
Subject: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 04:17:40 GMT

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It is April, and life on Tracy Island has not been dull. One operative was injured, and another rekindled an old love -- leading both to leave the island and International Rescue. Birthdays have been celebrated, rescues completed with varying levels of success, and though there are emotional gaps with the loss of personnel, they are slowly being closed and healed. However, Jeff must now ponder a serious question: is his idea of bringing in new recruits worth the cost? His answer will affect how International Rescue continues to function, should it weather what is coming its way.

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 04:21:54 GMT

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Monday, April 1, 2069, 4 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff Tracy was nervous.

Not that he'd never been nervous before, but the sensation had happened so infrequently during the past few years, he could hardly recognize it when it popped up. This time, however, he knew immediately what it was.

He fingered the connect button on his wrist-comm. "Jeff Tracy to Will. How are things going in the boat pen?"

Will Abbott locked the winch he had been using before he stopped to return the call. "It's slow goin', Mr. Tracy, but I'll get the smaller boats out of the water before lowerin' the door."

"Good man," Jeff replied. The new door over the entrance to the cavernous boat pen was a safety precaution put in after the tsunami last year. Hopefully, this time they had enough warning and wouldn't lose any craft.

"To be honest, Mr. Tracy, I'm glad we don't have that sea plane down here anymore," Will admitted. "That would've been a bear to try and secure."

"I agree." Jeff shook his head. It had been less than a month since Vince Crenshaw lost an eye in an auto accident on his way home from church, and less than that since he had tendered his resignation. He promptly moved his family to New Zealand, taking up the position that was supposed to be his cover story. Now he, his wife and children, were gone, and Jeff was looking at hiring yet another aquanaut -- something he was loath to do. He shook his head, clearing his thoughts, and said, "Keep at it, Will. The clock is ticking."

"Yes, sir!" came the reply. "Abbott, out!"

"Sounds like Will has things under control."

Jeff glanced to the other team member in the room, Callie Spencer. "Sounds like it, doesn't it?"

Callie nodded. "I'm glad the rescue is over now, and the rest of the team is coming home. Do you think they'll get here before that typhoon hits?"

"Well, let's find out." Jeff crossed to his desk, and the multi-screen computer that sat on it. One of the pictures was of Thunderbird Five, and its current space monitor, Alan.

"What's the latest on the typhoon, Alan?"

Alan turned from the screens he had been monitoring. He looked grim, and not only because of the current situation. "Dad, it's still on track straight for the island and it's approximately two-and-a-half hours out."

"Does it look like the Thunderbirds will make it home in time?"

Alan nodded. "Scott will. Not so sure about Virgil, but if he keeps up his speed and heading, he should just make it."

Jeff blew out a deep breath. "Hopefully, we'll everything battened down in time..." Reflexively, he glanced up and out the wide windows to the balcony... and saw nothing. The gray metal storm shields were already down across the window. Turning back to Alan, he said, "Keep an eye on things up there, son. Let me know if there are any changes in their ETAs."

"F-A-B, Dad. Thunderbird Five on standby."

"Thanks, Mr. Tracy, for bringing me down early," Callie said, smiling. "I wouldn't have minded staying up there during the storm, but I'm thankful Alan insisted he go up early."

"You're welcome, Callie." Jeff sounded a bit distracted. He knew the real reason for Alan's abrupt desire for the privacy of the satellite: the break-up between him and his medical-student girlfriend, Nikki Jackson. "I'm going to check in with John and Gordon now; see how they're doing in the hangars." Touching his watch, Jeff called, "Jeff to Gordon. How are you two doing down there?"

In Thunderbird Two's cavernous hangar, Gordon waited until his brother, John, had maneuvered the Laser Truck onto a platform before replying. "Gordon here, Dad. We're winching up the last of the small vehicles." As he spoke, John climbed down from the cockpit, and activated the clamps that would keep the truck in place. Then he headed toward the pod's internal winch controls. This new system, put in place only recently, allowed the pods to carry more equipment. In this case, it would provide extra protection against any possible hangar flooding.

"How many more to move?" Jeff asked.

Gordon shot a look at his brother, who held up four fingers. "Four, Dad. The Jodrell, the Mobile Crane, and the Recovery vehicles."

"Sounds like you'll have that ready to go," Jeff said, sounding relieved.

"Yup!" Gordon said, sounding cheerful. "Have we battened all the hatches yet?"

Jeff chuckled. "Just about. Kyrano and Lisa are taking care of shuttering up the Round House. The Cliff house dome is engaged. And Tin-Tin is finishing up diagnostics on the other internal systems."

"And Grandma?" Gordon asked.

"Making dinner. It should be done by the time the crew gets home." Jeff smiled widely. "Then we can all ride out this storm together."

xxxx

The Pernons were your typical American tourists, and they were looking forward to their day at Ekka Amusement Park outside of Brisbane. The day wasn't too cool for autumn down under, and it made their visit even more enjoyable.

"Hey, Dad." Twelve-year-old Bobby indicated a brightly painted tower that rose up not far from where they stood. "What is that?"

His father, James, pulled out the park map. "That's the... Bonzer Bomber." He chuckled. "Weird names they have for these things." Squinting closer at the map, he looked surprised. "Hm. Sounds like this one's a crowd-pleaser. It's been here for over fifty years."

"Looks like fun to me!" Bobby said, grinning.

"Me, too!" James turned to his wife. "What do you think, Alice?"

Alice gave it a speculative look, then smiled. "It looks like fun to me three! Let's just hope the lines aren't too long."

"Well, then," James said, linking arms with his wife. "Let's go!"

After a patient 15 minutes, the family was seated, and firmly held in by safety harnesses. As the ride started, Bobby yelled, "Yahoo! Here we go!" Alice gripped James's hand as they rose steadily hundreds of feet into the air. At the top of the tower, the seats -- groups of four spaced facing out from each side of the tower's walls -- clicked into place. The Pernons held their collective breath, anticipating the moment when they would free-fall a hundred feet toward the ground!

Before they could take that plunge, the tower shook and vibrated, making the riders on all four sides scream. One of them shouted, "Earthquake!" and below, the panicked crowds milled around like ants when their hill was kicked. Many made for the exits, threatening to trample fellow visitors underfoot. Other rides stopped midway, or were brought to a halt, and park workers were hard pressed to bring the chaos under control for an organized evacuation.

At the controls of the Bonzer Bomber, however, that small quake had other consequences. "The emergency release isn't working," David Bard, the ride operator radioed to his supervisor. "The magnetic brakes are offline, too."

On the top of the Bomber, there was shouted discussion about the quake, with the natives explaining to the tourists about how infrequent they were. "The safeties will have us down soon," one of them said, "Just hang on, mates!"

But as time went by and there was no release, James furrowed his eyebrows. "Something must've gone wrong with the ride. I think we're stuck up here."

Bobby looked down to the ground and gulped. "Dad, do you think this thing'll collapse?"

"No, no, of course not," James answered, trying his best to keep his calm. In the back of his mind, though, he couldn't help but think of that possibility.

"What do you mean, the controls are fused?" David's immediate supervisor, Elle Armstrong, had arrived to take over. "The safety features..."

"All the controls are fused," explained maintenance engineer Tom Pascal, coming out from under the control panel. He brushed off his dark hands as he stood. "Safety features aren't working and won't work. With a ride this old, it was only a matter of time. We'll have to find another way to get those passengers down before any aftershocks bring them down the hard way."

Elle shook her head. "The rest of the park is being evacuated; even a little shake like that means other rides have been compromised. Hopefully we won't have the same trouble with any of them!" She let out a frustrated huff. "I'll round up the rest of the engineering crew and see what they can come up with. In the meanwhile, go through the spare parts and see if you can find something that we can jury-rig. We have to get those people down!"

Up on Thunderbird Five, Alan kept an eye on the weather screen, and an ear to the transmissions. Even so, he couldn't keep from dwelling on the last few weeks. Nikki, his girlfriend and former team member, hadn't had much time for him because of her medical studies, and frankly, he was tired of it. They'd had a knock-down, drag-out row that had resulted in her throwing him out and breaking up with him. He had been nursing his wounded ego all week, and had jumped at the chance to get away from his family's near-constant advice -- mostly of the "suck it up and apologize" variety.

He pulled up short as the system picked up a news story with the word "rescue" in it. It was from an Australian TV station. "A small earthquake has struck just offshore," said news anchor Evelyn Gooles. "The magnitude is only 5.1, and so far there haven't been reports of any damage."

Gooles paused, glancing down at her laptop computer. "Wait a moment, please. I'm receiving some breaking news here." After reading it carefully, she said, "We have a report that Ekka Amusement Park has sustained some damage. The park is evacuating all visitors, but the popular Bonzer Bomber ride at Ekka Amusement Park is stuck. Sixteen people have been stranded at the top of a 52 meters tall tower." She paused again, then added, "This story is only now developing, and we'll give you more details as soon as we can get them."

Alan shook his head. "Do I tell Dad? Or wait for them to call us?" He shook head. "Dad's not gonna like it, but if they call after the Thunderbirds are home, he's not gonna like sending them out again either." He blew out a breath. "I'll tell him, and let him make the call."

Toggling a switch, he said, "Base from Thunderbird Five. Come in, Base...."

Beginnings by Tikatu and TracyFan4Ever

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 04:24:12 GMT

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Luke yawned as he leaned back into his chair in Thunderbird Two's cockpit. At his feet, Rommel lay snoring, the dog's orange vest covered in dust. They were just coming back from an arduous mine rescue in China. None of the team had been physically hurt, but the number of casualties left plenty of wounds in their psyches.

Dianne, Dominic and Brains were down in Thunderbird Seven, going over data and doing a general clean up.

Virgil and Elise sat in front of him, talking quietly and Luke closed his eyes, hoping for a short nap before getting back to Tracy Island. This was his first rescue since his injury back in November and he was slightly disappointed in how tired and achy he felt. He considered going down to Seven and asking Dianne for some pain killers, but decided he was too comfortable to move. We're almost home, he thought to himself. I'll get some then.

Virgil manned the controls of his ship, keeping one eye on the instruments and the other on the sky in front of him. "I don't like the looks of this storm," he said.

Elise nodded in agreement. "It's moved faster than they predicted."

"I hope we can still--"

"Thunderbird Five calling Thunderbird Two. Van Gogh, do you copy?"

"I copy, Indy, what's up?"

"I've been listening to the radio. There's been an earthquake outside of Brisbane. Apparently, there's an amusement park in trouble. Some of the rides are collapsed and people are trapped." Alan told them.

Virgil glanced over at Elise. Behind him, he heard Luke sit up and whisper to Elise. "What's going on?"

She shook her head and turned her attention back to the radio. "Do they want us to respond?" she

asked.

"Negative, Frankie." There was a pause. "It sounds like mass confusion down there. They could use our help." Alan's tone was matter of fact.

Elise glanced at Luke then turned to Virgil. "We have to go."

"I know." He sighed then squared his shoulders. "Ladies and Gentlemen, the captain regrets to inform you that we will be making an unscheduled stop. Please fasten your seat-belts and make sure your tray tables are in their upright and locked position."

Alan chuckled. "I'll let the Boss know. Good luck!"

response by lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 04:28:50 GMT

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"Diagnostic complete."

At the sound of the metallic sounding voice, Tin-Tin turned toward the middle console. She clucked her tongue, shaking her head slightly. "I don't know why Bra...", she caught herself, and blushed, "... John can't upgrade these to something that sounds more human than Braman."

Reaching across, she checked to see that the diagnostic files were saved, glancing quickly over the read-outs to see that all was normal. It was; the desalination plant was working within normal parameters.

"Well, three down, two to go!" Tin-Tin said as she put the console on station-keeping. She had diagnostics running on the power plant, and was setting up those for the communications systems. The waste treatment plant had already finished its internal assessment, and came back with a clean bill of health. So had the master computer, the very first of the systems she checked.

A frown creased her brows as she noticed a flashing red light on the power plant console. Starting the communications diagnostics, she hurried over. Her frown deepened as she scanned the readings that had been recorded.

"A power fluctuation?" She shook her head, then reset the program, making note of the data she'd been given. "I hope it's just a fluke or some momentary aberration."

While the programs ran, she busied herself with cleaning work benches and making notes on equipment that needed restocking. When she heard, "Diagnostic Complete" in that grating tone, she glanced over to see which console was finished. The communications lights were green across the board, but the power plant once again had a stubborn red light.

Huffing out a breath, she finished the comm system's program off, dumping the data to the main

computer, then returned to her little mystery. Shaking her head, she muttered to herself, "I guess I'd better go look myself."

A few minutes later, she was dressed and hurrying up the steps to the plant, equipment hanging from a belt. It wasn't too far up the monorail line from the lab itself, and though she had a car available, she decided to hoof it. The power plant itself was well-shielded; roaming around in the cavern that held it was perfectly safe. Even short visits to the interior of the power block didn't produce enough radiation to be considered harmful. Still, she had thought, better safe than sorry, and put on a radiation-proof suit.

Once inside the cavern, she closed her eyes and listened carefully. Like Brains, she knew every sound the island's infrastructure was supposed to make; often a deviation in any of it would herald some sort of internal fault. As she let the throbbing hum of the power plant fill her ears, she caught a bit of a skip in the rhythm of the hum. After the skip turned up again, she nodded, and pulled up the hood on her suit. Keying in her entry code and putting her hand on the scanner, she waited long enough to draw on her gloves before giving a final command for the door to cycle open. Then she stepped inside.

Lights turned on in the plant as she stepped into the control room. A quick glance at the main console told her the levels of radiation that filled the air weren't any higher than normal. She moved to the fuel mix board, where several red lights shone.

"Hm. This shouldn't be happening," she muttered, her breath threatening to mist up the interior of her hood. "The intermix is off... when did we switch tanks? Ah, earlier this morning... still, there's something wrong with the fuel if these readings are correct. The way things are going it won't be long before..."

Abruptly, the lights went out. The background humming died away. She stood perfectly still in the oppressive dark before finishing her sentence.

"... the plant goes into failsafe mode and shuts down."

Oops! by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 04:30:42 GMT

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Jeff sat intently at his desk as he listened carefully to the transmissions of the rescue at Ekka Amusement Park in Australia.

Callie was also listening to the rescue efforts, but she looked at the storm shutters covering the windows.

"Worried about the typhoon?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. Waiting for this thing to arrive is driving me nuts." She looked at him and added, "This'll

be the first time I've had to face a direct impact from a tropical system."

"You didn't have to deal with them growing up in Opp?"

"I had indirect impacts from the outer bands on several occasions."

Jeff said, "What was the worst damage you had from any system there?"

"I'd say the flooding damage from the torrential rains. Some parts of Opp were under ten feet of water after one storm rolled through."

"Well, hopefully things won't end up too badly for us."

Callie looked up at the comms panel as voices from the rescue filtered through.

"We'll have to get the people on the Bonzer Bomber off with individual rescue cables," Virgil said. "They're just too high to climb down safely."

"F-A-B, Van Gogh," said Scott.

As the two listened in on the efforts of the others, Jeff changed the subject. "Let me ask you something, Callie. Have you ever been stuck on an amusement park ride?"

Shaking her head, she answered, "I'm happy to say no. I almost got stuck on a steamboat, though."

Jeff's eyes widened. "What do you mean by almost?"

"When I was a kid, my family and I would go up to Jubilee CityFest in Montgomery. One of the most popular rides is on the Harriet II steamboat near the Riverfront Amphitheatre next to the Alabama River."

"A real working steamboat?"

"That's right, sir. Anyway, our family rode on it for an hour-and-a-half and went up and down the river. We had no problems when the boat was going. When the next group of passengers got on board, the ship lost power, leaving all those passengers stranded in the middle of the river."

Jeff shook his head. "Did anyone get hurt?"

"Thankfully, no. The weather was clear, the water was calm, and a couple of tugboats came by to tow the Harriet II back to the port. Needless to say, the steamboat rides were called off for the remainder of the weekend."

"That's good to know," Jeff chuckled. "It's too bad this time there's a pending typhoon while many are out on that rescue in Australia."

Callie sighed. "It would be nice if this typhoon steered clear, but that won't happen."

"No, it won't. The bigger concern is the safety of the others after they finish this rescue at the park. Thunderbirds One and Two will have to land at Mateo Island and ride out the storm until tomorrow." He stared at those shutters and said, "We can replace buildings and structures, but not the people."

"No, sir," she agreed. "It'll just be an inconvenience but a safer option for them."

"True. Even though we won't lose power here on the island, the winds in this storm would still make the flying debris very dangerous. We'll just have to wait it out and hope the damage isn't too severe when the others do return."

Jeff nodded and the two went back to listening to the rescue mission.

Listening in while waiting for the storm by TracyFan4Ever

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 04:33:51 GMT

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Without any warning, the lounge became completely dark.

"What the hell?" Jeff said, his voice full of surprise and anger.

In the darkness, Callie called out. "What's going on?" She stood, her movements making noises that Jeff could hear. "I thought this wasn't supposed to happen."

"It isn't." Jeff's tone was terse. "Callie, stay right where you are," he commanded. "The emergency power should kick in soon enough."

And it did. In the crimson of the emergency lighting, Jeff could see Callie gazing around. "Weird," she said. "Why aren't the regular lights back on?"

"The red lighting takes less power to run," Jeff said, "and highlights the fact that this is an emergency situation." He shook his head. "I never thought that we would have to use it." He opened a drawer and pulled out two things: a flashlight and a boxy-looking contraption. "At least the old comm system is powered as part of our emergency protocol."

"What do you think happened?" Callie asked, approaching the desk.

"I don't know, Callie, but whatever it is, it probably started in the power plant." He glanced at her, his mien serious. "We're in a very dangerous situation, and will continue to be until we find out what's wrong and fix it.."

"Right," she replied, nodding firmly. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

While they talked, Jeff was plugging in the old comm system. He flipped a switch, and was

gratified to see a green light appear. "I think there might be something, Callie. I'm going to see who is where and who might need immediate assistance. If you would take the flashlight, there is a panel to the left of the door leading into the hallway. Pop that off, if you would, so we can activate the door manually. We're not doing anybody much good sitting here in the lounge."

"F-A-B, Mr. Tracy," Callie said as she picked up the flashlight. "I'll see what I can do."

XXXX

Alan frowned and tried again. "International Rescue Base from Thunderbird Five. Come in, Base." He shook his head at the blank screen that, just moments before, had displayed a picture of his father in the lounge. "What the hell happened?"

Huffing out a frustrated breath, he turned to another channel. "Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Five. Come in, Thunderbird One."

Scott, hovering over the amusement park, touched his earpiece. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One, reading you five by five. What's up, Alan?"

"Bad news, Scott. I can't raise Base. The signal just... winked out on me." The tiny picture that Scott saw in his visor showed Alan shaking his head. "I've tried and tried to raise them. There's... no response."

Now Scott frowned, an expression Alan saw clearly on his monitor. "Maybe the comm mast is down."

"It shouldn't be, Scott. The typhoon's worst winds are still two hours out. They're beginning to get hammered, but that comm mast is rated..."

"I know what the comm mast is rated at, Alan. It's the only explanation I can think of." Scott paused, then asked, "Have you been able to raise Virgil?"

He glanced over at the screen showing Thunderbird Two's cockpit. "I'm getting all their comm talk without a problem, just like you are."

Scott's eyes opened wide as a thought struck him. "Hey, have you tried calling Dad on his cell? I know it's not the first thing we think of when we're off base and in action, but Lena did make it safe..."

Alan struck his forehead with the heel of his hand. "Of course! Why didn't I think of that?! I'll call him now. Stand by, Thunderbird One."

Taking up his cell phone, Alan speed-dialed his father's number. Down in the gloom of emergency lighting, Jeff started to hear his cell phone ringing. He found it, sitting in its now-deactivated power dock. With a relieved glance at Callie, who looked back at him at the sound, and stood paused between the lounge and study, he answered. "Jeff Tracy here."

"Dad!" Alan's voice was loud and clear. He thought about being direct about what he'd seen, but

the possibility that the island could have been invaded rose up sharply. He decided to play it cool. "How are things at home?"

"You don't need to beat around the bush, Alan. We're fine, so far. However, the power is out, and I'm not sure why." He shook his head. "We have emergency lighting and power, and I'm about to use the old intercom system to see who is doing what where."

"Whew!" Alan actually wiped his hand across his forehead. "I didn't know what to think when your comm just winked out like that. Scott thought that maybe the comm mast was down, but according to my weather satellites, you're still a couple of hours from the brunt of the storm."

"How are things going with the rescue at the amusement park?" Jeff asked, his forehead wrinkled in a concerned frown.

"They're assessing the situation using the flying camera," Alan said. "Mom is pushing for letting Seven out to help with injuries. The park's administrator was really surprised when she got my call."

"F-A-B, son." Jeff glanced at his watch. "You take care of things up there, and I'll do what I can down here."

"Dad, what happens when the crew returns to base. If the power is out, will they be able to land?"

Jeff thought for a moment, then shook his head. "No, son. The emergency power feeds only the most critical areas. The hangars aren't in that grid. Tell them both to divert to Mateo when they're finished in Brisbane."

"F-A-B, Dad." Alan sounded completely relieved. "Keep me in the loop down there, all right?"

"I'll do my best, Alan." Jeff smiled, a small rueful expression. "Have Scott call me on his cell, if he has it with him. Virgil should do the same when the rescue is finished." He thought for a moment, then added, "Actually, have Dianne call me when they're through. I think I'd like to hear her voice a little more than Virgil's."

Alan chuckled. "F-A-B, Dad. I'll pass that along. Talk with you again later."

"Later, son."

Disconnecting the call, Alan turned back to his brother. "Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Five. Come in, Scott."

"Thunderbird One here. What's the news, Alan?" Scott sounded concerned.

Alan tried hard to hold back his grin, and was only partially successful. "Well, for the first time in recorded Tracy Island history, we've had a power outage..."

A first time for everything by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 04:47:43 GMT

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"That should do it."

Gordon hopped out of the cabin of the Recovery Vehicle and let out a satisfied sigh, stretching his arms up high as he exited the pod into the hangar. It was the last of the equipment to be stored away safely before the incoming storm hit.

"Oh, man, I'm glad that's over," he said. "I can't wait to go get a snack!"

John shook his head.

"It won't be long before dinner," he said. "You'll ruin your appetite."

Gordon rolled his eyes.

"No I won't," he said. He patted his stomach. "This baby has room for snacks and dinner."

John chuckled.

"Soon it'll look like there is a baby in there if you're not careful."

Gordon clapped a hand on John's shoulder and smiled.

"Relax, Johnny. You won't be getting any nieces or nephews from me any time soon." Gordon's face took on a faraway look for a moment. Things hadn't worked out with Alysha. Hanging out with her in a group was fine, great even. One on one, however, they soon found that they didn't have a lot to say. He shook himself back to reality, and began to walk to the service lift. "Let's get out of here. I'm sick of looking at the inside of Two's hangar."

John raised an eyebrow at the brief interlude in his brother's good mood, but said nothing. They walked the short distance to the service lift. Gordon pressed the button for the Villa's lower level and they began to rise.

"I wonder what Grandma's making for dinner?" Gordon said.

"I thought you wanted a snack?" John asked.

"I want both!" Gordon said. "I--"

There was a jolt as the lift car stopped suddenly. The main lights cut out, and the illuminated red strips on the floor kicked in as emergency lighting.

"What the --?" Gordon said.

John shook his head and sighed again, this time in annoyance.

"Oh, Gordon," he said. "I was hoping you would have left the April Fool's jokes for another day. We're going to be hit by a typhoon!"

Gordon pressed the lift buttons but nothing happened.

"Hey, don't look at me!" he said. "While it would have made a good joke, I'm afraid this is nothing to do with me."

He pressed the emergency intercom button. Thankfully, it ran on a backup battery supply like the rest of the vital comms systems.

"Hey, Dad? Dad, can you hear me?"

"Gordon! Where are you? Where's John?"

"Dad, we're trapped in the service lift from TB2's hangar. We got in, but it seems like the power's cut out."

"We're without power, too," Jeff said.

"Well don't blame me!" Gordon said, casting John a mock-angry glance. "Someone down here thought it was my fault!"

"No, son, I think it's an island-wide power outage. How, we don't know yet. Are you boys okay?"

"We're fine, Dad," John said. "Hopefully we won't be trapped here for long."

"Sit tight," Jeff said. "I'll keep you both updated."

"F-A-B," Gordon said.

The line clicked off, and Gordon let his arms fall loosely to his sides.

"Sooo," he said. "What's new with you?"

John put his face in his hands.

Stuck! by ArtisticRainey

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 04:50:28 GMT

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Will stood beside the control panel for the new boat pen door. "Looks like the surf is risin'," he muttered to himself. "Better get that passageway closed off."

Hitting a series of switches, he listened intently for the door's motors. There was an occasional

scrape of metal on rock, and he swore he could see a distance glimmer of light under water disappearing little by little. He was so intent on watching that event, it was understandable that he jumped when the lights all around him went out.

"What the hell..." Will stood still as his surprised oath echoed around the boat pen. He peered back toward where he knew the water was lapping; there was still a sliver of greenish light under the depths. "Damn. It didn't close all the way." With a sigh, he checked his watch. "Time's running out here."

The activation of the emergency lighting didn't faze him, but he started a little at Jeff's voice. "Jeff to boat pen. Are you still down there, Will?"

"Yes, sir!" Will replied, hoping that he didn't need a microphone to respond. "I'm here."

"What's your status?"

"I'm okay, Mr. Tracy, but we may have a problem. When the lights went out, the boat pen door stopped about..." He peered out into the water again. "About three-quarters of the way down."

He could hear Jeff sighing. "Well, we'll have to deal with that later. The problem now is to figure out why the power is out, and see what we can do to bring it back online. As it stands now, the Thunderbirds won't be able to return to base."

"Well, sir, I'd say that the best place to start would be with the lab. Tin-Tin would be most likely to know what's happened."

"Unfortunately, I've tried the lab, and it doesn't seem as if Tin-Tin is in there."

Will frowned. He was beginning to get an inkling of what could have happened, and he didn't like it. "Hm. She'd told me she was running diagnostics on the household systems today, because of the storm. Maybe somethin' turned up."

"The power plant isn't supposed to break down, but that's the only possible answer I can think of." Jeff sounded certain of his idea.

Rubbing the back of his head, Will replied, "Well, sir, there might be a break in the lines somewhere. I think we should start at the power block, in any case. If it's wirin' trouble, we can track it down easier from there."

"Ah, yes. Wiring could be the culprit. Good call, Will." Jeff sounded relieved at the new possibility. "Can you get there from where you are? There are manually-operated hatches from the boat pen to the monorail line."

Will nodded a second before he realized Jeff couldn't see him. "I can get out into the monorail system, but I'm not sure I can get to the power house from here. I'll give it a try, though." He paused, then asked, "Are you all right, sir?"

"Yes, Will. I'm fine. Callie and I are in the lounge, and we'll be bypassing the automatic doors in a

few moments to get out and see who needs help."

A thought struck Will, and he glanced at his watch again. "Sir, are the wrist comms still working?"

There was a long pause, then a chuckle. "You, sir, are a genius. I didn't even think of them. I was caught up in the old intercom." He paused, then added, "The satellite phones are still working, too, but I'm not sure how well they'll do underground."

"Well, then, I'll just call Tin-Tin on my wrist comm, and see where she is. Then we can join forces to track down this outage." Will pulled a flashlight from the equipment locker, then moved toward the hatch, and spun the wheel to unlatch it. "I'm heading for the monorail now, Mr. Tracy. I'll keep you in the loop as soon as I find Tin-Tin."

"F-A-B, Will. Jeff Tracy out."

Turning on the flashlight, Will stepped out into the darkness of the monorail system, closing the hatch securely behind him. The emergency lighting there was sparse, but there was a narrow strip of concrete on either side of the tunnel. He flashed a beam at the square rail that the cars rode on.

"With a power outage, this shouldn't be live," he muttered. "Even so, it's not gonna to be an easy trek."

Lifting his wrist comm to his mouth, he called, "Tin-Tin from Will. Tin-Tin from Will. Where are you, Tin-Tin?"

Tin-Tin nearly jumped out of her skin when the call, sketchy as it was, came through her wrist comm. It was audio only; the power house was heavily shielded, and most of the monitoring equipment inside was hard-wired to the boards in the lab. She got up and moved closer to the door before she replied. "Tin-Tin here, Will. I'm in the power block. There's been an outage... the fuel mix is off."

"I figured it was somethin' like that," Will said, jogging down the grade toward Thunderbird Three's silo. "You stay put. I'm comin' from the boat pen to help."

"How will you get here?" Tin-Tin asked. "The monorail is down."

"Looks like I'll be takin' an up-close-and-personal tour of the island's innards, then," he replied, grinning. "I might need your help to get through a few tight spots."

The monorail's grade became very steep, and Will found the going difficult. Finally, he found a thick set of sliding doors blocking his way. "Tin-Tin?"

"Yes, Will?" While he had been silent, Tin-Tin had opened up her watch and fine-tuned some controls so that the interference from the thick walls and the natural radiation in the plant would be neutralized.

"I'm at Thunderbird Three's silo, but I can't get in."

She stopped to think, picturing the monorail line in her head. "Is it at the first door from the boat pen, or the second?"

"First."

"Backtrack a little and head for the second entrance. I can help you better from there."

"F-A-B!"

He followed her instructions, backtracking until he found a tunnel that curved away to the left. Taking this route, he found himself on the line going directly from Thunderbird Two's hangar into Thunderbird Three's silo.

"I'm there, Tin-Tin. Now what?"

"To the left of the doors, there should be a manual override that will open the doors for you." She sounded apologetic. "It will mean some heavy cranking, but you won't have to open them far." There was a pause. "In fact, every door has a manual override in roughly the same place. I'll have to see what I can do with the door here."

"That's good to know." Will had managed to pop the cover off, and pulled out the crank within. "I think I need to have a word or two with Brains about this system. There... grunt... has to be a better... groan... way."

Tin-Tin chuckled. "I'm sure there is." She paused. "Once you're inside, there's a platform to your left. That will lead you down to Thunderbird Five's access tunnel."

Will swung over to a ladder set in the rock, and hurried down to the platform. There was a hatch there, not unlike the one at the boat pen. "Whew!" he muttered to himself. "This place has too many doors!" The hatch led him to a steep staircase cut into the rock itself. "Tin-Tin? Where am I going?"

His voice was muffled by the thick rock, but she could still hear it. "This takes you to Thunderbird Three's access tunnel. Just follow that until the end."

The going was easier now; the access tunnel was wide and there was plenty of room to move. Will was happy to be going this way instead of trying to walk along the monorail through Thunderbird Two's cavernous hangar. He remembered that there was no convenient platform on either end of that line.

"Here's a hatch," he said, as much for himself as Tin-Tin. "Where does it lead?"

"Into Thunderbird Two's passenger chute." Tin-Tin sounded distracted; she was busy trying to open the power house door. "There's another emergency hatch just before it enters the hangar. Take that to climb down to the floor. Then up the maintenance vehicle tunnel all the way to the power block." She smiled. "You could even take one of hover bikes. I'm sure you're tired of all this walking."

Will huffed a laugh as he climbed down the ladder to Thunderbird Two's hangar floor. "It's worth it, learnin' my way around the place like this." Now that he was close to his goal, he sprinted across the floor. "I think I will take your advice on the hover bike, though."

He chose one of the red hover bikes, detaching it from its charging unit. All three of the Tracy children had their own, individually painted hover bikes now, with Tyler's being the newest. He smiled as he saw them, then mounted his choice and zipped up the maintenance ramp toward the power block. He sped by the pod vehicle repair area, with its access to the lab. Beyond that, after a couple of sharp bends, lay the power house. There was a vehicle entry way, and after dismounting, he laid the bike down, and went looking for the manual override. "Tin-Tin? I'm at the vehicle entrance to the power block, but I can't find an override..."

Tin-Tin sighed. "There probably isn't one, Will. Not on the outside at least, not there. Probably is one up here, though." She shook her head, even though she knew he couldn't see it. "I'm having trouble with the interior override."

"Then I'll come up through the lab and try it from the outside." Will's voice hardened a little. "And if that doesn't work, I'll grab an oxyhydrite cutter and use that!"

Tin-Tin chuckled. "Hopefully it won't come to that."

Will turned around and headed back to the pod repair bay. The headlights on the hover bike picked out a side door in the tunnel, and he stopped there. "Well, here's a break!" Hopping off the bike again, he popped off the cover, and quickly opened the doors. They put him on the steps going from the lab to the power block, and he took them two at a time, stumbling at one point due to the dim emergency lighting.

"Nearly there, Tin-Tin!" he called into his watch. As he approached the power block, he slowed. He'd been past it many times since he'd started working for the Tracys, but today it was so different. Instead of the deep, throbbing hum he felt whenever he was near it, he felt nothing. Heard nothing. The machine was utterly silent. The lamp post near the monorail platform burned a silent, glaring red, as did the lights outlining the outside of the block. He increased his pace, and headed straight for the manual override panel.

"I'm right outside, Tin-Tin," he said. With a heave, he took the whole panel off bodily, and began to crank. The doors parted, and Tin-Tin appeared, looking oddly pale under the lights. She staggered, and he caught her.

"Sorry," she said, bringing a hand to her forehead. "I'm getting quite a headache."

"What's the problem?" he asked, peering into the darkened room.

"Fuel mix, I think," she mumbled. "Got some odd readings."

Will gave the air a careful sniff, then another. "Fuel leak is more like it," he said. Settling her carefully on the floor, he cranked the doors shut again, then crouched beside her. "I'll have to deal with it later, when Brains comes back. Right now, I need to get you topside, and into the fresh air." He glanced back the way he'd come. "I'd take you outside... damn, the hangar doors aren't

working either."

"The sick room." Tin-Tin scrubbed her face with both hands. "It's considered an essential system. Any emergency power would be diverted there."

Will grimaced. "All right, the sick room it is. But you'll have to show me how to get there from here."

Self-guided tour by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 04:53:01 GMT

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"Boy-oh-boy, but you wouldn't catch me on one of those things," Dianne said, staring out the cockpit window of TB2 at the tall ride.

The Bonzer Bomber was striking against the deep blue of the Australia sky. It would have been a picture perfect advertisement for the park, if not for the fact that sixteen people were stuck at the top.

"I would love to try that thing," Dom said from his position by her side.

"Me too!" Luke said, grinning at the Irishman.

Dianne gave them a sidelong glance and rolled her eyes.

"Ah'm not surprised," she said. She stepped away and placed her hand on the back of Virgil's pilot's chair. "Ah still think we should get TB7 down there to attend t'the injah'd," she grouched.

"The park's First Aid team are down there already, Mom," Virgil said, deftly keeping the giant craft hovering nearby the tall ride. "There shouldn't be any serious injuries. You were the one who put me right about worrying about someone having a heart attack. People with those medical conditions can't ride those tides."

"Ah know," Dianne said, "but it doesn't mean Ah'm not worried."

Before Virgil could respond, Scott's voice cut in over the comm system.

"Alright, Van Gogh, I've been in touch with the park's engineers. There's an emergency release mechanism on the side of each of the harnesses. Each release will free the four passengers on that side of the tower, but it can only be triggered by the use of a special key and passcode. Someone's going to have to come down and get them, and then we can start rescuing the trapped riders one side at a time."

"FAB, Maverick. I think the best course of action is to send the Rescue Cage down to the ground with a crew of Einstein, Doc and Tynan," Virgil said, looking over his shoulder at his stepmother.

"Doc and Tynan can get out and assess any injured riders before handing them off to the park's First Aiders. Einstein can get the key and the code and ride up to release the passengers. It might be a tight fit in the cage itself, but we'll simply have to deal with it."

"That sounds great, Van Gogh. I'll circle the area and relay any further instructions. I'll let Dad know now, providing I can find my cell."

"Actually, Maverick," Brains cut in, "it might be more prudent for you to return to base. At least that way we will know that it's safe to return Thunderbird Two to Mateo. There's honestly not much for you to do here but just circle, as you said."

There was short pause, before they heard Scott give a quiet sigh.

"You're right, Einstein, as always. I'll head back to base and relay any relevant information."

Virgil acknowledged his brother's words and turned away from the comm to face the gathered. With a grin, he nodded.

"Well, let's get to it!"

Ironing out the details by ArtisticRainey

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 05:01:54 GMT

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"Super Power Bots, go!"

Cherie rolled her eyes as another episode of the brightly coloured Japanese cartoon flashed up on the large home theatre screen. She would much rather have been sketching or even watching the latest episode of her favourite soap, but she had promised Emily that she would get the boys out of her hair as she started dinner. Alex and Tyler were engrossed in the TV show, but Joshua wasn't to be so easily entertained.

"Cherry! Cherry! Cherrryyyyy!"

The little boy clambered up into her lap and pulled gently on her hair.

"Yes, Jak?" she said.

"I want juice!" he said.

Cherie sat up and lifted the boy into a more comfortable position.

"You have water," she said, reaching down for the water bottle she had brought.

"No, I want juice!"

"You daddy said you can have water, and then juice later."

Joshua's face darkened and Cherie knew what was coming. An idea came to her and she sipped some of the water.

"Hey! It's not normal water," she said. "It's magical water. You take a sip and it's any flavour you want it to be!" She sipped more water. "Mmm, strawberry!"

Joshua's brain was working hard, and he reached for the bottle. He took a drink.

"Mmm, strawberry!" he said.

Cherie smiled and petted his head.

"Good boy!"

"Can you guys be quiet!" Alex said crossly. "We're trying to watch this!"

"You've already watched 3 episodes," Cherie said.

"I know, but --"

Alex's retort was cut short when the screen suddenly cut out and the room was plunged into total darkness. In a few seconds, the emergency lighting strips kicked in. Cherie sat up, keeping a hold on Joshua. Tyler and Alex muttered their confusion.

"What's going on?" Tyler said.

"I don't know," Cherie said. "I'll call Dad."

She lifted her communicator watch up to her face.

"Cherie to Dad. Dad, can you hear me?"

Her father's face appeared in the watch, a bright sphere in the darkness. The others gathered around. Joshua tried to grab it.

"Cherie, where are you?" Jeff asked. "Who's with you?"

"We're in the home theatre. I have the boys and Joshua with me."

"Okay," Jeff said. "Sit tight, honey. We're not sure what's wrong with the power just yet."

"Actually, Dad, I was thinking of bringing everyone to the kitchen. I think we could use Grandma's level head."

There was a short pause.

"That's a good idea, Cherie, especially if you have Joshua there. There should be emergency lighting to help you along."

"Right," Cherie said.

"I'll tell your grandmother you're on the way. Dad out."

Cherie set Joshua on the ground and took his hand.

"Okay, it's not a long walk to the kitchen but it'll be strange without lights. Let's just stick together. I'll look after Josh. Alex and Tyler, you stick together."

"FAB!" Alex said.

With that, the small group shuffled out of the theatre.

"Land's sakes!" Emily Tracy said. "In the middle of making dinner for everyone and the power goes out. I don't want to be feeding sandwiches to a tired rescue crew! And where are those grandchildren of mine? They should have been here by now."

She crossed her arms and stared at the cooking pots, their water now lukewarm instead of bubbling merrily.

"This has never happened before," she said. "Not in all the time we've lived here. Back in Kansas Grant would have cranked up the backup generator and we would have gone on as normal. Sometimes I wonder if technology is really all it's cracked up to be."

She shook her head and tried to busy herself, but turned around and sighed in relief as there was a knock at the kitchen door. Thankfully, it was open and she didn't need to worry about trying to open it manually.

"Finally!" she said as the small troupe entered the kitchen. "I thought you'd gotten lost!"

"No, Grandma," Cherie said. "We were just being careful in the dark."

"That's my girl," Emily said. "Now, who wants a snack?"

Super Power Bots Go! by ArtisticRaine

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 05:03:33 GMT

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"There, the last of the shutters is fastened." Lisa dusted off her hands, as she looked around Penelope's suite. "My, she sure likes things fancy."

"Lady Penelope is indeed used to the finer things in life," Kyrano said as he gave a pink satin pillow an unnecessary plump. He glanced at his watch. "We must hurry if we are to make it back to the Villa before the storm gets much closer."

Lisa sighed. "And here I was hoping to do a little bit of cleaning in my salon before we left. But you're right... as always, love." She came to him and took his hand, resting her head on his shoulder, before kissing him softly on the cheek.

Kyrano had been saddened of late. The death of his former father-in-law had been a blow -- an expected one, but a blow nonetheless. He had managed to find employment for his late wife's sister, Tamea, cleaning and cooking for Brains's friend, Professor Borrender. She still lived in the little apartment she had shared with her father, but Kyrano felt he would need to visit again and help her sort through her father's things and he was dreading the trip.

"We should go, tercinta," he said softly, leading her into the main living room, and closing Lady Penelope's suite behind them. It was eerie; the wide windows that usually illuminated the tastefully furnished great room were covered, and the room itself was lit by only one or two lamps. The door was not yet protected, but would be when they left.

They had made it halfway across the room, hand in hand, when the power went out.

"Tuan?" Lisa asked, sounding uncertain. "What just happened?"

"I do not know." Kyrano moved toward the door. The sky outside was dark and heavy with rain; wind shook the palm trees nearby, and strong gusts bent them over in half-arcs. The first bands of rain pelted the door in fits and starts, as if someone was throwing buckets of water at it. He shielded his eyes with a hand to his brow. "I cannot see if there are lights on anywhere else."

"Well, we should let Jeff know, in any case," Lisa said, taking control. "Your watch should do the trick."

"Yes, if they work." The emergency lighting chose that moment to kick in, making Kyrano nod. "If not, there is an older intercom system that, if I recall correctly, runs on the emergency power. I will try my watch first." He lifted it to his mouth. "This is Kyrano calling Jeff Tracy. Are you there, Jeff?"

There was a moment's hesitation, but Jeff's voice and picture came over loud and clear. "Yes, I'm here, Kyrano. What's your status?"

"Lisa and I are in the Round House. We have pulled all the shutters over, but the power has gone out and we cannot cover the door."

There was a sigh on the other end of the conversation. "The power outage is island-wide, and from the reports I have, originates in the power plant itself. Will is helping Tin-Tin to the infirmary; she was trapped in the power block for a bit. I'll be heading down there to see what's going on. The kids are with Mother right now, so they're safe enough. You and Lisa should stay put. Even if

you tried coming back, you'd be at the mercy of the storm, and the house is already shuttered. Without power, you won't be able to get inside."

Kyrano nodded solemnly at Jeff's instructions. "Very well," he replied. "We will remain here until the storm has passed. Tell my daughter I love her and am thinking about her."

"I will. You two take care and we'll see you soon. Jeff out."

The retainer turned to find his wife bustling about, pulling edibles from the deactivated refrigerator, and arranging them on the coffee table before the comfortable leather couch. She hummed as she worked, drawing a set of three-stemmed candelabra from a pantry drawer. This she also placed on the coffee table, then she gathered three mismatched tapers from somewhere, firmly filling the three stems and lighting the candles with a butane lighter.

"There!" she said, observing her work. "If we're going to be stuck here, we might as well make the best of it. A romantic candlelight... well, it isn't quite a dinner. But it's still romantic." Her eyes shone, beckoning to him. "Come, love. Come sit with me and let the world take care of itself for a change."

He smiled slightly, and joined her on the sofa. "I have been neglecting you, I think, in my sorrow."

"It's understandable, Tuan," she said as she poured a glass of wine. "You won't grieve forever, and you don't grieve alone. I liked Elias, too, you know. I'm glad I got to meet him." She handed him a goblet, then raised her own. "To the storms of life, and the calm days in between."

"May we have many more calm days ahead," he murmured. They touched glasses, and drank. She snuggled in next to him, and he put his arm around her, dropping a kiss on her head.

"Later, we can go upstairs. The guest bedrooms are very comfortable." It was not a suggestion on her part, but a stated fact.

"Yes," he murmured, taking in a deep breath and letting it out. Even in sorrow, he knew, there were happy moments to be found and cherished.

Battening down the hatches by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 05:05:04 GMT

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Knowing of the power outage on Tracy Island, Scott was concerned for the well-being of his family back home. He almost couldn't find his cell phone, until he checked the left arm pocket of his uniform jacket. "Whew," he said to himself. "The last thing I need is no way to contact home at all."

He contacted Virgil and Alan. "Thunderbird Two and Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One. I've got my cell phone now. I'm heading back to base."

"F-A-B, Maverick," said Alan. "Tell the boss we're all praying for them."

"And we'll meet you on Mateo," added Virgil.

Scott started leaving the Ekka Amusement Park rescue mission and called his father. "Come on, Dad, answer."

In the lounge, Callie held on to the flashlight as Jeff continued to crank the lounge door open by hand.

"Callie," he said calmly, "could you move the flashlight a little to the right, please?"

Looking down, she realized she shifted it slightly. "Oh, sorry about that, Mr. Tracy."

"It's okay. We'll be out of here soon enough." He remained cool, but on the inside his anxiety grew for the safety of everyone else on the island.

He heard his cell phone ring and grabbed it. Looking at the caller ID, he smiled as he answered. "Scott! I'm glad to hear from you."

"Same here, Dad. How are things at home?"

"Right now, a little on the rough side. I've almost got the lounge door open with the hand crank, and we've gotten in contact with everyone on the island." He explained where each group was as well as what was happening. "The old comm system works okay on the emergency power. Until we can find the source of the power outage, though, you know what you'll have to do."

"Yeah," Scott said with grave concern. "Looks like we'll have to spend at least one night on Mateo."

"Afraid so, son. We're about to get the brunt of the storm shortly, but Mateo should only get some squally weather by the time you get there."

"Okay, Dad. I'll head to Mateo and use the cliffside entrance on the west side. I'll let Virgil know that immediately."

Jeff nodded. "That's fine. We'll keep ourselves entertained here while the rest of you will have to do the same on Mateo."

"F-A-B, Dad. Take care over there."

"Count on it, son."

After he disconnected the call, he went back to cranking the wheel to get the lounge door opened. Within three minutes, there was enough width for the pair to leave. "Ah, at last. We can finally get out of here."

"Oh, don't I know it, sir," she said with a smile on her face.

"Now let's get to the others and see if we can help them out."

With a nod, she passed the flashlight to him and let him go first before she walked out of the lounge herself.

Scott contacted Virgil to let him know the situation. "Van Gogh, as soon as you and the others are done with the rescue, head straight to Mateo. Getting back to the base itself now is out of the question. They're getting the worst of the typhoon now."

"F-A-B, Maverick. I'll let the others know right away. Be careful getting to Mateo."

"Don't worry, I will."

As Scott continued flew closer to Mateo, he was able to see the dark clouds of the typhoon about 100 miles in front of him. "Wow, what a storm," he said to himself. "I'd better check with Alan about exactly where the storm is."

On Thunderbird Five, Alan continued looking at the radar when he heard Scott call in. "Reading you four-by-four, Maverick. What's going on?"

"Indy, can you give me the latest conditions on Mateo Island?"

Alan looked up the Pacific radar and said, "Good news, Maverick. Mateo's getting one last squall from the western edge of the outer bands."

"Why am I still seeing very dark clouds then?" Scott questioned.

"The cyclone itself's over 300 miles long with a 30-mile wide eyewall. You'll probably get tropical-storm force winds when you reach Mateo, but the outer rain bands will have moved out completely."

"Thanks, Indy. I should reach Mateo within the next 10 to 15 minutes, provided I don't run into any cross winds from the typhoon."

"F-A-B, Maverick. Take it easy."

After flying another 11 1/2 minutes, Scott could see Mateo Island. Going toward the western side of the island, he pressed a button on his control panel, which opened a cliff-side door, similar to that of Thunderbird Two's door on Tracy Island.

As soon as Thunderbird One entered the cliff door, he set the reconnaissance rocket down in its horizontal mode. "Made it," he said with a sigh of relief. Soon, he called Virgil, Alan, and his father to let him know he arrived safely.

"Now comes the hard part, waiting for everyone else from the rescue to get here while the others do their best at home."

Anxiety on the way to Mateo by TracyFan4Ever

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 05:06:54 GMT

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Dianne folded her arms and shifted her stance so she could better watch the retreating rescue cage. Far above them hovered the Thunderbird Two, positioned precisely to keep the ride safe from the VTOL impellers' backwash. Dom stood beside her, his curiosity leading him to gaze around at the amusement park's features. They were both within the ride's parameters, relatively sheltered from curious on-lookers. One thing that both Scott and Virgil hadn't accounted for was the attraction of a Thunderbird hovering in one place. People who should have been evacuating the park were now stopping, transfixed, or ignoring park security to hurry over and watch the rescue in progress.

"I'm sure there'll be a lot of long distance or zoom lens pictures taken today," Dianne grouched. "A lot of people bring cameras to a place like this."

"The way you're talking, Doc, it sounds as if you don't like amusement parks," Dom said, grinning.

Dianne sighed. "I like them fine, but not as rescue venues. Far too public." She craned her neck for another view of the rescue capsule, which had stopped at the top of the ride, and now obscured the people on that side. "You sure wouldn't get me on this thing."

In the rescue capsule, Brains clutched a rail with one hand and the device he'd been given with the other. He was securely linked in with a harness, yet despite all of Virgil's efforts to keep the capsule from moving, the laws of physics said that it would rock a bit and turn on the axis of the cable above. Grabbing onto the rail at this point gave him an added feeling of security, one he'd have to abandon once he reached his destination.

The tower, which had all but filled his line of sight, was abruptly interrupted by four pairs of feet, then legs, then knees, and finally, the anxious faces of those he'd come to rescue. He gave them what he hoped was an encouraging smile, before glancing upward. "Van Gogh, I need a bit of spin to the left, point one-zero degrees, then lock the cable."

"F-A-B, Einstein," came the answer, a reply that only he could hear through his ear-piece. Thunderbird Two moved ever so slightly, and with it the rescue capsule turned so it was directly facing the riders, some of whom now looked relieved to see him. There was a sudden buzzing noise, and a small thunk as current was run through the cable, making it stiff and unyielding. This was a new innovation, invented specifically for the dicetyline cannon, but it worked as well on the other cable-bound devices. Brains spared a fleeting thought for Cassie, whose invention necessitated the alteration, and a longer, thankful thought for Tin-Tin, who had actually developed it.

"Van Gogh, move forward about three meters. Stay directly on this heading, and take it slow."

"F-A-B, Einstein."

If Virgil sounded a bit peeved, Brains had no time for it to register. Slowly, the rescue capsule moved forward until it was almost touching the tower beside their first rescuee, a boy whose wide eyes showed no fear at all.

"All right, everyone," Brains called in what he hoped was his most reassuring, yet commanding voice. "I have a gadget here that will unlock all four harnesses at once. I'm told, however, that each harness can be lifted individually, so when you hear the devices unlock, hold on tight until I can help you out. Once I have the four of you safely inside the rescue capsule, Thunderbird Two will lower us down and you'll be evaluated by our medics before being released." He indicated the wide belts that were linked by carbiners to permanent anchors set just below the rails in the capsule. "I'll help the first person with their belt, but each of you will have to help the others. As you can see, there are only four spots, but there is a railing, and when we're ready to go down, I'll hold on to that, while the rest of you are clipped in." He paused, scanning their faces. "Do you understand?"

There were four nods, and a couple murmurs of acknowledgment.

"Okay. I'm going to unlock you all now." Brains put the gadget into the slot meant for it, and with a sharp click, the harnesses were unlocked. Knuckles whitened on those who were waiting, and there was at least one audible gulp. But the young man who was going first grinned widely.

"Let's get you out of here," Brains said, drawing the harness over the boy's head with one hand, and grabbing his arm with the other. A swift pull, and the boy was in the cage. Brains helped him attach the safety belt, and clipped him in.

"What's your name?" he asked.

The boy gave him a big grin. "Bobby. Bobby Pernon." He paused, then asked, "What's yours?"

"You can call me Einstein." Brains moved to the next person on the ride, a woman. "Now, Bobby Pernon. Let's get everybody out of here."

Taming the tower by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 05:23:02 GMT

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Dianne slung her medical bag over her shoulder, glancing around at the crowds that were being kept at a respectable distance by the park staff. The entire situation had put her on edge. Thankfully, there hadn't been anything more serious than a few rattled nerves, and the IR medical crew had done nothing more than give a few soothing words of comfort. Dianne watched as

Dominic shook hands with one of the younger riders and sent him trotting back off to his waiting parents. His mother embraced him so tightly he spluttered and began to grouse. The doctor couldn't help but smile a little. She would have done the same.

"Well, Doc, that's that," Dom said as he sauntered back over to her.

"Yes it is, Tynan," Dianne said. "Let's get home."

They walked together to the rescue cage where Brains was waiting for them and as the little group began to rise up back into the belly of the beast that was Thunderbird Two, there was a colossal cheer from the crowds below. Dominic grinned and wagged his eyebrows.

"I feel like a celebrity," he said.

Dianne shook her head.

"Young man, even if no one knows your name, you already are a celebrity."

It didn't take long for them to settle back in with the rest of the crew in the cabin, and Virgil beckoned his stepmother over.

"Dad said he wanted to hear your voice rather than mine," he said with a tone of mock offense.

He gave Dianne a wink as she rolled her eyes, turned his attention back to the controls of the great machine as Dianne headed over to the little locker where personal belongings were stowed for safety if the crew was heading out of the craft. Most of them didn't bring cell phones with them, but Dianne's 'better-safe-than-sorry' attitude was justified considering the fact they now needed it to contact home. Scott had called through earlier to tell them about the power outage on Tracy Island. As Dianne popped open the locker and grabbed the cell she frowned. The power cut and the storm meant that it was unlikely they would be able to return right to the island and instead had to divert to Mateo for the time being. She flicked to her most used contacts; Jeff's name was right at the top. She dialled, and it was only a few seconds before the call connected.

"Dianne!" Jeff said; his voice was clear as crystal on the modern satellite phone. "How is everyone? Mission accomplished, I assume?"

"Yes indeed," Dianne said. "Everyone is safely back on the ground, and we're about to head home. We'll fill y'all in on the details later when we debrief."

"That's great news, love," Jeff said. He paused for a moment. "The unfortunate news is that because of this storm, it's going to be at least tomorrow before you're able to come home. You'll have to go to Mateo."

"Ah thought as much," Dianne said, frowning. "But there's nothing we can do about it. Is everyone okay there?"

"Everyone's safe and accounted for. The kids are all with Mother. Although," he paused again briefly, "Will has taken Tin-Tin to the sick room. She seems to have taken some kind of severe

headache after being down in the plant area."

Dianne frowned deeply.

"Now that doesn't sound good," she said. "Get Will to call me once he's free to give me an update on her condition. Now Ah'm even more annoyed that we can't get home."

"I know, love," Jeff said. "Let me know as soon as you're on approach to Mateo."

"Ah will," Dianne said. "Ah'll talk t' you soon."

The call disconnected with a quiet beep and Dianne pocketed the cell. Every set of eyes was on her.

"Tin-Tin's been taken to the sick room," she said.

"Oh, no," Elise said. "Anything serious?"

"Ah'm not sure yet," Dianne said. "Will'll keep me posted."

"She'll be fine," Luke said, placing a hand on Elise's arm.

Dianne raised an eyebrow as she noticed Virgil's face darken slightly at Luke's action, and he turned away to face the controls.

"Well, let's get home," he said, and then chuckled, though the sound was not a mirthful as it should have been. "Or at least, as close to home as we can get for now."

The assembled crew took their seats, and began the final leg of their journey back to base.

The burden of celebrity by ArtisticRainey

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 05:26:43 GMT

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Mateo Island, April 2, a little after 1:00 AM

Luke shifted, trying to get comfortable on the narrow couch. The team had landed on Mateo Island, quickly securing the ships in the hangers. Scott had put together a sketchy meal using the few supplies on hand. They had all agreed they were tired of being in the ships themselves and divvied up sleeping arrangements. Everyone was exhausted and went to bed shortly after dinner.

A loud snore punctuated the darkness. Luke closed his eyes and tried to sleep. After a few minutes, he rolled over again, wincing at the twinge in his shoulder. Letting out a sigh, he gave up and got to his feet. He glanced over at his room-mates. In the dim light, he could see that Scott

was sprawled on another couch, his long legs trailing over one end. One arm was cushioning his head and his mouth was open wide. Shaking his head and getting up, Luke paused and looked down at the other occupant of the room.

Dom was completely buried under the blanket, the only part of him showing was his thick, black hair. Luke resisted the urge to run his hand through it and walked out of the room, Rommel trotting at his heels.

Walking into the kitchen, he was surprised to see Dianne there. "Oh, hey."

She looked up from the stove. "Good evening, Luke. Or should I say, good morning," she said, glancing at the clock. "I'm having a cup of tea; would you like one?"

Luke shook his head. "Ugh, no thanks."

She chuckled and poured the hot water into her mug. Sitting at the table, she motioned for him to join her, noting him rubbing his shoulder. "So, what's keeping you up, besides our stellar accommodations?"

He chuckled. "Actually, I'm glad I ran into you. Could you grab me some pain-killers from the med locker?"

Dianne looked at him closely. "What kind of pain are you in?" she asked as she got up and walked over to him.

He shrugged. "Not a whole lot. It's mostly just a deep ache. Enough that it's keeping me awake. I didn't know we'd be gone so long today or I would have brought some of my own."

"Mm-hmm." She gently manipulated his arm, noting when he winced. "I'll get you something for that. Be right back." She vanished from sight, returning a moment later with a pill bottle. She handed him a tablet and a glass of water. "Here you go."

He looked at the single tablet and then up at her. "All I get is one?" he said pleadingly.

Dianne rolled her eyes and shook another out. "That's all you get."

Luke grinned and swallowed them. "Thanks, Doc."

She muttered something under her breath and sat down to finish her tea. "You're not made of steel, you know."

"I know. It's just... This was my first rescue back on the team. I'm disappointed on how much things are bothering me."

"Things, plural?" she asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Yeah, the chest is achy too. The shoulder is worse though." He shook his head. "Wait, that didn't come out right." He got up and filled his water glass. "The chest was surgically cut, so it healed

faster. The shoulder was shattered and they rebuilt it."

"I know. I've seen your films."

"Right." He sat back down. "Well, I've been doing all the exercises and weight training, even taking the extra vitamins like you suggested." He sighed. "I guess I just expected it to be better than it is."

Dianne reached over and placed her hand on his. "Luke, there's a big difference between using those muscles in therapy and using them in real life. Don't be discouraged. You've made amazing progress. It will only improve. Just stop being so hard on yourself."

He looked up and grinned at her. "We seem to have this conversation a lot."

"Well, we wouldn't if you'd just listen to me!" she exclaimed with a smile.

Luke laughed. "You really have to meet my mother sometime. You two would get along great, discussing my many defects." He got up and hugged her about the shoulders. "Thanks, Dr. Tracy."

"You're welcome, Luke. Go try and get some sleep."

He shot her a wry look. "Have you ever slept in the same room as Scott before?"

She laughed. "Good night."

"Night."

Midnight musings by Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 05:32:05 GMT

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Dominic yawned and ran his fingers through his hair as he pulled himself up into a sitting position and sighed, though stifled the noise when he remembered that he wasn't the only one in the room. He had been sleeping on one of the couches of the small lounge/kitchenette; Luke was curled up on one of the others, and Scott was spread-eagled on a third. Thankfully his snoring had abated eventually. It had taken a lot of self-control not to smother him. Rommel sat up and watched as Dom rose to his feet, and trotted along after him as the young man wandered over to the kitchen area. Dom eyed him warily, but forced himself to relax. It's just a dog, he thought. It's also a very well trained dog. It is not going to bite you, unless Luke tells it to, and Luke wouldn't do that, not even as a joke. Rom let his tongue loll out of the side of his mouth, and Dom very slowly and carefully reached out a hand to pet the top of the dog's head.

"I need to get used to you, mutt," he said quietly. "If it's a case of me or the dog, I know Luke would choose you."

Rom's fur was very soft, and Dom even went as far as to scratch behind the dog's ears. That action was met with approval. Dom nodded, feeling as if he had accomplished something great. Rom sat back down and watched as Dominic went about his business once more.

The lounge/kitchenette was a functional if sparse area with the basics of living. There was a stack of MREs (though none vegetarian, much to the annoyance of Dom's growling stomach), long life milk, dried snacks and of course, coffee (even if it was instant) and various other accoutrements in the cupboards, as well as a stove and several basic sofas, chairs and a dining table. It looked a lot like the student apartments Dominic had frequented in his university days, though he himself had never been able to move away from home. His mother's condition had prevented that completely. The Irishman idly pulled open the cupboards, yawning again, and grabbed a jar of coffee and an unopened carton of milk. With his eyes barely opened, he filled the kettle with water and leaned against the counter as he waited for it to boil. His eyes slid closed again. He had not slept very well.

The beds, like the rest of the accommodation, were basic and clearly not meant for a stay of more than one night. Though as far as Dom was concerned, those who had claimed a bed were the lucky ones. There were six crew members and only four beds (as Virgil had said, the place was not designed for a larger group; when it had been furnished, none of the additional IR crewmembers, not even Dianne, had been taken on). Dom had sniggered a little into his hand. The lack of a woman's touch was very obvious. There were two rooms with two beds in each of them, so the ladies had been unceremoniously forced to take one room. The men drew straws for the other beds; Virgil and Brains had come out as the winners in that situation. Dom had flushed when he realised both he and Luke would be sleeping together -- not together! Don't think about it that way! -- in the lounge. He had hoped no one had seen, though Dianne's hawk eyes had picked up on it. One of her eyebrows had nearly disappeared into her hair line. Luke, for his part, was completely at ease, though he was concerned that Dom wouldn't like sleeping in the same room as the dog. Dom had brushed the concern off, not wanting to appear weak in front of the others. It had unsettled him a little, but he had been so tired that as soon as he lay down on the sofa he was out cold, and Scott's snoring hadn't bothered him. Much.

When he had woken, he felt a little pang of guilt at how he had been more concerned about a dog sleeping in the same room as him than he had been about being away from his son for the night. He knew, however, that Joshua would no doubt treat the whole thing like a game, and would probably even relish the idea of getting to sleep in a different place. The little boy had been pining since the Crenshaws had left, taking his only playmate Lea away with them. Cherie, bless her heart, seemed -- to have picked up on it, and was trying to include Joshua as much as possible when she was spending time with her biological brothers -- much to their chagrin.

Dom started suddenly and grabbed onto the side of the counter as he was torn from his sleepy reverie by a new voice in the room.

"You're cute when you're tired."

Luke grinned at him, and Dom frowned, flexing his fingers against the sideboard.

"You nearly gave me a heart attack!" he said.

Luke reigned in his grin and held up his hands.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't think you'd react that sharply."

Dom calmed his heaving chest and waved the apology off. He glanced over at the couches to see if Scott had arisen too; he hadn't.

"No, I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't mean to snap." He turned around as the kettle boiled and picked up the jar and the milk. "Coffee?"

"Please," Luke said.

Dom went about making the drinks and stirred the milk in with a little more force than was strictly necessary. He felt that he should really be saying something, but couldn't think of the words. God, you're like a love-struck teenager, he thought.

Thankfully, within the next few minutes the rest of the crew trundled in, as if the smell of the mediocre coffee was some kind of kiss of life. They had a light breakfast and Dianne called in to see if it was safe to return. They were given the go-ahead, and there was a communal sigh of relief.

"I will not miss those beds," Elise said. "Who on earth picked them? It was like lying on rocks!"

"Agreed," Dianne said. "I may need to have a talk with a certain Mr Tracy about doing some upgrades out here."

"Right. Man, my back is killing me," Elise said.

Virgil looked as though he was about to say something, but Luke hadn't noticed and cut in.

"You could have come out and slept on the couch with me," he said playfully. "It would probably have been more comfortable!"

Elise chuckled and set down her coffee mug.

"You're probably right."

At that point Virgil got up from the table and thumped his mug on the counter before pulling open the dishwasher. Dianne shared a confused look with Dominic, who simply shrugged. Who knew? Dom stood and went over to the kitchen area. He was reaching down to stow his own mug in the dishwasher when Virgil spun around and knocked the other man over. Virgil was significantly heavier and more solid than the thin Irishman, and Dominic yelped as he toppled to the side. The last thing he felt was the side of the counter cracking into his temple.

Dianne wrenched her neck around to see what the commotion was about as she heard her nurse

yelp, followed by a rather nasty crack and a crash.

"Oh, God!"

She watched as Virgil knelt down and hovered over the unconscious man, and immediately Dianne was on her feet and over beside them, with Scott at her heels.

"What happened?" she asked. She was about to call for her medical bag when it was immediately deposited in her hands by a terrified-looking Luke.

"I turned around and knocked him over," Virgil said. "I didn't mean to. God, there's so much blood!"

Dianne motioned for Scott and Elise to attend to Virgil, who was clearly not shocked by the injury but more that he had caused it. Elise gently pulled him up by the elbow and patted his arm.

"It was an accident," she said.

Dianne opened her bag and pulled out her little torch. She opened Dom's eyelids, shined the light in them and frowned. His pupils were unequal. As she let go of his second eyelid the man began to stir and she felt a little relieved. Dom opened his eyes and closed them several times, and Dianne placed a hand on his shoulder. Luke was rustling through the medical bag for dressings and had begun to staunch the bleeding.

"Dominic, can you heah me?" Dianne asked. "Mistah Kelly, you know Ah do not like to be ignoah'd!"

"Nuuuuuurgh," Dom muttered, and finally managed to open his eyes and keep them opened. "What the... Yes, I can hear you. Why are you yelling at me? Did I do something wrong?"

"No," Dianne said, patting his shoulder. "You just had a little accident, that's all."

"Oh, God, that's embarrassing," Dom mumbled. "Did Luke see? I really hope he didn't."

"I'm right here, buddy," Luke said. He placed his own larger hand on Dom's other shoulder and smiled. "And don't worry. I've seen you do much more embarrassing stuff -- Dorothy."

Dom chuckled but immediately winced and cried out a little.

"Calm down," Dianne said softly. "You'll be all right. Just a little concussion is all. We're heading back to the island now."

She shared a reassuring glance with Luke, who seemed to be inordinately concerned, and several pieces of a puzzle she didn't know she had been assembling finally clicked together. She had to bite her tongue to stop her utterance of, 'Ooooh, now I get it,' and instead took over mopping up the blood at the nurse's temple, and gave Luke another reassuring smile.

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 05:35:01 GMT

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Luke folded the blanket he had used and added it to the pile of bedding on the couch. He turned to grab the ones off of where Dominic had slept. As he pulled it, Dom's shirt slipped out and onto the floor. He bent to pick it up, then closed his eyes and sighed.

"Luke? We're nearly ready to go! Where are you?" She entered the room and paused. "Hey; are you all right?"

He looked up and her. "Yeah. I'm just straightening up. I'll be there in a few minutes." He turned away.

She frowned and watched him a moment, then walked over and placed her hand on his arm. "Luke? What's wrong?" she asked softly.

"Nothing," he replied. Pulling his arm free, he finished with the blanket then tucked Dominic's shirt under his arm. "What?" he asked, seeing her expression.

Elise stood with her arms folded across her chest, an almost glare on her face.

Luke rolled his eyes. "I'm just a little freaked out over Dom, OK?"

She gathered up the blankets. "It's just a bump on the head. Dianne said he'll be fine."

"I know, but..." Luke sighed. "He and I have gotten... close... since I've been back," he said quietly.

"Of course you have. You're friends... Oh!" she exclaimed as realization hit. "But, wait a sec, Dom's straight. Isn't he?" she asked, puzzled.

Luke shook his head. "He's bi." He sat down on the couch and motioned Elise to join him. "When I got back, he confessed he had feelings for me. And that he'd had them for a while."

"Wow. I never even got that impression. I mean, he was upset when you were shot, but then again, we all were. Wow," she said again.

"Yeah, wow. Imagine how I felt!" he chuckled, then grew serious again. "We haven't actually talked about things. Just sort of taking it slow." He took a deep breath. "Very slow. He says he's in love with me."

Elise reached over and took his hand in hers. "Do you love him?"

Luke looked up into her green eyes. "I don't know. I think... I think I do. That's why today, when I

saw him lying there... " His voice trailed off and he shuddered.

She squeezed his hand and he reached around her shoulders and pulled her close, closing his eyes. They sat there a few moments before Luke sat up. "Well, enough of the chick-flick stuff. We'd better move before they come looking for us." Luke turned and took Elise in his arms and hugged her, holding her close. "Thanks, honey. It feels good to finally talk about this." He kissed her on the cheek.

"Well, don't think this is the end of it. I want details!"

"Yeah, good luck with that."

They both laughed and gathered up the rest of the blankets and straightened the couch cushions.

Out in the hallway, out of sight of Luke and Elise, Virgil stood watching, an angry glower on his face. He had come to find the others and stopped short of entering the room when he saw Elise in Luke's arms. I am done with this. He turned and stormed off towards the hanger, the others never noticing he had been there.

Confessions! by Lillehafreue

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 19 Jul 2012 05:41:30 GMT

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"Brace yourselves!"

Thunderbird Two hovered close to the ocean's swells, which seemed to reach up greedily for pod seven. Because of the sea's agitation, Virgil dared not let the pod drop fully to the surface; it would make disgorging the hovercraft difficult. Instead, the pod's bottom skimmed the water as the door slowly opened to make a ramp.

"Thunderbird Seven, from Thunderbird Two."

"Go ahead, Thunderbird Two." Dianne sat at the controls, concentrating on the choppy water ahead of her. Dom was resting in the medical cabin, under the watchful eye of Luke and Rom. Elise sat in a co-pilot's seat, her face white with determination. Scott and Brains waited in the fuel tanker; once Seven was on its way, Virgil would retrieve the pod, berth his Thunderbird back in the cavern at Mateo, and join the tanker crew for the ride home. They would likely get back to the island ahead of the hovercraft, and have already started work on repairing the power plant.

"Things are about as ready as they'll ever be, Doc." Even with Lena's improvements in their communications security, old habits still died hard for Virgil.

"Ah know." Dianne took a deep breath. "Hope y'all don't get seasick, 'cause this is gonna be one bumpy ride!"

With that, she ran her hands over some controls, and Seven rose as high as she could go in the crowded pod. Another sweep and the hovercraft moved forward, not easing out onto the choppy surface but rather shooting out, rising further to keep the swelling sea at bay. Behind her, Virgil closed the pod door, spilling a goodly amount of water inside, then retrieved the pod.

"See you at base, Thunderbird Seven," he called as he turned his 'Bird to face Mateo once more.

"See you there." Elise responded this time as Dianne was fully concentrating on her piloting.

"Thunderbird Seven, out."

XXXX

The fuel tanker came in for an uneven landing on the main runway, and Scott shut down all of its systems. As the three men disembarked, Scott gave a low whistle. "Wow."

The storm had done a lot of damage on this level. The runway was half-covered with sand and driftwood from the beach. Several of the palm trees lining the airstrip were leaning away from or out over the tarmac; that is, unless they had been ripped totally out of their sockets. A portion of the switchback trail had disintegrated, leaving a sizable gap that they'd have to fill. The Cliff House was still covered by its protective dome, but some boulders had come loose from the cliff side above it, leaving marks where they hit. A few had shattered on the airstrip, but a couple of larger ones were still intact, and had left craters in the tarmac.

"I'm amazed you put the tanker down as well as you did, Scott," Brains remarked as he gazed at the damage.

"I'm amazed, too, Brains."

Virgil gazed down the runway, and across the span of beach, then shook his head. Scott nudged him. "It's gonna take them some time to get here, Virge. Let's make sure they can get inside when they do."

"Right." Turning, Virgil followed Scott down to the aircraft hanger that was set in Thunderbird Two's massive exit. The three men were wearing their civvies, just as if they'd never left home.

"If we can't get in here, we can try one of the freight elevators on either side," Scott said, popping open the manual door controls. The crank here was fairly large, but with both Scott and Virgil lending their strength, the door ground open about two feet, then stopped.

"Sand's gotten into the edges," Brains said, shaking his head. "Expect to see that a lot."

"Hey there!" A head of curly red hair stuck out from beneath the door; its owner turned so he could see outside. "Welcome home! Ready for some clean up?"

Scott grinned as Will slithered out from beneath the hanger door. "Good to see you, Will! How are things right now?"

"Well, your two brothers finally extricated themselves from the elevator by popping the emergency hatch and climbing up the cables. They were filthy when they got to the top, but your grandmother forgave them once they'd showered (with cold water from the tanks, I might add), and changed clothes. She said something about burning what they'd worn..." He turned to Brains. "The power plant is still sealed; we've been waiting for you to get back before doing anything to bring it back online."

"How's Tin-Tin?" Brains asked, ducking beneath the doorway.

"Her headache has subsided with pain meds, but she's really kinda listless. Mr. Tracy's afraid she got some of the fuel's fumes in her system, but he's been in touch with Dr. Tracy who won't let him do more than the basics until she's done some tests." Will caught the gaze of each man in turn. "I gather they're comin' back in Seven?"

"That's the plan. Dominic had a fall and was concussed. Mom wanted him monitored all the way home." Scott scratched his head. There was no sand inside the hangar, neither was there any water. "Looks like this place stayed watertight."

"Yep." The small party began to make their way up the pod vehicle ramp. "Kyrano and the missus are safe and got out of the Round House a little bit ago. The main house is still shuttered, but..." and here Will looked sheepish, "we rounded up some oxyhydrite equipment and cut a hole in the shutters. Damn, but they're made of some tough stuff!"

They had reached the lab block, and waiting for them on the steps were Callie and John. "Welcome home, everyone!" Callie called. "We're ready to fix the power plant whenever you are, Brains."

"Well, then," Scott said, rolling up his sleeves. "Let's get to work."

Consternation! by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Tue, 24 Jul 2012 19:21:52 GMT

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Brains leaned heavily against the elevator's wall and sighed, closing his eyes. It had been a long day, with a few close calls, but the fact that the elevator was taking him up from the bowels of the island to the Villa level was testament to his success. Once in the lab, he and Will had suited up in radiation-proof suits with air tanks and respirators. Callie stayed behind to monitor the situation, while Scott after a talk with his father began clean-up efforts on the airstrip. Together, he and Will had assessed the damage to the power plant, repaired the leaks in the fuel lines, and brought the generators back online one by one.

They were well into fixing the leaks when Thunderbird Seven arrived. The mobile med unit could squeeze its way through the smaller hangar door, but with the lifts still out, there was no way to get Dominic up to the Villa. After a conference with Alan, who assured them there were no satellites, aircraft, or sea craft in the area, Dianne took Seven down the beach to a spot where it

could go overland to the Villa. Once there, doctor and patient were offloaded, and Elise took it back down to the air strip and into the underground hangars.

Now, the island was at full power again. The main hangar doors could be opened, and Virgil and Scott were on their way back from Mateo with their Thunderbirds. The damage in places like the boat pen had yet to be assessed, but all Brains wanted was some food and about twelve hours of sleep. Dinner, he had been informed, was waiting in the dining room, a buffet to which all members of the team had been invited. But before he calmed the rumbling in his belly, Brains had a stop to make.

The lights in the sick room were on, and a still-woozy looking Tin-Tin was just pushing away her dinner tray, the contents mostly untouched. She was dressed in one of the hospital-style gowns, and had an oxygen monitor on her finger, and a cannula in her nose. Dianne came out of her office when she heard the door swish open, and smiled when she saw the freshly-showered Brains.

"All clean and decontaminated?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied. "So is Will." He glanced around. "Where is Dom?"

"Over here!"

Brains trotted around the curtain that separated the hospital beds. Dom gave him a crooked, woozy smile.

"How are you doing?"

"I'm grand. Doc has some good meds for clearing out the head." Dom's grin turned into a pout. "But she won't let me go home and take care of my little man. Says I have to stay for a bit." He beckoned Brains closer. "D'ye think you could put in a good word for me with the Doc? See if she'll let me go home?"

"You are on good meds, aren't you?" Brains smiled and shook his head. "Sorry, Dom. No can do."

Dom waved a hand, dismissing him. "You're no help. Get out of here."

"Okay." Brains went back to Tin-Tin, who looked at him with an almost accusing stare. Dianne's gaze flicked back and forth between them, and she smiled.

"I haven't had my own dinner, yet," she said. "I'd better hurry before the kids eat it all." At the door to the hallway, she paused, "You, too, Brains. Don't stay too long or there won't be anything left." Unspoken, yet still implicit in her words was the warning, "A short visit; no more."

The door swished shut behind her, and Brains moved to perch on the edge of Tin-Tin's bed. He stifled a moan as he rubbed his neck.

"So," Tin-Tin began. "Everything is fixed downstairs?"

He nodded. "As far as I can figure, the vibrations of the power plant caused lines one and two to rub against their supports, causing small ruptures that finally broke through today, letting air into..."

She put up a hand. "Later, Brains. My head is still too fuzzy to deal with it."

He subsided with a nod, and she added, "Dianne wants me in here one more night ... for observation, she says. She tells me it'll take a bit for the fumes to finally leave my system, but I should be released tomorrow to my own room and off duty for a few days."

Brains brightened at that. "Maybe we could take advantage of that and do something fun. Perhaps a picnic on the beach?"

"Perhaps." Tin-Tin regarded him for a long moment through half-closed lids. A slight smile crossed her lips, and she beckoned for him to come closer.

He moved as close to her as the raised head of the bed would allow, and hitched a hip onto the mattress where she'd patted it. She motioned for him to draw closer still; he was both curious and alarmed at the same time.

Without warning, she reached up and took his head in both hands, rising up to plant a hungry kiss on his lips. His eyes opened wide with surprise, and he made some sort of noise, breaking the kiss.

"Tin-Tin!"

"I love you." Her tone was very matter of fact, and it was accompanied with another, even more passionate kiss. This time, his startled senses relaxed. He leaned in, propping himself up with one forearm beside her head, while he threaded the fingers of the other hand through her hair. When they paused for breath, she said, just as matter-of-fact as before, "Marry me."

Brains blinked and sat back. "Tin-Tin, I..."

She put a finger to his lips. "I know what you're going to say: I'm sick and sleepy and don't know what I'm saying." She shook her head. "I know exactly what I'm saying, why I'm saying it, and who I'm saying it to!" She put her hand on either side of his face again, but this time, brought their heads together so his forehead rested on hers. Her voice was just above a whisper as she said, "I love you. I know you love me. We've taken things slow because I was burned. But that doesn't matter anymore. What matters is us, and it's high time we did something about it. So, marry me, John Grayson."

A chuckle bubbled up from somewhere deep inside, and Brains let it out. He shook his head, rolling his wide forehead against her sweaty, strand-bedecked one. Pulling one of her hands away from his face, he twined his fingers in hers, then placed a tiny peck of a kiss on her nose, and a longer lingering one on her lips.

"How can I refuse?" he said, smiling. "Bother the romance and flowers and sparkly things. I never could get them right, anyway."

"You do. You can. You will. We can make it all official later, but I'm putting in my offer now before anyone else has a chance to." An eyebrow rose in questioning challenge. "So?"

He drew her face up to his, and this time, their kiss was sweet and long. "Yes," he murmured. "Of course I'll marry you."

From behind the separating curtain came the sound of slow clapping, then a flat attempt at a whistle. Both of them turned in that direction, Brains with a slight frown on his face and Tin-Tin with a faint smile.

"Congratulations on your impending nuptials! Mazel Tov and all that. Now will you two lovebirds get yourselves a room?" The comment tapered off into a muttered, "Teenagers..."

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Wed, 01 Aug 2012 03:12:56 GMT
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Later that evening...

Virgil paced the length of his room, his forehead furrowed in a frown. He kept seeing Elise in Luke's arms, him holding her close. I am so done with this. He snarled to himself and marched from the room.

It seemed like forever before he arrived at the Cliff House. He pressed the buzzer to Elise's apartment a little too forcefully. The door opened a few moments later. "Hi, Virgil! Come in!" Elise said cheerfully.

He followed her inside, the smell of chocolate filling the room. "You're baking?"

She nodded. "Yes. After the past few days, I need something chocolate." She opened the oven and peered inside. "I made a double batch of brownies so I can share with my fellow chocoholics upstairs." Closing the oven, she turned and wiped her hands on a towel. "Will is as bad as I am! And we all know about Luke's addiction." She chuckled to herself.

Virgil scowled. "Oh, yes, we can't forget Luke," he muttered sarcastically.

Elise looked up, surprised at his tone. "What?"

Virgil's hold on his temper finally snapped. "Every time I turn around it's 'Luke this' and 'Luke that'. I am so sick of hearing about him!"

She stood staring at him, a look of surprise on her face. "Virgil, what are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about all the time you and he seem to spend together! Hell, today I saw you in his arms! He always seems to have his hands on you and you never seem to mind!"

"He's my friend!"

"Sure, sure he is," Virgil muttered.

Elise threw her hands up in the air, exasperated. "I don't understand where this is coming from! Luke and I are friends! Like brother and sister. You know, like you and Tin-Tin."

"It didn't look like brother and sister to me on Mateo," he snapped.

"Were you spying on me?" She marched over to him, hands on her hips. "Just what are you saying, Virgil?" she asked, ice dripping from every word.

He met her angry glare with one of his own. "I think I've made myself perfectly clear."

"Are you..." She took a deep breath. "Are you accusing me of something?"

"Why? Do you deny it?"

"Deny what?!"

He glared down at her, his eyes flashing with anger. "Deny that you and Luke are a little more than friends."

Elise's face turned white then red. "I think you'd better leave before we both say something we're going to regret later."

"Fine with me, I have nothing left to say." He turned on his heel and stormed out the door.

Elise stood shaking for a moment, then sat on the couch. She wrapped her arms around herself, rocking back and forth as the tears flowed down her cheeks.

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Lillehafroe](#) on Fri, 03 Aug 2012 00:42:24 GMT

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Virgil stood outside Elise's door, his fists clenched. She didn't deny it. She never once said it wasn't true. Scowling, he stalked towards the monorail.

Too agitated to stand still, he paced the length of the platform, waiting for the train to arrive. He paused as he heard it coming, and moved to the edge of the platform, ready to board as soon as it stopped.

Head down, he stomped into the car, colliding with the person exiting. He would have fallen except for the hand that grabbed his arm.

"Whoa! Easy there, Virgil!"

Virgil looked up to see he had crashed right into the one person he hadn't wanted to see. He glared at the other man and pulled his arm free.

Luke and Rommel stepped off the car. They allowed the doors to close and moved from the edge of the platform. "Virgil? Everything OK?"

"No, actually, it's not." He folded his arms across his chest. "Stay away from Elise."

"What?" Luke asked, surprise written on his face.

Virgil leaned in close. "I said, stay away from Elise. Did you hear me that time?"

Rommel growled at his tone and Luke signaled him back. "What is the matter with you?"

"Me? You're the one chasing after all the women on this island!" Virgil shouted. He gave Luke a little shove. "First Callie, then Cassie, now Elise. Who's next, my sister?"

Rommel growled again, stepping towards Virgil. Luke reached down and grabbed the dog's collar. "Easy, Rom." He looked up at Virgil. "I have no idea what you're talking about. I never chased anyone."

Virgil rolled his eyes. "That's bull. We all saw you and Callie after the Halloween party. Then when your good friend Cassie got here, you were all over her. Now you've decided to make Elise your next conquest and I won't have it!"

"Elise is a friend! She's nothing more than a little sister to me!"

"Yeah, right. That's why every time I turn around, you're all over her! Hell, this morning on Mateo, she was in your arms! Again!"

Luke shook his head. "Virgil, you're taking this all wrong. She's my friend. She'll never be anything other than that!" He took a deep breath and released it. "I'm gay."

Virgil blinked at him in surprise then his expression hardened again. "Gay? Really? That's the best defense you can come up with?"

Rommel struggled against Luke's grip and Luke turned and opened the door to the common room. He shoved the dog in, then closed the door behind him. "Virgil, I'm serious! I don't like women! I like men!"

"OK," Virgil snorted. "Is that what you told Cassie? What's the real reason she left the island?" He turned and started towards the monorail car.

Suddenly Luke grabbed his shoulders and spun him around. Before Virgil could react, Luke was kissing him on the mouth. A heartbeat later, they broke apart. "Now do you believe me?" Luke snarled. Without waiting for a reply, he flung open the door to the common room and marched off with Rommel.

Virgil, stood staring after him, a shell-shocked expression on his face. Then he put his face in his hands. What have I done?

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Fri, 03 Aug 2012 01:40:02 GMT
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Virgil couldn't keep his thoughts straight as he made his way back to the Villa. Gay. He's gay. He's gay and I accused him of... Oh, Christ! He was barely aware of his surroundings as he exited the monorail and climbed the stairs to the upper levels of the Villa. All he wanted was to hole up in his suite.

He let out a groan as he went to pass the games room and came face-to-face with Scott. He knew his pain was written all over his face, so he wasn't surprised when his older brother pinned him with a concerned stare.

"Virg? What's wrong?"

"Nothing, Scott. Just leave me alone."

"Whoa there now, fella," Scott said, placing a hand on Virgil's shoulder. "What's going on?"

"Nothing, Scott," Virgil said, trying to push his way past, "just let me go."

"Hey, who do you think you're talking to?" Scott asked. He pushed open the games room door. "Come in here and we'll talk, now."

There was a stern, yet concerned tone to Scott's voice that was so like their father's that Virgil could not help but obey. He allowed Scott to usher him into the room. He leant against the pool table and hung his head, shaking it from side to side.

"Spill it, Virg," Scott said. "Is it something to do with Elise?"

"No," Virgil said, and then shook his head more vehemently. "Well, yes, really. But not exactly."

He looked up. Scott didn't need to say anything; his expression said it all. Virgil closed his eyes briefly and sighed.

"I accused her of fooling around with... With Luke."

Scott's eyebrow shot up so far it practically touched his hairline.

"You accused her of fooling around with Luke? Virgil, he's gay!"

"Well I know that now!" Virgil said, his temper flaring. "I didn't know that until a few minutes ago." His mind caught up with the conversation. "Wait, you knew he was gay?"

"Well, yeah," Scott said. "We've hung out a few times and we've talked."

"He never mentioned it to me," Virg said.

"Well, it's not like he arrived on the island and said, 'Oh, hey everyone. I'm Luke Morel and I'm gay.' It just came up in natural conversation one day. Have you ever really talked to him before?" Scott asked.

"Well, sort of. Not really outside of the job I guess."

"And that's why you didn't know," Scott said.

"Well, he should have said something," Virgil said. "If he had, this whole mess wouldn't have happened."

"What, do you think he should wear a sign or something? Warn everyone?"

"Don't be ridiculous, Scott," Virgil said, waving away his comment. "I just meant..."

"You just wanted to shift the blame away from yourself," Scott said.

Virgil hung his head again and clenched his fingers around the edge of the pool table.

"You sure don't beat around the bush," he said.

Scott's shoulders slumped a little and he leant against the table beside Virgil.

"I'm not trying to rag on you," he said. "I'm just being realistic."

"I know," Virgil said. "I appreciate it. Ugh, now I have a few apologies to make. I yelled at Elise, and then I yelled at Luke. Me and my big mouth!"

Scott clapped Virgil on the shoulder and nodded.

"Yeah, but your big mouth goes with your big heart. I can understand where you're coming from; it just so happens that you were way off base."

Virgil nodded, and brought his hand up to scrub his face.

"You know, just to prove his point, Luke kissed me."

Scott's eyebrow shot back up again and he nodded.

"And how did that feel?" he asked.

"To be honest," Virgil said, "the only answer is this: scratchy."

Scott guffawed and clapped Virgil's shoulder again.

"Come on," he said. "I think you need to lie down and get your thinking cap on. As you said, you have some apologies to make. I suggest you make them good ones."

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Wed, 08 Aug 2012 04:34:39 GMT

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Wednesday, April 3, 2069, 11:00 a.m., Tracy Island

Jeff glanced around at the men and women gathered in the lounge, data padds in hands. He cleared his throat, gaining everyone's attention. "So. Where do we stand?" Turning to his right, he asked, "Brains?"

Brains adjusted his glasses and gave Jeff a glance that was both sharp and bright. Indeed, there had been a visible bounce to the engineer's step as he'd entered the room, and his smile couldn't have been any wider. "The power plant is obviously back online. We replaced as much piping as possible, but we need to stabilize lines one and two with something that will eliminate any rubbing." He shook his head. "I've already put in an order for a graphite padding that should accomplish our goals, as well as some more piping in a stronger material for our future needs."

Jeff nodded. "Sounds good. Do we need another fuel run?"

The engineer glanced at his data padd, more for form than to refresh his memory. "I've moved the next scheduled run up by two weeks. We can recalibrate from there."

"Excellent." Jeff now turned to Will. "What do you have for us, Will?"

Will glanced at his padd. "Well, we'll need to replace two of the villa's storm shutters, and do some clean up of Thunderbird Three's silo hatch. One of the shutters on the Round House is stuck half-closed and I'll be workin' on that this afternoon." He shook his head. "I suggest that we come up with somethin' with a bit more power as back up in case this happens again." He rubbed his upper arm. "I'm still feelin' sore from usin' those cranks..."

Most of those in the room chuckled, except Virgil, who looked totally lost in thought.

"What about the Cliff House?"

Will shook his head. "No damage to report there. Most debris slid right off the dome and though I think it took at least one hit from a boulder, there were no dents."

"So noted." Jeff decided to bring his second eldest back to the here and now. "Virgil. You're next."

"Huh?" He looked up startled. "I'm sorry, Dad, what did you say?"

Jeff frowned; the circles under Virgil's eyes suggested he'd not slept well, if at all. He shot a look across the room, catching Scott's eye and making a slight inclination of his head in Virgil's direction. Scott shook his head minutely. Jeff clamped down on his questions and repeated himself instead.

"Your turn, Virgil."

"Oh." Virgil took in a deep breath and let it out in a sigh. He frowned at his data padd as if it were lying to him, then he shook himself. "Thunderbird Two's hangar is clear of debris. The hangar doors are working properly and are free of sand. The air strip is also clear, though we have to replace at least three palm trees, and repair four more. Two of the emergency fire suppression towers will have to be replaced, too; they're not deploying properly." He rubbed a hand across his upper lip, and seemed to be mumbling behind it.

"Is that all, Virgil?"

Virgil started again. "Is that... yes, that's all I have."

Jeff's gaze lingered on Virgil for another moment, then he turned to John. "What do you have, John?"

John, who had been watching his older brother with a worried gaze, nevertheless responded quickly. "Well, the comm mast at the southern end of the island is damaged, which means that school is out for the duration." Jeff snorted a laugh, as did Scott, while Dianne rolled her eyes. "We should be able to get it fixed today so the kids can get back to it tomorrow." He glanced down at the data padd he held. "Of course, this hasn't disrupted communications to Thunderbird Five as we're more reliant on satellites than on the comm mast at this point. Satellite phones are functioning normally, too. I took a hike out to the treatment and desalination plants to give them a once over to be sure both are undamaged."

"Good." Jeff now turned to Scott. "Your report?"

"The pool is now clear of sand and is retracting without incident. Thunderbird One's hangar and launch cradle are both clear." Scott cleared his throat noisily. "I took a dune buggy out for a run around the beaches. There's quite a bit of debris to be cleared, particularly on the southwestern corner." He sobered. "I'm told the garden took a big hit, though. Kyrano is sorting through to see what he can salvage."

"Noted." Jeff turned to Gordon. "How's the boat pen?"

Gordon grinned. "Shipshape!"

Everyone groaned, except Virgil, who seemed to be oblivious. Scott crossed behind everyone and put a hand on his brother's shoulder. Startled again, Virgil glanced up at Scott, who nodded toward their father. This made Virgil straighten and sit back, relaxing a bit.

"Seriously," Gordon continued. "The boat pen fared very well, even though the storm door didn't deploy fully. That has been tested; it's working a-okay. I took a skiff out to the eastern side of the

island. The eastern beaches fared pretty well with the bulk of the island acting as windbreak, though the southeastern edges could use some clearing, too."

"How is the tunnel out from the boat pen? Any changes there?" Scott asked.

Gordon frowned a bit. "There is some sign of rock fall off the northern cliffs." He shrugged. "I guess I'll have to take Four out and do a bit of sounding... make sure there's been no major shift in the shoals or reefs off that part of the island."

"Has anyone taken a helijet up to see if we had any landslides or washed out paths?" When the general consensus returned as "No," Jeff nodded toward his oldest son. "Then you do that today, Scott. Take Virgil with you... if he's up to it."

John quickly jumped in. "I'd rather go, Dad." Unspoken in his words were, "and give Virgil a break."

"All right, John. You're with Scott." Jeff finally turned to his wife. "Dianne? How are your patients?"

"Both have been released from the sick room to their own quarters." She put her data pad aside. "They have my orders for follow up and return to duty. For now, they are off-duty entirely."

"So noted." Jeff stood and stretched. "So, if there's nothing else..."

"Actually, Dad, there is."

Jeff sat down again at Scott's words. "Okay. What've you got on your mind, son?"

"Mateo." Scott glanced around the room. "I think we can all agree that the living quarters," here he shot a look at Dianne, "and the medical facilities are badly in need of a retrofit." He shrugged. "I know we don't spend much time there, but when we do, it would be nice to have enough beds for more than four people."

"Not to mention more comfortable ones!" Dianne sat up straighter and put a hand to her back, as if it hurt. "I thought I was sleeping on rocks!"

"You could have slept in Thunderbird Two," Brains reminded her. "And used its sick bay."

"For that matter, the biobeds on Seven would have been more comfortable!" she declared. "However, we're not always going to have Seven along. Nor are we going to have Two. We've retrofitted the sickbay on Five. It's time to turn our attention to Mateo."

"Agreed," Jeff said, amiably. "Get me some plans and some ideas. If we need to carve out more rock, so be it." He glanced around. "Anything else?"

Brains cleared his throat. "Uh... y-yes. There is."

All eyes turned to him, making him obviously nervous. He clasped his hands together to keep them from trembling.

"I've already spoken to John about this. Ahem." He cleared his throat again. "When Tin-Tin and I went to Paris to see her grandfather, Tin-Tin wasn't sure just how to introduce me. I mean, she's known me forever as, well, 'Brains'. I had to step in and provide my real name or at least, my adopted name as I've never known my birth name." Glancing around, he drew in a deep breath. "It's become important to her, and important to me, that people call me by my first name." His gaze rested on John, who grinned and winked at him. "I know that will make for some confusion, seeing as I have the same name as your son. And 'Brains' has been a solution to that. But, as he said, we've both had the name for approximately the same length of time. 'Brains', though it's a good nickname, isn't really my name. So, please, call me John from now on."

Before anyone else could speak, John piped up. "If it will help any, you can go back to calling me Johnny. It's not my favorite nickname, but I can put up with it if necessary."

"What would your favorite nickname be, then, Johnny?" Gordon asked, one thick eyebrow raised impishly.

John smirked. "Well, you could go by my penname, J.G. -- Leroy."

"I'm beginning to think Thing One and Thing Two is a better choice," Scott said, his tone dry. He glanced at Brains's puzzled face. "Don't worry about it, Bra... I mean, John. I was only teasing."

When Brains turned his puzzled, questioning gaze to John, his friend mouthed, "Don't ask!" in his direction.

"All right. John, I'll be happy to do as you request, as long as you're willing to put up with an occasional slip and the resulting confusion." Jeff caught the eye of each family member. "We can discuss this with the rest of the family this evening at dinner. You two might want to make a special effort to tell our recruits yourselves." His gaze ranged around the room again. "Is there anything else at all?"

This time, the negative response was unanimous, and Jeff nodded firmly. "Then this meeting is adjourned."

As people began to stand, stretch, and file out, Jeff approached Virgil. "Are you all right, son? You looked... distracted."

Virgil favored him with a wan smile. "I'm just... I just have something to take care of, Dad. I'll be okay."

"Is it something I can help with?"

Virgil shook his head. "No, not really. Though I might need to fly to Auckland or Christchurch in the days ahead."

"All right. Just let me know when and I'll schedule it." Jeff clapped a hand on his son's shoulder. "Get some rest. You look all in."

Wordlessly, Virgil nodded, and Jeff went off to follow his wife.

While this was going on, Dianne caught up with Brains and put a hand on each of his shoulders, drawing him close so she could murmur in his ear. "An' heah Ah thought you had somethin' else t' tell us!"

Brains's eyes went wide behind his glasses and he slowed to a stop. Dianne gave him a raised eyebrow and a coy, knowing smile before Jeff caught up with her and put an arm around her waist.

John clapped a hand on Brains's shoulder from behind and watched his father and mother leave. "What was that all about?" he asked.

Brains swallowed and blinked, letting out a slight sigh. "Come with me to Tin-Tin's suite. I... we have something to tell you."

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Tue, 21 Aug 2012 11:36:57 GMT
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Thursday, April 4, 2069, 9.00am, Tracy Island

Joshua ran along the hallway in front of his father, spraying an imaginary fire hose at the walls and ducking from side-to-side. When he reached the workout room door he stopped and concentrated his aim on the door.

"Watch out Dad, there's a fire! Woooooosh!"

Dominic chuckled and jumped back, cowering from the imaginary flames.

"Put it out, Jak! Save us all!"

"Woooooooooooooosh!"

Joshua's little arms shook with the force of his 'hose' and after a few more seconds, he reached out and touched the door.

"It's all out, Dad," he said. "We're safe!"

"Woohoo!" Dom said, scooping his son up in his arms. "We're saved, all thanks to you!"

Joshua giggled loudly as he was swung through the air, his head tossed back in pure delight. There was a click at the end of the hallway as the sick room door opened, and Dianne shook her head at the antics of father and son.

"I thought that could only have been you two," she said with a smile.

"Good morning," Dom said. He placed Joshua back on the ground and looked at him meaningfully.

Joshua got the hint and looked right up into Dianne's eyes.

"Good morning, Mrs Tracy," he said.

"Dr Tracy," Dominic corrected.

"Oh. Good morning, Mrs Dr Tracy."

Dominic chuckled and Dianne shrugged.

"Well, I am both Mrs and Dr so you aren't wrong," she said. "C'mon in and we'll get your dad seen to."

She held out her hand and Josh took it. As soon as he was in the sick room, his eyes grew wide as plates as he took in the unusual environment. They always did.

"Now, you sit up here," Dianne said, placing him on a biobed, "and Dad can sit right next to you. Don't fall now, y'hear?"

"Yes ma'am," Josh said, and grabbed on to the edge of the bed.

"This won't take long," Dianne said as Dominic hopped up onto the bed.

The similarities between father and son were striking as they sat side-by-side, holding onto the bed and swinging their legs. While Dom had the darkest of black hair and Joshua the lightest of blond, the child definitely favoured his father in facial features not to mention the need for glasses (though Dom no longer needed his due to surgery). Joshua was watching her every move, his mouth open.

Dianne went through her checks and Dom answered her questions. Finally she stepped back and nodded.

"You can go back to full-time duty as of now," she said. "Just try not to get knocked over again."

"Well, tell Virgil to watch where he's going," Dom said. "If he falls right on top of me I'll get squashed. He's a big guy," he said, hopping down from the bed, "and I'm not."

Dianne nodded and regarded his frame with a careful eye.

"When was the last time you weighed yourself?" she asked.

"I don't know," Dom said. "I guess I haven't paid too much attention. I've been busy with work and Josh we've been potty training since his third birthday and I think he's cracked it. Right, Jak?"

"Right!" Joshua said as Dom lifted him down from the bed.

"Well, hop on over to the scales here and we'll see," Dianne said.

Dominic hesitated, but on being subject to Dianne's stern stare he did as he was bid. Dianne shook her head at the result.

"65 kilos at 180 centimetres is very low, Dom," she said. "I know you're not a big guy, but this is starting to get unhealthy. Don't want you to start fainting due to low blood sugar like a former mutual acquaintance of ours."

Dom made a face and lifted Joshua up onto the scales to his cries of, "Me next! I want to go next!"

"That's never going to happen," Dom said. "I just need to pay more attention to myself."

"Or perhaps have someone else pay attention to you?" Dianne asked.

"Huh?" Dom could not help the colour rushing into his cheeks as he tried to feign ignorance. They betrayed him.

"I think there's something going on between yourself and a certain Mr Morel," she said.

"What makes you think that?" Dom asked.

"Oh, I don't know," Dianne said, tapping her fingers on her chin as she tried to suppress a smile. "Maybe something to do with the fact that you reacted so strongly when Luke got shot, or the dinners I hear you keep having together--the Cliff House is a very small community after all--and how concerned Luke was when you smacked your head. Plus," Dianne said, "I'm not stupid. I've suspected for months but I haven't said anything. It's not really my business but as your friend, I'm happy for you both."

Dom helped Joshua hop off the scale and he shook his head.

"You're one sharp cookie," he said. "Yes, there is...something...going on. We've just been spending time together and not really much more. He's been burned and I've been burned, and we both live and work in the same place and if something went wrong it would be so difficult..."

Dom pressed his lips shut to stop anything further from tumbling out. Dianne placed a hand on his shoulder and smiled.

"Sometimes life is about taking chances," she said. "But it's up to you the both of you to decide whether they're worth it. I would hate to lose either of you. After everything we've been through, you and I make a great team, and Luke has brought so much to IR. But no one can tell you what to do. What you're doing now is probably the best course of action."

At that moment there was a crash, and the two friends turned around to see Joshua wincing amid a pile of bandage boxes that were once neatly stacked.

"Oops," he said.

Dianne clicked her tongue.

"Now I did ask you to put those away..." she said to Dom.

The Irishman shook his head and went over to start cleaning up the mess. Joshua looked at him, as if waiting for the punishment, but none came.

"It's okay, Jak. It was your old man's fault," Dom said.

"Well I'll help clean it up," Josh said.

Dianne smiled as father and son began to straighten up the boxes and move them to where they should have been in the first place.

"Dad, when I grow up I want to be a doctor," Josh said.

"I thought you wanted to be a fireman," Dom said.

"No... Mrs Dr Tracy is really nice and I want to be really nice like her."

Dianne couldn't suppress her chuckle, and she winked when the youngster turned around to grin at her.

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 26 Jan 2013 23:56:20 GMT

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Thursday, April 4, 2:00 p.m., Tracy Island

"Hmph!"

Tyler folded his arms and scowled, poking a toe with some force at the uncomplaining wall. Jeff took a moment to raise an eyebrow at his youngest before pointedly going back to rolling up the sleeping bag spread out before him.

Alex, on the other hand, whistled as he brought in his back pack. "Grandma Tracy sent along some apples. Said 'boys can't exist on s'mores alone'." He set the pack down carefully. "How does she get away with calling you a 'boy'?"

Jeff's reply was tinged with amusement. "Because she's my mother, that's how." He gestured with his head toward the tightly-coiled roll. Alex crouched down to pull the velcro straps up and around, fastening the sleeping bag firmly. "Took her forever to stop calling Alan 'the baby'."

Alex chuckled. "Maybe I should call him that."

"Only if you want to take your life in your hands, son." Jeff turned to Tyler. "Ty, bring your bag over here."

Tyler did as he was told, still scowling. "How come we're going on a stupid camp out for Scott's birthday?"

"Because this is what Scott wanted to do," Jeff replied mildly. He set in to rolling up Tyler's sleeping bag.

"Yeah, but I wanted to do paintball! I didn't get to do it last year!" Tyler's scowl deepened. "Everybody said I was..." He put up scare quotes with his fingers and took on a sarcastic tone, "...'too little!'"

"With an attitude like that, young man, I might decide you're 'too little' for this camp out, too," Jeff warned. "Do you want to stay home with the womenfolk and go to bed early?"

Tyler's response was a sullen, "No."

"Then change your attitude and help me fasten up this bedroll."

The younger boy sighed, resigned. "Yes, sir."

Alex changed the subject. "Who's coming tonight, anyway? Will Luke be there?"

"Actually, I think he's the only one of the men who isn't coming." Jeff frowned, perplexed. "That's kind of odd, considering he's the one person I thought would be there."

"Rats! I hoped we'd go looking for nocturnal wildlife!" Alex's disappointment was fleeting. "But we can play flashlight tag!"

"Flashlight tag?" Tyler sounded surprised. "We haven't played that in a long, long time. Not since we lived in South Carolina and back then, I was too little to play."

"You're not too little to play that anymore, Ty." Jeff finished affixing Tyler's bedroll to his small backpack. "Been a long time since the older boys have played that, too. You'll probably beat the pants off them."

"Okay!"

Jeff helped the boys fasten their packs, Scott came in, followed closely by Gordon. Scott held his pack by a strap, but Gordon already had his on.

"Ready to go?" Scott asked.

"Not yet." Jeff grinned. "You two have flashlights?"

"Yeah," Gordon replied. "Dare I ask why?"

"We're gonna beat your butts at flashlight tag, that's why!" Tyler crowed.

"Oh really?" Scott reached out to tousle Tyler's hair. "We'll see about that. C'mon, squirt. You can follow me."

"I'll get my gear and meet you out at the foot of the trail," Jeff said, heading out and hurrying down the hall.

As Alex moved toward the door, Gordon - who had held back a bit - put out a hand. "Wait a minute, bud. I need something that only the bug master can provide."

Alex favored his older brother with a calculating, skeptical frown. "Oh? What's that?"

Gordon leaned over and whispered in Alex's ear. The younger boy folded his arms. "What do you need those for?"

"Alex, my man," Gordon said, favoring his brother with an eyebrow wiggle and a mischievous grin, "the less you know, the better you can plausibly deny responsibility."

"Somehow, I doubt Dad would look at it that way." Alex shifted his stance. "Besides, don't you have some of those yourself? I'd think that with all the pranks you pull..."

"Indeed, I do, sahib, I do. They're just not as ... shall we say ... realistic as yours." Gordon clasped his hands below his chin, widened his grin, and gave Alex what could only describe as "puppy dog eyes". "Pweeeese?"

Alex sighed and dropped his arms, resigned. "Oh, all right. But my name doesn't come up, okay?"

"I swear never to reveal my sources." Gordon held up three fingers in a Scout's salute. "Scout's honor, cross my heart, and all that jazz."

Jeff popped his head into the room. "What's the hold up here?"

"Nothing, Dad," Gordon said, smoothly. "I need a pack of cards. Alex says he has one."

"All right, then. But hurry up!" Jeff ducked back out.

"You heard the man," Gordon said.

"Gordon," Alex whispered as he pulled out what Gordon really wanted. "I don't have any cards!"

"Don't worry, sahib. It's all taken care of. Now, let's get going!"

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Thu, 23 May 2013 01:14:19 GMT

Luke made his way up the steps of the Cliff House, Rommel at his side. As they moved closer to the second level, the dog's ears pricked up and he stepped in front of his master.

"Rommel," Luke warned and the dog paused. When they got to the top of the stairs, Luke spied what was exciting his dog. Josh sat playing, zooming trucks and cars along the floor. He looked up as Luke and Rommel approached.

"Hi, Wuke!" the boy lisped.

Luke smiled. "Hey, sport. What do you have going on here?" He knelt down to examine the boy's cars.

"Here! Use this one!" Josh pushed a yellow car into the man's hands. Together they played for a few minutes before creating a spectacular pile up. Their laughter attracted Dominic, who came out to see what was going on. A wide smile crept across his face.

"You two be careful now," he chuckled. "I don't have to attend any traffic accidents."

Luke eyed the impressive pile of 'smashed' cars and couldn't help but smile.

"It could be a bit too late for that," he said.

Dom playfully shook his head and sighed.

"What am I ever going to do with you two?" he asked. "You want to come in for a drink? The wee man needs a snack."

"Yeah, snack!" Josh said.

He ran straight through the pile of toys, sending small plastic cars in every direction. Dom folded his arms and gave his son a semi-stern look.

"Ah-ah, you need to tidy your cars first. We can't have anyone tripping and falling now, can we?"

Josh looked a little sullen but nodded. "Yes, Da," he said.

"Here, I'll help you, champ," Luke said.

Josh's face lit up and together they transported the toys back into the apartment.

Dominic walked to the fridge and pulled out a juice box. "Here you go. Want something?" he asked Luke. "I've got a very nice red." He held up another juice box and grinned.

Luke shook his head. "I'm good, thanks." He put the small piles of cars on the table. "How are you feeling? Sorry I didn't get down to see you earlier, I ah, got tied up." He smiled at Dom but it didn't quite reach his eyes.

"Wait a sec." He turned to his son. "Want to watch a some cartoons?" The boy nodded enthusiastically and a few moments later was on the couch, juice in one hand, cookie in another, eyes glued to the screen.

Dom led Luke over to the kitchen area, where he poured two glasses of lemonade and set them on the table. "Sit!" he said as he sat down and motioned for Luke to do the same. Luke paused a moment, glancing out the door at Rommel. The dog was lying down, sleeping in the shade under the table. He sat and took a sip of lemonade.

Dom did the same. "I'm doing OK, head's a bit sore, but getting better."

"That's good," Luke replied. He looked down at his glass, playing with the water ring on the table.

Dominic frowned in puzzlement. "I overheard a bit of news while I was in the infirmary. I'm sure we'll be getting an announcement in a couple of days."

"Cool."

Dom reached over and took Luke's hand. "What's wrong?"

Luke sighed. "I had an argument with Virgil last night."

"What about?"

"He...he accused me of having an affair with half the women on the island, including Elise."

"What?!" Dom yelped.

Luke nodded. "Yeah. I told him it wasn't true, that I was gay. He didn't believe me." Dominic stared, his mouth open like a gaping fish. Luke went on. "It got ugly, we kept going back and forth then I...I..." He took a deep breath. "I kissed him, Dom. Dammit, I don't know why I did it, I just acted on impulse. God, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry." His voice hitched.

Dom couldn't help but let his fingers flinch away. However, the crestfallen look in Luke's eyes brought them right back down again. His insides were turning over and over. What?

"Well... God, why did you do that?" was all he could say.

"I don't know!" Luke said. He paused for a moment and then shook his head. "Well, actually, I think I do. It was just on impulse. He was being completely stubborn and block-headed. The last straw was when he implied that I had been carrying on with Cassie and then told her I was gay to get out of it, or at least I think that's what he meant." Luke's brow furrowed deeply. "I just felt like it was the only way I could get him to believe me."

"What was his reaction?" Dom asked, keeping his voice as steady in tone as possible.

"I don't actually know," Luke said. "I left. I didn't give him a chance to react. You're not angry, are you?"

"What? No, of course not!" Dom said, although the hitch in his voice betrayed him. Luke raised an eyebrow and he conceded. "Well, I have to admit the thought of you kissing someone else didn't sit well with me. But, we're not exactly going out so I don't really have the right to that reaction."

"It wasn't even a real kiss, anyway," Luke continued. "I was pissed and trying to prove my point, I guess." He sighed. "Needless to say, I'm not going to the camp-out. I sent a message up to the house telling them I wasn't going to make it. Scott didn't seem to question it."

"Then I won't go either."

Luke shook his head. "No. I'm not ruining your day further. Besides, I'm not fit for much company anyway. Rom and I are just going to chill."

Dominic's forehead furrowed in thought, then he looked up and smiled. "Take Josh."

"What?"

"I was planning on bringing Josh up to the Villa but why don't you take him instead? The two of you can...chill...together!"

Luke frowned. "Dom, I don't think--"

"It's perfect! I have his bag all packed and ready to go." Dominic paused a moment. "Unless you just want to sleep here?" At Luke's stunned expression, Dom chuckled. "Your place it is then." The Irishman turned back into his apartment, appearing a few moments later with a fireman duffel bag in his hand, matching sleeping bag in the other. "Here you go," he said handing them to Luke. "I'll get Josh washed up and bring him up in a few minutes."

Luke stood staring. "Dom, I--"

Dominic smiled softly and took Luke's hand. "It's alright." He squeezed Luke's fingers gently. "We'll talk later."

"Thanks, Dom." He smiled thinly. "Have fun. Bring him up when he's ready." He turned and walked outside, snapping his fingers for Rommel to follow him up the steps.

Dominic watched him go, then turned to his son. "Hey, Jak, I have a surprise for you."

Written by Artisticrainey and Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Thu, 02 Apr 2015 15:49:50 GMT
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Scott sat back on the wide log and stretched his feet to the campfire. He closed his eyes for a

moment and drank in the details of his birthday celebration.

All around him was the sound of merriment. Tyler and Alex were replaying their game of flashlight tag again, giving a blow by blow account including the moment when Gordon tripped over a rock and fell, arms-flailing, head over butt.

Scott breathed in deeply. The smells of the campfire brought back innumerable memories from childhood, like cookouts with his grandfather Grant. It always felt like they had been in the middle of the wilderness, but in truth they were probably still on his grandfather's farm. Grant had never failed to enthrall his grandchildren on those trips.

Rough wood scratched against Scott's fingertips as he gripped the log, and when he licked his lips he could still taste the s'mores from earlier. When he opened his eyes at last he saw the dancing fire and the shadows licking the sand around them, and all those gathered together to help celebrate his birthday his father, both his biological and step brothers, and a small group of other men who had become his friends over the last year. Something struck him then, some kind of irrepressible desire to express his thanks and probably embarrass himself. Even so, he stood up.

"Hey guys, can I say something?"

Several heads turned towards him.

"I think you just did," John said with a wink.

Scott rolled his eyes.

"You know what I mean. Call the squirts in."

John did as he was asked and the group started to gather around the campfire. Jeff regarded his son with a mixture of curiosity and...pride?

Once everyone was together and silently waiting, Scott cleared his throat. Just as he was about to speak he saw a familiar glint in Gordon's eye and knew what was coming.

"Quiet everyone, quiet!" Gordon said with mock outrage.

He received a punch in the side from John for his mirth and Scott shook his head. Gordon rubbed his ribs but was still smiling.

"Thanks, Johnny," Scott said. "Everyone, I just wanted to say thanks for everything not just for coming out here to celebrate my birthday, but for all the times over the last year - and more - that you've stood by my side, trusted my judgement and have helped me to smile, even in dark times. I do appreciate it." He picked up a bottle of water and raised it. "To you all."

"And to you, son," Jeff said softly as he returned the toast.

There was a round of 'cheers' and 'hear-hears' above the crackle of the fire. Scott sat back down and Jeff shuffled over to him, clapping him on the shoulder.

"Happy Birthday, son," he said.

Scott grinned. It was indeed a happy, happy birthday.

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...
Posted by [artisticrainey](#) on Sat, 11 Apr 2015 20:59:13 GMT
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The camp fire was dying down, and the last of the stragglers were heading for their sleeping bags. Dominic yawned, stretched, and cast his eyes skyward. A canopy of stars was draped above them and he could not help but smile.

"Beautiful, aren't they?" said a voice.

Dom turned to see John standing with his hands in the pockets of his khaki shorts, a lopsided grin on his face.

"I love looking at the stars," Dom said. "Me ma always used to say that each star was an angel or an ancestor. I sometimes like to think that she's lookin' down on me now." He paused for a moment and pulled his gaze away. "I hope she'd be proud of what I've done with my life."

John fell in beside Dom and glanced upwards.

"Sometimes I think the same thing."

The two men lingered for a few moments in quiet reflection, before the tranquillity was disturbed by another yawn.

"Oh man," John said, trying to stifle his own exhalation, "now you've got me going."

"It's time to hit the hay or the sleeping bag, as the case may be," Dom said.

They wandered over to the pile of packs that had been abandoned earlier. As John unfurled his bedding and started to settle down, careful not to wake any of the sleeping figures around him, Dominic fished for his pack. It wasn't where he had left it, but then that wasn't unusual. With so many bags, it would have been disturbed by others.

He crept across to an empty space as the last embers of the fire glowed in the darkness. He tiptoed past the sleeping form of Gordon, snuggled securely in his sleeping bag. Dom frowned as he pulled his bag out of its cover. He had never been particularly good at repacking the darn things, but this time it slipped out as if it were brand new. I must've mastered this the last time I used it... he thought.

As quietly as he could, Dom draped the bag on the ground, stripped off to a pair of shorts and a light t-shirt, and undid the zip. When his bare feet hit the bottom of the bag they touched something unusual.

They touched something.

Dom pulled his legs out and jammed his arm in, but paused for a split second. What if it was... Nah, couldn't be, he thought. Could it? With more caution, he continued to reach into the bag until his fingers brushed something with legs... Multiple legs... Eight legs.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

John had just closed his eyes when the cacophonous scream erupted.

"What the hell?"

He was not the only one to leap from his sleeping bag. The entire assembly was now on its feet, the air filled with a chorus of confusion.

"What goes on here?" Jeff demanded groggily, looking around for the culprit.

John joined him, but whoever had screamed was nowhere to be found.

"Who was that?" Scott asked, rubbing his eyes with his knuckles. "I swear, if it was Gordon I'll-"

"Not me, Scott," Gordon said. "I was in my bag the whole time."

John narrowed his eyes and regarded his brother closely. There was something there, an almost imperceptible twitch of Gordon's lower lip, that betrayed him.

"Gordon... What did you do?"

"Nothing!"

All eyes were now on the redhead.

John looked around the group and shook his head.

"Hey, where's Dom?"

Heads turned, and no one came back with a positive response. Will knelt down at a sleeping bag he hadn't seen before - it must have been Dominic's - and picked something up.

When John saw it, his eyes immediately returned to Gordon.

"Gords," he said, advancing on his younger sibling, "Will appears to be holding what seems to be an enormous fake spider. Would you have any idea why it was in that sleeping bag? Indeed, that particular sleeping bag?"

Gordon instinctively stepped backwards and glanced around for an escape route, but all paths were blocked by a series of increasingly annoyed men.

"Hey, it was a joke!" he spluttered. "You know, funny ha-ha?"

"Gordon," Jeff said, his tone of voice dangerously low, "that was not funny. The man has a phobia of spiders. Where did you even get it?"

Gordon's eyes flicked to the side and Jeff followed his son's gaze. Alex held up his hands and shook his head.

"I loaned it to him but I didn't know what he was going to do with it, I swear!" he said. He glared at Gordon. "Not cool."

"Not cool, indeed," said Jeff.

"Now we're going to have to search for him," said Scott. "For Pete's sake Gordon, it's the middle of the night! On my birthday!"

"Relax, guys, will ya? He can't be far. Geez, why can no one take a joke?"

In truth, it didn't take long to locate their missing man. John, frustrated after searching part of a stretch of strand, shook his head before glancing upwards and huffing out a breath.

There, above him at the top of a palm tree and hanging on for dear life, was Dominic.

"Uh, Dom?" he asked, blinking in case his eyes deceived him. "You okay up there buddy?"

"S-spider."

"Yeah, we found it. It was a fake. We're all going to kill Gordon for you. Will you come down?"

"I-I'm not sure I can. I think my arms and legs are locked. I keep telling them to let go but I can't!"

If he hadn't been so bone tired John might have laughed. As it was, he didn't.

"You want me to come up and prise you off?" he asked.

"I-I'll try again."

The palm tree shook a little as Dominic tried to free himself. Then, in a split second, he was detached.

And falling.

Without thought, John held out his arms and caught the skinny Irishman before he hit the sand.

"Twit-twoo."

Both John and Dom turned their heads at the same time towards the voice. It was Gordon.

"There are easier ways of getting some alone time, you know," he said with a wink.

John and Dom looked at each other, and without a word John gently let the other man down. They paused for a moment before, in tandem, they bolted towards the red-headed Tracy.

"I will kill you!" Dominic screamed.

Gordon took off at a sprint, dodging through the other campers.

"I regret nothing!"

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Tue, 14 Apr 2015 18:47:37 GMT

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The thumping bass of Luke's phone ringtone startled him awake. Groping around on his nightstand, he finally grabbed it and answered.

"Yeah, hello?" he mumbled.

"Mr. Morel?"

"Yeah, that's me," he replied groggily.

"This is Bethany from Edward Porticello's office."

"Who?"

"Mr. Porticello. He's handling your case against Doug Byerley."

Luke heaved himself up to a sitting position. "Doug Byerley? Oh, my accident. Sorry. You, ah, caught me off guard."

"That's quite all right, Mr. Morel," Bethany told him. "Mr. Porticello wanted me to let you know that they set a date for the trial. It will be April twenty-fifth, at 10:30 at the Yellowstone Country Courthouse in Billings." She paused. "They want you to testify."

That woke Luke up completely. "Wait, what? Mr. Porticello said there wouldn't be much I could contribute, being nearly dead and all," he replied bitterly.

"I'm sorry. Mr. Byerley's attorney has requested it. He said if you cannot make it, they will be forced to subpoena you. Mr. Porticello assured him you would be there."

He sighed. "Terrific. I guess I have no choice."

"Again, I'm sorry for the short notice. They are hoping you won't come from Los Angeles and the case will be dropped," Bethany said.

Luke shook his head. "That's not going to happen, I'll be there."

"Very good. I'll send you some briefs to read through before you get here. Mr. Porticello will want to see you before the trial to go over a few things. I'll be in touch as the date gets closer."

"Great, thanks. I guess I'll see you in a couple weeks," Luke told her.

"You're welcome, Mr. Morel," she replied. "Have a nice day."

Luke scowled as he hung up the phone. "Too late for that," he said, flopping back down on the bed. "Great news before I've even had a damn cup of coffee."

"Hi, Wuke!"

Luke was startled a second time and bolted upright. Spying Joshua at the end of the bed he sighed, then grinned. "Hey there, champ."

"Wom is hungwy. I is too," the little boy told him. Rommel's head also appeared and he added a "Woof!" to the conversation.

Luke laughed. "Well, I can't let you two starve now can I. Let's find some breakfast, then how about we go build sandcastles on the beach?"

"Yay!! Sandcastles!!" Josh jumped up and down making Luke laugh again.

"Want pancakes?"

"Yes! Pwease!" The little boy rushed from the room.

Rommel looked up at his master. Luke nodded. "Go on." The dog sped out of the room after Josh. Luke shook his head and got up, pulling a pair of shorts and a shirt on. "Time to turn this day around."

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 16 Apr 2015 22:54:02 GMT

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Dianne brought her cup of coffee into the lounge. Pausing at the door from the study, she gave her husband a visual once-over before descending the steps and crossing to his desk. His hair stuck out in odd little spots and though his eyes were focused on a tablet he held, she could tell

he wasn't really seeing it.

"Good morning, love," she said, coming around to his chair to give him a peck on the cheek.

"Mornin'," he mumbled, placing the tablet on his desk. He punctuated the greeting with a huge yawn before returning his attention to the screen.

"I take it the camp out didn't go so well."

Jeff blinked bleary eyes and glanced up at her. He shook his head. "No, it was fine. Great even--that is, until Gordon pulled a prank on Dom as we were bedding down for the night. Scared the man so much he ran off into the jungle and we spent God knows how long searching for him."

"Would this prank have anything to do with spiders?" When he frowned at her, a question in his eyes, she shrugged. "I know he's afraid of them. Makes the most sense to me."

He grunted slightly. "Well, you're right. Fake spider in the sleeping bag. Never heard someone scream that loud!"

"I'll bet!" Dianne settled her derriere on the edge of the desk. "Where'd Gordon get the spider? Don't tell me he has a collection of them!"

"Actually, he does, and I probably should do something about that. But this time, he got one from Alex."

"Alex?" Dianne frowned. She put down her cup and straightened. "I'll have a little talk with him ..."

Before she could take a step, Jeff grabbed her wrist. He shook his head, giving her a weary smile. "No need, love. Alex had no idea what Gordon was going to do with it. In fact, his response to the prank was, and I quote, 'Not cool'. Besides, I had a little chat with him and he promised me he wouldn't help Gordon out like that again." He placed a lingering kiss on the back of her hand. "In any case, I told Alex and Tyler they needed to get some more sleep--in their beds, this time. Waking them this early will mean grumpy sons later on."

"All right. I'll just let him know you told me--once he's up." She picked up her coffee and drained the cup. "I take it someone found Dom?"

"Yes. John did. Helped him out of a tree." Jeff rolled his shoulders with a slight groan. Dianne laid her cup on the desk and moved behind him to massage the affected area. "Then Gordon found them and they went after Gordon ..."

"Which explains the split lip and scraped knees Gordon came in with this morning."

"Very likely." Jeff grunted as his wife hit a particularly tense spot. "Though I didn't see anything ..."

Dianne huffed a laugh as he continued. "Obviously, none of us got a lot of sleep before the sun came up."

"Obviously." She leaned over, getting her mouth down near his ear. "You'd better get some yourself, love. After all, we have guests tomorrow."

Jeff's eyes grew wide and he froze. His head whipped around to meet her gaze. "Damn! You're right! Stephanie and the twins are due here tomorrow! I totally forgot!" He paused, taking her hand from a shoulder. "There's no way! We still have so much clean up to do! The runway isn't fit! I haven't even discussed Operation Cover-Up with everyone." A frown furrowed his brow and his eyes pleaded with her. "Can we just postpone it? It's not like we don't have a valid reason!"

Dianne sighed and resumed her prior position, leaning up against the desk. She folded her arms. "Jeff, we planned this months ago. It's true we're not one hundred percent back to normal after the cyclone but this is their spring vacation. It's already Friday over there and they're either at Drew's or on their way to Drew's." She shook her head. "I'd suggest sending the 'Birds to Mateo, but we'd have to send the support crew as the boys would be expected to be here when the kids arrive--and none of them are up to par on Four."

"I know, I know." Jeff ran a hand through his hair. "We haven't even fixed the trail from the runway to the house. Though maybe ..." He picked up his phone. "I'm going to call Drew and see if there's a way to stall them a bit. Maybe Disney or Sea World. I'll pay for it. It'd give us some time to confer here and make some concrete plans."

"Okay, love. He might have a few ideas of his own." She picked up her cup. "Want some coffee? I'm getting a refill."

Jeff nodded. "Sounds good. I want you in on this brainstorming session. Besides, who else is going to convince Maggie to put up with the twins for a couple of extra days?"

Dianne, already on her way out of the room, turned and shot him a wicked grin. "My mother, that's who!"

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 26 Apr 2015 14:57:47 GMT

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Luke and Rommel carefully picked their way along the path leading to the main house. There were branches and debris strewn about and Luke picked up some as he went, tossing them into the underbrush. "That storm did a lot of damage, didn't it, boy?" Luke spoke to Rommel as they walked around a large pile of branches. "Give me a good blizzard any day!"

They finally reached the house and Luke made his way to Jeff's office. He walked up to Jeff's office and paused to knock on the door.

"Come in," Jeff called.

Jeff glanced up and smiled when Luke stepped in, followed by Rommel. "Hello, Luke." He set down the tablet he had been reading. "To what do I owe the pleasure?"

"The mutt here and I were out for a walk. There's a lot of debris out there," Luke told him.

Jeff sighed. "Yes, unfortunately. I was hoping to have more cleaned up by now but..." He shrugged. "The major repairs are done; it's just the smaller things that still need doing--like the debris you mentioned and the break in the trail from the airstrip."

"Well, count me in for the clean-up. Won't be the first time I cleared paths and cut down trees."

"I'll do that! We missed you at the camp-out last night," Jeff told him. "Alex was hoping to go search for nocturnal wildlife."

Luke fidgeted. "I, ah, I was feeling a little sore and achy after the rescue and having slept on the couch on Mateo. I figured sleeping on the ground wouldn't be the best idea."

"Yes, my wife informed me that the sleeping quarters needed a major upgrade. I'll be looking into it." Jeff raised an eyebrow. "Are you all right now?"

Luke nodded. "Yes, I'm feeling fine today. Could you tell Alex he and I can go out searching another night?"

"Sure."

Luke paused a moment. "Sir, I wanted to talk to you about something."

"Okay. Shoot."

Luke walked over to the desk, Rommel trotting at his heels. "I got a phone call from my lawyer back on Montana this morning. They've finally set a trial date, April twenty-fifth. The defending attorney contacted mine. They want me to come testify. If I don't come willingly, they'll subpoena me," he told Jeff. "I'm not really sure what they're trying to prove since I was pretty much dead when it happened," he said bitterly.

Jeff nodded. "I understand. Didn't remember much of my own disaster either. Still, I think you should go, if only to face the man and let him see what he did to you." He shook his head. "Idiots. Drunks and guns..."

"That's sort of what my brother said when I called him," Luke replied. "He's been called to testify too. I'll just be glad with this is over and done with!"

"I'm sure you will." Jeff turned to his computer. "Let me take a look at the schedule." He waved Luke to a chair. "Have a seat. This may take a bit." He scrolled through his calendar. "I see the 25th is a Thursday. When were you thinking of leaving?"

Luke leaned over to glance at the calendar. "Probably on the 22nd. They want me to come in to the office to go over things beforehand. And if it's all right, I'd like to stay for a week or so. I really didn't get a good visit in last time." He chuckled. "And Mom won't be able to fuss over me so much either!"

He paused then frowned in thought. "Could you get me a ride to LA and I can hop a commercial flight from there?"

Jeff nodded, smiling. "We can do that. Probably should, too, seeing as you're supposed to be working out of that office." He typed something in. "All set. We'll work out who's flying to LAX a bit later, as well as how you'll get back from Montana." Glancing up, he asked, "Anything else?"

Luke shifted uncomfortably. "Well, there is one more thing...Easter is coming up and I was wondering if there was any way I could make it to New Zealand for church. I don't expect to be able to go to the Tridium, but I would like to go to Mass."

Jeff stroked his chin. "Of course. Where do you go to services?"

"I've been to St. Teresa's a couple of times. It's in one of the neighborhoods in Christchurch. I'll double check the Mass times, but I think they're at eight and ten," Luke replied.

"So, the 10 am Mass, then?" Jeff checked his schedule. "I think I'll deputize Gordon to fly you over, if that's all right with you. It'll keep him from pulling anything during the egg hunt." He shook his head, snorting a wry laugh. "The young'uns would NOT be pleased if he dared interfere with that!"

Luke smiled. "No they wouldn't. Knowing Gordon, he'd substitute the eggs with raw or rotten ones." He glanced over his shoulder. "I'd better not say that too loud, I'd hate to give him any ideas!"

Jeff turned to his computer again. "All right. That's in the schedule now, too. I'll let him know later today."

"Thank-you, Mr. Tracy," Luke said, getting to his feet. "Please keep me posted on the clean-up." He snapped his fingers and Rommel sprang up, tail wagging.

"You're welcome, Luke. If you've got time to help out, let Brains know. He's coordinating the continuing clean-up efforts."

"Great, I'll head over to the lab now." He started for the door. "Have a good afternoon!"

Written by Lillehafrue and Tikatu

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 26 Apr 2015 21:42:42 GMT
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Virgil got off the monorail and headed towards Elise's apartment. He paused a moment in front of her door, then turned and headed through the common room. He stopped in front of her French doors. Lights shone through the closed curtains and he could see a shadow moving around the

room. He took a deep breath and knocked.

There was no answer, so he tried again. "Elise?" Still no answer. "Elise, can I talk to you? Please?"

The light shut off, and sighing, Virgil turned and sat on one of the patio chairs, head in his hands.

A few minutes later, the door opened and he snapped his head up in surprise. Elise stood in the doorway, arms folded across her chest. For a moment, they stared at each other, then Virgil jumped to his feet. "Elise, I just want to talk."

She waited a moment, then nodded. "Come in."

Virgil followed her inside. She moved over to the sink and busied herself putting dishes away. Virgil stood uncomfortably, his hands in his pockets. The silence grew longer.

Finally she turned to face him, her hands folded across her chest. "I thought you wanted to talk to me?"

He nodded. "I do. I wanted to say I'm sorry." She didn't reply, just looked at him pointedly. He sighed. "I'm sorry I accused you and Luke of having...whatever it is I thought you were having. It was stupid and jealous of me."

Elise nodded. "It was. More than you know."

"I do know," he said, running a hand through his hair. "I ran into Luke after I left here. I'm not proud to admit I blew up at him too. And he, ah, well....he convinced me I was being an idiot." His face reddened.

Elise raised one eyebrow but didn't respond.

"Anyway," he went on. "I was stupid and I'm sorry." His shoulders slumped and he turned away from her.

Elise's cold shell cracked a little. She walked over to him. "Virgil, why? Why don't you trust me?" she asked him. He met her gaze and for the first time, she noticed his red rimmed eyes. "When have I ever given you reason to doubt us?"

He shook his head. "I know, I know! I guess I saw how close you two were and..."

"Virgil, why wouldn't we be close? Luke has been my friend, my big brother! Callie spends all that time up on Thunderbird Five, with Kat gone, Will is busy down in the hangers, and Dom is pulling double shifts to make up for Nikki! Luke came back early, unable to work and we spent time together. Would you rather us have both been lonely and alone?" She paced the room, agitatedly.

"No, Elise--"

She went on. "Besides, there is no way, no way, Luke would be interested in me!"

"I know! Elise, will you let me get a word in here!" She glared at him and he took a deep breath. "I know you and Luke aren't together. He made that perfectly clear."

"He told you?" she asked.

"Yeah, and showed me," Virgil muttered. "Look, I was a jerk. I should never have said anything to either of you. I was nothing more than a jealous fool." He met her gaze again. "Elise, please, forgive me."

They stood staring at each other for a long moment. Then Elise sighed. "Virgil, I love you but we can't go on if there's no trust."

"Elise..." He walked towards her but she stepped back and held up her arms.

"No. Virgil..."

Virgil's face fell. "I don't want this to end. I love you."

"But you don't trust me." She held her hand up to stem his argument. "Virgil, if you had, this never would have happened."

"You're right, I screwed up, I admit it. I saw something that wasn't there and I'm sorry."

She nodded. "Yes, you are. But why did you go looking for something to accuse me of? Do you really think I would go behind your back? And if I had, would I have been as blatant as you've seen? Virgil, I have nothing to hide, I never have." She turned to look at him. "I think we should take a step back. Obviously we have some things to work out."

He took a shuddering breath. "Step back? Are we done?"

Her green eyes bored into his. "I don't want to be. But I won't stay in a relationship where I feel as if I need to justify my actions."

"So we start over? Pretend this never happened?" Virgil tried to keep the desperation out of his voice.

Elise shook her head. "No. You...We learn from this. I need some time, Virgil. Time to think about what I want." She blinked away the tears in her eyes. "Can you do that? Can you give me some time to think?"

He walked over to her and took her hand. "Elise, I'll give you all the time you need, if it means you'll give me another chance."

She nodded, her eyes bright with tears. "Good night, Virgil." She pulled her hand free.

He swallowed the lump in his throat. "Good night." Walking to the door, he turned and gave her

one last, heartfelt look, then slipped out into the night.

Subject: Re: Another Really Rather Marvellous Chapter...

Posted by [TheBossLady](#) on Wed, 13 Apr 2016 02:18:14 GMT

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Sunday, April 7, 2069 (Palm Sunday) late afternoon, Tracy Island

Jeff shielded his eyes from the sun's glare, gazing out over the whitecaps to watch Drew's plane approach. Dianne sat in a dune buggy, waiting with Gordon at the edge of the runway. Every so often, she glanced up to the switchback drive, casting a critical eye on the work team as they filled in the cut dug out by the cyclone's lashing winds. The boulder and debris had been cleared away from where they'd fallen and the macadam runway had been patched and smoothed. However, to make the trail repairs, Brains had to order a special bonding ingredient to add to the concrete mixed up on site. It had arrived the previous day and between the calcium rebar, pumice-infused cement, and flexible metal lathe, the trail would soon be back in use. Until then, the dune buggies would be the choice of transport while the Parkhurst cousins visited.

Drew's jet touched down smoothly, jets screaming as he applied reverse thrust. It came to a halt in the shadow of the main cliff, just before the hangar door. Jeff took his place beside Dianne while Gordon eased out around them, heading down the runway toward the jet.

By the time Jeff and Dianne joined him, the steps had been lowered and Jared's twins had tumbled out, followed at a more sedate pace by Stephanie and Maggie. Gordon greeted the two boys with enthusiasm before giving Stephanie a quick hug. Dianne hurried up to greet Maggie, who hooked a thumb over one shoulder.

"Fair warning," she said as she parted from Dianne's heartfelt embrace. "He's grumpy. Verrrrry grumpy."

Before Dianne could ask why, Jeff pulled the pilot's door open, offering a hand to Drew. Drew looked at it with a sour face.

"Never again."

"Well, it's good to see you, too." Jeff let his hand drop. "What happened?"

Drew hopped down from his seat, leaving his tablet behind. He pointed very emphatically at Dianne. "Don't ask me to take Jared's two hellions anywhere near a theme park ever again! You couldn't pay me enough repeat that experience!"

"Why? What happened?"

"There were only two of us and three of them!" Drew slammed the pilot's door shut, making Jeff wince. "Stephanie wasn't so bad; she was only interested in a few of the rides and preferred shopping with Maggie. The twins, on the other hand, could not wait patiently in line for anything!"

He shook his head as he turned toward the dune buggies. "Not to mention that J.J. ate too much junk food and got horribly sick on Space Mountain, of all places!"

Dianne shook her head, blowing a long breath. "Wow. That must have been awful!"

"It was!"

Jeff put a hand on Drew's shoulder. "I'm sorry to have put you through that, Drew. We won't ask it of you again."

"Thank you for taking them on," Dianne added. "We really appreciate it."

Being double-teamed by a pair of appropriately remorseful and thankful Tracys drained the pique from Drew. "Hmph," he huffed, a still-peevish expression on his face. "Thank you and you're welcome." Stopping at the dune buggy, he glanced at it as if seeing it for the first time. "Why--?"

"That." Jeff pointed up to where Scott, Virgil, and Will were working.

Drew followed his finger and let out a low whistle. "Now I understand why you needed a delay." He turned to Dianne. "When did that happen?"

"The storm. We're still making repairs." She gestured toward the airstrip. "I bet you didn't even notice the missing palm trees."

"I did!" Stephanie grinned from where she stood, waiting to climb into the dune buggy. "I asked Gordon about them and he said something stupid about a cyclone picking them up like in the Wizard of Oz."

Dianne turned toward the girl and motioned for her to climb into a back seat. "Well, he's right--sort of. To be accurate, a typhoon, a hurricane, and a cyclone are all the same thing. Just different names in different places, depending on where the storm originates." Dianne kept talking as she took the seat in front of Stephanie. Jeff took the driver's side and Drew settled in behind him. "In the Atlantic and the northeast Pacific, the term is 'hurricane'. Down in the South Pacific and the Indian Ocean, the proper term is 'cyclone' and in the northwest Pacific, it's typhoon." She held on as Jeff put the dune buggy in gear and headed along the beach for a bit, following in the tracks Gordon--carrying Maggie and the twins--had already made.

"Oh! I thought he was talking about a tornado. I mean, that's what took Dorothy to Oz, isn't it?" Stephanie grabbed onto a roll bar as they took a sharp turn and began to climb. "Aren't tornadoes also called cyclones?"

"I think Gordon likes his wordplay a bit much sometimes," Jeff called back. "People used to call tornadoes 'cyclones'--after all, the word's origin means 'revolve' or 'whirl'--but that hasn't been scientifically accurate for a long time." He pressed down on the accelerator to keep them bumping up the relatively clear hill to the Round House. "Plus, a long-standing nickname for Australia is--"

"Oz!" Stephanie slapped her own forehead. "Duh!" She shook her head. "How do you put up with Gordon, Aunt Dianne? Uncle Jeff?"

Jeff chuckled. "Practice, Stephanie. Lots and lots of practice!"
