced quickly at Jeff, who was playing Dutch Blitz in partners with Tyler and smiled. Then she turned her attention back to Elise.

"I'll be glad to see my things again. Can't say I've missed New York though, as I wasn't there long enough to feel really at home."

Dianne sensed Elise was going to add something, but instead the girl turned her head and looked out of the window. Dianne decided there was no easy way to begin what she wanted to say, and so dove right on in.

"So how does it feel to be back in the air?"

Elise knew where Dr. Tracy was going with this, and knew she'd have to tell her sooner or later. Suppose sooner would be better... oh well... here goes

"Actually I'm a little more nervous than I thought I would be."

"How so?" Dianne probed carefully.

"Yesterday, I had...um, well, a flashback, and it scared me. I've never experienced that before."

"Have you ever crashed before?" Dianne spoke softly.

Elise chuckled, "No, unless you count the 'almost' incident with the Fireflash!"

Dianne looked puzzled.

"Ask Scott," was all Elise replied.

Dianne considered her words carefully. "So, you've experienced something that's new to you, and frightening. And it's coming back to you, especially now while we're airborne." Dianne didn't make it a question.

"But why now? It's been weeks since the accident! Surely I would have had dreams or something!" Elise answered. "I've had bad flight experiences before, flown through horrible conditions, yet nothing like this has ever happened!"

"I can see this upsets you, Elise, and I'm sorry, but I think you really need to talk about it. From what I understand, a lot of pilots, even the very best, sometimes go through this."

She lowered her voice as she continued. "Jeff would have my hide if he knew I was telling you this, but while he was in the hospital, it happened to him, too."

Elise looked at Dianne, shocked. The other smiled and added, "Honey, he's been to the moon and back, can pilot anything made to fly, and yes, he had flashbacks that frightened him."

Dianne took a sip of her soft drink. "The doctors at Mt. Sinai diagnosed him as having PTSD, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. It's something he and I have had to deal with in a patient-doctor setting since he came home. But Elise--"

Dianne reached out to touch Elise's arm gently,

"He doesn't remember half of what happened that night. You've got a whole lot more memory to

work with and I would think that the stress would be greater because of it."

"I suppose...," Elise said hesitantly. "I'm finding that I'm almost afraid to fly again."

"It's only natural, Elise, that you would feel this way. But I believe that you can overcome this. Once the boys have you training with the team, you'll be too busy to let this get you down."

Elise smiled a little, then suddenly looked anxious. "Oh, no... you won't tell Scott about this will you? I don't want him to find out."

Dianne soothed Elise's fears. "No, I won't. But I can't promise he won't pick up on it. He makes a point of knowing what is or isn't bothering the team members and that includes his brothers."

"Thanks" Elise answered, softly.

"When you have a flashback, come to me and we can talk about it. Facing the fears is what will help you get over them," Dianne suggested.

She looked out over the blue sky with a snowy white bank of clouds making a deceptively firm surface below them. "You'll fly again, Elise. And with the love you had for it before the crash."

"I hope you're right Dr. Tracy, I really hope you're right." Elise, too, looked out over the vast expanse of blue and white. I only hope I can overcome this soon.

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 22/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 16:34:02 GMT

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Friday, March 16, 2068, 3:30, local time, New York City

"TRI 003 requesting permission to land," Dianne intoned.

"Permission granted. Use runway 23 Left," came the reply from La Guardia tower.

"Roger, tower," Dianne responded. Behind her in the cabin, everyone was buckled in, ready for landing.

The landing was smooth, and Jeff smiled when the wheels hit the ground gently. He was proud of his wife's flying ability. She taxied over to the Tracy Industries hangar, where a limousine awaited them. With great excitement, Tyler, Alex and Cherie, got out of their seats, intending to leave the plane. Lisa glanced sharply at her grandchildren. "Hey, make sure your father is safely off before you try to leave."

"It's okay, Lisa," Jeff interrupted. "Let them leave first, it will give Dianne more time to negotiate my wheelchair."

"Hey, Dad! Can I sit up front with the driver?" Alex asked.

"You mean you don't want to sit in back with Gordon and the rest of us?" Dianne asked over her shoulder as she and Lisa worked to help Jeff into his chair.

Alex bit his lip and gazed at his mother. He was obviously torn between sitting alongside the driver or with his older brother, who he hadn't seen for what seemed like ages to him. To make things worse, Gordon got out of the limo and waved at them cheerfully.

"Can I sit by Gordon, please Mom?" Cherie sighed. She really wanted to sit by her older brother.

Gordon laughed. "Hey, there is room for both of you to squeeze in." Actually, there was much more room than that, so Alex and Cherie both sat beside their brother, one on either side.

Bernie, their chauffeur for the nonce, made short work of the luggage, putting it all into the limo's spacious trunk. "Make sure you put Mrs. Matumbo's luggage aside," Dianne instructed. "She'll be stopping at Tracy Towers for a little bit and then will be heading out again."

At last, everyone was situated in the stretch limousine and it headed out into heavy weekend traffic. Dianne leaned back wearily. Jeff watched his wife. She was looking tired. He guessed that piloting the entire flight been very tiring for her. He made a promise to himself that for the moment, she would be able to totally relax. He made a mental note to ask Lisa to take care of Tyler, Alex and Cherie so that Dianne could have time to relax with him. He knew that she was in for a testing time at the memorial service and he intended that nothing, but nothing, should worry her, and that everything would go as smoothly as clockwork for her.

In the seat facing them, Lena looked out the window, gazing at the sights of New York City. It looked exciting, but not as exciting as the prospect of getting home to see her babies.

Elise also looked out at New York, a mixture of feelings surfacing. She had begun to make the city her home and now her life was upside down... again. She saw a helijet in the distance as it rose from the top of one of the skyscrapers and she shuddered. Memories of that last fateful journey still haunted her. She could still see in her mind's eye that fateful flight, with Jeff helpless and injured, and herself calling for help. Would she ever get over these feelings?

Lisa watched her three grandchildren as they interacted in the seat across from her. Tyler had put his head in her lap and was dozing. She stroked his hair absently as Gordon made Cherie and Alex giggle with his latest jokes. She sighed. She had missed Gordon, and for the first time, she was looking at getting home with some trepidation. For the first time, she wished that she could stay on the island, with Kyrano and her family. For the first time, she was not looking forward to resuming her life as a hair stylist. But she had other children, too, who had a right to see her, and clients who missed her. And she knew how much support Dianne and the children would need in the days to come.

She gazed down at Tyler and smiled, then stared out the window as she was lost in her own memories. She glanced over at Jeff; he was so good for Dianne and the children, and his other boys had accepted their stepbrothers and sister. In fact, it was as if they were not considered as

stepsiblings at all. Yes, everything was just great. The only decision was left with her, that was to leave everything that she had known and move to Tracy Island. Here, her thoughts were broken into with the arrival at Tracy Towers. Lisa sighed and resumed her position as mother, mother in law and grandmother.

Bernie hopped out and began opening doors. Dianne watched as Gordon got out of the limo. She was glad to see that he seemed to be feeling well and showed no sign of pain. But when he came to offer his help in getting Jeff out of the car, she waved him away.

"You don't need to reinjure that back of yours. You see to the little ones. Ma and I can handle Jeff."

"Lena," Jeff called as he emerged from the limo. "Wait for us inside, and I'll get you signed in with security."

"All right," Lena said amiably. "I'll be waiting. Dis wind is brisk! Brrr!"

He chuckled as he watched her go into the Towers, followed by the children, Gordon, and Lisa. Elise stood on the pavement looking upward. Jeff wheeled his chair up to her and tapped her on the shoulder. She started and then looked back at him.

"You're to stay with us until you've got your things in order. When we get back from South Carolina, then we'll all travel back to the island together."

"Oh. Okay," Elise said hesitantly. "Thank you."

Jeff just smiled and said, "You're welcome. Let's get inside. Lena's right. The wind is brisk today."

With that, Dianne, Jeff, and Elise filed into the towers, while Bernie brought up the rear with Lena's bags.

Post by Tawnyangel22 and Tikatu on 22/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 16:34:45 GMT

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Friday, March 16th; 4:30 PM; Tracy Industries headquarters in New York City

Lena and the Tracys walked into the Tracy Industries building together, and Jeff signed her in at the security desk. He had arranged to have a badge ready for her, so if she ever had to return, she would be able to pass through quickly. The guard gave it to her, and she clipped it on her jacket lapel.

"This is where we part company, Mrs. Matumbo. Will you be okay from here?"

"I'll be just fine, sir. You arranged for de car to take me to de airport, as well as for a plane ticket

and a car to take me home. It has been a very interesting experience. I'll be in touch with you all in the near future."

"I'll be looking forward to hearing from you again. Take care, and if you need anything else, please don't hesitate to ask."

"I won't. You take care of yourself."

She shook hands with him, and Elise, Dianne and Lisa hugged her, then they headed toward the elevator to the penthouse suites. Lena turned to the guard and asked, "Which floor is the I&M Department on?"

He looked it up on his computer. "Eighteenth floor. The elevators to your left will take you there. If you'd like to leave your suitcase and bag here, I'll be more than happy to watch them for you."

"Thank you, young man." She handed them to him, then walked over to the elevators and very shortly was heading up to the I&M offices. When she arrived, she asked the first person she met to direct her to the supervisor's office. Moments later, she was knocking on his door.

She heard a gruff, "Come in," and opened it. A heavyset man with thinning brown hair was sitting at a desk facing her, gathering up some things and putting them into a briefcase.

"Mr. Peterson, I'm Mrs. Matumbo, head of the I&M department in the Washington D.C. offices.

"Oh, yes. I received a memo saying that you would be stopping by. Well, it's late, and I'm getting ready to leave, so I suggest you make this quick and to the point."

"Okay. I was informed you had a problem with not being advised of the email problem." She walked in, closing the door behind her.

"That's right. I should have been informed immediately. Why wasn't I?"

Although he hadn't invited her to sit, she did so anyway. "There was no reason for us to do so. No one knew that the New York offices had been - or would be - affected; in fact, they weren't until a day or so after the D.C. offices were."

"Nevertheless, I should know about things like this. I expect that in the future, you will inform me whenever something like this happens."

"No."

"What?"

"Do you plan to inform me when something occurs here?"

"Of course not. I am head of the New York offices, Tracy Industries headquarters, not you. Therefore..."

"Therefore you are responsible for what happens to the computer systems in the New York offices, and have no need to know about problems elsewhere. Would you ask the I&M supervisor in London to report to you?" He looked at her in astonishment, then shook his head. "I didn't think so. They are not your responsibility, and neither are the systems in D.C., or anywhere else, for that matter. Plus, as I understand it, you don't have the authority to demand such things. So I and my team will not be informing you of anything, unless we feel it is imperative that you need to know."

"Mrs. Matumbo, you may have spent time with the Tracy family recently, but that does not give you the right to just come in here and try to ride roughshod over me."

"Is that what you think I'm doing? I assure you, it was not my intention. I came here to personally inform you that if I'd had any inkling that the New York computers would be affected, I would have notified you. However, because some of the emails contained sensitive information, I felt that it was imperative to get to the source of the problem quickly.

"And you felt that you were the only one who could do it? Wasn't that presumptuous of you?" he replied disdainfully. "Had you notified me, the situation might have been rectified much sooner. I should have been the one to notify Mr. Hackenbacker, and gone to wherever they live to make the necessary repairs, not you. I do have seniority, you know."

"Your seniority isn't in question. As I said, there was sensitive information in a few of the emails that I felt should not go any further. So I took the steps that I believed necessary. When I contacted Mr. Hackenbacker, I thought that he would be the one to fix it. It came as a complete surprise to me when he asked me to go to the Tracy home and do the repairs myself." She shook her head, still somewhat astonished at what had happened during her stay. "As I said, had I had any hint that the New York offices would have been affected, you would have been notified. I don't think, though, that you could have solved the problem any faster. But that's neither here nor there. What's done is done."

She paused. "But I do mean what I said before. You will be informed of a problem if it is believed that it will affect the systems in this building. But things that occur in offices in other cities are not your business. So take care of the computer systems here, and I&M supervisors in those other offices will take care of theirs."

He stood up, red-faced. "How dare you!? Do you think you can just waltz in and tell me my job? I have some pull around here, I tell you. I could have you severely reprimanded for your impudence, possibly even fired! The Tracys live in a penthouse upstairs in this building and one of them is there right this minute. If I called up there I could..."

"Actually, more of them are up there right now," Lena replied calmly, but there was a fire in her eyes. "Mr. Tracy arrived with me - along with some others - and knows the reason for my visit. So call upstairs, if you wish. But I don't think any of them would be interested to hear what you'd have to say. And even if they did, I doubt that I would be the one to be adversely affected by it."

He had his hand on the telephone. In fact, he had picked up the receiver. But when she finished talking, he paled, hung up and sat back down. His mouth opened and closed a few times, but no sound came out. Lena leaned over and picked up her purse, then stood up. "I think we understand one another, and are finished here. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a plane to catch."

She walked out, closing the door behind her. She sighed, thinking, Tank goodness, dat's over. Now I can go home. But I wish dat, just once, I wouldn't have to mention someone else's name to get cooperation. She headed to the elevators and was soon back in the lobby. She retrieved her bags from the guard and started toward the chauffeur who was beckoning to her, but was stopped by a man who was vaguely familiar looking. He held a microphone up, and she noticed a cameraman standing off to one side.

Now what? she thought tiredly.

"Mrs. Matumbo, I'm Ned Cook, reporter for NTBS. I understand you just got back from visiting the Tracys. Our viewers are interested in Jefferson Tracy. Would you care to comment?"

"What makes you tink I was visiting dem?"

"I was at the airport when their jet landed and saw you and Mr. - Mrs. Tracy get off."

"You just happened to be in de right terminal at de airport at de right time?"

"Well, I got a tip the Tracy jet was heading here, and its approximate arrival time."

"From whom?"

"I have my sources. Look, I'm the one who is supposed to be asking the questions. Now, what can you tell the viewers about Mr. Tracy's condition? Has he had a relapse and is that why he's returned to New York?"

"Mr. Tracy is improving daily. Dat's all I have to say about him." She started to walk on, but he swiftly moved in front of her again.

"We'd like to know more, and I'm sure you can tell us. Now why has he re..."

"I have notting more to say, Mr. Cook. So please . . ."

"But surely you must have more you can tell my viewers. After all, the people do have the right to know."

"No, dey don't."

"What do you mean by that?" Ned argued. "Mr. Tracy is a public figure, and..."

"Den dey can read or hear about his public appearances. But his private life is none of deir business. It is only for him and dose dat share it wit him."

There was a pause, then Ned, still feeling humiliated from his last encounter with Jeff Tracy, continued. "Did you share it with him, Mrs. Matumbo?" he asked, an unmistakable innuendo in the tone of his voice.

Lena looked at him disdainfully. "Dat was an offensive and intrusive question. It was low, even for you. I suggest you leave now, while I still have some control over my temper. Or I'll have you trown out." She indicated the security guard, who was intently watching them, and looked ready to come to her aid.

Ned turned to his cameraman, making a slicing gesture. The cameraman lowered his video recorder and turned away. "All right, have it your way for now. But I know there's a story in all this, and I'm going to get it one way or another."

"I can't stop you from trying, Mr. Cook, but I suggest dat you consider very carefully how you try to get dat story. De consequences of your actions could hurt your reputation and your career. And don't try it wit me or you might not like what I do - or say. Now, if you'll excuse me," she replied, handing her suitcase to the chauffeur, who had walked over to her, "I have anoter plane to catch. Good bye." He stepped aside and she followed the chauffeur out of the building and over to the car.

Post by Hobbeth on 23/11/2004[

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 16:41:35 GMT

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size=2]Malaysian Grand prix (Part 3)

Alan and Kenny met in the foyer of the hotel.

"Okay, are we really going to a night club?" Alan asked.

"Yep, the Lotus Flower is a very exotic night club, where the girls are...," and Kenny rolled his eyes.

"Boy, wait till I tell Scott and Virgil. Won't they be jealous!" Alan remarked.

Kenny had already called a taxi.

"The Lotus Flower Club," he informed the driver, and they were driven off at speed.

The Lotus Flower nightclub was set slightly out of the centre of Kuala Lumpur. Kenny was right; the girls were very exotic, wearing very little apart from a garland of flowers around their necks, and a thin, flimsy sarong around their hips. Alan gasped to himself, Oh yes, Scott and Virgil will be so jealous!

They were shown to a table towards the back to the club, and one of the girls glided over to take their drinks order. Both Kenny and Alan ordered exotic cocktails. A suave young man came up to them.

"Why, hello, Mr. Malone. It's good to see you again. You and your friend are just in time for the

show."

Kenny rubbed his hands together eagerly. "Good! I want my friend here to have a very good time!"

Kenny laughed as Alan coloured.

The lights on the stage suddenly turned on, bright and blazing. A slow jazz number with a pounding beat sounded out, and two beautiful Asian girls stepped out onto the stage. They were dressed in tight, Chinese style dresses with mandarin collars and a slit on both sides from the hem to the hip. They began to slowly gyrate to the music, seductively swaying their hips in rhythm to the beat of the music. With gracefully sexy moves, they began to remove their clothes. Before long, they had stepped off the stage, and, as a spotlight followed their every move, they took off in different directions, dancing around the tables, lingering here and there for a few moments before moving on.

One of the girls paused at Alan and Kenny's table. Kenny let out a long whistle. Alan clapped and cheered. The girl stood in front of Alan, slowly dipping her knees, looking at him all the time. Slowly turning this way and that she sashayed around the table, ruffling his hair and then Kenny's hair. Alan longed to hold her, but when he tried to, she moved away, smiling seductively. Both Alan and Kenny were getting hot under the collar.

"Phew!" Alan joked. "Is it me, or is it hot in here?"

"It's hot in here, and it ain't just the temperature," Kenny replied.

Shortly after she left, the second girl approached their table. She too, seductively swayed to the music, causing both Alan and Kenny to whistle and slap the table appreciatively. She moved off, and when the routine ended, both girls were back on stage. They smiled, waved and blew kisses. Alan thought that one of them blew a kiss right at him and grinned at her.

"Wow, oh wow, wait until I tell the folks back home." Alan murmured to his friend, still recovering from the titillation of the dancing.

Kenny grinned, "By folks, why do I get the impression that you are going to boast to your brothers?"

Alan grinned back. "Yep, Scott and Virgil are going to wish they had come along."

Finishing their drinks they left the club and walked back into the centre of the town, and found a pub run by an Australian. This was seemed quite quiet, after the scenes at the Night Club. Anyway after several beers and a few games of darts, Alan and Kenny left to return to the hotel.

Alan slept well that night, dreaming of exotic dancers and cocktails and motor racing all jumbled together. The next morning, Kenny drove him to the airport terminal.

"You know, we should do this again sometime," he told his friend.

"Well, I am going to the Monaco Grand Prix in May; part 2 of my birthday present. Why don't we

meet up there?" Alan replied.

"You're on, I'll hold you to that."

The two friends embraced, then Alan boarded his plane, and having gained clearance, headed for home.

Oh, yes, he thought to himself. I will really rub it in about those girls to Scott and Virgil. They will be so envious that they didn't come with me.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 22/11/2004[/size]

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 16:58:43 GMT
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Post by Tawnyangel22 on 22/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:00:42 GMT
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Silver Springs, Maryland; Friday, March 16th, 2068; 8 PM

Lena walked in her front door, followed by the chauffeur with her bags. She turned and thanked him, as he tipped his hat and left, closing the door behind him. She walked over to her favorite chair and sank down with a sigh. It's so good to be home, she thought. She sat there for several minutes then, with another sigh, got up and picked her bags up, taking them into her bedroom. She quickly emptied them, putting all of her clothes in the laundry basket, then put the bags away. She headed into her bathroom and ran a bath. While it was filling, she picked up her cordless phone and called her son.

"Matthew? I'm home," she said, when he answered.

"Mom, why were you gone so long? Where were you? When did you get back? Couldn't you call? It's all very well and good to get emails, but when I'm used to talking to you three or four times a week, at least; it isn't the same."

"I just walked in de house about fifteen minutes ago. Honey, I'm bone tired. Even dough we spent de night in Los Angeles, it isn't de same as being in your own bed. I'm going to make a quick call to your sister, soak in a nice hot bat, have a bite to eat, den get some sleep. Maybe we can talk tomorrow." She headed into the bathroom as she spoke and turned off the water.

"I'll call you around 11. Okay? Maybe we can get together this weekend, all of us, and you can tell us about your trip."

"Dat sounds like a good idea. Dat way I don't have to keep repeating myself. Okay. Now, give de children my love, and tell dem I'll see dem soon."

"All right, Mom. Take care of yourself."

"You, too. 'Bye."

She then called her daughter, who wasn't home. Her granddaughter, Naomi, answered. "Mom's doing the grocery shopping. Leslie had to take Siti to the hospital, because she was having trouble breathing. Everything's okay now, but you know Mom. She had to be there, too. Anyway, she didn't get to the supermarket this afternoon, like she usually does."

"Okay, Naomi. I just called to let her and you all know dat I'm home, safe and sound. I've already told your uncle. He tink we should all get togeter dis weekend so I can tell everyone at once about my trip."

"Cool! I'd like to hear about it, Nyanya. I'll tell Mom."

"Dat's fine, sweetie. Take care, now, and I look forward to seeing you all, real soon."

They hung up and she got into the tub, sighing with pleasure. Gradually, she relaxed and, after half an hour, got out feeling refreshed. She wasn't very hungry, so she just made herself a sandwich and when she'd eaten it, left the plate in the sink. She headed to bed, slipping between the covers with yet another sigh. I'm sure sighing a lot, today, she thought to herself with a smile. That was her last thought, as she fell into a deep, restful sleep.

Post by Hobbeth on 23/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:02:40 GMT
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Saturday, March 17, 2068, 2:30 p.m. Afghanistan time, somewhere over Asia

Emily sat back in the copilot's seat. She was relieved to be finally on her way home.

The day had gone well. Things went smoothly at the manufacturing plant. The colorfastness testing showed that both the navy dye and the light blue would do well in Tin-Tin's fabric. The reds didn't do as well in colorfastness, and the orange was dicey, all of which concerned Tin-Tin, but most of the other colors were fine. Tin-Tin confirmed the order of fabric, made the arrangements for some of it to go elsewhere for dyeing, and selected the colors that would be dyed there in Kabul. Mr. al Kadar was very gratified.

"We'll just have to find a substitute fabric or maybe a different dye for Dianne and Dominic's uniforms, that's all. And possibly Gordon's as well," Emily had told the engineer, who had nodded. She knew that the girl was tired and disappointed. Disappointed, that was, until lunch time.

They were eating a quiet last meal in the hotel's restaurant when a messenger came to their table. "Ms. Kyrano? Ms. Tin-Tin Kyrano?"

"I'm Ms. Kyrano," Tin-Tin said. The messenger smiled, then presented Tin-Tin with a lovely bouquet of flowers. She gasped, her disappointment swallowed up in her delight at the blossoms. Calla lilies, pink tea roses, pink carnations, and white chrysanthemums filled her arms, and she took a deep sniff of the roses.

"Oh, how beautiful!" she cried. "Who sent them?"

The messenger reached into a pocket and, with a flourish, presented her with a card. She opened

it, and blushed. Emily's sharp eyes did not miss the flush of the girl's cheeks and could guess from whom the flowers had come. As she identified the flowers and wracked her brains for the meanings of each, she was surprised at how chaste the sentiments were that the flowers represented.

Pink carnations mean "I'll never forget you," and the calla lilies, mean "majestic beauty". The pink tea roses mean "I'll always remember," while the white chrysanthemums mean "truth". Hmm. There's more to this Giles Tallman than meets the eye. Perhaps I've misjudged him.

Tin-Tin tucked the card in her purse. He had written on it, "Until we meet again." And he had included his cell phone number and an email address.

The bouquet now sat on one of the seats in the passenger area of the Ladybird, wrapped in wet paper to keep them fresh. The scent of the lilies and the roses filled the cabin. Emily glanced at Tin-Tin, who seemed to be wrapped in her own world.

"Earth to Tin-Tin," Emily said quietly. Tin-Tin turned her gaze to Grandma Tracy and she smiled.

"I'm sorry I haven't been chatting much, Grandma. I'm just glad to be on my way home." Tin-Tin sighed contentedly. "It turned out to be a productive trip, didn't it?"

"Yes, it did, child," Grandma agreed. In more than one way for you, I suppose, she thought with an inward sigh.

Back in Kabul, the man with the dusty truck also sighed, but with relief. His charges had gotten off safely and he hadn't had to intervene. He didn't know who the blond Brit had been, but he would describe the man for his superior in London. Right now, he sent off an email to the Pink Lady: "Our pigeons are flown and on their way home."

The wiry little man who had been washing windows at night, also watched as Ladybird took to the sky. He made a phone call to that effect and got a curt reply for his pains.

In his hotel room, Giles Tallman, aka Hightower, hung up the phone after getting news of his subject's departure. He turned to the dark-haired woman who awaited him, her naked form half covered by the sheets. He smiled at her.

"Ms. Kyrano is on her way home. You did a wonderful job for us here, Fatma, my love. We don't forget our friends."

"I am very pleased with the bonus you have given me, sir. Working for your firm is proving to be very fulfilling. In more ways than one," she replied, reaching over for a glass of champagne on the nightstand behind her. Giles watched with interest what the movement did to her trim figure. She handed a glass to him, and then reached back for another. They clinked their glasses and drank the wine, then Giles lazily ran a hand down her face and neck and further down, eliciting a low moan from his partner.

"Now, Fatma, my beauty. Where were we?"

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:04:38 GMT
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March 16, Tracy Penthouse, New York.

Elise found herself once again unpacking the things she would need while she was in New York. She was glad she'd thought to bring some cold weather clothes; New York still was chilly this time of year.

She started making notes in her head as she settled in, and the first priority was to get her belongings taken care of and shipped. As she wasn't exactly sure where her stuff had been taken, she decided to ask Gordon. After all, he was at the apartment helping pack it all before Scott had her whisked off to the island!

She left her room and began looking for Gordon. Elise knew the layout of the penthouse from when she stayed there after leaving the hospital and before she left for the island. Virgil had been here then; now it was Gordon who was the resident Tracy. She heard him before she actually saw him. Following the noises of a disgruntled sports fan, she found him slouched on the couch, munching on chips and complaining to a sports announcer who was oblivious to the fact that Gordon's tirade was directed at him! Elise watched for a minute, amused, until Gordon sensed her presence and looked up.

"Elise! Hi! Um... how long have you been standing there?"

"Long enough!" she smiled back at him.

"Sorry!" he mumbled as he sat up.

"S'okay. I know how you guys are with sports!" Gordon laughed.

"Yeah, it's a genetic thing. Can't help it, I'm afraid! What's up with you?" he asked, casually.

"Actually, I was wondering if you wouldn't mind coming with me tomorrow to locate and take care of my stuff. You know... the stuff you put in storage?"

Gordon looked a little lost and then realized what she was talking about.

"Oh yeah! Sure, no problem. It won't take long to get it taken care of. You wanna go early to do it?"

"Yes, the sooner the better. Thanks."

He flashed his boyish grin at her and she smiled back. As he started to stand up, his back gave him a twinge, and Elise noticed.

"Are you okay?" she asked, concerned.

"Yeah, it's just a cramp." He twisted his torso around a bit, loosening the muscles. Elise thought about a remark she'd heard Dianne say at the airport. Something about Gordon re-injuring his back?

"Gordon? Did you injure your back?"

He didn't reply right away, contemplating on what to tell her. He hated to talk about it, and even more, he hated the sympathy people usually tried to offer him. Gordon liked to pretend he was never injured in the first place.

"Well? Did you?" she persisted.

He nodded, "Unfortunately... yes. Yes, I hurt it a long time ago, but I recently re-injured it."

Elise saw the far-away look that had appeared on Gordon's face. He looked sad, and then almost angry, but in a flash it was gone. She walked around the couch and sat down.

"How did it happen? On a rescue?"

Gordon sighed heavily and sat down, leaning back against the couch. "No, not on a rescue. It happened before International Rescue."

"Ah, I see."

Gordon knew the tone of her reply meant she wanted details, details he wasn't sure he wanted to give.

Why the heck does she even want to know?!

He looked at her and noticed her eyes were staring off to nowhere. He studied her for a few minutes.

There's something bothering her, something bad.

He knew that look. He had seen it time and again; on the faces of the victims he'd rescued, on the faces of his brothers, and on his own face.

She was trying to mask her fear.

"Elise?"

"Hmm?"

"Is there something bothering you that you want to talk about?"

She looked at him, but averted her eyes quickly.

"No, not really. I was just curious about your back, that's all."

LIAR!

He knew a tall one when he heard it. He hadn't spent years concocting the best lies in the world for nothing!

"I'll be fine, don't worry," he assured her.

They arranged a time to leave the next morning and said their goodnights.

Gordon was up early and was surprised to see Elise ready and waiting to go.

"Anxious, are we?" he joked but noticed how jittery she seemed.

"I was awake earlier than I expected, so figured I'd get ready."

"Okay then, let's go."

Gordon grabbed the keys to the car that was kept downstairs in the garage and they headed out.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 24/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:10:57 GMT

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Monday, March 19th; 7:30 AM; Tracy Industries Washington DC offices

Lena sat at her desk checking out her new computer as she waited for her staff to arrive. She had a half smile on her face as she remembered her reaction when she went into her computer room the previous Saturday. She hadn't taken three steps into the room when she noticed what was sitting on her desk. She'd stopped dead, shocked. I locked up my house good. How did anyone get in to do dis? Then she noticed an envelope on the desk. She went over and took out the sheets of paper that were inside.

"Dear Lena," it said. "I would have let you know I'd had this done, but I didn't receive confirmation until just after we parted company. This is your new state-of-the-art computer, and you'll find the one in your office at Tracy Industries has also been upgraded. I'm not going to tell you how we were able to get in without alerting anyone," (she could just picture him grinning as he wrote that) but I intend to make sure no one else can do what we did. We have also installed a security system in your home. Since I couldn't inform you of that, either, it wasn't armed. But I expect you to arm it every time you leave the house, and when you go to bed. The instructions are enclosed. I want to ensure your safety as much as the safety of International Rescue.

"Again, it was a pleasure meeting and talking to you, and Brains informed me that he enjoyed working with you, and looks forward to doing it again.

Jeff Tracy"

She'd spent part of Saturday and most of Sunday familiarizing herself with the new computer. She'd also spent Saturday afternoon and evening with her family, giving them an expurgated version of her two weeks with the Tracy family. She would never lie to them; whenever anyone asked her a question she felt she shouldn't answer, her reply would always be, "I'm sorry. I can't answer dat. I promised Mr. Tracy."

Now she was familiar with the new systems and left her office when she heard her staff coming in. Each one expressed their happiness at her return, to which she laughingly replied, "Are you telling me dat you couldn't work under Tom's supervision?"

They all laughed with her. "Something's missing when you're away, Lena," Louise replied. "We have no problem working together whether you're here or not, but it's far more enjoyable when you're around." The rest of the staff agreed.

"Why, tank you, Louise. Tank you all." She proceeded to tell them a little about her trip, then they all went to their desks and got to work. She returned to her office, feeling humble. She knew her staff liked her, but didn't realize how much. It made her feel, well, like she was where she belonged.

Post by Hobbeth on 27/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:12:40 GMT
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Tracy Island, Monday 18th March

Nikki and Kat were doing some serious sunbathing down by the pool. Suddenly a male voice interrupted their thoughts. Virgil, Alan, Christopher, Brandon, and Dominic with Joshua made their way down to the pool.

"Hey, how about us all playing a game of water polo?" Virgil shouted to them.

Without opening her eyes, Kat replied, "No chance, Virgil. Not until we have extra females on our side."

"Aw, come on," Alan added. "We just want to relax."

Still with her eyes closed, Kat remarked, "You are not going to beat us just because you are obviously bored."

Virgil knelt by her chaise. Kat glanced at him through half opened eyes and said, "If you really

want to relax, why don't you ask Brandon and Christopher to have a game of tennis with you, and Nikki and I will come along and watch."

"Did someone mention tennis?" Christopher asked, "Come on Brandon, let's see how good you are at tennis."

"Oh, do play tennis," Nikki said eagerly. "I will umpire for you."

"Right then, tennis it is, Virgil agreed. "Now we must find a job for you," he said to Kat, laughing. "I know! You can be our ball boy."

"Charming!" Kat, responded, but with a smile.

"Say, Kat," Nikki looked at her friend. "It will be fun, seeing the Tracy boys beaten."

Kat nodded, but Brandon didn't look too sure about that. Laughing and chatting, the group made its way to the tennis court. Dominic and Joshua settled down, prepared to watch an interesting game. They played three sets, with Virgil and Alan winning two sets to one.

"Okay, you girls, now how about mixed doubles?" Alan asked.

"Don't look at me," Kat said. "I haven't played tennis since I was at school. I must be very rusty."

"Oh, come on Kat! It will be fun," Nikki urged her friend.

"We'll toss who plays against who," said Alan, tossing a coin. "Heads!"

Heads it was. "I'll play with Nikki," Alan said.

"Sorry, Virgil, you are left with me and I can't play very well," Kat said apologetically. "Like I said, I haven't played for years."

The game started, and to everyone's surprise Kat and Virgil managed to win two sets.

"Hey, you're not too bad," Virgil stated.

"Oh, it was a sheer fluke, beginner's luck. You were the one who did all the real work," replied Kat modestly.

"I think that drinks are in order now," Brandon said, glancing at his friends.

"I vote that Alan and Virgil get them," Nikki replied.

"How come?" Alan inquired.

"Well, you are our hosts, in a way, and we have obliged you by playing tennis with you," Christopher added.

Laughing, Alan looked at the newbies, "Yeah, okay, but just this once. From now on you must all take turns." And he led them back inside to the kitchen.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 27/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:21:47 GMT

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Monday, March 19, 2068, 3:30 p.m., Tracy Island

"Tracy Island, this is TRIC 078, requesting permission to land."

"TRIC 078, permission granted. I'll see you down at the airstrip."

"Roger that."

Scott turned off the communicator and turned on the intercom to reach the kitchen.

"Kyrano? The cargo plane has arrived. Just thought you should know."

"Thank you, Mr. Scott. I shall be there directly."

Scott scrambled outside and hopped into the hover cart that sat at the base of the steps from the house. He waved to Brandon, who was swimming laps in the pool, and gestured to Alan.

"Alan! Come on! I'll need your help!"

"Coming, Scott!"

Alan hurried to the hover cart and together he and Scott maneuvered the small vehicle down to the airstrip. By the time they got there, Kyrano was already outside with a hover float, and Christopher was leaning over the rails of the Cliff House patio.

"Could you blokes use an extra hand?" he asked with a shout.

"Sure could!" Alan replied with a yell.

"Be right there!"

Meanwhile, Tin-Tin had arrived to take charge of the manifest. She smiled widely; the orders from the uniform makers had finally come! She knew that she and Grandma Tracy would probably be working hard to put on the patches that had been requisitioned from the embroiderers. The people who made the various parts to the uniforms didn't know who they were making them for, with the exception of the embroiderers, who gladly made the patches for International Rescue and kept quiet about it. Still, even they didn't know where the patches went once they were shipped out. An agent would collect the patches from a dummy address and send them off to a central location,

where the other boxes would be assembled. There was always a middleman, or two, and in some cases, three, when they dealt with outside suppliers.

"Thank you, Gary," Tin-Tin said as she signed the manifest. Gary was their regular cargo plane pilot, and on the Tracy Industries payroll, and, like Juan the mailman, made regular trips to the island. He usually came with items too bulky for Juan's little puddle jumper. But even he had no idea what was in the boxes.

Nikki sauntered out to the plane to idly inspect the packages. Her face beamed as she saw one with a familiar address.

"Yes! The gear I had shipped has finally made it!" she exclaimed. She turned and looked up at the Cliff House, the patio of which towered several stories above them. "But just how am I going to get it up there?"

"Do not worry, Ms. Jackson. We will make sure it gets to your apartment," Kyrano soothed. "But first I will take these parcels up to the main house."

"Is that everything?" Gary asked, brushing his dark hair out of his eyes. "If so, I've got another delivery to make on the way back to Wellington."

"Yes, it is, Gary. And thanks again," Scott replied with a genial handshake. "Let me get upstairs and we'll give you clearance for take off."

"Right," Gary said as he headed to the cockpit. "See you later this week!"

The little group waved, and dispersed. Scott drove Kyrano and part of the cargo back up to the villa, then checked the radar before giving Gary the go-ahead for his departure.

I'll tell Dad about this when we have our daily check-in. It will cheer him immensely to know that our new operatives now have their official uniforms. It will take a while for my brothers and I to get used to the new design, but I think it's far more practical than what we've had up to now.

Post by Tikatu on 27/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:23:28 GMT
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Monday, March 19, 2068, 5 p.m., Tracy Island (Monday, March 19, midnight, New York City)

"Hi, Dad."

"Hello, Scott. How are things going back on the island?"

"Things are okay. We got a shipment today from the clothiers..."

"Excellent. Have the items been distributed?"

"Yes. They have. Much to the acclaim of our new people."

"Good. Please tell Tin-Tin that another set will be have to ordered once measurements have been taken."

"Right! Elise! How are things with her?"

"She and Gordon went out yesterday morning to see to her things. They're to be shipped tomorrow."

"Good. We'll look for them, though they might not be here by the time you return."

"Understood. What else came in the shipment?"

"The satellite phones. They've also been distributed, with the appropriate warnings. I have a list of which numbers are attached to which person. There are four left."

"Yes. I ordered them by the number of apartments we have, occupied or unoccupied. So when we return, Elise will already have one available. Anything else?"

"Not that I can think of. How are things in New York?"

"Brisk. Lena's back at home, everything is set up for her. Dianne plans on going shopping tomorrow with Lisa and the children to get them appropriate clothes for Thursday. I have an appointment at Mt. Sinai early Tuesday, before we fly to South Carolina. Hopefully my casts will be gone by the end of the appointment. It would remove a lot of stress all the way around. Gordon seems to be doing okay though he has avoided being examined by his physician. If he continues, I'll probably have to step in and lay down the law."

"How is Mom doing? I know that this is a difficult time for her."

"She's not sleeping well, which concerns me, especially since she's our main pilot. Gordon may have to fly us south and back so she can get some rest. Fortunately the press has stayed away so far. That may not last; one of the security guards reported that Lena was accosted by Ned Cook as she was leaving Friday night."

"What?! Man, I wish I were there. I'd give the high and mighty Ned Cook what for! What is the man after?"

"An interview with me, it seems. I'll have Bernie keep an eye on Dianne, Lisa, and the kids as they shop tomorrow." Sigh. "Well, son, it's after midnight here and I'd best get to bed. Dianne's waiting for me. Give our greetings to everyone."

"Right, Dad. And give our love to Mom, Grandma P and the kids... including Gordon. Tell Elise I said 'hello'."

Chuckle. "All right, son. Goodnight."

"Goodbye, Dad."

Post by Tikatu on 28/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:25:22 GMT

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19th March 4.15pm

Christopher gazed around the cockpit of Thunderbird 2. He listened to the communications chatter on his headset.

"Thunderbird 7 to CJ." He heard Dianne say over the comlink. "We are ready to go."

"F-A-B, Doc." Christopher smiled as he flicked the toggle to lower the main body of the vehicle. "Strap yourselves in."

Christopher fired the retros, lifting the vast cargo carrier into the air. He then fired the main engines, pushing the craft forward. He quickly checked the camera detectors for any anomalies then turned Thunderbird 2 towards the nearest hospital, which was in Edinburgh. Making a quick mental calculation, he worked out the arrival time.

"Thunderbird 2 to Thunderbird 1, 5 and 7, the ETA is around ninety minutes from now."

He heard all parties respond in the affirmative, so he decided to concentrate on the flying.

"Thunderbird 7 to Thunderbird 2." Nikki's voice came on. "One of our patients has gone into critical status! We need to get to the hospital as quickly as we can!"

Christopher punched up the maps for the area, scanning for any areas that he could use for a diversion. "Yes!" He grinned as he scrolled to an area that he thought would serve his purpose. The RAF had used to use this valley for training purposes, and he had flown through it a number of times.

"Batten down the hatches,," he said. "I'm taking a little detour." He turned Thunderbird 2 towards a valley that in his estimation would shave some time off the journey. He received confirmation from his passengers that they and their passengers were secure, then he increased his speed slightly.

Getting closer to the valley entrance, he tilted Thunderbird Two ever so slightly, just enough for the vast craft to fly through the valley. Christopher constantly checked from side to side, adjusting and compensating for the wind speeds in the valley. After a fraught few moments, which saw Christopher adopt a grim expression, Thunderbird 2 emerged from the valley.

Christopher turned the vehicle towards Edinburgh, and then toggled the comlink. "Everyone ok?"

"Thanks, Thunderbird 2," Nikki said in a relieved tone. "I didn't think we would make it."

"Well, I managed to shave a little bit of time from the journey," Christopher said as he saw the Edinburgh skyline in the distance.

Getting closer to the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, he saw Thunderbird 1 sitting there waiting for him. Easing his huge ship around, he touched down. Then after raising the main body up, he relaxed.

The lights snapped on as Edinburgh disappeared from the view ports, and two doors slid open to reveal Virgil and Brains sitting at a bank of screens.

Christopher unbuckled himself from his seat. "How did I do?"

Post by The_Wrong_Trousers on 28/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:26:23 GMT

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Monday, March 19, 2068, 9:30 p.m. local time, New York City.

Jeff approached Dianne from behind. She sat out on the small patio of the penthouse, wrapped in a thick sweater against the chill of the March evening. Her wireless headphones were in her ears and her music player lay on the small table at her elbow. She didn't turn as he asked her, "What are you listening to?"

"The Toccata and Fugue in D Minor, by Bach," she said with a slight smile.

"That's an appropriately moody piece," he commented. She nodded slightly, then turned to him, sighing.

"Ah'm sorry Ah've been such a bear lately," she began. Jeff put his right hand along her cheek, positioning his thumb over her lips.

"Nothing to be sorry about, love. You've been under a good deal of stress and this is a sad time for you. Just like a certain week in September will be for me. We'll get through them both... together. Just don't shut me out, okay? We both do better when we've got the other to lean on."

She nodded, putting her hand over his. He withdrew his from her face, and clasped her hand, intertwining their fingers as her gaze shifted back to the Manhattan skyline.

"How did shopping go today? I noticed that there were far fewer packages than usually arrive after one of your forays into the fashion district," he asked, a gently joking tone to his voice. She smiled again, wider this time.

"It went well, especially considering Alex was with us. You know how he is about clothes

shopping. We got what we went for. An appropriate dress for me, something almost matching for Cherie, somber pants, vests, and shirts for the boys. Tyler wanted a bright bowtie and I let him get one, but not for Thursday. I am glad we went shoe shopping; the boys have outgrown both their dress shoes and their sneakers."

"Did you have any trouble with the press?"

"No. Bernie was amazing at keeping us safe while we shopped. Things went so well that Ma even has a chance to get something for herself. Ah wonder what Dougie will think when he sees it?"

"Don't worry about your brother. I've helped him and his family out plenty, now it's his turn to use wisely the help I've given him. Jared's a different case; he's worked hard and kept himself out of financial trouble. Setting up college funds for his kids was no trouble. But Douglas was given the same opportunity and turned it down, preferring to be bailed out of debt instead." Jeff squeezed her hand. "Enough about your brothers. I got an email today from Andrew. He and Maggie are coming to hear you speak."

She smiled again, then her smile faded and she looked down. "Charles and Martine will be there, too. Ah hope Ah do well."

"You will, love, you will."

There was a moment of silence between them, and then Jeff gave her hand a little tug. "Come on, Di. It's time we got some sleep. I've got an appointment with Mt. Sinai in the morning and I hope it goes as well or better than your shopping trip went. Maybe tomorrow night I can put myself to bed without your help."

"Ah hope so, Jeff. It would mean closure, of a sort, to this difficult time." Dianne reached over and turned off her music player and removed the earphones, slipping them into their little case, picking up both player and earphones. Jeff backed up so she could rise, and they walked back inside hand in hand.

Post by Tikatu on 28/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:28:53 GMT

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Tuesday, March 20, 2068, 11:30 a.m., Mt. Sinai Hospital, NYC

Ned Cook sat impatiently in the media room at Mt. Sinai. He had tracked Jeff Tracy to the hospital that morning, bright and early, but when he entered, he had been spotted and shuffled off to the media room. He had been cooling his heels there ever since, eating donuts and drinking some surprisingly good coffee. Other reporters, having gotten wind of Tracy's return to the hospital, had filtered in, taking their places in the seats and chatting. One of them, Jo Ann Moss, a reporter for the newspaper owned by NTSB's parent company, came over to talk to him.

"So, any ideas on why Tracy's back here?" she asked.

"Ideas? Yeah. Lots of them. He arrived Friday evening and has been in his penthouse all weekend. He brought some woman with him, name of Lena Matumbo. I tried to get some information from her, but she gave me the cold shoulder." Ned's ego was still stinging over Mrs. Matumbo's sharp words. "I've had some of my best informants watching to see him come out, and there was nothing until today."

"That's what you think," Jo Ann said smugly. "His wife was out and about shopping with her mother and the children. But no one could get close. Their driver is good, very good, at keeping them out of the public eye as much as possible."

"His wife? The kids? I'd love to interview them," Ned said, sipping his coffee and looking peeved.

"Well, it's too bad you don't report in South Carolina, then," Jo Ann added, a small smile on her lips. "I bet the local yokels get a word from the lady on Thursday."

Ned looked at her sharply. "Thursday? Why Thursday? And she's going south?"

Jo Ann gave him a incredulous look. "You mean you don't know?"

"What am I supposed to know?" Ned growled.

"Thursday is the fifth anniversary of the bombing of the Federal building in Greenville, South Carolina. Where Mrs. Tracy comes from. Her first husband died in that bombing! She's been asked to speak this year, probably because Homeland Security and the FBI have closed their investigation."

"Really? I wonder if I can get a flight down there...." Ned's musings were interrupted by the appearance of the hospital's media representative. The shapely dark-skinned woman looked out over the crowd.

"All right, people, let's make this brief. You've probably heard that Mr. Jefferson Tracy has returned to Mt. Sinai this morning. He was here for a consultation with his osteopathic surgeon, Dr. Richard Nighthorse. As a result of this consultation, Mr. Tracy's arm cast and most of his leg cast were removed. His foot remains immobilized pending further healing."

A reporter raised their hand. "So, the rumors that Mr. Tracy has had a relapse are false?"

"Yes. Mr. Tracy's condition is improving on a daily basis. He has not had a relapse. In fact, we would like to announce that the Tracy family, in gratitude for Mt. Sinai's handling of Mr. Tracy after his accident, has made a sizeable donation both to our children's oncology ward and our Intensive Care Unit."

"How much of a donation?" someone asked.

The press secretary smiled. "Tracy Industries will confirm this, of course. But the final figure is ten million dollars to each. Twenty million dollars total."

A series of ooh's and whistles went around the room. Ned raised his hand. "Any way we can get a word from Dr. Nighthorse? Or from Mr. Tracy himself?"

The media representative's eyes narrowed at Ned Cook. She had not forgotten his last escapade. "No, Mr. Cook. Dr. Nighthorse has moved on to other patients. And Mr. Tracy has already left."

"Gone? Already?" another reporter asked.

"Yes. Now if there are no more questions, this concludes this press briefing." There didn't seem to be any more questions, so she gathered up her papers and left the room.

"Hmm. Wonder if I can get a flight to South Carolina?" Ned repeated.

Jo Ann turned to him. "I wouldn't even ask if I were you, Ned. I understand that you're persona non grata with the Tracys right now. And the locals wouldn't appreciate your butting in. The national office probably won't give you clearance anyway."

Ned let out a deep breath. "You're probably right. Still, it galls me that the yokels down in South Carolina might get something from the family that I can't."

"Play it cool, Ned," Jo Ann advised. "Apologize for your behavior and let them alone for a while. Then approach them later. Maybe you'll catch old man Tracy in a good mood or something."

"Maybe," was all that Ned Cook would say.

Post by Tikatu on 28/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:31:50 GMT

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Tuesday, March 20, 2068, 4:15 p.m., local time, Greenville, SC

"That should do it," Lisa Parkhurst said as she maneuvered her full grocery cart to the checkout line. It seemed like forever since she had been home and she needed to restock her pantry. Not only that, but she expected to cook a big meal for the family on Thursday, to be eaten after the memorial service, and she wanted to have a variety of foods available. Her daughter-in-law, Angela, would be cooking some of the meal at her home and bringing it along but with Dianne, Andrew, and her oldest son, Jared, and their respective families in town, the guest list had just multiplied exponentially. She knew that Jeff could and would take them all out to dinner at some fancy restaurant and pay the tab without a blink if she wanted him to, but that's not how she was raised, nor was it the way she had raised her children. Family came together at home as often as possible.

Dianne followed her mother to the checkout line. Gordon was still meandering through the store, marveling at the new things on the grocer's shelves and the differences in brand names and in

what was considered gourmet from what he knew. He had asked Dianne point-blank if she had ever eaten pig's feet, to which she answered "No, and I don't intend to, so don't even think of buying any!" For all she knew, this prankster stepson of hers was coming up with some devious plot involving the pig's feet that were so neatly packaged in the meat section of the store.

Alex, who hated clothes shopping but loved food shopping, started to help unload the overflowing basket, and Dianne moved into position to help him. She removed the groceries from the cart while he scanned each item and passed it on to Lisa for bagging. Dianne was leaning down into the basket to get a last few things when someone tapped her on the back.

"Dianne? Is that you?"

Dianne came up out of the basket and looked at the woman who stood in line behind her.

"Pauline!" she cried happily. The two women embraced.

"It's so good to see you!" Dianne exclaimed. Pauline, a woman about Dianne's age with straight salt and pepper hair, looked over at Alex.

"Is that Alex? He's grown so much since I saw him last!" Pauline observed.

"Hi, Mrs. Harding," Alex responded, giving her a little wave.

"Oh, and there you are, Lisa!" Dianne's old friend called.

"Why, hello there, Pauline!" Lisa called back with a grin. "It seems like forever, doesn't it?"

"It sure does. When can I call for an appointment?"

"Try tomorrow morning, Pauline."

"I will!" Pauline turned her attention back to Dianne. "So, you're here for the memorial?"

"Yes, I am," Dianne told her. "They've asked me to speak."

"That's a switch!" Pauline commented. "But a nice change if it continues. How's your husband? I heard about that helijet going down."

"He's doing much better, Pauline. As a matter of fact, he got his arm cast off and most of his leg cast just today. His foot still has some healing to do, though," Dianne explained.

"Well, that's encouraging!" Pauline frowned a bit. "Did they ever figure out what he was doing up there with that pilot? I've heard the most outrageous rumors!"

"You have? You'll have to tell them to me sometime," Dianne replied, her heart twisting as she thought about what those rumors might entail. She leaned close to her friend. "Between you, me, and the grocery cart, he was up there to buy me a gift."

"Really? That's marvelous," Pauline said, her tone indicating that she didn't quite believe Dianne's explanation. Just then a tenor voice cut in.

"Why, Mom! Who is this lovely lady?" Gordon came up behind them, pressing a box of crackers and a bottle of soda into Alex's hands.

Dianne rolled her eyes and shook her head, while Pauline laughed. "Pauline, meet my number four stepson, Gordon Tracy. Gordon, this is my good friend, Pauline Harding."

"A pleasure to meet you, ma'am," Gordon said, putting on his most charming smile as he shook Pauline's hand.

"My, my, my," Pauline said, looking at him with an amused smile. "Aren't you the charmer? If your father is half as charming as you are, young man, it's no wonder why Dianne fell for him!"

"Try twice as charming," Dianne riposted. "Now, Gordon. Do you have everything you want?"

"All except those pig's feet...."

Pauline laughed. Dianne took him by the shoulders and pushed him off in Lisa's direction. "Go help your grandmother take the groceries out!"

"A pleasure to meet you, Mrs. Harding," Gordon called back, as Lisa put him into service as official cart pusher. Pauline began to unload her own groceries.

"It's so good to see you again, Dianne. I won't be at the memorial service; work, you know. But you'll be in my thoughts."

Dianne embraced her friend again. "I know, and I appreciate it. Maybe I'll see you later and we can really talk."

"Maybe. In any case, don't be a stranger."

"I'll try not to. Talk to you again, soon."

Dianne left the grocery store, walking some distance behind her family. She sighed, a mixture of pleasure and of melancholy.

It's so easy to forget about one's friends and the world around you when you live in an island paradise. I have to make more of an effort to keep in touch.

Post by Tikatu on 28/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:35:53 GMT

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Thursday, March 22, 2068, 10:30 a.m., local time, Greenville, SC

The day was bright, and warm, and breezy. All around the town were the signs of spring. Dogwoods and cherry trees were blossoming and the azaleas threatened to burst forth into their riotous colors. Tulips were already following the long gone daffodils and croci, with daylilies putting forth tentative stalks for later blossoms. It was a perfect a day as could be for those who sat or stood near the remains of the Federal building.

Mr. Martin, as the organizer of the event, welcomed those who came, especially the government officials who were there. The Vice President, the state's two Senators, and the Representative from the district were all there. A line of local firefighters and county EMS workers sat near the front. Members of the County Council had turned out in force as well, and the head of the Council sat on the dais with the other dignitaries. The district's Federal Representative introduced the Vice President, who advanced to the podium to speak, the microphones adjusted for her lack of height.

In the audience, Tyler turned to Jeff as the Vice President's speech seemed to go on and on.

"When's it gonna be Mom's turn?" he whispered.

Jeff leaned towards his son. "Soon. Now sit still and pay attention."

"Yes, sir."

At last, the Vice President finished, and the crowd applauded. She turned and shook hands with the Representative, waved to the crowd, and was swallowed up by her Secret Service contingent.

The Representative turned to the crowd, and announced, "Now for our keynote speaker, I present Dr. Dianne Koch Tracy."

Dianne came forward to the sound of clapping, looking poised and confident as she shook the Representative's hand.

She stepped up to the podium, standing straight and tall, looking out at the audience, and making brief eye contact with individuals as she began her speech. The crowd hushed. She took a deep breath, and began.

"We gather here, as we have on this day for the past four years, as a remembrance. As a memorial of the day and all that it means to us. But we do not come here to commemorate the event. None of us want to remember what happened five years ago today. And commemorating the actual event gives it life that it does not deserve. So we do not come to remember what happened.

"We come instead to commemorate the lives that were lost here. We come to remember them, always with tears, but sometimes with laughter, as we reminisce of the happier times we shared with them. For when all is said and done, this was only one event in the lives of those we loved, and still love, and remember with joy.

"We come also to remember those whose were injured. In many ways it is harder to survive

something of this magnitude, for the survivor lives with the memory of the event in their very body, their very soul. They may be permanently scarred, sometimes in ways we cannot see. So we have come together today to show our support for them, to tell them with our presence, 'You are not forgotten. We remember what you went through on this day five years ago. And we are here for you.'

"We come together to remember and honor those who helped us. Those brave men and women who quenched the fires, who dug through the rubble to pull the living... and the dead... from the shattered remains of this building. We come to remember them and to thank them for what they did for us and ours in our hour of need." She smiled, focusing on the line of emergency workers. "There really are no words to express the depth of our gratitude to you. But we will try. Thank you."

Dianne now returned her focus to the crowd. "But most importantly, we come together as a sign. A sign to those who would try to imitate this event, those would try to inflict the same pain and sorrow on others that has been inflicted on we who are here today. A sign that no matter how hard they try, they will fail. They cannot break us. Not as individuals. Not as families. Not as a community. Not as a people. And not as a nation. We will always rise again. Not even death can conquer our spirits.

"I leave you with Holy Sonnet Number Ten, by John Donne.

"Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so,
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure, then much more from thee must flow
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and souls' delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings," She paused slightly. "...and desperate men
And doth with poison, war and sickness dwell
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
Or better than thy stroke. Why swellst thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And Death shall be no more. Death, thou shalt die."

She looked out over the audience and bowed her head slightly. "Thank you." She turned as the applause started, shook hands with those on the podium, then sat down in her seat. Her eyes met Jeff's, and he smiled widely, nodding. She smiled slightly in response.

One of the state's Senators took the podium and said somberly. "It is almost 11:08. Please join with me for a moment of silence to honor those who were lost and those who were injured in the bombing."

There was a full two minutes of silence. Nothing could be heard other than the wind chimes in a nearby garden. Then the Senator broke the silence with a simple, "Thank you." People stirred again, and focused their attention on the dais.

Mr. Martin took the podium. "Today is the fifth anniversary of the event that brings us here. And today we wish to dedicate the last memorial statue, and move it to ground zero, where it truly belongs. Today we dedicate a statue to the memory of Richard Allen Koch, who died in the service of his country as a U.S. Customs agent. We remember him this day, as we remember all of our lost loved ones." A smattering of applause greeted this statement, and the memorial service continued for another ten minutes, with music provided by a number of local choirs, instrumental groups, and soloists.

Dianne sat on the dais, not even listening to the final few moments of the service. Her mind had turned back to that day five years ago, and the fractured, crazy quilt memories of that afternoon in the emergency room where she had been working. She sighed and brought her thoughts back to the present. This day has been a long time coming. Maybe now I can put all the anger and bitterness behind me and look toward the future with a lighter heart. Her eyes suddenly focused on a head of silver hair that stood out from the crowd around it. That future lies with Jeff now. I hope you understand, Rick. I loved you, I still love you, and I will always love you. But you are gone. And now there's another man for me to love and cherish. Thank you, Rick, for the sweet years we had together and for the three beautiful children you gave me. I will see to it that they never forget you. As I never will.

The final song was sung, and Dianne found herself applauding, then waiting for the others to leave. The dignitaries shook hands with her, murmuring words of sympathy and approval, and she thanked them, smiling softly. Then she turned to leave the stage.

At the bottom of the steps stood a small crowd, a crowd of four who waited just for her. She smiled at them as she descended the steps.

"Come on, Mom. Dad's waiting for us so we can go see Dad Koch's statue," Tyler said as he slipped his hand in hers.

"Are you okay, Dianne?" Lisa asked softly.

"Yes, Ma. I'm okay now," she replied as she let her youngest son pull her towards a waiting Jeff, who stood on his crutches, a mixture of pride and love shining in his eyes.

Post by Tikatu on 30/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:47:54 GMT
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Thursday, March 22, 1 p.m., local time, Lisa Parkhurst's house, Greenville, SC

"Lisa, let me get in there and do the dishes," Maggie Carmichael offered, tying the strings of an apron around her trim waist.

"No, no, Maggie! You're a guest!" Lisa cried. Maggie, however, pushed past her sister-in-law and

made her way to the sink.

"Nonsense! I'm family!" she said firmly. Lisa sighed, then smiled.

"Thanks, Mags. I really appreciate it."

Maggie grinned at her and began to fill the sink with hot soapy water. Gordon took that moment to sneak in and try to snatch a cookie from the plate that was waiting to be put on the buffet table.

"Gordon Tracy! If you come in here one more time, I'm going to put you to work peeling spuds!" Lisa warned, shaking a spatula at him. He grinned and winked at her, then sidled up to Maggie.

"How y'doin' Aunt Maggie? Hey, I can call you that for real now, can't I?"

"Yes, you can, Gordon," Maggie said. She shoved a dish towel into his hands. "Here. Make yourself useful."

"I was making myself useful. I was keeping Alex from killing one or both of the twins," Gordon complained. Lisa, hearing this, turned to her daughter-in-law, Angela.

"Angie, call Alex inside, please? He likes to help cook and it will keep him away from Jared and Patricia's two terrors."

"Sure, Lisa." Angie wiped her hands on a dish towel and went to the back door to call Alex in from the yard.

"Tyler gets along okay with those two; he's more their age. But for some reason they've never gelled with Alex," Lisa said with a sigh. She wished Kyrano were there, and not for the first time. Turning from the preparation table to the sink, she asked, "Gordon, where are Cherie and Stephanie?"

Gordon shrugged. "Haven't a clue, Grandma. Haven't seen them. Who knows where adolescent girls go when they're together?"

"Hmm. I could use their help to set up...." Just at that moment, Cherie, dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, came inside with her nearest-in-age cousin, Stephanie. The girls were talking animatedly. They were followed closely by Alex.

"Ah, just the people I wanted to see," Lisa said cheerfully. Cherie looked up and rolled her eyes, sighing a long-suffering sigh. "Girls, go wash your hands and start putting piles of plates and utensils on the buffet table. Alex, wash your hands, too, and come back in here. I need you to fetch and carry as I make the mashed potatoes."

Stephanie made a face, brushing her long dark hair out of her eyes. "Do we have to?"

Angie looked up at her daughter with a frown. "You heard your Grandma. Hop to it!"

"I'll be right there, Grandma," Alex said eagerly. He nipped into the washroom next to the kitchen

and gave his hands a good scrub, while his sister and cousin waited impatiently for him to finish. He presented himself to Lisa with a smile. "What do you need, Grandma?"

"Get the butter out of the refrigerator," Lisa said.

"And while you're at it, son, hand me a can of Cheerwine, please," said a deep voice. Lisa looked up to see Jeff standing on his crutches near the refrigerator.

"Jefferson, I thought I told you to take care of your wife today," Lisa said with a hint of crossness in her voice.

"I am, Lisa. She wanted something to drink," Jeff replied mildly.

"Oh," she said, mollified. "Well then. Carry on. But next time, send someone able-bodied to fetch it. Like Drew."

"Yes, ma'am," Jeff said with a grin, giving his mother-in-law a salute before hobbling back into the family room. As he left, he heard Alex say to all the kitchen occupants, "You should have seen the snake I found....!"

Jeff maneuvered himself onto the couch next to Dianne, and handed her the can of soda. She looked much more relaxed and comfortable in jeans and a lightweight cream sweater, with her feet in slippers and her hair slightly mussed. She had been chatting with her sister-in-law, Patricia, Jared's wife, who had come down from Boston with the family to be there for the memorial. Andrew was talking with Charles Koch, Rick's father, while Rick's mother, Martine, sat napping in an easy chair. Dianne's youngest brother, Douglas, had parked his bulk into the best recliner and was channel surfing, trying to find some racing to watch.

Suddenly, Dianne bolted from her seat. "Gimme that remote!" she cried, yanking the device from her brother's hand.

"Hey!" Douglas protested as his sister clicked back several channels to a certain program. Andrew, Jeff, Jared, and Douglas all groaned when a lithe young man, dressed in an elaborate costume, began to glide across an ice rink.

"Not skating!" Jeff moaned. "Anything but that!"

Dianne ignored her husband's complaints and shouted at the top of her lungs, "HEY MA! THE FINALS ARE ON!"

Lisa's voice echoed from the kitchen. "WHICH ONES?"

Dianne watched and listened for a moment, then shouted back, "MEN'S SHORT PROGRAM!"

"RECORD IT FOR ME!"

Dianne got up and slipped a disk into the recorder that was built into the plasma screen TV. Then she sat back with a smug smile and began to watch her favorite sport.

Jeff turned to Andrew and said, "You never warned me about this, Andy."

Drew Carmichael shrugged then said facetiously, "I would have, if you had told me you were going to marry the girl." They both shook their heads and chuckled.

A cry came from the dining room as Lisa called out, "Okay everybody! Time to eat!"

The people in the family room rose and made their way to the dining room, where a buffet was spread out. Everybody, that is, except Dianne. Jeff turned back to look at her.

"I'll send Cherie in with a plate for you, Di," he said with a smile.

Dianne glanced away from the screen and returned his smile. "Thanks, love. I appreciate it."

Jeff shook his head again, smiling. It had been a rough week, but she had come through it with flying colors and now, after all was said and done, it was good to see her happy at last.

Post by Tikatu on 30/11/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:49:49 GMT

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Thursday, March 22, 3:30 PM, local time, Lisa Parkhurst's house, Greenville, SC

Everyone had eaten, the dishes were washed, the leftover food (what little there was) was put away, and they were now relaxing. The broadcast of the ice skating was over and Dianne was chatting with her sister-in-law. Lisa picked up the first section of paper and began to read, feeling like she could finally relax. But ten minutes later, she gasped.

Dianne heard her mother. She hurried over to her and said, "Mom, what's wrong?"

Lisa looked up at her, unsure about whether or not to show what she'd just read to her daughter. Dianne, correctly interpreting the look on her face, said, "Let me see." Slowly, Lisa handed her the paper, which was turned to the "Letters" page. Dianne scanned it and paled when she saw what had made her mother gasp.

"When I read the newspaper report and heard the television report of the conviction of the terrorist, I was overjoyed at first. I had lost three family members in the bombing, and wanted someone to pay for it, so desperately.

"Then I felt shame. I remembered that there had been a report five years ago that hate mail had been sent to the family of Richard Koch, and I must now confess that I wrote one of those letters. When I heard that he was under suspicion, I believed him guilty. I felt, so soon after the bombing, that I had to, so I did. That was my reasoning, but it is not an excuse. There can be no excuse for writing such letters. It didn't even make me feel better. And all it did was victimize Mr. Koch's

family, who never hurt anyone.

"I hope whoever else sent them similar letters reads this. They, too, should feel remorse for what they did. And I hope they learned more than one lesson from this, as I did.

"I do not ask for forgiveness from Mrs. Tracy - no matter how much I want it - but want to let her know that I am ashamed of myself. I wish I had the courage to tell her so face-to-face, but I don't. Maybe someday I will, and she will be able to forgive me then.

"Name withheld by request."

Dianne threw the paper down in disgust. "Ah thought it was all over, then this has to appear. When are they goin' to leave me alone?" She sat down heavily next to her mother, and put her head in her hands.

"Honey," replied Lisa, putting her arms around her, "Ah understand somewhat how you feel, but you have to remembah that many othahs need healin', too. Let it go. If this lettah helps this person find some closure, then Ah say, good. Now just put it behind you and move on. Rick has been vindicated, largely thanks to you, and you have a wonderful future to look forward to."

Dianne raised her head, turned and hugged Lisa. "Thanks, Mom. You're right. It'll be hard at first, but Ah will, Ah'll move on." She looked up and saw Jeff, who was talking to Jared. "And Ah have a wonderful husband who'll be with me every step of the way."

Just then he looked over at her and smiled at her, swaying a bit on his crutches. Her eyes twinkled as she added, "Even if those steps are goin' to be slow and hesitant for a while."

Post by Hobbeth on 01/12/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:50:52 GMT
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Friday, March 23rd, New York City.

After fond farewells to Lisa and the rest of Dianne's relatives that had stayed the night in Greenville, the Tracy clan headed back to New York. It was time to collect Elise and head home.

The limo pulled up in front of the penthouse building and Bernie quickly opened the doors. "Thank you, Bernie," Dianne acknowledged as she and Gordon assisted Jeff out of the car and into the building.

Jeff hobbled along towards the elevator. "The wheelchair was one thing, but getting used to these crutches is another!"

Gordon laughed. "You'll do fine, Dad. Besides it's not like we're going to let you fall or anything." The look Jeff gave Gordon indicated to the redhead that his statement wasn't very convincing.

"I'm gonna miss Grandma," Tyler piped up.

"Yeah, me too," added Alex.

"I know, boys, I will too." Dianne smiled softly at her sons. "You know, I'm very proud of all of you for the way you've all acted the last few days." She looked around to include Cherie, Gordon and Jeff in her statement. "Thank you so much. I'm so lucky to have such a wonderful family." She hugged all 3 of her children at once and then turned to Gordon, "And that includes you Gordon, even if you did try to provoke my mother's temper once or twice!"

He smiled boyishly, and replied, "It was nothing!"

Lastly she turned to Jeff and laying her hand against his cheek, gazed into his eyes. "I don't know what I would have done without you by my side. I love you so much."

He reached up to cover her hand with his. "I'll always be by your side, Dianne, and I love you too."

The tender moment ended when the elevator doors opened. Dianne herded the younger ones off to start helping them get their things together, and Jeff had a chance to talk to Gordon alone. "Son, Dianne has been through a lot these past few days, and I want her to rest on the way home. I want you to fly us home. Are you up for it?"

"Sure, Dad, no problem. I understand. Will we be laying over in L.A.?"

"No, I'd like to get back to the island as quickly as possible."

"Yeah, me too."

Jeff knew Gordon hated his turn at being a corporate Tracy, and understood his anxiousness to get back into action, so to speak. "Thanks, son." Jeff squeezed the boy's shoulder as he gathered up his crutches and hobbled off to find Dianne.

As Gordon started to make his way towards his own room, the front door opened and Elise came in. "Oh, hi! I take it you're all back then?" She closed the door, and walked towards Gordon.

"Yep, so you might want to get your stuff together. Dad wants to head out a.s.a.p."

"I'm all ready. I just went out to grab something to eat." She indicated the sub sandwich in her hands. Gordon gave her a look. "Don't worry, no one followed me and I didn't get stopped by anyone. Besides, I only went to the sandwich place next door."

Gordon relaxed a little. "Okay. I won't tell on you... THIS time!" Elise threw him a disgusted look and went to get her bags.

The aircraft was fueled and waiting for them when they arrived at La Guardia Airport.

"Dianne, I've already asked Gordon if he'll fly us home. I want you to relax on this flight."

"But Jeff, I'm capable of flying, really I am. Besides..."

"Besides, nothing. It's already settled. I want you to relax... and I want someone that I can relax next to!" He had a mischievous look in his eye and she giggled.

"All right, you win, but if Gordon gets tired, I'm taking over. Deal?"

"Deal," he replied, knowing full well Gordon wouldn't relinquish the controls once he had them.

Once everyone was settled and ready, Gordon completed his pre-flight checks and sat confidently in the pilot's seat. Elise had been watching him, admiring the pilot in him. Even though flying wasn't his first love, he was very at ease with the controls. She wondered if she'd ever feel that way again. Get back in the water. Gordon's words spoke aloud in her thoughts as the plane turned and began hurtling down the runway.

Dianne rested peacefully next to Jeff. She now realized that this flight home was indeed, the start of a very different future for her, and her children. The past had finally been laid to rest, and Rick could now rest at peace, not only in her heart, but in the hearts of all those affected by the events of 5 years ago. Her children could grow up knowing that their father was a good man, and remembering him that way. Dianne turned to look at the man who was her present and her future and smiled lovingly at him. He returned the favor with a chaste kiss and squeezed her hand.

"Looking forward to going home?" asked Jeff.

"Hmmm... yes, I'm looking forward to a long hot soak in the tub!" she chuckled. He whispered in her ear, making her blush. "Jeff! There are other ears present." Various looks were sent their way, but they didn't last. Jeff merely smiled.

Gordon eased the plane up to cruising altitude and relaxed a little. The weather was perfect, and the view clear. We should be able to make up some time with a good tailwind. He wanted to go home as much as anyone else on the plane.

After a few hours of solitary contentment, Gordon needed a distraction. When Dianne had offered to fly for a while, he'd flat out told her she was on strict instructions to get some R - R the entire flight home and she was not to come to the cockpit. He looked at the empty co-pilot's seat and thought.

The intercom crackled and woke a dozing Elise. "Hey, Elise? Would you come up to the flight deck? I need to ask you something."

Elise rolled her eyes and got up. As she walked past Jeff and Dianne, Dianne stopped her. "Will you be okay up there?"

"Sure, I'll be fine." Elise smiled gently and continued on her way.

"So, what's this burning question you need to ask me?" Elise said, as she sat down in the

co-pilot's seat. Gordon pretended to fiddle with some of the controls and mumbled something about the altimeter and incorrect readings. Elise leaned forward to look and was soon caught up in the instrument panel and trying to locate what Gordon thought was a problem. After 15 minutes and finding nothing she told him that he was imagining things.

"Really? I'm wounded!" he announced, dramatically placing his right hand over his chest. Elise just shook her head and sighed.

Gordon grinned and noticed that while Elise had been engaged in something, she was quite calm and relaxed. His mind raced for a plan to get her 'back in the water' and being a man of the moment as it were, what better time to do it than now? After a few minutes of silence, Elise turned from looking out of the window to find Gordon frowning and rubbing his head.

"You all right?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered.

"Gordon, what's wrong? Is it a migraine or something?" She kept her eyes on him, as he moved his head as if trying to shake himself free of something.

"I'm not sure, suddenly this pain shot across my eyes... and then... Oh... I don't feel so good, I think I" His words ended as his body slumped forward over the controls.

"GORDON! Oh my God! Gordon can you hear me?" Elise shook him frantically to no avail. It took her mere seconds to realize the plane had started to descend. The thought of calling Dianne for help didn't occur to her. Instead Elise's training and instincts kicked in as she pushed Gordon backwards, off of the controls, and quickly switched control of the plane to her. Her hands scanned the controls efficiently, and without a second thought, she brought the nose up and leveled off. Once stable, she increased the altitude and monitored the engines. Everything seemed to be running smoothly. Only then did she let out the breath she didn't know she'd been holding.

Her hand came away sweaty as she wiped her forehead, sweat she hadn't known was there until then. Realization hit her! I flew the plane. Oh Lord, I flew it. I did it. I haven't lost it. She looked briefly over at Gordon, who was still passed out. Programming the auto-pilot enabled Elise to have her hands free to try to wake him, and she shook him once again. "Gordon, c'mon, wake up! Please wake up!"

He made a small groaning noise as he started to come around.

"That's it! C'mon Gordon, wake up!" she encouraged. He was enjoying the great pretense of 'coming round' and inwardly applauded himself for being so convincing! He'd been awake the entire time, of course, and even watched her through slit eyes, as she took over control. I knew she'd do it! She's still got it. Just needed a prod to get it going again! His eyes opened and he looked around, confused. "What happened?"

"You passed out!"

"I did?"

"Yes, you did! You acted like you had a migraine and then slumped over. Are you okay? Do you want me to get Dianne?"

Elise started to leave and Gordon stopped her. "No, no. Don't get Dianne, I'll be fine. Blood sugar must have dropped, I guess."

Something in the way he said that made Elise leery. She slowly sat back down. "Blood sugar? You ate enough donuts and stuff earlier to keep your blood sugar elevated for the next 10 years!"

Oops! I didn't think about that! He averted his eyes towards to the controls, turned off the auto-pilot and resumed control. "Did you switch on the auto-pilot?"

"Yes, I did, after I had freaked when you passed out, and I leveled the plane out from a descent and gained some altitude. I needed both hands to shake you awake! That is, if you were really passed out?" Elise dared him, with her look, to lie to her. "What's going on Gordon? What happened just now?"

He looked at her thoughtfully before replying, "You got back in the water, Elise." Only later would he laugh to himself as he recalled the stunned look on her face as he told her that.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 08/12/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:52:18 GMT

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Saturday, March 24, 2068, 11:30 a.m., Tracy Island

Dianne slipped into the hot water of the Jacuzzi with a contented "Ahhhh!" They had been home for about an hour, racing the sun across the Pacific after a refueling stop in Honolulu and crossing the International Date Line. Now it was time to relax and wash the proverbial dust of her travels away.

The children were already in the game room, challenging all and sundry to games of air hockey and pinball. Gordon was in the pool, swimming laps while Elise was soaking up the sun in a lounge by the water. Word had gotten around that she was staying and joining them, and the team members, both rookie and veteran, had made it a point to greet her and tell her that they were glad she was going to be part of the team. Since her belongings hadn't reached the island yet, she was still in the guest room. She would be moved to the remaining one bedroom apartment when her things came.

Dianne supposed that Jeff had taken back his desk and was busy catching up on work in both of the family businesses, making arrangements for communications equipment to be delivered to Lena and installed in her home, scheduling training sessions, and going over maintenance logs. So she was surprised to hear the bathroom door swish open. She turned her head and smiled to

see Jeff standing in the doorway on his crutches, wearing a dressing gown, and his foot's cast wrapped in some kind of blue... stuff.

"What's that you've got on your foot?" she asked as he hobbled toward the Jacuzzi.

"A waterproof coating. Brains said it would harden around the cast and make it waterproof for up to three hours. Then I can peel it off."

"Really? Why did you have him put that on?"

He sat by the side of the deep bath and took off the robe. Dianne took in a sharp breath as she looked him up and down, admiring every feature of his naked form.

"Do you really have to ask?" he said huskily as he began to ease himself into the water. She rose from her seat, allowing him to admire her as she came to him.

"No, Ah suppose not," she answered as her lips met his, effectively silencing both of them.

Post by Tikatu on 08/12/2004

Subject: Re: Growing as a Team
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 17:53:18 GMT
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With that we end Chapter Three: Growing As A Team
