
Subject: Love (Among Other Things)

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:11:49 GMT

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The New Year is well underway, and Valentine's Day is just around the corner. International Rescue operatives are pairing up, and love is in the air on Tracy Island. Newlyweds are dealing with the adjustments that come with marriage. An old friendship is blossoming into adoration, while a brother is intrigued by someone off the island. Someone will be surprised by a new paramour, while an established pair find themselves drifting apart.

Yet love isn't the only thing brewing. Enemies are still trying to find their way into Tracy Industries, and have set their eyes on International Rescue's secrets. How will they accomplish their goals? And what rescues will test IR's mettle? Only time will tell.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:12:19 GMT

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Friday, January 25, 2069, midnight GMT, Fireflash, en route from Paris to Sydney (noon, same day, Tracy Island)

Brains looked fondly at his companion, who was reclining in her seat, covered by a blanket and head resting on a pillow. She was sound asleep, not a difficult thing to do in the quiet of first class. They were taking the Fireflash back to Sydney, and she had wanted a good nap before flying the Ladybird back to the island.

He settled back and sipped his martini. Really, they need some better barkeeps around here. The Tracys may go heavy on the vermouth, but this particular bartender likes to put in more vodka. It's a good thing that they limit the passengers to a couple of drinks -- one more from this gal and just about anyone would be tipsy.

Taking his data pad from the table before him, he read the last missive Penelope had sent. He had contacted the aristocrat when he'd learned they'd be going to Paris. While he had spent some quality time with Professor Borrender, trying to figure out the elusive canning process that Ma Tuttle had used, Penny and Tin-Tin had done some shopping among the Paris design houses. They had been wined and dined by François Lemaire himself, who had ordered an impromptu show of his latest designs. They had also made their way into several perfumeries -- Penelope had ordered some of her signature scent, Soupçon de Pèril from Jacques Verre -- and most importantly, some jeweler's shops. He smiled at the information she had provided for him: Tin-Tin's ring size, as determined by at least three jewelers.

He reclined his chair, and let his mind wander over the past few hours. Their last day in Paris had been bittersweet. They had visited the cemetery where Tin-Tin's mother was buried, and he heard, for the first time, just how that cherished lady had died.

"Mother was a scholar, specializing in Medieval and Renaissance history," Tin-Tin said quietly. "She was doing research in one of the libraries' Renaissance collections when it caught fire. She

was one of about a dozen people who died of carbon monoxide poisoning before the flame broke out." She shook her head. "I can see why Father jumped at the chance to work for Mr. Tracy. They had a common bond, and the desire to see people rescued from certain death. To help with that, even behind the scenes, gave him purpose, and allowed him to get past his grief."

Brains gestured to the grave's simple head stone. "What does it say?"

"It gives Mother's name, and the dates of her birth and death. The Arabic character reads, 'tercinta', which is Malay, means 'beloved'." She smiled a little. "Father has taken to calling Lisa that."

After visiting the cemetery, they had visited Dr. Manabo and Tamea again, with Tin-Tin preparing a traditional Malaysian meal for them all. Tamea helped her, and the two women had chatted freely in the kitchen, while Brains set up his camera to take some family pictures.

"So, Jean," Dr. Manabo asked, his tone soft and serious. "When will you and my granddaughter marry?"

Brains blushed and looked down at his feet. "To be truthful, sir, I have not yet asked her." He gazed off toward the kitchen. "We have been friends for a long time, and she has recently had some bad experiences with men." Returning his attention to the invalid, he added, "I know she loves me, and she knows I love her. She asked me to go slowly... and I have." In a tone that was meant more for himself than anyone else. "The time is almost right to ask her." He shook himself a little and smiled at Dr. Manabo. "Valentine's Day is coming, and I would like to make any proposal special."

"A proposal is special, no matter the day or circumstances," Elias replied, smiling. "My dear Samani told me she proposed to Tuan over tea in her apartment. It was the first time he had accepted her offer to visit, and she didn't want to waste the opportunity." He held up a gnarled finger. "Do not wait for the 'right' day to come along; you may never find just the day you are looking for."

"I'll remember that, sir," Brains replied quietly, remembering the plans he had already set in motion.

Just before they had left, the pair had ascended the Eiffel Tower at dusk, watching the lights come on all over the city. Tin-Tin had pointed out the landmarks she knew; they consulted a guidebook to recognize the rest.

"Paris really lives up to its reputation," Brains had said. The lights had stirred his soul in a way nothing else had in a long time. He turned to Tin-Tin, and drew her to him for a long, sweet kiss. "I love you, Tin-Tin. Thank you for sharing Paris with me."

She had rested her head on his shoulder after the kiss. "Thank you for coming with me, Brains... I mean, John. You've made this visit with my grandfather so much easier."

His mind back on the present, Brains drained his drink and laid the glass down on the table. He glanced over at Tin-Tin again, her face peaceful as she slept, and smiled, murmuring, "Soon, my

love. Very soon."

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:12:55 GMT
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A little before noon...

Virgil whistled to himself as he made his way down to the hanger bay. It was well after noon and his grandmother had sent him to find Scott. Knowing his older brother was working with Elise, Virgil decided to walk down and visit them.

He nearly ran into Scott as he entered the hanger. "Hey, watch it!"

"Sorry, Virg." Scott glanced behind him and scowled. "Just trying to get away from Captain Bligh."

Virgil looked puzzled. "I thought you were down here with Elise?"

"I am."

"OK... Grandma sent me down to get you for lunch and on the way down I realized something. Do you remember what this weekend is?"

Scott frowned. "It's not somebody's birthday or anything, is it?"

"Nope."

"Then I have no... The Super Bowl! Damn! How could I have forgotten?"

"Well, things have been a little hectic around here."

"Yeah, you could say that again." Scott shook his head. "KC is playing the Cowboys, right?"

Virgil nodded. "In Minnesota. Should be a great game. Both teams only lost two games all season." He sighed. "Wish Dad wasn't snowed in. You know how he feels about the Chiefs."

Scott laughed. "They haven't made it this far in years! I've got an idea. What if we tape the game, then replay it next weekend? We can have a barbeque or something, maybe invite the rest of the gang."

"Great idea! Think we can stay away from the media for a week so we don't spoil who wins?"

Scott looked shrewdly at his younger brother. "Bet you twenty that you can't do it."

"You're on." Both brothers shook on it. "You'd better get up to the house before Grandma skins me."

"Are you going to talk to Elise?" At Virgil's nod, Scott looked back into the hanger and shrugged. "Well, good luck with that." He clapped his brother on the shoulder and walked out the door. Virgil chuckled to himself. When is he going to learn to get along with her? I swear, how did they ever work together and not manage to kill each other? He ducked around the tail of the heli-jet and spied Elise bending over a tool box. "Hey there! I was--HEY!" He dropped to the ground as she spun and threw something at him.

Color flooded Elise's face. "Oh God, Virgil! I'm so sorry!" She hurried to his side.

"Do you want to tell me what that was about?" Virgil asked, holding up the cable she had just thrown at him.

She grabbed it out of his hands and marched back to the box. "I thought you were Scott." She slammed the box shut and turned her attention to the computer.

Virgil walked over and leaned casually against the side of the jet, watching as she stormed around the aircraft, muttering under her breath. "What was that?"

"Nothing."

He pushed himself off and walked over to her, wrapping his arms around her shoulders and pulling her close. "What's wrong, Elise?"

She held herself stiffly for a moment, then relaxed into his embrace. "Nothing, just... everything from yesterday I guess."

He placed a soft kiss on top of her head. "Alex is fine. Nothing happened."

"I know that, but... Luke could have gotten himself killed. Why doesn't he realize that?"

Virgil bit back the retort on his lips. "He's a grown man, Elise. No buts," he interrupted her before she could speak. "He knew what he was doing." He bent down and kissed her. "You know, we haven't spent any time together since around New Year's. Want to do dinner?"

She sighed. "Sure, why not."

He laughed. "Don't sound so enthusiastic about it!"

She glared at him for a moment, then giggled. Soon they were both laughing. Virgil rested his forehead on hers. "So, what do you say about dinner? Tomorrow night up at the Villa?"

Her green eyes went wide. "At the Villa?"

"Sure! Why not! Grandma is cooking some of Alex's favorites. I believe we're having cheeseburgers and baked macaroni and cheese." He grinned. "Come on, you know you can't resist all that cholesterol! Besides, then we can head to my rooms and watch some movies," he added with a sly wink.

Elise smiled and nodded. "That sounds great. Should I bring anything?"

"Just yourself." He placed another kiss on her lips, lingering longer this time. "Mmmm, is it tomorrow yet?"

"Don't I wish." She pushed him back. "OK, you need to go. Before I..." Her voice trailed off.

"Are you threatening me, Miss Collins?"

"Why, are you afraid, Mr. Tracy?" She smiled coquettishly.

He pulled her close. "Show me what you're got."

Laughing she pushed him back again. "Go! I have work to do!"

Virgil waved and headed towards the door. "See you later!"

"Virgil! Wait!" He paused and turned back. Elise stood with her hands on her hips. "Tell that good-for-nothing brother that we're not done here!"

"No problem." He wandered back up to the house, chuckling to himself.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:13:22 GMT
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Friday January 25th, 2069 around six p.m . . .

Running along the water line, Cassie listened to the waves crash on her right. She had hoped a run would help clear her head. Release some of the pent up frustration she was feeling. As she headed back in the direction of the path leading up to the Cliff House, the dark-haired woman had to admit that her thoughts were in as much turmoil as when she began.

Cassie knew what the source of her frustration was - concern for her friend. When she had heard about what had taken place the day before she had gone through a whole range of emotions - fear, concern and finally relief that both Alex and Luke were going to be okay. Despite all that, she had yet to stop in and check on Luke, afraid that both of them would say things they would both say things they would regret later.

I can't believe he would do something so stupid! He's still healing from his previous injuries and I'm sure that climbing down a cliff is not on his list of activities he's allowed to do. He should have waited for the others, she thought. Seeing the path up ahead, she slowed her pace down to a brisk walk, cutting across the beach toward it. Yet I should know that Luke couldn't idly sit by and not help someone in trouble, she added, trying to reason away her feelings of anger. Absently her hand went up to her shoulder that still bore the scar from the consequences of her own reckless

actions. Put in a situation like that, you wouldn't have waited for help any more than he had, so how can you be angry at him for his actions? she asked herself.

The answer to that question came easily. Because you're concerned about his well-being.

She shook her head. Sometimes she just didn't understand the conflict of emotions that she felt.

I'll stop by and see how he is doing tomorrow, Cassie told herself. By then I should be able to keep from saying something I shouldn't.

Relieved to have come to a decision, Cassie finished her walk up to her apartment. Reaching it, she walked to her desk and turned on her laptop. While it booted up, she went to the refrigerator and pulled out a bottle of water. Twisting the cap off, she took a long swallow before heading back from her computer.

Logging into her email account she found several emails waiting for her. The first one was from Chief Calloway.

Kishi,

Glad to hear you're enjoying your job and life out in Wichita. The guys, and Janet, have been keeping me updated on what you have been up to. I got to admit, I still miss you around here though I can't hold anything against the guy who replaced you. He's a solid firefighter and is fitting in well. Still, it isn't the same without you on the squad.

As for your question about the proposed fire codes bill that your contact with Tracy Industries has told you about, it is basically the same changes that headquarters tried to get passed about a year ago. They removed a few things to make concessions so we're all hoping the city will pass it this time around. With any luck it will make our lives a little easier. The bill is scheduled to be on the itinerary for the February 4th vote.

Stay in touch,
Chief Calloway

As Cassie clicked the arrow to move to the next message, she tried to remember the proposal that the chief was referring to. She did remember the disappointment of the supervisors at the station when the bill hadn't been passed. It didn't surprise her that they were trying to put it through again. However, the former FDNY fire fighter couldn't remember all the details of the proposed bills, though with things having been removed she supposed it didn't really matter. If the new proposal went through, there would be adequate time to implement the changes necessary. Cassie made a mental note to review the policies in place at the NYC branch of Tracy Industries over the next week so that she was familiar with them.

The next email was from Dr. Lindon. Cassie had written to her after the talk with Scott earlier in the week. Though she had left Scott's name out of it, Cassie had told the psychiatrist about the evening and about Scott's suggestion, having ended the email with asking the woman's opinion about making the trip to Nathan's grave on what would have been the little boy's third birthday.

Visiting Nathan's grave would be a good way to gain closure when you're ready for that; but Cassie, only you can determine if you're at that point. You have made a lot of progress in the last six months. If you feel this is a step you are ready to take, then I would say that his birthday would be a good time to do it. Also, if you go to his grave, I would like to see you afterwards. I have a feeling that there will be things that you will want to talk through afterwards. Please let me know what you decide, and as always, feel free to contact me through email again or via phone.

Cassie read through that paragraph twice. By the second time through, she knew that she did want to go to New York to visit Nathan's grave. She hadn't been there since the funeral, not having been able to bring herself to go.

I'll need to talk to Mr. Tracy when he gets back to see if the time off can be arranged, she thought, as she moved on to her next email.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:16:37 GMT
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Dominic paced. He had paced up and down the apartment so much he was sure he was walking a trench into the floor. He felt like a caged animal, not able to get out, penned in by his own emotions. Joshua had gone to spend a few hours with the Crenshaws and Dominic should have been tidying the place up. All I ever seem to do is clean! But he was preoccupied -- more so than usual.

"What are you doing here?"

"You're wasting time, Dom..."

And then they were in the infirmary. As Drew looked Luke over Dominic had wanted to stride over and punch him in the face. Dumb, dumb, dumb Yank. Recovering from a gunshot wound, and what does he do? Climb down a frickin' cliff! Okay so he needed to save Alex, but he should never have been there in the first place. Dumb. Dumb. Dumb. Dominic clenched and unclenched his fists before kicking a nearby couch and stomping out the door.

Luke lay on the bed with his hands behind his head. He stared up at the ceiling, his thoughts on the argument he'd had with Elise. If I had needed that much care, I would have just stayed in the States. The door chime sounded through the empty apartment. He grunted and stood, waiting a moment to get his balance. Probably another well-wisher, he grouched. Rommel looked up, ears and eyes alert. "Rommel, stay," he commanded and the dog lay back down. Walking to the door, Luke opened it and blinked at the expression on his visitor's face.

"You're an idiot," Dom said, his face thunderous.

"And hello to you, too," Luke said, his expression mirroring his friend's.

"You're just a jerk. A real big jerk. What the hell were you thinking?!"

Luke shook his head and folded his arms.

"I'm a jerk? I'm not the one yelling abuse on someone else's doorway."

Dominic's face went puce and Luke seriously thought the man's head was going to explode unless he took a breath. Dom squeaked in frustration.

"You're hurt. You were freakin' shot. What the hell were you doing yesterday?"

Luke let silence reign for several beats before he answered.

"I'm so sick of this!" he suddenly yelled, throwing his arms up. "I'm not an invalid and I'm not an idiot! I knew what I was doing!"

"Alex got hurt. You could have seriously injured yourself, you dumb Yank!"

"I was there to save Alex," Luke spat, "And the same could be said for every time you walk out the door, you Leprechaun!"

"Oh, I'm a Leprechaun now, just because I'm Irish!"

"What?" Luke exclaimed. "You're the one who came in all guns blazing, calling me a dumb Yank, and now you're getting your panties in a twist because I called you a Leprechaun? You can give it but you can't take it!"

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah!"

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah!"

Dominic reached out and grabbed the front of Luke's shirt. He wrenched the other man towards him; several buttons on the shirt popped off. They glared at each other, gritting their teeth, before Dom growled.

"Take this."

In a split second Luke went from being sure that Dominic was going to head butt him to having his brain go completely blank. He wasn't sure what was happening for several moments until he felt a probing tongue part his lips with ease, and he melted into the passionate kiss. He felt his knees buckle and gripped the doorframe for support.

Dominic chuckled softly, his anger evaporating, another emotion entirely taking its place. "Now, now, none of that." He led an unresisting Luke inside and onto the couch. He glanced around

nervously for a moment. "Where's Rommel?"

"Who? What?" Luke shook his head to clear it. "In the other room. Dom, what the hell was that?"

"Well, if I have to explain it to you, I must not have done it right."

Luke's eyes flashed angrily. "You know what I mean." He ran a hand through his hair, annoyed to see it was shaking. "Do you really think this is a good id--"

Dom leaned close, his lips inches from Luke's. "Did anyone ever tell you that you think too much?" He placed another searing kiss on Luke's mouth.

"Dom..."

"Luke?"

"Yeah?"

"Shut up."

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:16:58 GMT
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Cuddled together on the sofa, Lana and Vince were watching one of Lana's favorite movies, a 2067 remake of The Proposal. As the heroine was tossed from the boat during an argument, Lana's gaze drifted away from the TV and over to the collection of sheets draped over the four kitchen chairs. Underneath the draped sheets, Lea and Josh were 'camping' in their 'tent'. Lana realized she hadn't heard any whispers or giggles come from under the sheets for awhile.

"Those two have gotten kind of quiet," Lana commented.

"They probably fell asleep," Vince replied. "They've had a busy night. They built their tent, built a fire," Vince said, his gaze falling on the ring of Lea's Weebles, which were characters from the little girl's favorite cartoon Rainbow Riders, with Lincoln Logs placed inside, "had a sing-along, and don't forget making their 'dinner'," he told her. Dinner, as Lea had kept referring to it as, had in actuality been a snack of apple slices which the two kids had spread peanut butter on with plastic knives.

"They sure did enjoy themselves," Lana said, smiling at the memory of the kid's antics that evening. They had gotten along well, although there was a moment when she had thought her daughter was going to throw a tantrum as Josh was having more fun moving the Weebles from the circle that Lea had been making. Finally by giving him two to play with, the little blonde was able to build her 'fire pit' and place the logs inside it. "I still think you should check on them."

With a sigh, Vince removed his arm from around his wife's shoulders and got to his feet. It didn't

take long for him to walk over to the tent. Lifting the one sheet up revealed two sleeping children, both cuddled up in a light blanket and using one of Lea's stuffed animals as pillows.

"Told you so," Vince told his wife.

"Maybe you should move them someplace more comfortable," Lana suggested.

"They'll be fine. Remember Lea wanted to 'camp out tonight'. Somehow I don't think she'll be too happy if we put an end to that while her friend is still here," Vince told her, letting the sheet fall back down and heading back to the couch. "I'll put her in her bed after Dom picks up Josh," he told her as he settled back down on the couch next to her. "Now look, you made me miss my favorite part," he told her, picking up the remote and rewinding the movie as he put his other arm back around Lana's shoulders.

Gordon was seated in front of his computer checking the web sites for different swim clubs in the U.S. He wanted to see what kind of times were getting posted at swim meets so he could compare Aaron's times with them. Though he had already qualified to go to the time trials for Worlds, those trials were still over a month away. With Aaron not actively competing, the times were the only way to get an idea of where he needed to be in order to be competitive at the trails.

Gordon had just changed to another clubs site, when he saw Alysha come online. Deciding it was a good time to take a break, he sent her a message.

Capnahab: Hey Alysha. How are you this evening?

bluedolphin: Hi Gordon. I'm great as I actually have a whole weekend off. That isn't something that happens too often.

Though Gordon had a feeling he was going to get a refusal, the copper-haired Tracy decided he would take a chance anyway.

Capnahab: Well, if you're off this weekend how about meeting me for lunch or dinner sometime?

bluedolphin: You are persistent, aren't you?

Gordon smiled. She doesn't know just how persistent I can be, he thought, encouraged by the fact that he didn't get a flat out refusal.

Capnahab: So is that a yes?

bluedolphin: I don't think so. I barely know you. Forgive me if I'm not comfortable with meeting someone I've only met briefly for a cozy dinner for two.

Capnahab: I can understand that, but how are we suppose to get to know each other if we don't spend time together?

bluedolphin: Do you really want to see me this weekend?

Capnahab:Yes

bluedolphin: Then here's my proposal. There is an orienteering meet this Sunday at Bottle Lake Forest Park. It's a team event and one of my team members broke his ankle yesterday so we've been scrambling to find a replacement for him, so we can compete.

Capnahab: I've never tried orienteering before. Are you sure I wouldn't just be a hindrance to your team?

bluedolphin: We need four members or it's an automatic disqualification so even if all you do is tag along at least we could compete. Besides, I'm sure that you at least know how to read a map and a compass given your time with WASP.

Capnahab: Yes I do know how to do that. What time Sunday?

bluedolphin: 2 p.m.

Capnahab: Count me in.

bluedolphin: Great! Abbey and Eli will be excited to hear I found someone!

And perhaps after we spend the day together, I'll finally be able to convince her to go out on a proper date with me, Gordon thought as Alysha started telling him what to expect on Sunday.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:17:26 GMT

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"Good night, dear. Don't stay up too late." Anna's husband kissed her on the forehead.

"I won't. I just have a few work things to check up on. I'll be there soon." Anna smiled at her husband as he left the room, then settled herself down on the couch and placed her tea on the table next to her. She held her video-phone and punched in a number. A few moments later, Scott appeared on the screen.

"Hi, Anna! How was your trip?"

"Very relaxing, but I'll admit it's good to be home. How are things there?"

Scott shook his head. "Funny you should ask. First of all, Luke is back and--"

"Wait? What did you say? What is Luke doing back? I saw him a couple of weeks ago and he didn't say anything about returning so soon."

"That's what I'm talking about." Scott proceeded to tell her about the undersea rescue, Alex's fall and his parents being stuck in New Hampshire. "Needless to say, it's been a little busy around here."

"It certainly seems it. Should I make plans to come there? I'm not expected for a few more days, but I could change my schedule if need be."

Scott thought a minute. "No, I think it would be better if you waited until Dad and Mom get back. Drew is here and between him and Maggie, we're managing."

Anna frowned but nodded. "All right then. I'll see you in about a week or so. But, Scott, please don't hesitate to call if you need anything."

"I won't, Anna. See you soon."

"Good-night, Scott." She signed off and sighed. I think I'd better be prepared to stay on the island for a few extra days.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:19:19 GMT

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Dominic sat easily in the waiting room of The Other Side piercing and tattoo salon and drummed his fingers on the arm of the chair. The lighting was low and glass cabinets lined the walls, displaying all sorts of piercing implements. He got up and walked past the surly and much-pierced looking attendant behind the small counter and looked at the neon tongue studs glowing under a black light, but as soon as he did the tattoo artists popped his head around the beaded curtain and called for him.

"Dominic Kelly?"

"Yo," Dom said, and gave the man a smile.

Dom was led into a dark corridor, but he squinted his eyes against the bright light as he was brought into the piercing room. It was scrubbed to a high level of cleanliness and an adjustable medical bed sat in the middle. Trays of instruments were stacked carefully. The tattoo equipment was ready.

"So, what are we getting today, eh mate?"

"Something," Dom said as he sat on the bed after the artist adjusted it appropriately, "that means a lot to me."

Later in the day Dominic walked out of the tattoo salon and headed for the nearest coffee shop, his arm covered in a clear film. Though technology had moved on, it still took a little while for tattoos to heal up. He ordered a cappuccino and a muffin and sat down to wait for them. The pretty waitress fluttered her eyelashes at him, and Dom smiled in return. As he sat down he went

to fold his arms, but winced and then thought better of it. It wasn't the soft eyes of a pretty girl that interested him now, but rather the life-lined eyes of a certain athletic, if temporarily injured, man.

Dom blew out a breath as he remembered the evening before. He had been so furious with Luke for being careless. What was apparently true was that he was furious because he thought Luke had been careless. There was nothing wrong with what he had done. It was just unfortunate that Alex had fallen, but fortunate that Luke had been there to help. Dom regretted blowing up at Luke, but hoped that his next action had gone a little way to making up for it.

He had savoured every minute of that kiss. He had taken in every detail, from the light stubble on Luke's cheeks to the slight grating of his chapped lips. Dom had swallowed Luke up, devoured him at first, though they quickly calmed down as the gravity of the situation had come upon them. Dom had sat back, looking sheepish. Luke had been in a complete daze. They had talked for a little while, before Luke had wanted to go for a rest. Dom felt bad for suddenly dropping this on his friend, but the passion with which Luke had returned the kisses could not be denied.

It had been a long time since he had been with a man. And in that sense, he had never been with a man that way. Throughout his turbulent youth he had dated many people, but had put all thoughts of men out of his head once he met Mags and Josh had come along. But now that was all gone, he was over her, and opportunities were beginning to open up. Dom thought back on his life, and back to the last rescue he had been on and the problems he had had. He turned over his arm to view his newest tattoo, and smiled as his coffee and snack were delivered. He sipped his cappuccino and read the words newly emblazoned on the inside of his left forearm: 'What cannot be cured must be endured.'

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:20:03 GMT
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[face=Arial]*****Saturday, January 26, 2069; Tracy Island; 11:45 a.m. local time*****

"Mmm, that fried chicken smells good," she said, "and the biscuits are coming out fine." She sighed and added, "Turnip greens would've made this complete, but I can't find it around here."

She was eager to do something nice for Luke, but after talking with Elise the day before, she was nervous. "He's been in a bad mood, but in Alabama, nothing cheers someone up like a good meal...well, at least I hope."

About 20 minutes later, she packed a couple of pieces of chicken and two biscuits onto two plates. Placing the plates onto a tray, she walked out of her apartment and into the elevator.

Heading to the third floor, her nerves were also rising. I'm just bringing him lunch, she thought. I just hope he's up for it. Arriving on the floor, she rang the buzzer.

"Yeah? Who is it?" Luke's voice asked through the intercom.

"It's Callie with some lunch. Mind if I come in?"

"Sure." A moment later the door opened. "Hey, Callie. Come on in." Luke led the way into his apartment. Rommel looked up from where he was laying in front of the French doors. He started to get up, but lay back down at a hand signal from Luke.

"I hope you don't mind a good Southern-cooking meal with fried chicken and biscuits. I'm just sorry I couldn't add the turnip greens, but locating them around here is a bit tough."

Luke wrinkled his nose. "Turnip greens? People actually eat that?"

"It's a staple in my part of the world, but Dad always told me to eat it with something else to reduce that really tart taste."

"Huh, no kidding. Here, sit down." He led her over to the table and they started to eat. "This is good. Thanks. I have a stocked kitchen again, but haven't gotten around to cooking much yet."

"I don't blame you for that." She took another bite and asked, "How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine," Luke grumbled. He rather forcefully stabbed another bite of chicken.

"You okay?" she asked with some concern.

"Yes," he snapped. "I'll say it again, I'm fine." He pushed away from the table. "I'll go get us something to drink." He marched off into the kitchen. He returned a few moments later and handed her a bottle of water. He didn't sit back down but instead walked over to look out the French doors. He took a deep breath. "Look, I'm sorry I snapped, but I am really getting tired of everyone checking up on me."

"Well, geez," she said sarcastically, "here I am trying to cheer you up, and this is the thanks I get for it?" She stood up and angrily said, "You know, people around here do care about you, and you'll get that question over and over again until you really are fine."

Luke turned to face her, a scowl on his face. "Look, I said I was sorry. And there's nothing wrong with me. I wouldn't have come back if I couldn't handle it."

"Yeah? You certainly aren't handling it right now." She grabbed her plate and her tray and said, "Enjoy the rest of the meal...by yourself!" Angrier than ever, she stormed toward the elevator door.

"Callie, wait." He grabbed her arm and held her back. He took a deep breath. "It's been a hell of a week. Nothing has gone the way I expected. I wanted to come back here, settle down and get my life back. Instead the universe has decided to throw me one curve-ball after another. I don't know how much more of this I can take." He ran his hand through his hair. "I'm sorry."

Taking a deep breath herself, she said, "The universe may be throwing stuff at you, but that doesn't mean you have to be grouchy with everyone."

"Then maybe everyone should just leave me alone!" He paced the room. "Callie, please, I

appreciate the chicken, really I do. But can you just give me some space? I've already got Elise pissed off at me. I don't want you mad, too."

"If you really want the space, fine. I'll avoid the entire third floor for a while." She turned and finished walking into the elevator. As the doors closed, she said, "When you're not spouting off at the world again, then you can talk to me."

While the elevator was heading back to the first floor, she angrily said, "I cannot believe I actually like him! He may be hunky, but his attitude's like a snake!" When she came back into her apartment, she finished eating her meal in anger. "Maybe I needed this more than he did."

Grabbing the remote to turn on the TV, she found the sports channel. "Good. Alabama's playing Kentucky on the court tomorrow. I'll just set the time for the game and enjoy it, all the while forgetting about Mr. Morel."

Callie visits Luke for lunch...and regrets it by TracyFan4Ever and Lillefrue[/size]

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:20:29 GMT
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Saturday, January 26, 2069, 4:30 p.m., Christchurch, New Zealand (same time and date, Tracy Island)

"So, what do you think our next poll should be?" Anneliese had a data pad out on the community center's conference table, ready to take ideas.

It was the monthly meeting of the "The Yellow Sash Fan Club" and Cherie, fresh from her riding lessons, was taking part. Gordon, who had flown them over and hung around while they took their lessons, had taken Alex and Tyler off to the mall. He would be back to pick her up after the meeting.

Anneliese continued. "The 'Name Yellow Sash' poll was brilliant, but it's time for a new one."

"Have you posted the results yet?" Cherie asked, frowning.

"When we create the new, we'll post the results of the old." The tall Maori girl, who was introduced to Cherie as Petani, turned her laptop toward her. "Have a squiz."

"Oh!" On top of the page, posted over the line, "Our Poll for January", were the results from December's poll. Cherie shook her head. "I don't know why I didn't see it before." She gave Petani a smile. "Thanks."

"I have an idea for the next poll," Manjari said. "Have you seen the shorts for Jad Roe's next flick?"

"Oh, yeah!" "Yes!" "Sweet as!" "Um, no."

All eyes fastened on Cherie, who smiled weakly. "Uh, haven't seen them yet."

Anneliese let out a long-suffering sigh, and gave Cherie, who was sitting next to her, a little shake. Aroha, who had come even though she knew Cherie would be there, folded her arms and huffed in disgust. On the other hand, Petani's mouth dropped open.

"What are ya! Don't you ever see the flicks?"

"She could probably download a dozen flicks and not be strapped for cash," Aroha said, a sarcastic tone to her voice.

"I probably could," Cherie said, a bit of haughtiness in her own tone, "but between my studies and my art projects..."

"Hey, now, let's not get stroppy!" Manjari said as she stepped in. "Jad Roe's newest flick is about the Thunderbirds."

"You mean, International Rescue Thunderbirds?" Cherie asked, her face wrinkling in a frown.

"Like, what other kind of Thunderbirds are there?" Aroha asked, the sarcasm plain this time.

Cherie turned in her seat to face Aroha. "The U.S. Air Force acrobatic stunt team is called the Thunderbirds. And there's a legendary bird from the U.S. southwest called that, too. Which is why I wanted to be sure what you were talking about." She turned back to Anneliese and Manjari. "So he's making a movie about International Rescue? How can he do that? Wouldn't he get in legal trouble?"

"I dunno." Anneliese shrugged, while Manjari sat at her computer and went looking for information. "I mean, how can he ask permission if no one has sussed out who they are?"

Aroha added, "It's based on that book. Y'know, the new one by Steve Gunner."

"He can't get in trouble for the short." Manjari turned her laptop so all could see what she'd found. "Here it is. Have a squiz."

The trailer that followed was a blur of quick shots. Scenes of collapsed buildings, fires, earthquakes, volcanoes, tornadoes, mudslides, and hurricanes flashed by, some old, some newer, most from archival film. Over the quick cuts the following words faded in then out, while a deep voice intoned, "No one knows who they are. No one knows where they come from. But come they do, and help they bring." The final words were in logo form, in a bold font, with a shiny, chrome-like look. They read, "International Rescue: Men of Mystery." Below the logo were the words, "Coming 2071."

Cherie nodded slowly as she watched. "That's cool!" She glanced over at Manjari. "This is being filmed already? Who is playing our Yellow Sash?"

"The Internet Film Wiki says the flick is 'in development', whatever that means," Petani said. "No

one's been selected to play anyone yet." She sighed, a dreamy sound. "I fancy Chad Braithewait for the part."

Aroha shook her head. "Get off the grass!" she exclaimed. "I think Todd Kenyon would be cracker for it!"

"Hey!" Cherie said, her face brightening. "Maybe that should be our February poll!" When she had the attention of the others, she explained, "We could ask, 'Who do you think should play Yellow Sash in the upcoming movie?' Then we could give a list of actors to choose from."

Manjari nodded. "That was my idea, too."

"That's brilliant!" Anneliese said, clapping her hands. She wrote it down on her data pad. "Let's suss out who we want."

The girls brainstormed a bit, looking up various actors online as they did so. Finally, they had a list of six. "Okay, Petani will work this up for our page, and I'll upload on the first."

"What was the result of the last poll?" Cherie asked.

Anneliese made another note on her pad. "All the names were chosen, but, so far, Brandon is choicest."

Cherie chuckled, and Aroha asked, "What's so funny?"

"I just know someone named Brandon, that's all." When she found the others were looking at her, she added, "He's a good guy."

"Okay." Anneliese referred to her pad again. "Now, about that troll on the boards..."

As the girls began to discuss what to do with their particular troll, Cherie made a mental note to herself. Gotta tell Dad about this. Maybe he can sic some legal eagle on this movie. Though... it might be kinda nice to see a movie about my family.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:21:10 GMT
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The Villa, early evening, after dinner...

"Thank-you for dinner, Mrs. Tracy," Elise said as she picked up her plate to carry it into the kitchen.

"You're welcome, dear." They went into the kitchen where Elise placed her dishes on the counter.

Virgil appeared, also with a stack of dishes in his hand. "Great dinner, Grandma, as usual."

"Can I help with anything?" Elise asked.

Emily shook her head. "No thank-you. Go with Virgil, I'll take care of this."

"Come on, you heard her." Virgil took Elise's hand and led her to the living room. "What do you want to watch?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Surprise me." She settled herself down on the couch.

"Hmmm...'Zombies vs. Vampires'?"

"No!!"

Virgil laughed and turned back to the movie case. "Here we go. 'Leaves of Autumn', with Peter Henderson and Suzette de Luna."

Elise's eyes widened. "A chick-flick? You'd watch a chick-flick with me?"

"Watch it!" He sat down next to her and wrapped his arm around her shoulders. "It was nominated for five Academy Awards."

"So you're watching this on an intellectual level?"

"Exactly."

They were about a third through the movie when Scott wandered in. "Hey, what are you watching?" He threw himself down in a chair and put his feet on the coffee table. "Huh, not your usual choice of movie there, Virg."

"Elise wanted to see it," his brother replied icily. He shot a pointed look at Scott.

Understanding dawned on Scott and he got hastily to his feet. "I'm ah...I'm going to...I'm just going." He quickly fled the room.

Elise giggled. "That wasn't nice. He could have stayed and watched."

Virgil pulled her closer. "I didn't want him to." He nudged her chin up. "I don't feel like sharing." He took her mouth with his.

They were so lost in each other, they didn't notice when Gordon came in. "Why's it so dark in here?" He flipped the lights on and sat down in Scott's vacated chair. "What is this? I don't think so." Before Elise or Virgil could say anything, he had grabbed the remote and changed the channel. He surfed a moment before coming across a car race. "Cool! Wonder if any of Alan's buddies are racing." He settled back in the chair.

"Gordon, we were watching that," Virgil said coldly. Before he could say anything more, John, Tyler and Alex came in.

"Hey! A race!! Anyone we know?" Tyler asked, seating himself down next to Elise.

Alex, his arm in a sling, sat in another chair. "Too bad Alan isn't here to watch with us."

"Couple more days, kiddo," Gordon replied as he turned up the volume.

John stood behind the couch. "Um, Virgil? Sorry. I'll herd them out of here," he said quietly.

"Don't bother." He got to his feet and held his hand out for Elise. "We'll go elsewhere." He all but dragged her out of the room. He paused in the hallway and took a deep breath.

"Guys, we need to have a talk about privacy." John's voice could be heard clearly over the din of the TV.

"Come on." Virgil led her to his rooms and locked the door behind them. "Elise, I'm sorry."

She smiled. "It's all right, Virgil."

"No it's not all right!" He paced the room. "I wanted to spend time with you here, in my home." He walked over and pulled her to him, kissing her passionately. "I want you here, in my bed."

She kissed him back, then pulled away. "Virgil, we can't. Not here."

He rested his forehead on hers and sighed. "Elise, I don't want you thinking that this is just sex. That I go to your apartment because I'm ashamed to have you here with my family."

She smiled up at him. "I know that. If you did, you wouldn't have said that."

His eyes softened. "I love you."

"I love you, too." She stood on her toes and pulled him down to her. "Now, since things are a little crowded here, why don't we go back to my place?"

He looked down at her. "As long as you're sure." She raised an eyebrow and he chuckled. "OK, stupid question." They walked out of his room and started out the door towards the monorail to leading to the Cliff House. One thing's for sure, when Dad gets back, he and I are going to have a little talk.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:21:47 GMT

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Lana was at the sink cleaning the dinner dishes and Vince was still sitting at the dinner table. Laughter could be heard from the living room along with the sounds of a video game which Aaron and Lea were playing.

"Perhaps you should check with our neighbor upstairs and see if he needs anything from the mainland while we're there tomorrow?" Lana commented as she worked. "What's his name... Luke?"

"Yeah, Luke Morel," Vince said, having heard the others mention him a couple times. He had also seen him from a distance a few times over the week. He had intended to go introduce himself before this but something seemed to come up. "How come I have to go?"

"Because I have no intention of going anywhere near his apartment with that dog he has," Lana replied.

"Got it," Vince said, getting to his feet. "I'll be back shortly."

Deciding to get some exercise and fresh air, Vince opted to use the steps and drop in on Luke via the balcony door. It wasn't long before he was on the third floor balcony of the Cliff House. Walking toward Luke's apartment, he passed Cassie who was heading back to her own apartment.

"Aloha, Cassie. Nice evening, isn't it?"

"Hi, Vince. Yes, it is. What brings you up to the third floor?"

"Lana sent me to see if Luke needed anything from the mainland when we go for church services tomorrow. Anything we can pick up for you?"

"No, I'm fine, but thanks for asking," Cassie replied. The two exchanged a bit more small talk before Cassie disappeared into her apartment and Vince continued on his way to Luke's.

"Aloha," Vince said as Luke opened the door. He held out his hand to the other man. "I'm Vince Crenshaw, I live in the apartment downstairs. Sorry I haven't found the time to properly introduce myself."

"No problem," Luke said, shaking hands with the man. "Want to come inside?"

Luke stepped aside to let Vince enter the apartment. Rommel immediately came to check out the new visitor. Vince held out his hand to allow the dog to sniff it. When it appeared Rommel had accepted him, Vince scratched his head behind his ears.

"Great dog you have here."

"Yeah, he is. Rom is a SAR dog but also a great friend."

"That's right; I heard you worked with a rescue organization before coming here. What region did you work?"

"I was working in the Colorado Rockies before I joined IR."

The two spent about ten minutes getting to know each other before Vince brought up the reason

he had dropped in on Luke in the first place.

"My family and I attend church services on the mainland every Sunday. My wife sent me up here to see if you needed anything while we were out tomorrow?"

"Can't think of anything I need right now, but thanks for the offer," Luke replied. He hesitated before speaking again. "However, I could do with some chocolate if you don't mind picking some up. I'm sort of addicted to the stuff."

Vince smiled. "Sure. I can do that," he replied.

The two exchanged a few more words before Vince headed back for his own apartment.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:22:27 GMT
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Tracy Island, around 6:00 AM...

Luke jogged slowly along the edge of the waterline. Rommel ran ahead of him, splashing happily in the waves. Luke smiled. He slowed his pace to a walk, then stopped and watched his dog. Rom continued running until he realized his master was no longer moving. He turned and trotted back to Luke's side.

"Having fun, mutt?" Luke scratched the dog between the ears. "Let's take a break." He walked over to an outcropping of rocks and sat down. Rom followed, lying down at Luke's feet.

Luke pulled a water bottle out of his bag and took a long drink. He then cupped his hands and gave some to Rommel. Putting the bottle away, he stretched slowly, wincing only a little. "Feels better today, boy." He gingerly rotated his shoulder. "Few more weeks and I should be able to go back on duty. If they still want me, that is..." He sighed. "Mr. and Mrs. Tracy should be back in a few days. I don't think they'll be too happy to see me after what happened to Alex." He patted Rom's head again and the dog rolled onto his back so Luke could rub his belly. "Don't get too comfortable there, mutt; we may not be staying."

He gazed out over the water, watching as the sky faded from pearly pink to vivid blue. "I don't want to leave, Rom. I love my job, my friends...Dom." Luke ran his hands through his hair.

"What the hell am I doing?" He got up and paced. "He thinks he's in love with me! Said it started before I got shot, that he'd been thinking about me for a while. Dammit! It's Barry all over again!" He sat back down again and stared out across the ocean.

"I don't think I've ever been so shocked as I was when he showed up on my doorstep the other night. I thought I was in for another shouting match like with Elise." He shook his head. "I certainly didn't see him jumping me like that." He smiled softly, remembering. They'd spent a blissful hour together before Dominic had to leave to pick up his son.

"It's been so long since I...since someone..." He sighed again. "It would be so easy, Rom, so easy to fall in love with him. He's kind, caring, loves his son, and not to mention, hot. What the hell am I going to do?" The dog merely looked up at him and woofed. Luke chuckled. "I know what you'd do, you'd eat! Well, there's no use worrying about this now." He got to his feet. "You know, I feel really good. What do you say we try another quarter mile?" Luke started off down the beach at an easy pace, his dog at his heels.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:23:00 GMT
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Sunday, January 27, 2069, noon, Tracy Island

"JT-1 to Tracy Island, requesting landing clearance."

Scott, already in Flight Control, toggled a switch. "Tracy Island to JT-1, request denied. TRAC-0002 is on the runway, ready for take-off. Hold to your present course and height. Copy."

"Copy, that, Tracy Island." Jeff glanced over at Dianne, who had taken her headphones off and was working the kinks out of her neck. "Wonder what's going on and who's taking Tracy 2 out."

"We'll find all that out when we get home," Dianne said with a weary sigh. She put her headphones back on, and peered out the window on her side of the cockpit. "The island never looked so good. I hate these long flights."

"Still sore from all the fun we had after the storm cleared?" he asked, smiling.

"Yes!" She gave him a sharp look, her lips pursed. "I don't know why you insisted on making such a damn big snowman! We almost needed a derrick to put his middle and head on!"

"The snow was there; it seemed a shame not to use as much of it as possible. We used to make snowmen that big back in Kansas."

Dianne was about to reply when Scott's voice came over the radio.

"Tracy Island to JT-1. You are cleared for landing. You can now make your approach." There was a pause, then he added, "Welcome home, Mom and Dad."

"Roger that, Tracy Island. It's good to be home."

By the time they'd landed and taxied into the hangars, Scott and Virgil were waiting for them. Scott guided the jet into its berth, while Virgil hurried over with a luggage float when the jet's engines whined to a stop.

The cockpit opened. Jeff busied himself with the minutiae of post-flight records, while Dianne stretched and yawned. She smiled at Scott, who helped her down to the hangar floor, and hugged

her tight. "Hello, Scott." She looked around at the hangar and noticed that not one, but two jets were missing. "Looks like it's a busy day here."

"Yeah. The Crenshaws went to church this morning; they should be back soon. Gordon has a date..."

"A date?" Dianne gave Scott a sly smile. "Anyone we know?"

"I don't think so," Scott replied. "He said he was going orienteering with this girl he'd met while at that dolphin cruise."

"Orienteering? That's no date." Virgil came up with the luggage piled on the float, and paused to give Dianne a kiss on the cheek. "Welcome home, Mom. If you and Dad are ready..."

Jeff came around the jet's tail to join the small group. He put an arm around his wife's waist. "We are."

"Then let's head upstairs." Virgil began to push the float before him. "There are some kids who are pretty anxious to see you."

"Yeah," Scott agreed as he fell into step with Jeff and Dianne. "They wanted to come down and greet you, but Grandma vetoed that." He glanced at his watch. "John's got flight control right now, so I can finish my own lunch before the Crenshaws get back."

In the dining room, Tyler got up from his seat and launched himself at Jeff. "Dad! You're home!"

"Oof!" Jeff said as he fielded Tyler's attempted tackle. "You're getting heavier, son. Pretty soon you'll be knocking me over!"

Dianne hugged Tyler, then went straight to Alex. "How are you feeling, Bud?" she asked, enfolding him in a warm embrace.

Alex wrapped his good arm around his mother. "I'm okay, Mom. It doesn't hurt much any more."

"I'm sorry we couldn't get home any sooner, hon," she told him, kissing the top of his head. "There was just too much snow."

"I saw!" Alex said, his eyes shining. "That was one huge snowman you and Dad made!"

"Your mom said it was too big!" Jeff ruffled Alex's hair, and pulled him into a sideways hug. "I'm glad you got the pictures we sent."

"Come sit down, Dianne," Emily said, pulling out a chair. "Jeff, over here."

Dianne started moving plates around a bit, and Jeff fell in with her silent suggestion. "If you don't mind, Ma, we're going to sit down here with the kids." He pulled the chair out between Cherie and Alex, giving the girl a quick kiss as he settled Dianne into her seat. Then he took the now-empty spot between Alex and Tyler.

Jenny came in, bringing fresh plates and utensils. "I'll bring out some glasses and a fresh pitcher of lemonade," she said as she quickly arranged their place settings. "Be right back."

"Thank you, Jenny," said Jeff as the young woman scurried back to the kitchen. He turned to survey the table. "Pass some of that roast beef up here, please, Tin-Tin. And, Brains, those Kaiser rolls?"

"Don't forget the lettuce and tomatoes," Maggie said, reaching for the plates as Emily passed them along. "Do you like mayo or pickles, Jeff? I know my niece has always hated pickles."

"Even when she was pregnant, she hated them," Lisa said as she came in with glasses and set them down. Jenny followed with the lemonade, and poured out when Lisa had settled the glasses to her own satisfaction. "Now, do you have everything you need?" Lisa asked, glancing over the table.

Scott and Virgil came in. "Is there anything left of my lunch?" Scott asked as he sat down. "Or did the squirts eat all my sandwich?"

"I wouldn't touch your sandwich if you paid me," Cherie said, making a face. "Horseradish... ew!"

"Your luggage is stowed in your suite, Dad," Virgil said. He pulled out his own chair. "I'm pretty much had my fill, so I'll just wait here for dessert."

"Thank you, son," Jeff said. He sighed, contented. "It's so good to be home." That was the last anyone heard from him for a bit as he tucked into his lunch, listening to the chatter around the table and savoring both his food and the warmth of his family.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:23:23 GMT
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Bottle Lake Forest Park, 1:40 pm, Sunday, January 27th . . .

Gordon arrived at the park and was surprised at the number of people who were there. He wasn't sure what he had been expecting but it definitely wasn't this crowd. Getting out of the car, he headed for the spot Alysha had said her and her friends would meet them. As he approached the area he saw the brunette was already there. Beside her was a blonde woman, who looked to be about Alysha's age. A chestnut brown-haired man, was chatting easily with the two women.

Spotting Gordon, Alysha waved to him in greeting.

"Hi, Gordon," Alysha greeted him, as he joined the group. "Gordon this is my friend Abbey," she said, indicating the blonde. Gordon exchanged hellos and shook hands with Abbey as Alysha paused briefly in the introductions. "This is Elijah."

"Hey, mate," Elijah said, holding out his hand. "Feel free to call me Eli."

Gordon nodded as he shook hands with the young man.

"You were in the Olympics a few years back, weren't you?" Abbey commented, as she finally placed why Gordon looked familiar to her. "Gold metal in freestyle and butterfly, right?"

"Yeah, that would be me," Gordon replied, feeling a little uneasy.

"Get off the grass!" Eli commented. "That's cool, man."

"Well, now that we all know one another's names, why don't we head to the starting point and check in," Alysha suggested, attempting to get everyone's focus back on the task at hand.

"Lead away, cuz" Eli responded, with a wave of his hand.

The four young people headed for the registration table. It wasn't long before, they had their team numbers to identify themselves, their map and the envelop containing the coordinates of the points they were suppose to locate.

Forty-five minutes later, the meet was well underway. Having located their first point, Alysha, Abbey, Eli and Gordon were heading through the woods to their second point. Abbey, the group's pace setter was counting the steps as they walked. Alysha had her compass out and was looking at it frequently, keeping the group headed in the right direction. Eli dropped back from where he had been walking in the lead with Abbey to fall in step with Gordon.

"How are you holding up, mate?" Eli asked.

"Just fine," Gordon replied.

"So, I hear you've been showing interest in my cousin," Eli said, glancing toward Alysha as she said the words.

"Why do you say that?" Gordon asked, trying to figure out if he had been told something or was making a guess.

"Alysha mentioned you asked her out. Well, actually she mentioned it to Abbey, who usually ends up telling me just about everything, especially when it comes to my cousin," Eli said.

"So are you trying to warn me away from her?" Gordon asked wondering where he stood with the other man.

"Nah. Alysha needs to have more fun in her life. You seem like a decent enough fellow. Word of advice though, my cousin is very cautious when it comes to relationships anymore, and I don't blame her, considering what she's been through, so if you're really interested, don't push things. Take it slow."

Gordon nodded but before he could make a reply, they heard Alysha's shout saying that she had spotted the flag for their second point. After retrieving the second flag with their team's number on it, Eli opened up the map he was carrying and the group consulted it, setting up path for the next point.

It was past dinner by the time Gordon returned to the villa that evening. They had placed fourth in the orienteering meet and the four of them had gone out to dinner as a group to celebrate. The dinner had given them all more time to talk amongst themselves, and Gordon had a chance to find out more about Alysha as well as the other two.

"Hi, Gordon. Did you enjoy yourself today?" John asked, as Gordon walked into the kitchen to get something to drink. His brother was standing at the counter pouring himself a glass of juice.

"Yes, I did. The orienteering meet was a lot of fun. They asked me to compete with them in their next meet at the end of next month. I told them I'd give them a definite answer at a later date, though it would definitely be fun to do so."

"And the girl? Are you going to see her again before that?" John asked, when his younger brother didn't offer the information.

"We're going to have dinner on Friday," Gordon replied, smiling at the memory of the brief conversation he had with Alysha.

"I had fun today. Thank-you for inviting me along," Gordon had told her as they four walked out of the restaurant. Eli and Abbey were ahead of them, walking hand in hand.

"Thanks for helping out. Just participating is more fun than forfeiting."

"So, now that you've spent some time with me with your friends, can I take you out to dinner sometime? Just the two of us?"

Alysha had paused, apparently thinking it over. Gordon had held his breath, not sure what the hesitation was.

"I'd like that on one condition, we have dinner on my turf. The Friday evening dinner cruise isn't sold out yet. I can reserve us spots on it."

"Have dinner with you with your dad as the chaperone?"

Alysha had laughed then. To Gordon the sound was music to his ears.

"No, my Dad won't be on the boat. He's got a private charter he's taking out that night. One of the other Captains will be at the wheel."

"Okay then, I'll accept your terms," Gordon said, as he really wanted to see her again.

"So, the clown of our family has got himself a girlfriend," John said in a teasing voice, punching his brother lightly on the arm.

"She's not my girlfriend," Gordon told him. "At least not yet," he added, grabbing a bottle of water from the fridge and then heading out of the kitchen.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:23:37 GMT
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Monday, January 28th, just before lunch . . .

"I think we can call it a wrap with official training for Thunderbird 4," Gordon commented as he and Vince disembarked from the tiny sub. They had taken her out to give Vince some experience with piloting her. Gordon had found that he had only to sit back and watch, and Vince accurately, albeit a bit hesitantly, piloted the craft. "Make sure you keep putting time in on the simulator and if you have questions or anything feel free to let me know."

"I've come a long way from sinking her during my first simulation, haven't I?" Vince commented with a wry smile.

"That's for sure," Gordon replied. "How's training on Thunderbird 1 coming along?"

"Not bad. I haven't been putting as much time in on that training as I have Four, as Mr. Tracy felt training me for the sub should be the priority. I hope I can get a chance to pilot her for real here shortly though."

Gordon talked Vince through what would be normal post-mission procedures. As the two were walking across the hangar on their way to grab lunch, Vince decided to broach the subject that had been on his mind since their rescue at Capullo.

"Gordon, I've been wondering has everyone who is trained to dive had training with low visibility and night diving?"

Gordon thought about the question before answering. "Well, I know Brains, Tin-Tin and my brothers all have experience with it, some more than others. We just trained Cassie and Callie on basic SCUBA technique; Callie actually has one more dive before she's certified which is scheduled for next week. You were there when I gave Cassie some training with the deep water dive suits, though she'll probably need more training before she's ready for a rescue using them. Neither of them have any night dive or low visibility training, and I don't think Dom has had any training diving at night, but you would have to check with him to be certain. Why?"

"Just thinking that if we had anyone interesting in night dive training that hasn't had it, then now is as good as time as any to set it up," Vince responded. "You guys did bring me on board for my diving experience after all."

Gordon nodded in agreement. "Want me to talk to my dad about it for you?"

Vince shook his head. "No, I'll handle it. Think I'll see if Callie and Cassie are interested first. If they are, I've got a meeting with Mr. Tracy tomorrow afternoon, kind of as a check-in type thing to see how I'm settling in, so I can bring it up then. It'll give me a chance to put together some type of presentation for it."

If I do hold a night dive training session, then I'll extend an invitation to Dom for him to join us. After his experience on the last rescue, I'm not sure if he'll be feeling up to joining us though it might help him deal with his fears if he did.

"Now might actually be a good time to try talking to Callie and Cassie," Vince commented, referring to it being lunch time. "I think I'll stop by their apartments before grabbing lunch myself and see if I can catch up with them."

"Okay. I'll talk to you later then," Gordon said, giving the older man a quick wave good-bye as he headed for the villa.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:23:50 GMT
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Brains, Virgil and Cassie had met to go over final plans for the upcoming test for the dicetyline cannon that Friday. They were gathered in Brains's Lab, the scientist making notes on a pad about their plans.

"So, let's go over this one more time and make sure we haven't overlooked anything," Brains said, glancing first at Virgil and then at Cassie. "We'll do the test on Neverland again. Time is set for two o'clock. The Firefly will be on stand-by in case the cannon doesn't work. Will and I will take care of setting off the fire. Virgil, you and Cassie will be in TB2, Cassie at the canon." Brains looked at the dark-haired firefighter. "You've gotten familiar with the controls, right?"

"Yes," Cassie replied. "I plan on putting in some more time with that between now and Friday."

"Jeff and Scott will both be on hand as observers, and either Will or I will record the scenario for later reference."

"Who's going to man the Firefly?" Cassie asked, realizing that though some names had been discussed, nothing had been determined.

Virgil turned his gaze to Callie who was working nearby. "Hey, Callie. Do you have any plans for Friday afternoon?"

Turning to face Virgil, she rubbed her chin and answered, "No, there's nothing in my plans other than the usual lab work. What's up?"

"We need someone on stand-by in the Firefly in case our new cannon fizzles," Virgil said. He let his gaze switch to Cassie for a moment. "Or Cassie can't aim the thing," he added with a grin.

"Hey!" Cassie said. "If I can't hit the fire with the cannon it'll be because it doesn't work or your flying," she told him, humor in her voice.

Virgil laughed. "So how about it, Callie? Want to hang out in the Firefly Friday afternoon?"

"I'm not scheduled to be part of it, but I wouldn't mind being there for the test." She faced Brains and asked, "Is that okay with you?"

Brains nodded. "I don't see why not, Callie. We don't have anything that can't wait."

"Great," Virgil said. "I think that covers everything then?" he ventured, looking to Brains for the scientist's agreement.

"Yes. I think it does," Brains said. "I'll send out an email to everyone with the itinerary for the day so everyone is on the same page on Friday. I guess that's it then."

Saying a good-bye to everyone in the lab, Virgil took his leave, heading to the villa for lunch. Brains turned his attention to his computer wanting to send out the said email before breaking for lunch. Cassie turned to Callie.

"Hey, Callie, want to grab lunch together?"

Callie nodded and answered, "Sure. Working today is giving me an appetite. Whose place, yours or mine?"

"How about your place? Being on the first floor, it's closer."

"The hash brown casserole I started this morning should be done by now. It'll be fresh and hot."

"Sounds good," Cassie replied. "Whenever you're ready."

The two ladies walked back to the Cliff House and went to Callie's apartment.

As they walked in, Callie saw the slow cooker light flashing. "Ah, it's done." When she took the lid off the cooker, the aroma took over. "Mmm, I think it's just right. What do you think?"

"Sure does smell good," Cassie commented, not able to hold her tongue when it came to the subject of fire safety. "You know, though, I've seen a lot of apartment fires back in the city get started because someone left an appliance on while they were out. I know a slow cooker should be safe but you never know when there might be a short in an appliance."

Not wanting to scold someone else after doing that with Luke a couple of days earlier, Callie simply smiled. "Ah, the firefighter part of you. Believe me, I understand. My older brother, Joseph, actually did have an appliance short out at our house, but thank goodness the only damage was to the slow cooker and the counter." As she started to make a plate of the casserole, she added,

"Since then, I've done a check on whichever device I use to make sure it won't short out."

Cassie nodded. She had done her part with making Callie aware of the danger and left it at that. Years on the job had taught her that no amount of lecturing was going to stop people from doing what they wanted. Besides, she's probably not the only one doing things like that. They'd probably tell me I'm being too cautious.

Callie gestured for Cassie to have a seat at the table. As she sat down, Cassie chose to change the subject. "How was your weekend? Didn't see you around; of course, I did spend a lot of time in my apartment."

"I was about the same myself, staying in most of the time. I watched a couple of college basketball games and did a little bit of apartment cleaning." She sat down at the table and gave Cassie her plate.

As Callie was about to start her first bite, she heard the door chime. "I'd better get that."

She walked up to the door and opened it. "Oh, hi, Vince."

"Aloha, Callie. I hope, I'm not interrupting anything," Vince replied, having stopped by on his way to his own apartment for lunch.

"Oh, no, you're fine. Cassie and I were just starting lunch. What can I do for you?"

Vince stepped into the apartment, exchanging greetings with Cassie.

"I'm actually glad I caught the both of you together; I can kill two birds with one stone so to say," he said. Both of the women gave him their attention. "I was talking to Gordon about where everyone is at with diving experience, and it came to my attention that the two of you have no experience with night or low visibility diving. I wanted to know if either of you were interested in some training in that area before I approach Mr. Tracy about the idea?"

Callie nodded. "That's really not a bad idea, since I started training on Four anyway. If I have to get out into the water, I have to be prepped for diving in those situations. You can count me in."

"I'd be up for it. SCUBA has been quite an interesting experience," Cassie responded. "It would be good to be prepared in case I was ever needed during a rescue."

"Great," Vince replied. "I'll have to work out exact details after I get approval from Mr. Tracy but you can expect the training to consist of four sessions. One in the afternoon and three night dives. The afternoon session would be so I can gauge first hand where everyone is at and get us familiar with a dive site in good lighting. I'll get back in touch with you after talking to Mr. Tracy. I've got a meeting with him tomorrow, so I'll probably bring it up to him then."

The girls acknowledged Vince's last statement. Callie offered him an invitation to eat with them, which Vince declined saying his wife was expecting him. After saying good-bye to the former Navy Seal, Callie rejoined Cassie at the table, and the two continued their conversation over the hash brown casserole.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:25:49 GMT

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Monday, January 28, 2069, 1:15 p.m., Tracy Island.

Luke got off the monorail and made his way towards the infirmary. He'd gotten an email from Dianne last night, asking him to meet her for an exam. Knowing she would want to do more than check his injuries, he'd put it off until today. Pausing in front of the door, he took a deep breath and went in.

Dianne was seated at her desk and looked up as he entered. "You wanted to see me, Dr. Tracy?"

"Yes, I do. I told you so when I gave my conditional approval to your return." Her tone was slightly chiding, and she gave him a long, solemn look. "Now that I've had a chance to look over the records from Montana, and the ones my uncle took after your last escapade, I want to see you for myself." She waved a hand toward the examining room. "There's a gown waiting for you."

Nodding, he went in. Dominic was standing near the table and smiled, handing him a robe. "She's not out to torture you. Relax."

"Easy for you to say," Luke responded.

Dom chuckled softly and left him to change. Luke quickly put on the robe, then sat on the edge of the table. "I'm all set when you are," he called out.

Dianne and Dom both came into the room. As she began her examination, Dianne said, in a conversational tone, "Tell me what happened the other day. I've heard it from quite a few different sources, but I want to get it from you, too."

Luke took a deep breath. "The boys stopped by earlier in the day to say hello. We chatted a bit and I gave them a few belated Christmas presents. I then asked if they wanted to come work with Rommel and I after they were done school for the day. When they joined me a couple of hours later, I had them split up, as usual. I found Tyler quickly, or rather, Rom did, then we went looking for Alex." He closed his eyes, remembering.

Dom placed his hand on Luke's shoulder. Luke opened his eyes and continued. "I found his hat by the edge of the cliff. I hurried over and looked down, seeing him laying on a ledge about fifteen feet below me. I called the house and spoke to John. He scrambled the team and I went down to get Alex."

"And exactly how did you do that? Rappel?" Dianne's touch was gentle, and her voice professional. "Just lie back now so I can scan those troublesome parts. You can keep talking while the scan is running."

Dom helped Luke ease down onto the scanner, as Dianne set up the console station. "Scanning started," said a mechanical, female-sounding voice.

"I had some equipment in my backpack; I was carrying a light load, trying to build up my strength. Anyway, I told Tyler to stay back and had Rom watch him, then I secured a line and yeah, rappelled down."

Dom muttered something under his breath and Luke shot him a glare before going on. "I got down to the ledge just as Alex was waking up. I gave him a quick look over and radioed in to John. He told me the team was on their way. A few minutes later, Scott arrived and he, Dom and I got Alex into a stretcher and up to the heli-jet. They headed back here and I climbed back up where Virgil and Gordon were waiting with Tyler. We all came here and Dr. Carmichael gave me the OK to head back to my apartment," he finished.

"I heard that you were winded and hurting when you got to the top." Her tone was still even, but Dom gave her a look, and when he turned his attention back to the patient, he waggled his eyebrows in some kind of arcane code, his eyes wide. Luke frowned; whatever Dom was trying to communicate, he wasn't getting it.

"Maybe a little," Luke replied. "But Virgil gave me O-two and I was fine. Nothing that a few painkillers couldn't help." He shrugged. "I'm a little achy, but it's nothing more than I've been living with. I haven't even taken any meds yet today. Figured it was time I started working through it."

Dom groaned to himself. Wrong thing to say...

This time, Dianne looked up and arched an eyebrow. Then she drew in a breath and let it out her nose, a noisy sigh. Dom scrunched his eyes closed. Oh boy.

There were still a few more minutes left on the scan, and the room was nearly silent; only the machine's hum could be heard. Luke had the distinct feeling of a storm brewing. At last the scan completed, and Dianne rose, data pad in hand. "You can sit up now, Luke."

Dom helped him up, and he swung his legs over to sit on the edge of the examining room bed. Dianne glanced over her notes, then handed them to Dom. "Well, things have calmed down from the other day, but you still have a lot of healing to do." She folded her arms. "What Ah'm not likin' howevah, Mistah Morel, is the martyr's complex Ah'm confronted with raght now. Yew coulda gone up with the helijet, but no, yew jest had t' do it all by yoahself!"

Luke's grey eyes flashed fire as he squared his shoulders. "He was in pain and bleeding from a head wound. While he seemed coherent enough, you know how fast that situation can change. I was perfectly capable of getting back up. Alex was the priority, not me."

Dominic, feeling like he was caught in the middle of a war-zone, stepped out of the line of fire. He pretended to be reading the notes Dianne had handed him, but his ears were hanging on every word.

Dianne wasn't backing down. "Ah'm not sayin' that goin' down was the wrong thang to do. It

wasn't; it was absolutely the raght thang. What was the wrong thang was yew thinkin' that yew were okay when yew. were. not. Yew could have as easily clahmbed into that helijet an' saved yoahself a lotta pain." She shook her head vehemently. "Yew think yew can do it all, all by yoahself. Well, Mistah, yew can't. This organization thrives on teamwork, and on lookin' out foah each othah." She stopped abruptly, and took in a deep breath, running a hand through her hair. She started again, in a lower, more intense tone. "An' when yoah doctuh tell yew to take yoah medicine, yew better damn well do what he or she says! Theah is none of this 'goin' it alone' or 'workin' through it' heah. Yew will take cayah of yoahself, suh, or, so help me God, Ah will strap yew down in the infirmary until Ah am satisfahed that yew are ready to go back to work!"

Luke got to his feet. "For the record, Doc, the instructions are for me to take as needed. I don't need them at the moment. When I do, I'll take them." He turned and pulled on his jeans before taking off the robe. "And I didn't do it alone. I called for help. I didn't do anything I couldn't do. Hell, I even submitted myself to yet another medical check-up knowing I was fine!" He grabbed his shirt and put it on, glaring at her the whole time. He turned and started to march out of the room. Suddenly, he stopped at the doorway, one hand resting on the door-jamb. "I'm sorry," he said quietly. "It's just..." He turned but didn't meet her eyes. "It's my fault. If I hadn't had the boys helping me, this never would have happened." He shook his head. "I should have just stayed in Montana." He turned to leave again.

"And that, Luke, is where this stinking martyr's complex comes in." Dianne shook her head. "I think you like beating yourself up over things you couldn't have helped if you tried. It was an accident, Luke. It. Was. An. Accident. You couldn't have foreseen it, and you couldn't have stopped it. Just like in Montana." She bit her lower lip, as teardrops trembled on the edge of her lower lid. "I'm just glad you were there, and you did the right thing for Alex. And I wish to God you'd done the right thing for yourself, too."

Luke finally looked up at her. "I didn't think. I saw him laying there..." He swallowed the lump in his throat. "I thought he was dead," he said hoarsely.

She drew in a deep breath to steady her voice, and sniffed. She was only partly successful. "But he wasn't, and he didn't, because of you." She shook her head. "I know my sons have said it, now I'm saying it, for both me and Jeff. Thank you, Luke."

"Mrs. Tracy..." Luke took a shuddering breath. "There's nothing you need to thank me for but, you're welcome."

He walked out of the infirmary. Dianne watched him go, then turned to Dom.

"Tell me, is he being a stubborn fathead?"

Dom blinked, surprised at the doctor's question. "... I don't know."

"I think he is." She sighed heavily and shook her head. "Why is it that all the men on this island are like that?" Her face took on a thoughtful expression. "Well, I take that back. Not quite all of them."

Dom, who was still processing her previous comment, now relaxed a little. Then she added, "I

have to admit that Kyrano's not. Probably never will be, either."

Doctor/patient confrontation by Lillehafrue and Tikatu

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:26:09 GMT

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The Cliff House (early evening)...

Luke stood in front of Elise's door and shifted the package in his arms. He took a deep breath and pressed the door buzzer. A moment later, it opened.

Elise's smile faded and she folded her arms across her chest. "Hello," she said.

Luke thought that if her tone were any colder, he'd freeze to death. "Hey, Elise. Can I come in?" he asked.

She didn't answer but turned on her heel. Luke waited a moment, then followed her inside, pausing to shut the door behind him. Henry trotted up to him, tail held high. Luke put down his package and crouched down to pat the kitten. "Hey, little guy. You've gotten big." The kitten purred and rubbed his head against Luke's hand.

"Is there something particular you wanted?" Elise asked him frostily.

Luke stood and met her irritated scowl with a cool firm gaze of his own. "I wanted to apologize for the other day. I'm sorry I lost my temper," he replied in nearly the same tone.

They stood there glaring at each other a moment before Luke's shoulders slumped and he sighed. "Elise, please."

She softened and relaxed, moving closer to him. "I was only concerned about you."

"I know. I was ugly and hurting and it all got blown out of proportion." He sat down at the table and she joined him. "I thought when I got back here, everything in my life would be back to normal. Instead, it's just been one crisis after another." He looked up at her. "First the thing with Alex, then the fight with you, Dom confessing to me, Callie....I feel like I'm caught in an avalanche."

Elise frowned in puzzlement. "Dom confessing? What does that mean?"

Luke groaned to himself as he realized what he'd said. "What happened on that rescue," he said quickly. "His panic attack."

She nodded. "Oh right. But I thought he was handling that?"

"He is. We've talked about it a few times."

"OK. But what happened with Callie?"

"She brought me lunch the other day and started in on me. I lost it then, too. I'm so sick of everyone thinking I can't take care of myself!" He shook his head. "I apologized immediately, but she didn't listen. Just sort of flounced off telling me she'd be waiting until I was ready to talk to her again. Hell, Elise! I said I was sorry; what else can I do?"

"Nothing. It's not your problem; it's hers." She reached out and took his hand in hers. "Luke, I know things aren't like you hoped they'd be when you got back, but you have to look at it from our point of view. When we went to see you, in the hospital, it was awful. You were connected to all those tubes and machines, and drugged to the teeth." Her eyes took on a faraway look as she remembered. "Dom was the worst. He fretted the whole flight to Montana, then berated the doctors daily on your condition." She turned her focus back to him. "We...I care about you, Luke."

Luke hid his surprise at Dom's reaction. "I know that. And I do appreciate it, really I do. But I know what I'm capable of. I called for help instead of trying to save Alex by myself, didn't I?"

Elise nodded. "You did."

"So trust me. Besides, it won't happen again."

She frowned, not liking his matter of fact tone. "Have you talked to Dianne yet?" she inquired.

"Yeah, a little while ago. Things are better there," Luke replied without elaborating.

"Good." Elise knew she wouldn't get any more out of him and dropped the subject. For now..."Luke?" He looked up at her and she smiled. "I'm sorry, too. I shouldn't have lost my temper either. Friends?"

He smiled back, feeling the rest of the tension leaving him. "Friends."

"So, now that we have that settled, are you going to tell me what that is?" Elise asked indicating the holiday wrapped package on the table.

Luke chuckled and nudged it towards her. "It's better late than never so, Merry Christmas!"

She eagerly tore into the package, then paused when she saw what was inside. "Jerk," she muttered good-naturedly.

He laughed. "Well, open them up!"

Elise glared at him as she opened the box and pulled out a pair of black hockey skates. "They're even my size! This means war. As soon as you can fly again, we're heading to the mainland for a showdown. And you will wear figure skates." She jabbed a finger at him.

"Bring it on." Luke grinned and got to his feet. "I need to get back to the mutt and take him for a last walk. Are we good?"

"We're good." She walked over and hugged him. "Don't be a stranger. Come out of that hole you're hiding in, OK?"

"OK. Good night, honey." He gave her one last squeeze and made his way over to the French doors.

"Good night, Luke." Elise watched him leave then turned back to see Henry up on the table, sniffing at the ice skates. "He thinks he's real funny getting me those." She smiled craftily as she sat down at her computer. "Well, I'll show him."

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:27:36 GMT
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Luke easily made his way up the first set of patio steps to his apartment. After talking with Elise, he'd felt as if a huge weight had lifted off his chest. Now if I could just figure out how to fix the rest of my life!

Reaching the second floor, he heard a high pitched squeal coming from the far side of the patio. He walked over and glanced through the screen doors.

Josh was running around the apartment wearing nothing but one sock and a cape. A frazzled looking Dominic was chasing after him, causing the boy to erupt in laughter. He knocked on the edge of the door. Dom looked up in surprise then smiled and beckoned Luke inside.

Josh stopped and grinned. "Luke!!!"

"Hey there, buddy. Are we having a party?"

The boy giggled. "I had a bath!"

"I think you forgot a few clothes there, pal."

Josh merely laughed and ran off in the direction of his room.

Dom shook his head. "He's been wound up all day. I was hoping a bath would calm him down." He glanced around, looking at the dishes still in the sink and the pile of laundry on the couch. "Feel free to sit if you can find a spot. I'll go get him dressed and be right back."

Luke shook his head. "Don't worry about it; I just stopped in to say hi. I should be heading back up--what did you do to your arm?" he demanded, spying the gauze wrapped around Dominic's forearm.

"Huh?" Dom looked down. "Oh this, I put the bandage on to protect it while I was giving Josh his bath."

"Protect what, Dom?" Luke growled.

Dom chuckled to himself. Ah, not so indifferent about me after all. " 'Tis nothing, really. Here, have a look." He carefully peeled off the gauze to reveal his tattoo.

Luke looked at it in surprise. "You got new ink? When?"

"The other day when I went to Christchurch. What do you think?"

Luke gently turned Dominic's arm so he could read the script. " 'What cannot be cured must be endured.' Nice." He had to force himself to not touch it. "Where'd you get this idea?" "After that last disaster of a rescue I was on. It's my new way of looking at life!" The Irishman grinned crookedly at his friend.

"I like it." This time Luke ran his fingers lightly across Dom's arm causing the younger man to shiver.

"Luke..."

"I ah, I was wondering if maybe you would want to come up for dinner one night." Luke looked up into Dominic's eyes. "I could make eggplant parm or something like that. You could even bring Josh and we could hang out, all of us."

Dom smiled. "I'd like that. And Josh would, too."

"Great. Let me know what works for you. My schedule is more flexible than yours."

"I will." Dominic shot him a quizzical look. "I was going to stop by later and make sure you were all right after this afternoon."

Luke shrugged. "I'm fine, no worries."

"You and Dianne put on quite a show!" Dom winked and Luke rolled his eyes. Suddenly, a crash and a cry from Josh's room caused them both to jump.

"I'll let you get back to your son. See you soon." Luke turned towards the door but Dom pulled him back.

He pulled Luke's face down and kissed him softly. "Good night."

Instead of being startled, Luke bent down and kissed him back. "Good night." Then he turned and with a smile on his face and a spring in his step, continued up to his apartment.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:27:46 GMT
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Gordon walked down the hallway to his parent's bedroom suite. Not wanting an audience of siblings, he had held off talking to his parent's about his plans for Friday until they had headed to their room. He also didn't want too long after his parents had retreated to their room. Reaching the door he knocked. His father's call to answer soon followed.

Entering the living area of the room, Gordon found his parents sitting next to each other on the couch, Jeff's arm around Dianne's shoulders, as they watched TV. Both of them were looking in his direction as he entered.

"Hi, Gordon. Did you need something?" Jeff asked.

"Hi Mom, Dad. I just wanted to let you know I won't be having dinner with the family on Friday night. I'm going to meet someone on the mainland that night," Gordon replied.

"Would it be that girl Scott mentioned you were with yesterday?" Jeff asked, not wanting to pry too much but also wanting to know a bit more about this girl his son seemed to be interested in.

Gordon nodded. "Yeah. She agreed to have dinner with me during one of the dinner cruises that Dale Scenic Cruises offers."

"What's her name?" Dianne asked.

"Alysha Dale. Her family owns and runs the cruise company. It's the same one I went on the dolphin cruise through," Gordon replied.

"Why don't you have a seat and tell us a little bit about her," Jeff said, gesturing to the easy chair.

Actually wanting to tell someone who wasn't going to make jokes about him having a girlfriend, about Alysha, Gordon sat down in the chair. Dianne picked up the remote and turned off the TV as Gordon started telling them about meeting Alysha and what he knew about her.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:28:03 GMT
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Monday, January 28th, after sunset . . .

Cassie walked down the path toward the beach, the light from her flashlight illuminating the path ahead of her. Now that the sun had set, the light was quickly fading. She hadn't walked along the beach in the dark for awhile but she had suddenly gotten the urge to do so tonight.

Reaching the beach, she took off her sandals and carrying them in one hand, and her flashlight in the other, walked across the sand to the water line. Stopping right before the sand turned wet from the crashing waves, she stopped and stood listening to more than seeing the waves crash in front of her. She turned off her flashlight, and let her eyes adjust to the darkness. Soon she could make out the white foam of the breaking waves as she stood there, enjoying the serenity of the moment.

Cassie wasn't sure how long she had been standing there when she caught a flash of light out of the corner of her eye. Turning her head she saw a beam of light from another flashlight. Curious as to who else had ventured down to the beach at this time of night, she turned her own light back on and started in that direction.

"Hello," Cassie called out once she was closer.

"Cass, is that you?" came Scott's reply out of the dark.

"Yes. It's such a nice night; I thought I'd take a walk," Cassie replied.

The two had continued to walk toward one another as the exchange took place and could now make each other out in the light from the flashlights.

"Decided to take a walk myself," Scott replied. "Want some company?"

Cassie shrugged her shoulders in reply and the two friends fell in step together as they started walking, angling their way back toward the waterline.

"I always found the beach so peaceful, especially at night when there aren't many people on it. The waves crashing on the shore is like mother nature's music. It's a change of pace, especially when you live in the city. My friends and I use to head out to Coney Island on Friday nights in the summertime when I was in high school just for a change of pace. The beach always seemed like a nice escape," Cassie said, as way of an explanation for being out on the beach.

"And now you've got a beach practically right out your front door," Scott commented.

"Yeah, definitely one of the perks of living here over the city."

"Do you miss living there?"

Cassie shrugged her shoulders. "At times I do. I'm definitely not as homesick for it as I was back around Christmas time but there are times that I miss not having things right at my finger tips. If you got bored, you always had a whole bunch of options open to you and believe it or not, I miss the sounds of the city. Or noise as most people look at it, but growing up with it I guess I got used to it. I still play my disc of city sounds my brother gave me from time to time. Guess that sounds silly to you."

"Not at all. Moving here from New York City I'm sure was quite a change for you."

"I'm kind of looking forward to Cherie finishing the mural she's been working on. It'll be nice to have a piece of the city right there in my apartment in a way. Cherie's been keeping me updated on the progress and I think she's doing a good job so far."

"That's great. That sister of mine is quite talented," Scott commented, a hint of pride in his voice. "I'd like to come see the mural once it's up, if that's okay."

"Of course. Art is something that should be shared."

"Have you had a chance to check out any of the museums on the mainland?" Scott asked.

"No. Other than the airport, I haven't spent time in the city since I went to finish my Christmas shopping back in December."

"Well, we'll have to change that. Perhaps we can arrange to spend some time at the museum one Saturday afternoon," Scott suggested.

"I think I'd enjoy that," Cassie commented, wondering if Scott really had any interest in spending time at a museum or was making the suggestion to be nice. Either way she appreciated the gesture. Alex never wanted to do things I was interested in. We always did what he wanted to do, she thought, as the conversation changed to other things.

As the conversation continued, Cassie made another realization. In all the years she had been with Alex, the two of them had never done something as simple as take a walk, whether in the park or the beach and enjoy one another's company. They had always gone to see action movies he liked, ice skating, out to dinner, or to one of the city's many clubs. A lot of times they were with other friends. The closest we came was the carriage ride in Central Park when he proposed and even that night had ended with grabbing drinks at the bar where we met up with other friends. The only time we ever really talked was over meals and even that didn't feel the same as this. I know I never once shared my feelings about the peacefulness of the beach with Alex. I never thought he would understand. So why didn't I give a second thought about sharing that information with Scott?

As she continued the conversation with Scott, she pondered the question. It was just one more thing to add to the jumble of thoughts and emotions she had been dealing with lately.

"How's Alex doing?" Cassie asked, when their conversation hit a lull.

"Pretty good, all things considering. I think he's glad to have his mother back home though." Scott paused a moment, trying to decide if he wanted to continue. Cassie did open up to me about her son, he reasoned. "Honestly, I've never been as relieved to see my parents get back to the island as I was this time. A part of me thought they would blame me for Alex getting hurt; after all, they left me in charge here and then I go and let Alex get hurt."

"It was an accident, Scott. You didn't let it happen."

"I know, but I was supposed to keep an eye on things here and part of that is keeping an eye on Alex, Tyler, and Cherie and then Alex gets hurt. Guess I feel like I wasn't doing my job."

"Much as we try to protect the people who are special to us, things happen that we have no control over. As much as you want to, you can't protect any of your siblings from every possible danger that's out there; all you can do is to do your best and then be there to help them through the things that are out of our hands. From what I hear, you handled the situation just like you do any other rescue and stayed strong for Alex and your other siblings. Sounds to me like you did your job."

Scott nodded. He already knew the truth of those words but it was still nice to hear someone else say them. What she had asked him in her apartment last week about if he was a psychiatrist came to mind. "Now who's the one that sounds like a psychiatrist?" he asked, smiling.

"Well, as I'm repeating things I've heard myself, that doesn't surprise me," Cassie told him.

A flash of lighting in her peripheral vision, caught Cassie's attention. She stopped walking, and turned toward the ocean. It wasn't long before another flash lit up the sky off in the distance.

"Think the storm's going to hit the island?" Cassie asked.

"Not, sure but we might want to start back just in case," Scott suggested.

Cassie nodded in agreement, and with the lights of their flashlights playing on the sand ahead of them, the two friends started back toward the path they had used to come down to the beach.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:28:25 GMT
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Tuesday, January 29th, 9:30 am . . .

"Hey, Dad, do you have a few minutes?" Scott asked, as he stood in the doorway of the study.

At his desk, Jeff looked up from the computer screen. "Sure, come on in," the Tracy patriarch said, motioning for his eldest to enter. He leaned back in his chair as Scott took a seat opposite of him. "What's on your mind, son?"

"Well, I was wondering if you would be able to get by without me for a few days? I was thinking I might get away from the island for a little bit."

"I don't see why not," Jeff said, trying to figure out when the last time his eldest had taken vacation time and realizing that it had been quite awhile. "You're certainly due a bit of time to yourself. Did you have a destination in mind?"

"Well, Bill has asked me a few times to come visit him out in Colorado. He and Jen just welcomed their third child. A little girl this time," Scott replied.

He thought of his latest conversation with his old college friend. Bill had sent him a picture of the new addition and most recent invitation.

"Emma's beautiful, Scott, though a picture hardly does her justice. You need to see her for yourself. I'm taking leave on the eighteenth of next month."

"Extend my congratulations to them," Jeff responded.

"I will."

"Did you have a time frame in mind for this visit?"

"Well, Bill has got leave the week of the eighteenth of February. Guess it would make sense to go visit him when he's got some time away from teaching at the Academy."

"That it would," Jeff said in agreement, already glancing at a calendar. "I don't see any reason I can't spare you that week. Alex's birthday party will be that weekend, so perhaps you could take the kids back to the States on your way out to Colorado."

"Sure, I could do that. I can lay over in there before continuing out to Colorado. I'll call Bill later when it would be evening where he's at and talk things over with him. We can work out exact details then."

"That will be fine," Jeff replied.

Father and son moved the conversation onto other things. As he talked to his father about other things though, Scott tried to figure out a way to bring up a topic he wanted to talk to his father about. He had gone through the argument himself several times since last Thursday, most recently last night after his walk on the beach with Cassie, about how it would be inappropriate to start a relationship with one of the recruits. It was just the way things were. Still, the more he made the argument for exactly that, the more he realized that somewhere along the way he had started falling for Cassie. The logical thing would be to just maintain the friendship they currently shared. Scott reasoned that if he heard the same thing from his father, then it would be easier for him to accept that and forget about his feelings. Bringing up the subject was proving to be harder than he thought it would be though.

"Is there something else you wanted to talk about, son?" Jeff asked, when there was a lull in the conversation.

"Yeah, there is," Scott said and then paused. Jeff waited patiently for his eldest to continue.

"Hypothetically speaking, if I were to get involved in a relationship with one of the recruits, what would be your reaction?"

"I'm not sure I'm following you," Jeff said, feeling a bit confused. He had never tried to dictate who his sons could date and who they couldn't. He trusted them to use good judgment when it came to that.

"Well, given that I'm usually in charge of a rescue and directly responsible for everyone out on a rescue... well, that is something the Air Force and most other military organizations would frown upon."

Jeff nodded as he knew exactly where Scott was coming from with the question now. "IR is a family organization, not a military one, and I'm not about to hold you to some standard that I'm not following myself," he told his son, thinking about his own marriage to Dianne and how it violated the Air Force's no fraternization policy. "If you wanted to pursue a relationship with one of the recruits then that would be your business. The only thing I would hold you to is making sure that

you treated that person no differently than any other member of the team while out on a rescue and the same would go for them. Doing that can make not only the job but a relationship harder, but I think you could handle it. After all, I have never seen you treat any of the recruits any differently than your brothers."

Scott nodded, partially disappointed that his father hadn't given him a different response and partially relieved to know that he had the green light to pursue a relationship if he wished. Dad's right though; it's a situation that both myself and whoever I'm involved with would have to deal with, in order to make a relationship work. Do I have the right to ask Cassie to have to deal with that?

"So what brought this about all of a sudden?" Jeff asked.

Scott shrugged. "I guess seeing Alan and Nikki and Virgil and Elise just got me thinking," he replied.

Jeff nodded, willing to leave it at that, and brought up another topic. It wasn't long before there was a knock.

"Come in," Jeff called out. Cassie stepped into the room. "What can I do for you?"

"I needed to ask you something, Mr. Tracy, but if you're busy, I can come back later," Cassie replied, a quick glance at Scott.

"No need. We were just chatting," Scott told her, starting to get to his feet.

"You don't need to leave and what I wanted to ask should only take a few moments," Cassie told him, before turning her gaze to Jeff.

"What did you need, Cassie?" Jeff asked.

"Well, I wanted to ask you if I could take a few days off to head back to New York next month. I told you about my son during the interview, and what would have been his third birthday is coming up on the twenty-second. I'd like to go and visit his grave that day if it wouldn't be too much trouble?"

I'm glad she decided to listen to my suggestion, Scott thought as his father spoke up.

"Of course you can have a few days off to go home," Jeff said, sympathetically, thinking of his own trips to Lucille's grave. "I can arrange for you to take a commercial flight from Christchurch so you'll be in the city on the 21st. Would that be early enough?"

"Yes, sir. I only need a couple of days," Cassie said, feeling a bit guilty about asking for more time off after spending Thanksgiving in Japan with her family.

Jeff looked at the calendar. "Scott, the twenty-second falls on the Friday of the week you just took off, so why don't we plan on you picking Cassie up in New York before coming back to the island."

"Sure Dad," Scott said, knowing he could always spend a day or two at the penthouse in the city if he left Colorado earlier than when they came back to the island. "Would coming back on Sunday work for you?" Scott asked looking over at Cassie.

"That would be fine," Cassie replied, planning on visiting Nathan's grave and Dr. Lindon on Friday afternoon. Though she hadn't confirmed an appointment yet, her psychiatrist had said she would keep a slot open for her the afternoon of the twenty-second.

After a few final words, Cassie said good-bye to both the Tracys and left the study, leaving Scott and Jeff alone once again.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:28:40 GMT
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Tuesday, January 26, 1:20 p.m., Tracy Island

John adjusted the straps on his backpack and grinned at Brains. "You ready?"

Brains sighed, shouldering his own pack and picking up his hard hat. "I suppose so."

This earned him a clap on the shoulder. "C'mon, it's not that bad."

One of Brains's dark eyebrows rose. "Says you. I'm really not fond of crawling around in the lava tubes."

"Just be glad it's not the wastewater plant we have to check today," John said, his tone amiable. "Only a couple hundred meters, and we're there."

"Let's just get this over with, okay?"

John shrugged. "Suit yourself."

The pair left the lab block via the vehicle repair bay, heading for what looked like -- and was -- a natural alcove, cut from the island's rock by an old lava flow. Within the alcove stood a door which was held closed by a simple electronic padlock.

"I can remember when we put the door in down here, just before Dianne and the squirts arrived," John said as Brains opened the door using a narrow key card. "Dad didn't want the kids playing hide and seek where they couldn't be easily found."

"Or where they could get into sensitive machinery." Brains pulled the door open, then paused long enough to put on his protective headgear while John did the same. "Not that the desalination plant is all that sensitive, but..." He shrugged. "Better that they don't mess around with it." Making a motion for John to precede him, he muttered, "After you."

John switched on his helmet's light and stepped through the door. They were immediately

enveloped in a gloom that moved to a velvety pitch-black as they proceeded down the irregular tunnel. It was almost tall enough for John to stand upright in spots; in others, he had to hunch over. His hard hat scraped along the ceiling more than once. The muted gurgling of water running through pipes could be heard, and in some spots, the pipes jutted out into the corridor, narrowing it effectively.

"Too bad we couldn't have just tunneled all this out to a uniform width," Brains said, shaking his head. "It would have made things easier all around, not only for our maintenance trips, but also for getting the thing in here in the first place."

John snorted. "Yeah, I'll admit, it wasn't easy putting that thing together, or laying the pipe network, and especially getting the electricity down here. But, we managed."

"I just hope this lasts a lot longer," Brains said, shaking his head. "If we had to install a new..."

"Don't say it!" John cried, turning around. "If you say it, it'll happen."

Barely seen by the light of John's helmet, Brains sighed and rolled his eyes. "John, that's just superstition."

"So I'm superstitious." John's grin shone in the light of Brains's helmet like some insane Cheshire Cat. Brains huffed, then tried to shoulder his way past.

"Let's just get this over with, okay?"

As Brains took the lead, John frowned and asked, "What bee is up your butt?"

The figure ahead of him shrugged. "I don't know."

"There has to be something; you're not usually this cranky."

Brains glanced back over his shoulder, not stopping. "Are you telling me I'm not allowed to be cranky?"

"Of course no... Brains, look out!"

There was the sharp crack of plastic on rock and Brains's head lamp went out. He uttered a soft, "Oww," and put his hand to his head. John hurried forward to help him.

"C'mon, sit down." Guiding his friend over to the rough side of the tunnel, John helped Brains remove the helmet, hunkering down beside him. "Let me see." What he saw made him grimace. "You are going to have a sizable goose egg there, Brains."

"Lovely," was the muttered reply. "I suppose you want me to see Dianne."

"Yeah, I do. First, though, let's get some ice on that." John dug around in the backpack he was carrying. "I know I have a first aid kit in here... yes!" He pulled a blue and silver pouch from the kit, and pulled on either end with a sharp snap. "There. Try that."

Brains took the pouch, which was quickly becoming cold, and put it on his forehead. "Thanks."

"No problem. I'm going to see if I can reach the villa. Mom should have everything ready..."

"I don't need a stretcher."

John glanced at his friend. "Probably couldn't get one in here if we tried... which is more of a reason to actually widen these access tunnels." He glanced around. "I mean, even if Dad and I like caving..."

Brains snorted a laugh, then sighed. "Do you want to know what's really bothering me?"

John, in the middle of adjusting the gain on his wristcomm, stopped. "Yeah, I do."

"It's..." Brains turned away, then looked down at his free hand, resting in his lap. "It's my name."

"Your name?" John frowned, puzzled. "There is absolutely nothing wrong with your name. Hell, it's my name, too."

"I know! And that's the whole problem!" Brains winced, and lowered his voice. "Nobody calls me 'John'. All they call me is 'Brains'." He made a sour face. "Or that damned alias, 'Hiram'." Looking up at John, he added, "I understand that your father didn't want any confusion at first; heck, I didn't want any either. But now..." He took in a deep breath, and let it out noisily through his nose. "When Tin-Tin introduced me to her grandfather and aunt, I told them my name was John. We've gotten close; she wants to use that. I just don't see how she can around here."

John looked thoughtful. "Hm. That is a problem. Maybe we should bring this to Dad and the rest. They might be able to brainstorm some ideas so you can actually use your name, without confusion." He paused, then put up a finger. "First, however, I'm going to call Mom."

As John put in a call to the Villa, Brains settled back and closed his eyes. The cold pack numbed the throbbing in his head, and he listened with half his attention on his friend, while the other half lingered on the memory of Tin-Tin at her grandfather's apartment.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:28:50 GMT

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Tuesday, January, Tracy Island . . .

As he took the monorail toward the villa, Vince looked over the data padd that held the preliminary plans he had made to present the SCUBA training he had in mind to Mr. Tracy. He had wanted to have most things ironed out before presenting the idea to his boss, knowing that the more prepared he was the greater the likelihood the training would be approved. The former Navy SEAL also felt that this was an opportunity to show his boss that he had made the right choice in

hiring him.

While working on the idea before dinner the day before, Vince had realized that Gordon hadn't mentioned three of the recruits when they had talked that morning -- Luke, Elise, and Will. It didn't take Vince long to realize that at this point, Luke was out of any SCUBA training because of his injuries. The other two, Vince figured he would talk to personally instead of questioning Gordon before. Still having time before Lana had dinner ready, Vince had gone to Elise's apartment to see if she was in. The blonde pilot was, and after listening to his pitch, had politely declined interest in the training. Vince sensed it was more than just a lack of interest involved, but didn't push the subject, not feeling that it was his place to pry. As Will had been invited to share dinner with the family, Vince had brought up the subject of SCUBA with the mechanic over dinner. The conversation revealed that not only was Will certified, but that he also enjoyed the activity. The two of them had made plans to go out this weekend and Vince planned on asking Gordon for some recommendations about good dive sites.

As the monorail came to a stop at the villa, Vince was satisfied that he hadn't forgotten anything. If Mr. Tracy approved the training sessions, all that would be left for him to do was to schedule the sessions, pick the dive sites and talk to Dom about joining them. Even if the nurse already had experience with night or low visibility SCUBA diving, Vince felt that the training sessions would be good for him, after the panic attack on the last rescue. It would give him a chance to work through things in a controlled situation as long as he felt ready to confront his fear again. Vince had decided to wait until after he got approval before approaching Dom as he wanted to be sure it would take place before even bringing it up to the Irishman.

Vince stepped off the monorail and headed upstairs to the lounge. Reaching the room, he knocked and then entered when Jeff bid him to do so.

"Hello, Vince. Have a seat," Jeff said, as Vince walked into the room. Vince took the seat indicated as he greeted his boss.

Jeff started the meeting by asking Vince how he and his family were settling into life on the island. They then moved to more specific items involving his training with IR. When Jeff had covered all the topics he had on his agenda, he asked Vince if there was anything he would like to discuss.

"Yes, sir, there is. It's come to my attention that a couple of the recruits could use some more training in SCUBA, more specifically in the area of low visibility or night diving," Vince said, and then began to lay out his plans for the five segment training session he had planned out.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)

Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:29:41 GMT

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Dominic peered at himself in the full-length gym mirror and frowned. He poked at his stomach with one skinny finger and frowned even more. I've got to start eating more, he thought. I've never been big but I seem to be shrinking away! Better get onto it before 'Mother Hen' notices -- though she probably already has! He gave himself another once-over, feeling more critical of his body than he had in a long time. He shook his head when he realised he was being stupid. I'm just

getting paranoid because I could be getting back into the dating game. It's been so long since I cared about how I look. I could probably use a hair cut too...

Dom turned away from the mirror and nearly jumped out of his skin when he came face-to-face with Vince. Dom squeaked, while the other man regarded him with one raised eyebrow. How on earth did I not see him in the mirror? Dom thought. Vanity, came the answer.

"Hey, Dom," Vince said, "you okay? I wasn't exactly quiet when I came in; I stubbed my toe on a loose weight. Didn't you hear me yell?"

"No..." Dom said, feeling his face darken. "I was a bit preoccupied." The Irishman coughed and changed the subject. "So, what can I do you for?"

"I'm organizing some night SCUBA training sessions and wanted to know if you wanted to participate," Vince responded. "Was thinking it might be a good experience for you giving the last rescue, if you're ready, that is."

Dom folded his arms and twisted his lips into a frown.

"You know, I think that's a good idea," he said. "Yeah, I'm ready for it. Cool! Thanks for asking."

Dom grinned, and Vince gave him a thumbs-up.

"That's great. The sessions have been approved already, so I'll get back to you with dates and times."

With that, Vince bade the Irishman goodbye. Dom watched him go, and he balled his hands into fists. I am ready, he thought, and headed to the treadmill with a renewed determination.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:30:06 GMT
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Wednesday, January 27, 7:45 a.m., Tracy Island.

The lesson was almost over when Vince came down to the pool to watch Gordon coach his son. He hung back, not wanting to disturb Aaron's concentration as he powered up and down the pool. When Aaron finally came to a stop, Gordon glanced at the stopwatch he held and nodded his head, speaking to his student. Vince figured that was the best time to make his presence known.

"Aloha, Gordon!" he called as he walked down to the poolside. "How are things going?"

"He's doing well, though he needs a little work on pacing in the middle laps. He needs to keep up a rhythm that will give him enough power for the final push." Gordon glanced at Aaron, and nodded. Aaron pulled off his cap and goggles, then went to towel off. "I want to add some strength training, using the gym here. I'll spot him, of course. Let me know when so it will fit around his

schedule."

"Sound good to me," Vince replied, his tone amiable.

"Hey, have you got everything in order for that night diving class?"

"Sure do. I talked with your father about it, and he's okayed everything. I'll be working with Callie, Cassie and Dom."

Gordon frowned a bit. "What about Elise and Will?"

"Will's already had the training, so I figured he didn't need to go through it again." Vince sighed slightly. "I did ask Elise, but she said she wasn't interested. I thought there was something going on there, maybe some reason why she didn't want to do it, but I didn't want to pry, y'know?"

"Yeah, I know. It's odd, though..." Gordon looked thoughtful, then grinned as Aaron came over, towel around his neck. "Well, I'll see you tomorrow, Aaron. I've talked to your dad about the strength training; we'll get that set up, too. By the time Worlds rolls around, you'll be sick of seeing my face!"

"I doubt that," Aaron said, grinning in response.

"C'mon, son. Your mother's getting breakfast around. Aloha, Gordon!"

"Aloha right back atcha!"

The Crenshaws departed, and Gordon went up to the Villa. He'd already done his own laps, and was ready to eat.

As he sat at the breakfast table, he asked, "Hey, Virge?"

A still-sleepy Virgil replied, "Yeah, Gords?"

"You and Elise got something planned for next Tuesday?"

Virgil thought for a moment, then shook his head. "Nothing I know of. Why?"

Gordon shrugged. "Just checking." He took a bite of the fresh Farmer's Scramble on his plate and chewed before elucidating. "Vince is going to do some night-dive training, and Elise declined his invitation. Thought maybe there was a conflict."

"Ah, okay." Virgil took a sip of coffee. "No conflict as far as know."

"Night dive training sounds like a good idea," Scott said, his tone approving. "The recruits will find it helpful. I know I sure did, when we rescued Brains at Lake Anasta."

Brains nodded, calling attention to himself and the bruised, glued-together gash on his forehead. "Me, too, Scott. I was glad you had that training!"

"Which reminds me," Gordon said as he finished clearing his plate. "The hydrostatic hoist could use a good once over, and maybe some new cable. I'll see to it while I'm thinking about it." He rose from the table, taking his plate to the autowasher. On the way out, he stopped to kiss Emily, "Great breakfast, Grandma." Then Lisa, "You, too, Grandma K." He ran into Jenny, who was bringing another pitcher of juice to the table, and gave her a kiss on the cheek. "Thanks, Jenny!" She stared after him, startled.

Kyrano, who had another plate of biscuits in his hands, stopped long enough to put up a finger. "You will not kiss me, Gordon."

"Aw, Kyrano!" Gordon wailed.

"No."

With an exaggerated sigh, Gordon pouted. "Oh, all right. But you're no fun!"

"Gordon." The warning came from the head of the table.

The son in question grinned, and swooped in to kiss Cherie on the cheek, despite her loud, "Eww! Gordon!"

"Have a good day, everyone!" he called, smirking as he left.

Jeff and Dianne exchanged glances. "What do you think, love?" he asked. "Is it going to be one of those days?"

Whistling, Gordon made his way down to Thunderbird Two's hangar. He sauntered down to Four's pod, passing some of the auxiliary vehicles as he did so. Hearing Gordon's whistle, a red-haired head popped out of the DOMO. "Hey, Gordon! How goes it?"

"Hey, Will!" Gordon detoured over to where Will was working. "How's your day been so far?"

"Kinda early to tell, actually, but it looks to be a busy one." Will gestured toward Pod Five. "We're workin' on my idea of utilizing as much pod space as possible by liftin' some of the smaller vehicles up nearer the catwalk. We're still tryin' to decide just which vehicles can be defined as 'smaller'."

"Sounds great!" Gordon glanced around as if looking for something. "Hey, is Elise involved in this? Seeing as she's one of Thunderbird Two's pilots?"

"Yep, she is. She should be comin' down soon to give us her opinions." Will grinned. "So should Virgil. I expect sparks'll fly; they don't always see eye-to-eye when it comes to Thunderbird Two."

"If she gets down here before Virgil does, can you detour her my way? I'll be in Pod Four, looking over some of our equipment there." Gordon indicated with his hands where he was going. "I've got a question to ask her; I won't keep her long."

"Sure, no problem, Gordon! I'll steer her your way."

"Thanks, Will!" With that, Gordon headed over to Pod Four and opened it up. Using his key code, he unlocked the equipment lockers and pulled out the hydrostatic hoist. The first time they'd used it, the rope broke while hauling a heavy marble column off Brains during their Anasta trip. He was displeased with the type of rope they'd used; he'd always thought that the cotton clothesline was too flimsy. But neither Brains nor Jeff had wanted to use a cable that could rust, or a plastic that could stretch. He had finally decided on his own to use a hemp rope, the kind that mariners had been using for centuries. It was just figuring out what thickness to use that had been eluding him. The hemp tended to take on water quickly and could weigh down the balloon so it wouldn't lift anything.

"Who came up with the idea of using a balloon to hoist heavy stuff underwater, anyway?" he grumbled under his breath. "There has to be something better."

A knock reverberated through the cavernous pod, and Gordon turned to see Elise approaching from the open pod door. She was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, but with work boots.

"Hi, Gordon!" she said, smiling. "How are you? Haven't seen you in a while."

"I'm good. You?"

She gave him a one-shouldered shrug. "I'm doing okay. Will said you wanted to see me."

"Yeah." Gordon put his rope down and leaned against the pod's inner wall. "I was talking to Vince today about the night-dive classes he's giving. He said you declined his offer, and I was wondering what was going on there."

Elise sighed. "I dunno. It was kind of out of the blue, and I was sort of taken off-guard, if you know what I mean." She held out her hands. "I know I'm making progress on getting over my hydrophobia, but... I barely know the guy! The idea of diving in the dark with a stranger... it gave me the shivers."

"Hm." Gordon gave her a thoughtful glance. "Would it be helpful if I were there? If I were the one teaching you?"

She glanced downward and frowned, a thoughtful expression. "I don't know. Maybe." Looking back up at Gordon, she asked, "Could I just... watch? Listen to his instructions and maybe decide later if I want to dive?"

"I would think so. The first dives are in the pool, y'know." Gordon's tone was sympathetic. "I really think you could do it, but I'm not going to pressure you to do anything you're not ready for."

"That's just it; I don't know if I'm ready or not. Maybe if I see the others doing it..." She shook her head. "Does he know about my... problem?"

Gordon shook his head. "No, he doesn't, and I wasn't going to tell him, either. I figured it was better coming from you."

Elise screwed up her face, looking rueful. "You would tell me that! Do you know how hard to admit to something that people think is a silly fear, one where they say you're being overly dramatic?"

"I know how hard it is to tell people you're in pain when they think you should have 'gotten over it' by now," Gordon replied, keeping his tone even. "Listen, I think it would be a good idea for you to -- at the very least -- sit in on the class. You'll learn from it, and if you're up to diving, then you can dive. If not, you and I can work on it together later. And you should be the one to tell him about your history. Only you can describe how you feel about water and diving."

There was a long pause, and Elise gave him an obstinate glare. He waggled his eyebrows at her, and she broke down into a reluctant chuckle.

"You are a pain in the butt, you know that?" she said, her tone a mixture of fondness and exasperation.

"Yeah, but you love me anyway, don't you?" He grinned, putting on as wide-eyed and innocent a look as he was capable of.

"I don't know if 'love' is the appropriate word here..."

When he'd finished chortling, Elise asked, "So, who's going to be there... besides Vince, that is."

"Let's see." Gordon gazed up as if looking for inspiration in the curved ceiling. "I think he said Callie, Cassie, and Dom were participating."

She glanced out the pod door. "No Will?"

Gordon shook his head. "Nope. Vince checked with him. He's already had the training."

"Ah, I see. Then what about Luke?" she asked.

Gordon was surprised. "What about him?"

"Was he even invited?" Elise folded her arms, and sounded peeved.

Shrugging, Gordon replied, "I don't know. I don't think so. He's still on light duty, and really can't dive until he's cleared by Mom."

"Yeah, but he should have at least been invited to this thing. He's a member of the team, right? And he could watch with me, right?" She tossed her head, letting her blonde ponytail fly. "We need to make sure he still feels like he belongs here as part of the team, and this is one way to do it."

Gordon fingered his chin. "Hm. Never thought about him watching the training. I guess it would be a good idea."

Grinning, Elise nodded. "I agree! So, who's going to ask him?"

"How about you mention it to him, and I'll poke Vince. I'll let him know you're both coming... but you still have to tell him about why you said no in the first place."

"Okay. I can deal with that."

"Hey, Elise!"

Both of them turned to see Virgil, Brains, and Will in the pod door. "If you're finished with her, Gordon?" Virgil said, a touch of impatience in his voice.

Gordon rubbed the back of his neck. "Yeah, I think we're finished. Sorry it took so long."

"Me, too. I'll be right with you, guys." She leaned in to give Gordon a peck on the cheek. "Thanks, Gordon. I'll talk to you later."

Looking heavenward, Gordon folded his hands and did his best cartoon embarrassment impression. "Aww, shucks!" he said in a goofy voice.

Elise snorted a laugh, then joined the small knot of men at the pod entrance. Once they were gone, Gordon activated his watch.

"Gordon to Vince."

Vince, who was heading down to Thunderbird Two's hangar from the Cliff House, responded. "Vince here. What's up, Gordon?"

"Hey, Vince. You're going to have a couple of observers..."

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:30:25 GMT
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Wednesday, January 30, 2069, 11 a.m. (Tracy Island time), somewhere over the Pacific, en route to Los Angeles.

"So," John ventured, keeping his eyes ahead as he flew.

Tin-Tin glanced over at him, curious, then asked, "Yes?"

Clearing his throat, John continued. "Brains and I had a little talk the other day."

"So, I heard." Tin-Tin's tone was dry and full of good humor, which turned more serious when she added, "I'm very glad you were there when he got hurt."

"Hmph," John snorted. "He probably wouldn't have been hurt if we hadn't been talking so much."

There was a silence, which John broke. "In any case, he says you want to start using his given name."

"Yes, I do." Tin-Tin nodded. "He deserves it, really. He's had that awful Hackenbacker handle, and he's been called 'Brains' nearly all his life. Nobody sees him as anything but a geek, and he's so much more." She folded her arms. "That old adage about a rose under another name... names are important. He deserves respect, and neither his alias nor his nickname give him any." Shaking her head and frowning, she huffed out an exasperated sigh. "I don't know if I'm even making any sense!"

"You are, Tin-Tin; you are!" John quickly expostulated. "I'll admit I hadn't given much thought to the matter, but 'John Grayson' is far more dignified than 'Hiram Hackenbacker' or even 'Brains'." He made a face. "I have no idea what Dad was thinking with 'Hackenbacker'."

She smiled. "I wish I knew his reasoning, too." A pause, then she asked, "Does this mean I... we... have your support in this?"

"Of course!" John nodded, careful not to dislodge his headset. "I'm not sure how well it would go over with the older members of the family, though. In the lab, sure; that'll work fine. I suggest that you start your campaign with the family when I'm topside next month. There will be less confusion then." He paused, then added, "You know, this is going to go over better if Brai... I mean, John talks to the family himself."

"I know." Tin-Tin took a quick glance at the jet's controls. "And he will. I just don't know what to do when you're back on Earth. You've had the name for so long..."

He laughed, long and hard. "Oh, Tin-Tin, if you want to get technical, we've probably had the name for the same length of time!"

"Oh, John!" Tin-Tin reached out to smack him on the arm. "Of course you haven't!"

"Ouch! Dangerous woman!" He grinned and rubbed his arm with unnecessary vigor. Shaking his head, he calmed and became serious. "I don't understand what you mean here, Tin-Tin."

"What I mean, John Tracy, is that my John has no idea what his birth parents named him. He was 'John Doe' from the time he was orphaned. All his adopted parents did was change his last name."

"Still, that's likely no more than a year less than I have," John replied, reaching out to tweak a control. "This is TRAC 002, asking for a position check."

The automated satellite system responded, and John brought the jet back onto its proper bearing. "Seriously, Tin-Tin, we both have legitimate claim to the name. It'll just be a matter of getting used to knowing that I'm not always being called when someone hollers, 'John!'." He chuckled. "I expect we'll both be answering to the name for a while; it goes with the territory."

Tin-Tin gave him a radiant smile. "Thank you, John, for supporting us on this."

"You're welcome, Tin-Tin." He paused, then gave her a sly look. "I will add one string to it, though."

Disconcerted she jerked in her seat, her eyes wide. "A string? Oh, John!"

"Yes, a just a small string." He held his forefinger and thumb up, with a half-inch or less between them to indicate how small. "I get to be best man at the wedding."

Tin-Tin relaxed with a chuckle. "Wedding? Oh, John, that's not going to be for a long time yet... if ever." She paused, studying him with a calculating eye. "Unless you know something..."

He shook his head, trying to project an air of innocence. "Nope. Not a thing. I know nothing. Absolutely nothing."

"Hmm." She continued to eye him suspiciously, until a call came from the cabin behind him.

"Hey, could either of you use a change of scenery?" Drew said through the intercom. "I'm getting a bit antsy back here."

"Please! Let him come up!" Maggie said, with a pleading tone. "I want a nap and he won't stay still!"

Pilot and co-pilot exchanged glances. "I'll go back," Tin-Tin said, unfastening her straps. "I'd like to have some girl talk with Maggie anyway. Learn some more about my new stepmother."

"Okay, Tin-Tin."

Within a few moments, the exchange was made and Drew was settling down into the seat beside John. He offered a bottle of cold water that he'd brought up with him.

"Thanks, Uncle Drew," John said as he took the bottle and logged Drew in as co-pilot. "I was on the cusp of getting into some trouble up here."

"Trouble? You? With my new step-niece?" Drew grinned. "How could that happen?"

"Well," John drawled. "It's like this..."

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:30:36 GMT
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Virgil stuck his head in his father's office. "Hey, Dad."

Jeff looked up. "Hello, Virgil."

He walked in and sat down across from the desk. "Drew and Maggie must be glad to be headed home. This wasn't exactly a vacation!"

"No, that's for sure!" Jeff shook his head and chuckled. "It'll probably be a while before they feel like visiting again."

"I don't blame them!" He was quiet a moment. "Dad, there's something I want to talk to you about."

"Sure, son, what's up?"

Virgil took a deep breath. "Well, by now you've noticed that Elise and I are... together."

Jeff looked up at him. "I did," he said cautiously.

"Well, while you were gone, she came here for dinner." Virgil went on to explain the events that occurred that night. "We're so used to being in each other's pockets all the time, that it never even occurred to anyone that maybe we wanted to be alone for a bit." He held up his hand. "I'm not saying we're going to do anything inappropriate, but it would be nice to watch a movie in peace once in a while. I wouldn't have even minded if they wanted to watch with us." He got up and paced. "I want her to feel comfortable here, in my home. Dad, she's important to me. I don't want her or I feel like we're sneaking around."

Jeff smiled. "First you, then Gordon; you boys are growing up."

"Dad..."

Jeff laughed. "I understand what you're saying, son, really I do. I'll talk to your brothers."

"I don't want to make a big deal out of this."

"You aren't. Like you said earlier, we're not used to it being anyone other than ourselves here. Things change and we all have to change with them."

Virgil looked relieved. "Thanks, Dad. I didn't want you to think this was just a ploy to get her into my bed."

Jeff sent his son a pained look. "Virgil, please."

He laughed and got to his feet. "I'll let you get back to what you were doing." He started out the door then turned. "I nearly forgot! Have you seen the television?"

Jeff looked puzzled. "Not really, why?"

"What I meant was, have you seen the score of the Super Bowl?"

"No, I haven't. Did the Chiefs win?"

Virgil shook his head. "We have no idea. No one's watched but we did tape it. And we've been staying away from the live feeds so we don't know the outcome. Scott and I thought we could get everyone together on Sunday for a barbeque and watch."

"Sounds like a plan," Jeff responded.

"Great! See you at dinner!"

Jeff watched him leave. His gaze fell to the picture on his desk. It showed the five boys when they were much younger. Alan couldn't have been more than ten. He picked it up and smiled. "Our little boys aren't so little anymore, are they, Lucy?" He looked at it a moment, then placed the picture back down and got back to work.

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:31:27 GMT
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Thursday, January, 31st . . .

As Luke related the procedure for the question asked, Cassie listened as she checked the answer against both the answer on the lap top(one word) in front of her and her own knowledge. She had offered to help her friend study for the test to finish his paramedic training, and Luke had accepted. The two of them had been reviewing the material for about the last forty-five minutes, and Luke had gotten a majority of the questions asked, right.

"Correct," Cassie replied, as Luke finished giving his answer. She scanned the course material on the screen before her. Finding a question that set up a scenario and gave the signs and symptoms that a fictitious patient was presenting, she read that one out loud. "Upon finishing your evaluation of the patient, what steps do you take?"

Luke pondered the scenario for a few moments before answering. His response was correct with the exception of one thing that was overlooked. Cassie pointed out the missed step before continuing with another question. Three questions later, Luke slowly pushed his chair back from the table.

"Let's stop here. I think I've done about all the studying I could do for right now."

"Okay," Cassie said, sliding the laptop across the table to its owner.

"Do you want something to drink?" Luke asked, as he walked toward the refrigerator to get something for himself.

"Water is fine, thanks. How close are you to getting your certification again?"

"Nearly there. I just have to take the test and put in a few more hours of hands on. I plan on talking to Dr. Tracy about that," he replied.

"Sounds like you've got it all planned out. When you finally do finish, it will be good to have someone else with medical training while out on the rescues. Especially now with Nikki away at

school."

"I've been wanting to complete the course work for awhile now but I'd been so busy," Luke responded, returning to the table with a bottle of water, which he handed to Cassie. "Now seemed like a good time to work on it."

"Well, I'll be happy to help out any way I can. Let me know if you want to do another study session like this," Cassie told him, as Luke sat back down across from her. The question of how he was doing was right on the tip of her tongue, but she hesitated in asking it that directly, figuring it was a question Luke was probably getting sick of asking. "So, how are you adjusting to island life again?" she asked, hoping the more indirect phrasing would be better received.

He shrugged and took a drink from his water bottle. "OK, I guess. What have you been up to? I haven't seen you around much."

It was Cassie's turn to shrug, disappointed the question hadn't gotten more information from him. "I've been trying to think through some things along with work," she told him. She wasn't about to tell him about what was going on with Nathan right now. Like she had told Scott, Luke was dealing with his own issues right now and she wasn't going to drop that on him. "We're testing the dicetyline cannon on Friday, and I've been trying to study up on the fire codes in place at the TI offices in New York so I'm ready if the new city codes get passed. Vince is going to be doing some night SCUBA training in the next couple of weeks, too. Speaking of Vince, I met up with him on his way over here when I left last Saturday. Have you met the rest of his family yet?"

Luke shook his head. "No. I've seen the little girl playing with Josh but I haven't met them." He stacked his books and shut the laptop. "SCUBA, huh? That ought to be interesting. I'll be looking forward to it. Get me a chance to get out of here and actually be part of the team again." He smiled. "I know I can't participate in the actual diving aspect, but I can go to the class and learn the basics. When does it start?"

"Next Tuesday actually. Vince has an afternoon dive planned and then a session at the pool at nine that night. There are three more dives planned after that. One thing is for sure, Vince doesn't waste time. Once he gets an idea he dives into it head first, so to say," Cassie said, smiling slightly at her play on words.

Luke laughed. "Great! I'll look forward to it. Who else will be there? The usual suspects?"

"Well, Callie's participating for sure, though Vince didn't mention who else was," Cassie responded, even as she tried to remember whose names had been in the 'To' section of the email she had received from the Vince earlier that afternoon. "Dom also got a copy of the email from Vince so I assume he'll be joining us. Other than that, guess I'll wait and see who else will be there. Honestly, I'm a little nervous. Vince was a SEAL; for all I know he's a worse taskmaster than Scott."

"He can't be that bad. Does he have a son, too? A swimmer? I've seen him with Gordon."

"Yeah, Aaron. The kid is good. Decent surfer too from what I've seen. The two of them tried to wrangle both Elise and me into surfing," Cassie commented, with a shake of her head. She looked

down at her watch. "No wonder I'm getting hungry," she commented. "Made any plans for dinner yet?" she asked, looking back up at Luke.

He shook his head. "Just frozen pizza. It's the chef's night off."

Cassie smiled, as she stood up. "Well, does baked ziti sound better than frozen pizza? If it does, give me about forty-five minutes and come on over."

"It sounds great, thanks! I'll take the mutt for a quick walk then be there." She waved and left through the French doors. Luke opened the door to the bedroom and Rommel came trotting out. "Hey, boy; let's go for a quick walk. I've got dinner plans."

Study time written by lillehafrue and starrynebula

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:31:38 GMT
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Thursday, January 31, 2069, 5:45 p.m., Tracy Island

"Virgil, can you help me? I don't seem to be getting the wire on tight enough." Cherie paused in what she was doing, and waited as her brother finished the canvas he was working on.

"Let me see. Hm. Did you double-check your orientation?" He turned the square canvas over and winced. "Oops."

The girl groaned. "Now I have to take off the other loop!" She flopped down on the studio floor. Virgil waited until she was seated before giving her the canvas. "Whose idea was this anyway?"

"I think it was yours, sis," Virgil replied with a grin. "C'mon. Let's get these two done and then have dinner, then finish either this evening or tomorrow after school."

"Then we can hang it tomorrow and I can get paid!" With a sigh, she picked up a pair of pliers and began to unscrew the offending loop. "I hope Miss Cassie likes this. It's been... I don't have the words for everything it's been."

"A learning experience?" Virgil suggested.

"Yeah, that... but..."

"An interesting addition to your portfolio?"

"I guess, once I take some pictures of it, but that's not quite..."

"I know, a lot of fun!" Virgil's grin grew wider.

Cherie gave him a sour look. "More like a great, big, wall-sized pain in the butt!"

He laughed, then reached out and squeezed her shoulder. "You'll feel better about it when all these canvases are on the wall and you see the finished project. Promise."

She took a deep breath in through her nose, and huffed it out in a heavy sigh. "I guess so. But I don't think I'm cut out to be a mural painter after all."

The loop came out, and Cherie turned the canvas, making sure it was oriented properly. She took a tape measure and used it to measure out how far down the loop should go. "Last one, and then supper," she muttered. "I can hardly wait."

Subject: Re: Love (Among Other Things)
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Wed, 25 Jul 2012 22:32:23 GMT
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This ends our very short
Chapter 15 - Love (Among Other Things)
