
Subject: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:13:41 GMT

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The party's over, and with the morning, come the slow, persistent winds of change. Difficult decisions lie ahead for many of our crew, with repercussions both small and great. Recovery progresses, aided by a professional, and rebuilding is planned. Another new recruit is brought on board; two missing colleagues return, and one must leave to find her own path. A close brush with an enemy brings IR into the crosshairs again, while unwanted intruders threaten the privacy and security of the island. The winds of change blow where they will, and for good or ill, the Tracys and International Rescue must endure and persevere.

Posted by Tikatu on March 8, 2007

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:14:14 GMT

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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 3/9/2007 7:38 AM

Wed. Aug. 15th: 1:30pm (Thursday August 16th: 8:30am on Tracy Island)

Tap-tap-tap.

Shannon turned to the source of the noise. "Bro, could you please stop tapping your foot? It's driving me nuts."

"Sorry, sis," Brandon replied, stilling his foot. "You know how I am when I'm anxious about something." Both he and his sister were sitting in the waiting area, expecting to talk to Dr. Stanfield about bringing their parents home.

"I know you are; so am I." Shannon put her hand gently on his shoulder. "But we need to keep a cool head. Mom and Dad are counting on us."

"You're right," he replied, putting his hand on hers. "All we can do is wait for the doctor."

Dr. Stanfield had finished her rounds and went to talk to Brandon and Shannon about discharging their parents. Looking at her charts, she said, "I'm pleased with the progress they've both been making. Mrs. McCain is improving every day."

"What about Dad; will he walk again?" Shannon asked.

"He was telling me when I went to see him that he had some feeling in his legs."

"And that's good, right?" Shannon looked at her brother.

"It's definitely a good sign." The doctor smiled at the two siblings. "But I don't want to get your

hopes up; it's too soon for a prognosis on that. They've improved enough to be released from the hospital and I'm sure they'll appreciate a change of scenery. However..."

"All right!" Brandon shouted happily. "Mom and Dad are comin' home!" He grabbed his sister in a bear hug. "Isn't that great, Shannon?"

"Hold on a minute, you two. Before they can be released, there are conditions that have to be met."

Brandon turned around to face the doctor, his excitement cut short by Doctor Stanfield's words. Giving her an inquiring look, he asked, "What conditions?"

The doctor handed him a sheet of paper. "Here is a list of things that are needed before they will be allowed to go home."

Brandon shook his head as he looked at the list. "We can't possibly get all this done in just a few days," he remarked.

"That's why I compiled this for you," Doctor Stanfield replied, handing him another sheet of paper. "It's a list of accredited convalescent homes your parents can stay in until you've completed the necessary modifications."

Brandon and Shannon looked over the lists. After they were through, she turned to him and remarked, "Looks like we've got our work cut out for us."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:20:26 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/9/2007 1:14 PM

Anna turned the page of her book. It was an old favorite, one she still loved rereading. Sitting by the pool in the late afternoon sun, she was relaxing. Everyone, including her, was still recovering from Virgil's party last night.

She was deliberately staying in sight of people. She knew from experience someone would feel the need to talk to her about something. She found people often wanted an outsider to tell their problems to, someone not involved or seen as neutral.

"Can I sit here?" The voice was tentative as if the speaker wasn't sure about the whole thing.

"Sure." Anna looked up, smiled, and returned to her book. The young lady sat down and set a sandwich, some chips and a can of pop down on the table. She started eating, looking thoughtful.

After a moment Anna directed a comment toward her new neighbor. "You're Kat, right?"

"Yes. And you're Mrs. Hanson." Kat started eating her second sandwich.

"Just Anna, please." She went on. "How did you like the party last night?"

"I had lots of fun. I danced with everyone and we all had a good time."

"Anyone special?"

For some reason this seemed to make Kat a bit uncomfortable. "No, not really. John is up on Thunderbird 5 right now." Kat fidgeted a bit then suddenly blurted out, "Do you think I'm selfish? I mean having fun while John isn't here?"

"Probably. Most human beings are selfish. It's a survival skill." Kat blinked at this. Anna went on. "You're, what, in your early 20's?" Kat nodded. "So you are just leaving your childhood and your birth family behind. You need to be a bit self-centered to do that. Or no kids would ever leave the nest. And you haven't found a new family to take your thoughts away from yourself yet. Unless you and John got engaged without telling anyone."

Kat blushed. "No, we're just friends. That's all. But, I felt like I was doing something behind his back, dancing last night."

"Did he know about the party?" Kat nodded. "Did he object to your going?"

"No. It just felt funny, with him not there."

"Ah. What I call 'guilt, the gift that keeps on giving'." Kat looked surprised. Anna went on. "Doing something you enjoy isn't being selfish. Didn't your mom ever do anything without your dad?"

"Well, with other women, yes. But this kind of felt like a date."

"Not like going out with friends after work?"

"I never went out with friends after work," Kat replied slowly. "I did after school, but that was with other girls."

"And since this was with a mixed crowd, it felt like a date." Kat nodded and took another bite of her sandwich. "Did someone ask you to go with them? Or was it a group invite?"

"Oh, it was a group invite. Virgil asked us all via email. And we girls all got together and picked out dresses."

"Then I suspect this is more that you aren't used to going out in a group with guys in it than guilt over having a 'date' behind John's back. Maybe a bit of sadness that he couldn't come but nothing else. Actually, if he had objected to your going, I would have been worried. The idea that someone thinks they have the right to control someone else's behavior is usually a danger sign. It's considered pre-abusive behavior."

"My mum wouldn't have gone without Dad."

Anna raised an eyebrow. "And I wouldn't go without my husband. I wouldn't have as much fun. But that isn't the same as feeling I needed his permission to go."

"Oh." Kat settled back in her chair to think about this.

Anna picked up her book again but put it down after a minute. "Was that why you felt selfish? Because you enjoyed yourself?"

"No." Kat was quiet for a minute then added, "My mum's been sick. I found out about it later. I hadn't even noticed."

"What's wrong with her?"

"She has a heart problem. She seemed tired last time I saw her but I didn't think anything about it. Now I find out she was hiding it from me and had to have surgery."

"Is she ok now?"

"Yes, but I didn't even notice!"

"Why should you have? Were you living at home?"

"No, I haven't for four years now. I went home a lot, though. I noticed she lost weight and seemed tired a lot. But I didn't think about it much. She said she was fine. We used to be so close!"

"And you aren't now? Or you would have noticed or someone would have told you?" When Kat nodded with tears in her eyes, Anna went on. "Which one upsets you more, the fact you didn't notice or the fact no one told you?"

Kat thought about this for a second. "I don't know. I suppose they were trying to protect me."

"From what?" When Kat looked at her with surprise on her face, Anna continued. "Did they think you couldn't handle the news or was this part of the way they coped, by pretending nothing is wrong?"

When Kat hadn't replied after a minute, Anna decided to give her something else to think about. "Did you notice I have a heart problem?"

"You do? You look fine."

"Congestive heart failure. Walking up the two flights of stairs to the house is my limit these days. But I don't look 'sick', do I?" Kat shook her head. "My father died of the same thing. He retired early and spent three of the last five years of his life downhill skiing. The last two, he couldn't, but before that no one he hadn't told knew he was sick. I'm on the heart transplant standby list -- I'm not critical -- but I don't look, or feel, sick and I won't need a transplant for some time -- maybe never. With some types of heart problems the person looks sick right off. Other people never look sick at all. It depends on the type of heart problem and the person who has the problem."

"Why aren't you at home with your daughter looking after you?"

"Well, one: because I don't need looking after, two: because I'd be bored out of my skull in two days and three: because we'd kill each other. I love her very much and we're close but she's not a good babysitter and I don't need one. I'm an adult. If I need help, I'll ask for it." Anna looked at Kat for a minute. "Has anything bad ever happened to your family before?"

"No. I had some trouble with sexual harassment at my first job. I'm not naive!"

No, but you have been sheltered, I bet. "I didn't mean that as an insult. But let's see. In the past couple of weeks you've seen a woman you like badly injured, found out your mom was sick and you were left out of the loop, and, or so I've heard, had a fight with your boyfriend. Any one of these would be upsetting in themselves. How do these make you feel?"

"Upset."

Anna snorted. "You wouldn't be human if you weren't upset. I mean are you angry? Scared? Do you feel guilty? Depressed? Put-upon? Bewildered? All of these are normal reactions. So is feeling guilty for enjoying yourself at a party soon after getting bad news. Like somehow this makes you a 'bad girl'. You should be staying home and covering yourself with ashes instead of having fun."

Kat gave a soft giggle. Anna went on. "I'm not saying you should treat any of these things lightly. They may cause major changes in your life. But they are not all of your life, are they? Your world doesn't revolve around your boyfriend or your mother, does it?"

"No. Although, I really like John."

"Have you ever had a bad argument with a boyfriend before?"

"Not really. I never was this close with any guy before. My mum and dad have never fought."

"And how long have they been divorced?"

"They're not divorced!" Kat replied angrily. "They have a perfect marriage!"

"Kat, your mom and dad are human beings. The only way two people living together never fight is if they never talk to each other, or if one of them has completely overwhelmed the other. Or if they're both perfect. I know of only one person like that. He got crucified for it."

"Mum and Dad love each other."

"And I love my husband very much. But some days I'm tired and snap at him, or I do something stupid and he gets upset, or sometime we just miscommunicate. He has some habits that drive me nuts and I'm sure I have some that do the same to him. And we both have interests the other doesn't share. Part of a marriage is learning to get along after a disagreement. And to handle yourself not being perfect."

"What do you mean?"

"I make mistakes. And I'm not always great about apologizing. I'm working on it, but I need to remember I still fail."

"You seem to feel very strongly about this."

Anna suddenly looked sad. "Part of this is my reaction to the word 'perfect'. One of the first therapy groups I ever led has two sisters in it. One of their other sisters had talked to them about how they had the perfect family growing up."

"So?"

"Dad had sexually molested both of the sisters in my group."

"Oh."

"But what really got me was after about 2 years, I made the older sister see that her husband had been molesting their daughter. She immediately quit the group. She hated her mother for not protecting her, but did the same to her daughter. She said she didn't need the group anymore, her husband had just been released from prison and everything was just 'perfect' now. Her sister quit a month later. 'God told her to'. This figures into my definition of blasphemy."

"Couldn't you do anything?"

"I had to report that I suspected abuse. But that was all I could do." Anna looked at Kat. "I'm not saying all marriages are like that. But 'perfect' is a cover up. A good marriage or any relationship takes work on both sides. And it is constantly growing and changing. Just like the people in it. Like any growing thing it gets messy and dirty. And sometime it hurts."

A sudden "Kat! Kat get wet!" split the air.

Kat looked up and grinned. "Hi, Josh. No, I'm not wet yet."

Joshua ran over and pulled at her hand. "Kat come! Get wet!"

Dom grinned at them. "Sorry ladies. Josh, don't interrupt the ladies."

"We were pretty much done. Kat, I think you're being kidnapped."

"And I don't think he'll let me go. All right, Joshua. Let's get wet." She took off her T-shirt to reveal the swim top underneath and walked with Joshua down the pool steps. He promptly tried to push her in.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:22:22 GMT

From: susanmartha Sent: 3/9/2007 1:17 PM

"Kat!"

Kat looked up from her book. She'd finished her swim and was now sitting at one of the tables by the pool. Gordon was swimming laps and Dom and Joshua were still playing in the shallow end. Brains smiled at her from the balcony and headed down the stairs, carrying a package. "I just received some new equipment for you. Here. Open it!"

Brains seemed so excited. Kat had no idea what could be in the package. She sat down on one of the lounge chairs and started to open it. Gordon stopped swimming and pulled himself up on the side of the pool.

The last of the paper fell away. Kat turned bright red and glared at Brains. The package contained a bright, sturdy, plastic fishing pole along with three plastic fish.

"Since, according to Ned Cook, you've become International Rescue's official fisherwoman, I wanted to make sure you had the right tools for your job." Brains tried to look innocent but didn't succeed very well.

Kat just glared at him for a second, then smiled. She suddenly dropped the package, leaped up and ran straight into Brains, pushing him backwards into the pool. He hit with a tremendous splash. As he came up sputtering, she smiled at him. "Sometimes the only tool you need is a little push." She picked up the toy and headed back to work.

Gordon and Dom both grinned. Josh clapped his hands and cried "Kat! Kat! Brains got wet!!".

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:24:07 GMT

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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 3/9/2007 1:46 PM

Alan whistled as the Cliff House lift ascended up to the upper level apartments. Since the accident, he found that he was visiting Nikki more than before...not that he was complaining.

Alan rapped his right hand fingers against his thigh as he waited for the door to open. He smiled when the door finally revealed Nikki and the apartment on the other side.

"Hey, Alan. When you said see you later, I was imagining a lot later."

"Were you busy?"

"Not really, just putting some clean clothes away." Nikki stepped aside and let Alan in. " Can I get you anything? A drink, something to eat?"

"It's ok, I just had lunch." Alan sat down and made himself comfortable in one of the seats in the lounge. He was soon joined by Nikki. "So, how are you feeling?"

"I'm getting there. I'm sure my ankle will be fine in a matter of days."

"And?"

"And what?"

Alan took a deep breath. Every time he saw Nikki, he always avoided asking about what he mostly wanted to know. Feeling that today was a good day, he bravely went on. "Well, that covers the physical side. What about up here?" He pointed to his own head. "How are you feeling...about the crash?" He noticed Nikki's eyes saddened a bit, but the rest of her face didn't give away any clues.

"I've dealt with it. I'm not seeing it every time I close my eyes if that's what you're asking." Nikki suddenly felt uncomfortable.

"Really?" Alan straightened in his seat. "It's just that my family, who weren't aboard Seven, are still dealing with it."

"Well, everyone deals with things differently and at a different pace."

Alan fell silent. He had a feeling that she was lying. Her eyes were a giveaway. "You know you can talk to anyone of us if you need to. There is even Mrs. Hanson."

"I know." Silence fell again.

"You know, I've been in situations where it nearly cost me my life. And I'm not just talking about during my racing career."

"Alan, I...", Nikki began. She stopped when Alan continued.

"Do you remember the incident where the Sun Probe was heading towards the sun?"

Nikki nodded. "I also remember hearing about Thunderbird Three being in the same predicament."

"Well, I was on that mission. I've got to admit I was scared. Not just for myself, but for Scott and Tin-Tin; it was her first mission." He looked down at his hands before looking at Nikki again. "Have you been back to see Seven yet?"

Nikki glanced down at the floor.

"I'll take that as a no." Alan sighed. "Maybe it'll help to see it." Nikki was about to say something when Alan interrupted her. "I know you said that you've dealt with the whole thing. Seeing Seven may confirm it for you and..."

"For you, too," Nikki finished. "That's what you were going to say, wasn't it?" She began to get agitated. "You don't believe me."

"It's not a matter of believing. It takes a while to get over something like that." Alan's hands moved as he spoke and his words flowed out quicker and quicker. "I know that from experience. It doesn't just happen over a couple of days or a week." He blew out a breath and slowed his speech down. "You don't have to go down there today or tomorrow and you don't have to go alone. Do it when you're ready and give me a call. I'll accompany you. At least think about it. Please?"

Nikki sighed, calming herself down. She had to admit, he had a point. If she saw Seven, she could show him that she was fine and she could confirm it for herself. "I'll think about it," she replied in quiet tones.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:25:58 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/9/2007 9:53 PM

Thursday, August 16, 1:30 PM, Tracy Island

"Dianne? Anna poked her head into the sick room. "You wanted to see me?"

"Yes. I want to talk to you about Elise. You talked to her yesterday, didn't you?"

"Yes, we had an appointment."

"How did it go and what do you think?"

"I think you're doing a good job and don't see any reason to change." At Dianne's surprised look she went on. "She trusts you and that can be very hard to get. She also trusts Gordon in the water. That's out and out amazing. If he ever wants a job as a physical therapist for trauma victims, I'll be glad to recommend him."

"Did you read my notes on her?"

"Yes, after I'd asked her if it was ok." Dianne raised her eyebrows. Anna replied to the unspoken question. "The more control a person feels they have over their life the better. If you had said this was an emergency or you didn't know what to do, I would have read them regardless. But by asking her, I gave her power. And, hopefully, some confidence that we both are trustworthy."

"What do you think?"

"Two things. She isn't just afraid of dying alone. She's also afraid of being the only survivor. I know it's irrational but she still subconsciously feels she should have saved them, somehow."

"That's perfectly normal for the age she was when they died. Cherie was that age when her father was killed. But she still feels that way now?"

"Cherie still had you. And her grandma and friends and the same school and church, Girl Scouts, etc. She was still in her own room, in the house she had always known. Elise went from a situation where she was loved and supported to live with a total stranger, in a new place."

Anna went on. "And there wasn't anyone there to tell Elise it wasn't her fault. Or even to notice she was having problems. I gather the aunt didn't have a lot of experience with kids and wasn't close to the family. I suspect Elise buried any feelings she had."

"I wasn't exactly 'there' all the time when Cherie's father died. And we didn't always get a lot of support."

"But it was familiar. And you were there for her to see. Plus, as I understand it, when she was attacked, others defended her and her father. And, the most important thing, you took care of them. So did Lisa. When you did leave, you came to a place that felt very safe. And with no unpleasant associations."

Anna looked down at her computer. "The other thing I wanted to ask you about-- is she still having flashbacks?"

"No, I don't think so."

"I see you taught her some relaxation techniques. Did you teach her to ground?"

"I've heard of grounding, usually when reading about PTSD. I've never done it," Dianne said slowly.

"It's a way of bring someone, or yourself, out of a flashback. You do something to reconnect yourself to the here and now instead of the flashback. Grounding is not hard. There are several different ways to do it. I would like to teach you, Elise and several other people how to do it."

"Who else?"

"Who would Elise go to if she started panicking?"

"Scott, Virgil or me probably."

"Them at a minimum. Also Gordon. She feels very safe in his company. And your husband. I'd also like to include Callie. I don't think she will start getting flashbacks, but it won't hurt. It can also be used if someone feels a panic attack coming on. And with any luck, Callie might start using it in her dreams."

"You didn't mind going through Callie's records?"

"Callie is an emergency. As her Doctor you have every right to ask my advice. Besides, you said she had given her permission."

"So had Elise."

"True, but she was here and I could ask. Callie -- we're trying to head off a problem before it gets out of control. I talked to Brains about the Hood. I'll talk to Tin-Tin and Kyrano later today or tomorrow. I also want to talk to Dom about finding her in the jungle. I may be out of my league here, but I can give her some basic tools. We'll see how well they work."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:27:05 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 3/10/2007 7:44 PM

Tracy Island, Thursday, August 16th, mid-afternoon.

Virgil groaned as he walked into the sunlit filled kitchen. He sat down at the table and put his head on his arms. "I'm dying."

Lisa looked up from the stove. "Good afternoon, Virgil. How nice of you to join us today." Virgil merely responded with another groan. Lisa chuckled. "Would you like something to eat?"

Virgil looked up, his face green. "No," he said in a strangled voice.

"Coffee?"

"That would be great." He put his head back down on the table.

Lisa laughed again and poured a mug of strong, black coffee. She placed it on the table in front of Virgil. "Here you go. Bottom's up."

Virgil tentatively took a sip, shuddering. "Why, why did I drink so much last night?"

"You're the only one who can answer that, dear," Lisa responded.

Just then, Scott came bounding into the room. "Hey, Lisa! The kids are hungry; could you give me a hand making some sandwiches to bring down to the pool?"

"Oh, God, not so loud!" Virgil moaned.

Scott grinned at his brother. "Well, well, look who's risen from the dead? How ya feeling, Virge?" He clapped Virgil on the shoulder.

Virgil winced. "Are you trying to kill me?"

Lisa smiled. "Your brother had a little too much champagne last night."

Scott laughed, causing Virgil to wince. "The sugar will get you every time. Stick to beer next time."

"There's not going to be a next time," Virgil muttered. "I'll be dead soon."

Both Lisa and Scott shared a grin. "Famous last words." Lisa started pulling bread out of the cupboard as Scott rummaged through the refrigerator. "How many sandwiches do you need, Scott?"

"About half a dozen," Scott replied.

"Peanut butter, or cold cuts?"

"Cold cuts, I think, lots of mustard and mayo."

Virgil gave a choking gasp and fled the room. Scott and Lisa watched him go with grins on their faces. "Guess he wasn't hungry," Scott commented.

"I guess not! Come, let's get these done before we have a riot down by the pool." Together, they turned back to the sandwiches.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:32:48 GMT
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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/10/2007 8:16 PM

Thursday, August 16, 2068, 5:30 p.m., Tracy Island

The working day over, a freshly showered and clothed Kat made her way to the Round House, where Lady Penelope was staying. She climbed the steps to the balcony, and entered the large, high-ceilinged lounge. She gazed up at the smooth beams that looked as if they supported the roof, their light colored woods adding to the spaciousness of the room. The floor to ceiling windows that made up one wall and looked out toward the sea gave the whole room an airy, fresh feeling. She sighed, contented, and passed through to the inner hallway.

She followed the curve of the round hall to the left, pressing the buzzer at the first room she came to. The door slid aside to reveal Parker.

"Ello, Miss Kat," the chauffeur said amiably. He gestured her inside. "Milady is h'expectin' you."

"Kat, my dear!" Lady Penelope, looking fresh in a light blue linen suit and her signature pink pearls, rose from her seat to give Kat a quick kiss on the cheek. "I am so very glad to see you. Please, sit down. Have you had your tea?"

"No, I haven't. Tea sounds lovely," Kat said, smiling as she sat across from her friend.

"Parker? You may bring in the tea things, and we two shall have a nice chat."

"Very good, Milady."

Parker brought the tea cart in, laden with small cakes, tiny sandwiches, scones with cream and jam, fruit tarts, and a fresh pot of fragrant hot tea. He let Penelope pour out, and allowed Kat to fix a plate of goodies for herself. Then he retired to let the ladies talk.

"These rooms are so pleasant, don't you think?" Penny said, indicating her surroundings. "Jeff and Dianne are planning on reserving a suite for me when I come to visit." She leaned over and said in a conspiratorial tone, "I believe Jeff thinks it will cut back on the amount of luggage I carry if I leave a few things here between visits."

Kat giggled, and Penny sat back, smiling. "I am to have the choice of rooms, and decor. Although I appreciate how close this room is to the lounge, I believe I shall choose the rooms further down the hallway. The view of the island is far more pleasing from that angle."

"It sounds lovely," Kat said. She sipped her tea and added, "The view of the Pacific from my apartment is quite stunning, especially in the evenings when the sun sets. The colors are so vivid; it makes me wish I could paint." She glanced down at her plate. "I should like to invite you up, but I haven't painted the walls yet, so I feel it is still unfinished somehow."

"Then I shall see it when I next come to the island," Penelope promised. She sipped her tea, and asked, "Now tell me, what has kept you busy today?"

Kat sighed. "Brains and I are trying to pull as much salvageable material from Thunderbird Seven as possible, and determining what systems may still be in working order. To be frank, it is a depressing job, but Brains is of the opinion that we may be able to use the medical cabin in some capacity until a new one can be built." She shook her head sadly. "The cockpit is beyond repair, I fear, and I find it disquieting to work in. The thought of what happened that day... I saw the inside, you know, with Dr. Tracy still fastened in the chair, which was on the ceiling at that point." She shuddered. "They were all so lucky, Dom and Nikki especially."

"Yes, they were fortunate," Penny murmured. "Very fortunate to be alive and recovering... though I fear the long road to full recovery still lies ahead of them all." She took a bite of scone, and looked thoughtful as she chewed. "How does Brains feel the medical cabin could be used?"

"His plans seem to revolve around putting the cabin on caterpillar tracks and towing it with one of the pod vehicles. We must rebuild the back corner entirely; it is quite beyond simple repair."

"Ah, I see. Well, if Brains feels it can be done, he will find a way to make it so. That is his genius."

Kat snickered. "Would you believe that Brains has a sense of humor?"

Penny waved a hand. "My dear Kat, I know he does. A particularly peculiar brand of humor and whimsy all his own. I should tell you sometime of the Christmas when he made it snow here on Tracy Island." She smiled widely. "But I gather from your comment that you are thinking of a particular instance. Tell me all!"

"Well," Kat began, "This afternoon during our lunch break, he brought me a present..." She then went on to relate the gift that Brains had given her as International Rescue's official 'fisher woman'. "I'm afraid I couldn't help myself, but my first impulse was to push him into the pool, so I did."

"Ah, I see," Penny said with a sage nod. "I was sure it was you the native referred to in his narrative of the incidents surrounding the tsunami. You are by far the tiniest lady to wear an IR uniform. But how did you catch the fish?"

"We were in a water-filled basement and it must have been deposited there by the wave. It gave me quite a start! The native man was the one who grabbed it and took it away."

"It sounds like quite the adventure." Lady Penelope poured more tea into her cup to freshen it, and asked, "More tea?"

"Yes, please," Kat held out her cup for Penny to refill, then sat back. "Besides Virgil's splendid birthday party, what brings you to the island? What adventures have you had recently?"

"Well, I was in Los Angeles for a time to oversee some of the security around Jeff and Dianne during her stay in hospital, both as IR and as her own self. I met and became acquainted with Dr. and Mrs. Carmichael, and looked in on the children while I was there. I saw John, Virgil, and Mrs. Tracy both times they stopped in Los Angeles on their way to and from the farm in Kansas." She sighed. "Mrs. Tracy had such a terrible time of it, trying to sift through the remainders of that house. I could not begin to imagine what it would be like if I had to do the same at Foxleyheath." Penny smiled slightly. "I was very surprised to see that she brought a mother cat and her kittens back with her. I don't believe there had ever been a cat on the island until Kyrano's Durian."

"Who was Christopher's Asterix," Kat was quick to point out.

"Ah, yes, I remember now. But there are now six, taking all into account." She cocked her head at Kat and smiled mischievously. "Have you seen them yet? I understand that they are all very pretty, and will need good homes and people to love them."

Kat shook her head. "I haven't yet had the opportunity. Perhaps I may ask Mrs. Tracy for a peek tomorrow after work. I should love to have a kitten."

"Then perhaps you shall," Penny said. She bit into a cucumber sandwich, and when her mouth was clear, asked, "Have you heard from your parents lately?"

Kat nodded. "My mother has been in touch via email, keeping me au courant with my brother Andrew's wedding plans." She smiled. "I am to be a bridesmaid as Melanie -- my brother's fiancée -- has two elder brothers and no sisters." She sighed happily. "I have had pictures of the dress; it is a lovely aquamarine velvet..." Kat went on to describe the dress in detail.

"It sounds exquisite, Kat," Penny said, nodding her head. Then she hesitated. "I wondered if you'd heard from them because three weekends ago your father and brother came to drive your car to their house. He knew you'd driven it to Foxleyheath after your birthday and said he did not want to impose upon me more than had already been done. I protested, of course, but he smiled and

thanked me for my generosity, insisting that since Foxleyheath was no longer your home, he would take it to his. Since the car was not mine, I allowed him to do so."

Kat sat up in alarm. "Oh, dear! I hadn't heard!" Her face took on an angry frown. "I should think he would have consulted me before doing such a thing! I shall ring him tonight and demand to know why he didn't ask me first."

"I am so sorry, Kat," Penny said quietly. "I should have rung you myself, but he implied that you knew of the transfer and indeed had asked for it. I could not understand why you did not tell me yourself." She sighed. "Yet, when I recall the weekend, I had been in Paris all week, and had only come in an hour or so before. I wonder how he knew I was home."

"I wouldn't know, but I shall find out," Kat said decisively. She glanced at her watch. "I will have to wait to ring him up at work, it's early in the morning there."

"True, it is."

The two women sat quietly for a while, finishing their tea, then Kat smiled and asked, "What did you think of Virgil's party?"

Penny put her empty cup and saucer on the tea cart. "It was a very nice party, though I'm sure it would not have compared to Paradise Peaks, had we gone." She smiled back at Kat. "You did very well with the song you chose."

Kat blushed prettily. "Thank you. You should have had a go; I'm sure you would have done well."

Penny shook her head and looked skyward. "Had I done so, Alan or Virgil would have been falling over themselves to remove the microphone from my hand. I once posed as a torch singer at Paradise Peaks, it was -- and it became abundantly clear that I did not have the voice for it."

"Ah, yes, Tin-Tin told us about that when we picked out our dresses. It's too bad that you didn't go over well," Kat said. She shook her head. "Neither did Cherie or Alex last night, I fear."

"No, they are like their elder brothers in that respect; no Tracy son can carry a tune, not even Virgil. Though Gordon quite surprised everyone with that duet he sang," Penelope explained. "I understand that young Tyler has a nice voice. It is a shame he didn't sing last night."

"Perhaps he was shy," Kat said, quietly. Evidently I missed quite a bit by leaving early. "With whom did Gordon sing a duet?"

"He sang one with Ms. Kennedy. A current country music favorite, or so I gathered." Penny smiled dreamily. "She wore such a lovely Lemaire frock; I shall have to see François and request one for myself."

"She seems to be well-acquainted with the latest fashions."

"She does, does she not? I think that perhaps we two will become friends in time."

Kat fidgeted a little. "Yes, I'm sure you will." She smiled shyly. "As John and I are becoming."

"Ah, yes, John," Penny replied. "Such a pity that he could not attend the party last evening. But I am certain he will enjoy the recording of it when it is sent to him." She smiled at Kat. "Did you record a special message for him?"

"I did," Kat said, nodding. "I told him that I missed him and looked forward to seeing him again next month, and that I had a surprise for him when he returned home."

"A surprise?" Penny sounded a bit disconcerted.

"Yes! I thought I might prepare a dinner for him and give him clues to guide him to the location. A sort of mystery for him to solve."

"Ah! What a unique and clever idea!" Penny said, her face clearing. "If I know John, he will be intrigued by your little mystery game."

"I hope so. I also emailed him about the party. He said he was glad to hear from me," Kat said with a pleased sigh. She suddenly glanced at her watch. "Oh dear! It's much later than I expected. I should go; Brains wants us to get an early start tomorrow since we had such a late one today."

"I understand." Lady Penelope rose, putting aside her plate, and Kat followed suit. "This has been such a nice chat. Perhaps we can have another before I leave for home."

"I would like that," Kat said, smiling. The two women walked together to the door leading from the lounge to the balcony. "Goodnight, Lady Penelope."

"Goodnight, Kat, and take care."

Kat left, turning to wave goodbye to the aristocrat, who stayed within the Round House. The younger woman hurried down the stairs, and onto the packed pumice pathway. Lights hidden in the bushes and foliage along the path winked on as Kat walked briskly back toward the Villa. The air was cool, and the skies above clear and full of stars. She glanced upward, not knowing exactly where Thunderbird Five was amongst all that glory, but she smiled, and whispered, "Goodnight, John," on the evening breeze.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:33:32 GMT
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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/15/2007 7:18 PM

Thursday, August 16th 2068, Tracy Island 10:30 p.m.

Grabbing her journal, pen and a cup of coffee, Elise settled down on her bed to write. She'd tried to keep up with the daily writing, but that had quickly developed into a weekly writing and now it was an I'll get to it when I can type of writing.

Gulping down a mouthful of coffee and setting the mug aside, she sighed deeply. Where to start? Today has had it's fair share of interesting moments, but last night...maybe I'll start there.

She laid down the journal and cast her thoughts back to events of the night before. She'd had her doubts about the party and her dress and the feelings of being out of place, but despite her misgivings, she'd enjoyed herself immensely. She smiled as she remembered Gordon and Alan and their antics with the camera. She picked up the journal again and started writing...

When these Tracys go all out, they go "All out"! The whole evening was wonderful. I ate entirely too much, but it was soooo good!

I was impressed with the way all the girls looked in red, and I think we seriously shocked the men! Who, I might add, weren't looking too shabby themselves! Definitely a great party.

It's at times like these you can really get to know a person, seeing who they are when they let themselves have fun. It felt good to be able to just "hang out" with the others -- the team, I mean. It's like our whole working/living relationship went to another level. Of course, the Tracy's themselves have always been courteous and welcoming; but last night felt different. There was no IR; it was just a close family celebrating a birthday with all those they care about with them.

I guess that's why when Jeff toasted Virgil and told him how proud he was of him, I felt so envious of Virgil. Maybe it was selfishness on my part, but for one moment, I wanted what Virgil had. I wanted my dad to be there telling me how proud he was of me.

I missed out on that. I always have, yet throughout my adult life I've managed to push it away. I saw birthdays as just watching time pass by. Sure, I went out with friends for a few drinks. We were usually on layovers! Pilots tend to stick together, so we enjoyed the downtime when we could. But last night, it hit home hard. Family. I lost mine, and Virgil seems to have more than an abundance!

Okay, enough pity party. I just felt a little left out, that's all. But hey, you live the life you're dealt. Maybe one day it'll change.

As soon as she'd written the last words, her mind pictured the dance with Virgil towards the end of the party. It had felt good to be in his arms, but then when the time for saying goodnight had come, something had changed. She looked down into her palm, seeing in her mind's eye Virgil gently kissing there, closing her fingers and whispering, "Something to dream on." She remembered gazing into his deep brown eyes and feeling like she could stand there forever. Later, she'd put those feelings down to too much drink, on her part and his, but now, thinking it all over again, she knew her relationship with Virgil had just changed. Starting to write once more, she put ...

Oh no, what have I done? I came here, correction, I was coerced here to fly planes and be part of the most elite rescue team in the world! This isn't supposed to happen!

Why now? Why him? Don't get me wrong; he's gorgeous, and has been a great friend that I can trust. God knows he's been there when I have had it rough some days...

Oh God! Maybe I just haven't seen what's been standing right in front of me!

She put down the journal and pen and sat back against the pillows. "What am I supposed to do now?" she asked to the air.

It was some time later that she went back to add her thoughts on the conversation she'd had with Anna earlier that day...

She called it 'grounding'; not sure exactly what that all entails, but if she thinks she can help me with my PTSD I'm willing to give it a try. Although now, I think I may need 'grounding' in more ways than one.

She snuggled down to sleep and just before she closed her eyes, her fingers curled over her palm where Virgil's kiss lay.

--Elise journals the party, by FrankieCTB2[/color]

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:37:11 GMT

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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/15/2007 7:25 PM

Tracy Island, Thursday, 16th August, late night

Kat put down the book she was reading, and yawned. Looking at her watch, she was amazed to see that it was almost midnight. That's the trouble when you're reading a good book; time just seems to fly by. Heading for the kitchen, she began to make herself a hot drink. Going back in the lounge intent on enjoying the hot chocolate, her thoughts returned to the conversation she had had earlier in the day with Anna. Did her parents have a perfect marriage?

I guess that when you are young, you tend to view the world through rose tinted spectacles, she thought.

She began to wonder if she had been too sheltered during her life? Yes, on reflection, she probably had. A blanket of love and protectiveness had certainly surrounded her; maybe being the only girl had meant her parents had been too protective over her. Certainly her brothers had got away with more things than she had been allowed. She remembered how her mother had fussed over her whenever she'd fallen off her pony. It could be quite embarrassing at times, and she had tried to ignore the grins and comments from her fellow competitors.

Thinking about those early days made her remember the time when her father had spent money buying a wreck of a car. It had been his intention to 'do it up' as he had told her mother. However, her mother had seen it as a complete waste of money. Kat had never heard her parents argue as much as they had done that day.

"We could have gone on holiday with that money," her mother had shouted.

"Think of it as an insurance," her father had calmly replied. "It'll be worth a great deal when I've finished with it."

But her mother had remained adamant. "Insurance indeed! At the rate you work, it'll never be finished. You've got no incentive to get on with things."

Kat smiled at that recollection. True, her father was very laid back; his philosophy on life was, "Live for the day, let tomorrow take care of itself."

The air had certainly been chilly for a while. Kat could not remember how the situation had resolved itself. But she was sure that her mother must have backed down, because the car remained. In fact, she had helped her father work on it. But she had to admit that her mother had been right, because when she had left home to work for Lady Penelope, the car was still far from finished.

Kat took her empty mug back to the kitchen. Trying to think about other things that had happened, she went once more into her lounge, and began searching through cupboards. Finally she found what she had been looking for, a small photo album. Curling up on her sofa, she opened the album and began turning the pages. She smiled to herself, as the first photo was a family group. There was her father, mother, Timothy, Andrew and herself. That was the last time we were on holiday together as a family, she recalled. After that, girlfriends and work seemed to take over.

Turning the page, she studied the picture of a young girl sitting on a pony, her hair in two short pigtails and wearing a crash cap that looked too big for her. She was grinning from ear to ear and clutching a blue rosette. That was my very first rosette I won with Rosie. Mum and Dad were so proud that day. Other pages revealed pictures of her as a young girl. There was a photo of her and her mother... Taken the day before I left to work for Lady Penelope. She remembered that day as if it was yesterday. It was the first time I would be living and working away from home. Mum was so proud that I would be working for the 'nobility', as she called it, but so sad that I was leaving.

At this point Kat's eyes were a little misty. Blinking a few times, she turned the page. There was a photo of her dad and his 'wreck', as her mum had referred to the car that he intended working on. I wonder if he'll ever finish it. I must remember to call tomorrow about my own car. She kept turning the pages, sometimes chuckling as photos would prompt good memories to surface.

The next thing she knew, it was morning. As she looked through her French doors, she saw the sun shining far off at sea, glinting on the waves. She stirred; the album had fallen to the floor. Gracious! I've been here all night. Stiff, she got up from the sofa, and headed for her bathroom to freshen up before getting her breakfast.

--Reflections by TawnyAngel22

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:38:32 GMT

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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 3/15/2007 7:37 PM

August 16th 6:30 a.m. San Diego (August 17th 1:30 a.m. Tracy Island)

All was quiet as Brandon made his way to the computer. He couldn't sleep, so he decided to do some research on the convalescent homes Dr. Stanfield had recommended. He wanted to select the best one for his parents to stay in until he and Shannon could make the necessary arrangements for them to come home. Looking at the screen, he checked out the places the doctor had recommended, noting the location of each facility as well as the amenities each had to offer, highlighting names that caught his eye. That makes three that would be good for Mom and Dad.

After he was sure he had the information he needed, Brandon turned his attention to finding nearby businesses that could supply him with the equipment he needed. As he continued his task, his thoughts wandered to the man that had struck his parents' car. What was that guy thinking when he got into his car that night? Does he even wonder how Mom and Dad are doing?

A rustle interrupted his thoughts, and he looked up to see his sister standing behind him, two steaming mugs of coffee in her hands. "Here you go, bro. You look like you can use this." Shannon handed him one.

"Thanks," he replied, taking it and sipping appreciatively.

"You're up early; it looks like you've made good use of the time," she remarked as she looked over her brother's shoulder.

"I couldn't sleep, so I thought I'd get the ball rolling." He told his sister what he'd found so far.

"Good job, bro, I'm impressed. It's amazing what you can do when you set your mind to it."

"Gee, thanks for your vote of confidence," he said sarcastically.

Shannon chuckled, giving him a playful punch. "I'll go fix breakfast. How about afterward, we go check out the places you highlighted?"

"Good idea, Sis. You're on."[/color]

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:41:42 GMT

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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/16/2007 2:46 PM

Friday, August 17th, 9:30 a.m., Tracy Island

"Recently, International Rescue was made aware of a situation involving Dr....' What is the man's name?" Jeff hunted over his desk, looking for the article he'd clipped and the notes Drew had given him on the situation. He found the article, then looked back at his work and shook his head. "That won't do. I have to be more general."

He scanned the notes and the article again, tapping his stylus on his chin as he did so. Then he erased what he'd started, and began to write again. "International Rescue wishes to offer its support...' No, that won't do either." He took a deep breath, sitting back to stare at the screen, taking off his reading glasses as he did. Shaking his head, he murmured, "Maybe I'd better give this to Tin-Tin. She's taken so much of my dictation she could probably write this and make it sound more like me than I can!"

A small window popped up in the corner of his computer screen, and a light chime sounded. He put his glasses back on and straightened up. "Contact the Killdeers with ETA." He sighed heavily, tossed his glasses on the desktop, and slumped back, rubbing his temples. As if on cue, Kyrano appeared at the door from the study, a tray holding a coffee carafe, cups, and condiments on it in his hands. "Your timing is perfect, Kyrano."

"It is a gift," Kyrano gently quipped as he set the tray on a nearby table and poured a cup of coffee for Jeff. As he passed it over, he observed, "You are troubled, Mr. Tracy."

Jeff nodded, a rueful expression on his face. "You have that right. I'm having trouble composing a letter to show our support of Mercy General, despite Dr. Willis's actions." He paused to take a sip from the cup, then went on. "I've also been reminded of the vacation Dianne and I promised the younger kids." He shook his head. "There's no way we can do it; Dianne simply isn't up to it yet. I guess I have to discuss it with her, then break the news to the children... and Dianne's relatives. Jared will be fairly easy, but Douglas?" Jeff shook his head again.

"You may find it easier to deal with him than with the children," Kyrano said with a warning tone. "Perhaps Lisa and Dr. Carmichael could be of some assistance."

"I hope so. I know the children will be disappointed; they were looking forward to this. So was I, to tell the truth. But that damned crash..." He took a sip of coffee to keep from sighing. "It changed everything."

"Indeed it did, as all such things do," Kyrano said, catching Jeff's eye with his own sympathetic gaze. "But you... but we must go on. Learn from it, and use what we learn in our lives for the future."

Jeff stared at Kyrano for a long moment, then smiled slightly. "You're right, as usual, Kyrano." He glanced down at the screen. "I think I'll take a break and go discuss the vacation with my wife, then come back to this later." He took another sip, placed his coffee cup in the saucer, and rose. "Thanks for the coffee, and the advice, Kyrano."

"You are most welcome, Mr. Tracy," Kyrano said. "Good luck in your discussion."

"Thanks," Jeff said again. He stopped at the partition between lounge and study, turning and

pointing. "You can leave the carafe there. I shouldn't be too long."

"Very good, Mr. Tracy."

As Jeff left, Kyrano picked up the soiled cup, and put it on his now empty tray. "I will return with a fresh carafe in twenty minutes," he murmured. "I fear it will take longer for the discussion than Mr. Tracy believes."

xxxx

Jeff entered the sick room all in a rush, only to stop short at the sight of Maggie straightening up one of the empty beds -- the one Dianne usually slept in.

"Oh hello, Jeff," Maggie said, glancing up from her work. "She's on the patio outside the dining room. She needed the change of scenery and I needed some quiet to work in."

"Ah, okay," Jeff replied, blinking. "Where's Andy?"

"In the surgery, getting ready for the follow up appointment for the nurses. He's looking over the files they brought back with them from the hospital." At Jeff's sudden frown, Maggie added, "He's one of the doctors on record as treating them; they might as well be in his own files back home."

"Ah, I see. I need to talk with him for a minute."

"Sure. Drew?" Maggie called. "Jeff's here. Needs to talk to you."

"Coming!"

It took a moment for Drew to appear. He was wearing a button down shirt and slacks, and had a data pad in his hand. "If you're wondering where Di is..."

"Maggie already told me," Jeff replied. He glanced from Drew to Maggie and back to Drew again. "I need your professional opinion."

Drew put the pad down on the bedside table, while Maggie went back to straightening up the bed clothes. "Go ahead."

"Before all this happened, Dianne and I had planned a vacation in the States with the younger kids. We were going to take Stephanie with us to the ranch in Wyoming, then the twins to our place in New Hampshire." Jeff slid his hands in his pockets. "I've gotten to the point where I have to confirm our arrangements or cancel them." He moistened his lips with his tongue. "I need to know: is Dianne fit enough to go?"

"When did you plan this for?" Drew asked, reaching out a hand to smooth it idly over the folded down sheet.

"We planned to leave Sunday, arrive in the States on Saturday...."

Drew shook his head. "No. She's not ready. I haven't even released her from the sick room yet."

Jeff paused, nodding. "How about next Sunday?"

Drew frowned. "Why do you ask that? You know it's still too soon."

"I know, Drew, but I need to hear it from you. The kids... they'll want to salvage some of the vacation if they can...."

"Ah, I see," Drew said, nodding sagely. "I get to be the bad guy here."

Jeff gave his friend a rueful look. "Uh, well... maybe... a little. The decision will still be mine and Dianne's to make, but I'd like the backup of medical authority." He rubbed the back of his neck. "Not only for the kids, but for Jared and Douglas, too."

Drew snorted. "If you have any trouble with Dougie, you send him my way. Or Lisa's. We'll straighten him out."

"I hope I won't have to, but I'll remember your offer."

Maggie shook her head. "You know Doug," she said, her tone one of slight disgust. "He'll be on the horn to you and to Lisa, trying either to get you to make Jeff change his mind, or to gripe about it."

"Just as long as it's me and not Dianne," Drew said stoutly. He glanced up at Jeff. "Do you need anything else?"

"Let me know when the nurses can go back to duty. But don't rush them. I'd like them to be healed fully before they go back on active status."

"I'll let you know. And depending on how things look tomorrow morning, I'll likely be releasing Dianne from the sick room."

Jeff grinned. "That's good news!"

"I thought you might say that," Drew said dryly. He picked up the data pad. "Now, I'd better get back to work."

"And I'd better find my wife so we can discuss the change in plans."

"Then I'll see you at lunch." Drew waved a hand and headed back into the surgical area.

Jeff turned to leave as well. "The patio outside the dining room?" he asked.

"Yes," Maggie replied. She paused, and just before the door closed behind Jeff, she called to him. "Jeff?" He stopped and turned back to her, a questioning look on his face. "She's feeling kind of low today," Maggie explained, her voice dropping in volume. "Today... it would have been her wedding anniversary with Rick. She's got their wedding album out and is looking over the

pictures..."

Jeff's face took on a look that Maggie couldn't quite place. It was concern mixed with sadness and perhaps a bit of stubbornness. He realized she was watching him, and gave her a smile, one that didn't reach his eyes.

"Thanks for the heads up, Maggie. I appreciate it." He turned to step outside again.

"Jeff?"

Something in Maggie's voice made him glance back again. "Yes?"

Maggie gave him a troubled look. "Don't be upset with her."

Jeff smiled again, and shook his head. "I won't be. Not now... not about this." He raised a hand. "See you later."

The door finally closed behind him, and Maggie sighed.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:43:27 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 3/17/2007 5:51 PM

Thursday, August 15, 2068; Opp, Alabama; Spencer Family Home, 4:30 p.m. (9:30 a.m. Friday, August 16 on Tracy Island)

Helping her mother with the laundry, Callie knew this was her last full day with the family before she had to return to Tracy Island and her duties with International Rescue. Of course, to her family she would return to Honolulu and her duties with Tracy Industries.

Earlier, her father, Richard, planned on having a family dinner outing at a local restaurant.

As she folded her t-shirt, Callie sighed.

"What's the matter, honey?" asked Lorraine.

"It's going to be hard leaving tomorrow. I don't even know if I'll be able to come home for Thanksgiving or Christmas."

Patting her daughter on the shoulder, Lorraine said, "Callie, it's okay. You know what it's like to make sacrifices. Remember when you spent Thanksgiving in Rio de Janeiro a couple of years ago, and then last Christmas up at the space station?"

"Yeah. It was so strange eating Christmas dinner way up in space. That's what makes it hard for

me sometimes, having to work so far away from home."

"Hey, sweetie. You will always have your home and your family here. If you ever need anything, we'll always be there for you."

Callie hugged her mother. "Thanks, Mom. That really helps me get through it all." After releasing the embrace, she saw the mail truck passing by. "Oh, mail's here. I'll go get it."

"All right, dear."

Walking out to the mailbox, she took the contents out and discovered a piece of mail she never expected to see. "No way...Roger Smithers? The creep who hurt me when he dumped me for that fraternity? How the hell did he get our mailing address?"

She quickly opened the envelope and started reading it carefully.

Dear Callie,

I'm probably the last person you'd expect to hear from. The last time we spoke was pretty bitter, and you were really angry at me. But I was driving through Opp the other day and thought of you. It made me realize I'd left something undone, and that was apologizing to you.

Yeah, apologize. I know that sounds strange, but for me, it feels like the right thing to do. I was pretty self-centered back then, blind to what I had, and could have had. I let the excitement of belonging to Alpha Psi become everything to me and I lost someone important: you.

I'm sorry for that, Callie, I truly am. I hope that you can forgive me someday.

She thought back to the time she was dating Roger at the University of Alabama.

Callie had believed in her heart she had found her "Mr. Right" in Roger Smithers, a sophomore majoring in architectural design. The pair had started out friends as freshmen, but in a matter of months, they had developed a relationship.

"Roger, you're amazing," she would say at all the times they had spent together.

Unfortunately, within a year, Roger had dumped her because of the time devoted to being a part of the popular Alpha Psi Epsilon fraternity. She confronted him one evening and gave him an ultimatum: it would be either her or the fraternity. Choosing the fraternity, Roger had left her behind.

Since that time, she never felt comfortable in a relationship because she couldn't tell whether she would be dumped all over again.

She continued reading the letter.

I've been hearing good things about you. Working for the World Space Agency and on the ISS must be exciting! I knew you'd go far. As for me, I'm married, with a little boy. Finished school, and am working as an architect in a firm up Atlanta way. I hope you found someone much better to

settle down with; you deserve only the best.

Don't worry about responding to this. I expect you'd like to put me and that part of your life away for good. I just wanted to give you closure, and some for myself as well. Still selfish, I guess.

Have a good life, Callie, and take care.

Roger

Lorraine could see something was wrong when her daughter slowly walked back inside. "Honey, is everything all right?"

With a deep breath Callie answered, "I don't know. I just read a letter...from Roger."

"Roger Smithers? The man who basically dropped you off a ledge so he could be in that fraternity?"

"Yeah, but he's married now, with a family. He wrote a letter to apologize to me."

Her mother's eyes widened. "He actually wrote a letter of apology? I'm surprised he mustered the courage to do it."

"Yeah, but I can't completely forgive him...at least not yet."

Holding her daughter's hands, Lorraine said, "Time will heal the wounds. You need to put it behind you and move on with your life."

"You're right, Mom. Thanks. Now, I'm gonna go freshen up for dinner tonight at Joey's."

With a chuckle, Lorraine said, "We'll make sure you go out with a full stomach when you leave tomorrow."

As Callie walked upstairs to her room, she thought about the letter. I haven't even bothered trying another relationship since Roger. I need to stop running scared and try again. My Mr. Right may be out there somewhere.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:53:36 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 3/18/2007 2:53 PM

Friday August 17, 10.30am, Tracy Island.

The mail plane had come and gone without anything of interest for Dominic. He hurried down the outer steps with Joshua in his arms. The young boy was clamouring to be let down, but there were too many steps, and they were already late. Joshua's disgruntled murmuring vibrated with

each descending step, and Dominic suddenly realised that the lift would have been quicker -- and less hassle -- than his current choice. The mixture of beach toys and water bottles clunked in his backpack, and Josh's diaper bag was swinging at his side. Horsey, in Joshua's grasp, was brushing against his forearm. He reached the ground floor and entered into the common area to find Nikki half-heartedly viewing some of the art on the walls.

"Sorry, sorry, sorry pet," he said, and finally let Joshua down.

The small boy immediately ran over to Nikki and attached himself to her leg.

"Ik-ik-ik!" He shouted with a wide grin.

"It's okay," Nikki said, and ruffled Joshua's fluffy white-blond hair. "I didn't think I'd been stood up," she added with a grin.

Dominic smiled and clapped his hands.

"Well, shall we get going?"

He gestured for Nikki to go ahead of him, and she managed to extricate her leg from Joshua's grasp and offer him her hand instead. The merry party made their way to the monorail, beginning their journey to the beach.

The scent of sun block was heavy, and Dominic glanced down at his bare, glistening arms. He had always been pale and skinny, and while the extra gym training was beginning to make him visible to the naked eye, even the tropical sun didn't seem able to tan him. Joshua was even more heavily covered than himself, though the boy had inherited his mother's more tanned complexion. The boy was chatting to Nikki, barely able to see her over the brim of his peaked cap. Horsey was being carried along by the left hind leg. His glass eyes glinted in the morning sunshine, and he almost looked sad.

There was a light smell of chlorine and tropical plants in the air as they reached the poolside, and Horsey was suddenly swung around wildly as Joshua waved in greeting to Virgil, who was sitting in the shade with a glass of water. It looked like it was sweating.

"Hi, Virgil," Nikki called, and waved along with Joshua.

Dominic gave a salute to the other man.

"Off on an adventure!" he said.

"Before you get going, come over here," Virgil said, and sat up. "There's something here you might find interesting to say the least."

Nikki looked over her shoulder to Dom, who shrugged, and they made their way over to the other man. Virgil held up an open copy of Newsweek. Nikki shook her head with pursed lips, and Dominic rolled his eyes.

"That's just marvellous," he said.

Emblazoned across two pages in bold, red writing, were the words: INTERNATIONAL RESCUE: NO MORE LIES, SAVE MORE LIVES!

"There's a whole section about us in here," Virgil said. He flicked through a few more pages. "There's stuff for us, against us. Heck, there's even an article on those crazy people who think we're aliens and their theories about us."

"Ugh. People can be so dumb," Nikki said. "I mean, why would anyone take notice of that kind of nonsense?"

"Makes for an entertaining story," Virgil quipped, "even if it is complete sh -- garbage," he said, eyeing Joshua.

"May I?" Dominic said, and reached out for the magazine.

Virgil acquiesced, and Dominic shook his head as he flicked through the pages. He came to the first article Virgil had shown them, trying to stop a sneer of contempt reaching his face. Didn't they save more lives than anyone thought possible in such situations? He huffed out a breath, and read some of the lines.

"...International Rescue, a humanitarian, philanthropic organization, has repeatedly ignored calls for them to release details about their technology. Their equipment does a fantastic job, so why not share? If each country could equip its own emergency services with this incredible machinery and technology, it is doubtless that more lives would be saved than International Rescue could ever manage. Even they themselves have increased their numbers in the past year at least; surely this is a sign that the state of the world is too much for even this extraordinary team to cope with..."

"Who wrote this rubbish?" Dominic said, and cast his eye upon the by-line and reporter's photograph.

His hands tensed up so much that the magazine crumpled at the edges, and if it were possible, he went even whiter. He felt a vaguely ill feeling creep into his stomach, and read the name again.

"Are you alright?" Virgil asked, and stood up.

"Yes," Dominic said. "I'm fine." He handed the magazine back to Virgil. "If you don't mind, I'd like to have a better look at that when you're done with it."

"Sure," Virgil said, frowning slightly and glancing over Dom's shoulder at Nikki, who looked equally as confused.

"Thanks." Dom turned to Nikki and his son, who had grown restless. His expression brightened, but looked strained. "Shall we head on?"

Nikki nodded, and the party waved their goodbyes, and walked on down to the beach. Joshua

continued to babble half-coherently and soon found a spot on the beach that he declared was his 'favourite'. Dominic firstly pulled a bucket and spade from his backpack, which set Joshua and Horsey digging, and then he and Nikki set up camp on a large, soft beach blanket. Nikki didn't waste any time.

"What's wrong, Dom?" She asked, pinning the man with an "I'm-not-taking-any-nonsense-from-you" look as soon as he glanced up.

"That article, the one about sharing the tech? It was written by a Thomas E. Hawkins. And that was definitely his photograph."

"Your brother?" Nikki asked incredulously.

"Yeah. Tom. Man..."

"That's...that's...just...oh my..."

"I know." Dominic watched as Joshua flung sand across the beach, covering himself in the process. "Careful son!" He shook his head, and focused on Nikki again. "How am I supposed t' even talk to him again? He doesn't know who I work for -- he can't -- but now... I guess I just don't know how to deal with this. Tom's my best friend, y'know?"

"I understand," Nikki said. "Look, maybe it was just a one-time thing. Maybe he doesn't even believe it but took the job anyway."

"That's possible... I mean, Newsweek is a big breakthrough for him. He might just have thought it was a more attention-grabbing story."

"That could be the case. I guess you're not going to find out for sure unless you ask him."

"I guess I'll have to," Dom said.

He tried to shake the frown from his face and the feeling from his stomach, and suddenly dashed across the beach to snatch his son and twirl him high in the air. No sense in running this day for Joshua, he thought, as the tiny blond boy squealed with delight.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 00:59:39 GMT
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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/18/2007 3:01 PM

Friday, August 17, 2068, 10:30 a.m. Tracy Island

Dianne lifted her head as the mail plane zoomed away, watching it fly off over the ocean, the sun glinting on its wings. She breathed a little sigh, adjusted the light sweater she wore, and went back to the book in her lap. A family picture looked up at her; her mother, brothers, sister-in-law

Angela in bridesmaid's dress, her uncle and aunt, her newly minted in-laws... all smiled widely for the camera. But the focal point was the woman in white, and the man in silver gray tuxedo beside her. I keep forgetting what he looked like before he grew the beard.

The sound of a door opening behind her made her turn her head. She couldn't quite see the door, or who came out, but a warm hand sliding across her shoulders as he passed told her who it was. She smiled as Jeff pulled up a chair to sit beside her. He kissed her before he sat down, and carried a book in his hand which he balanced on one knee.

"Maggie told me where to find you," he said, taking her hand. "She also told me you weren't in a good mood."

Dianne made a little "humph" and looked down. "Just a bit melancholy, I guess. It suddenly hit me that today would have been our 18th wedding anniversary if Rick had lived." She indicated the album. "Decided to relive a few memories."

"So I see." There was a pause, then Jeff ventured, "I don't remember you doing this last year."

Dianne smiled a little. "Last year I was busy training for Thunderbird Seven's debut and still enjoying being a newlywed. I didn't have time to think." Her smile faded. "This year, I've had nothing to do but think."

"Ah," Jeff said, nodding sagely. "Now I understand." He scooted his chair closer and looked over at the album. "Hm. I think I recognize everyone in this picture but this guy. Who is he?"

"Rick's brother, Walter."

"The one who lives in China?"

Dianne nodded. "I should probably should make some arrangements for the kids to visit with those cousins, or ask Charles and Martine when they'll be back in the States..." She sighed. "It's hard to keep in touch."

"I know," Jeff said. He pulled out the book he'd brought. "You made me think about my wedding to Lucy."

"Is that your album?" she asked, closing her book and looking toward his.

"Yeah, it is." In fact, it was his mother's copy of the album; his own was buried somewhere in a box that hadn't been gone through in years. He opened it at random, and happened upon a picture of the wedding party.

Dianne chuckled, then glanced at Jeff's hair. "It's odd seeing you with such dark hair. You look so much like Scott!"

"That's what most people say," he replied wryly. "Though they usually put it the other way around."

She chuckled again, then her voice got soft. "You wore your uniform."

"I was still in the military. It was appropriate." He glanced over the faces, struggling to remember names. "This is Tim Casey. I still keep in touch with him from time to time. In fact, he was the reason for one of our more covert rescues." He shook his head. "I've lost touch with the others. So many years have gone by."

"How many?" she asked. "I know it's at least thirty-three... unless Scott was born before you and Lucille got married."

"Thirty-five," he said, drawing in a deep breath and letting it out, somewhat shakily. "Can't believe it's been that long."

"You've never mentioned your anniversary or wedding to Lucille before."

He squeezed her hand. "Like you last year, I've often been too busy to remember." He sighed a little. "And I've had more practice pushing the memories away."

They sat in silence for a few moments, then Dianne reached over and turned the page. "Is that Lucille's family?"

Jeff nodded. "Yes, it is. There's another example of a relationship falling by the wayside. Though I can't take all the blame; they've not exactly tried to keep in touch with me or the boys either -- even when Lucy was alive."

"Why not?" she asked, frowning.

He sat back in his chair, letting go of her hand and draping his arm over the back of the wheelchair. "I've never been sure. Lucy once told me that her father was a very competitive and possessive man. The fact that I 'won' her and that she became 'mine' galled him, it seems. He was pleasant enough to me whenever we met... but no real relationship developed. The fact that the Air Force, then the WSA, moved us around several times early in our marriage didn't help either. We exchange Christmas cards and that's about it."

"That's sad," Dianne said, still looking at Lucille, radiant in her wedding dress. "Means the boys missed out on a set of grandparents."

Jeff agreed. "Sort of like the way the young ones are missing out on knowing their maternal grandfather..."

Dianne suddenly sat up straight. "Jeff, don't go there. Just... don't."

He held up his hands. "All right. I won't mention it again." There was a pause, then he said, "But we do have to make a decision concerning your family. Namely, what do we do about the vacation we'd planned."

She sat back suddenly. "I guess we cancel or reschedule it or something. I know I'm not ready to travel."

"So Andy has said. We'll need to tell the children. And we should do that together."

"I agree. Tell them after lunch?"

"Sounds like a plan. Then I'll call the Killdeers and your brothers to let them know."

Dianne looked at him with a troubled expression. "Don't you think I should call my brothers?"

He shook his head. "No. You don't need the stress right now. I'll be the bad guy and call." He smiled. "I've already been promised backup from Andy."

"And Mom will ream Dougie out if he needs it," she added.

He chuckled. "I hope it doesn't come to that. We'll make other arrangements for the kids to see each other. I'll just have to give it some thought."

"All right."

Jeff glanced at his watch. "Speaking of lunch, it's nearly time for it. Here." He put his photo album in Dianne's lap. "Let's go inside and put these away."

"Good idea."

He rose, and she reached an arm up, indicating she wanted him to lean over. He obliged, and she kissed him softly. "Thanks," she said.

"For what?"

"For sharing. And for cheering me up."

He kissed her again, and said, "Anytime, love." Then he moved behind the chair. "Hang on." And with that, he wheeled her back inside.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 01:02:56 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/18/2007 4:47 PM

Tracy Island, August 17th, morning

"Grandma? Can we come in?" Tyler opened the door to his grandma's room.

"Come on in, Tyler. But be quiet. Big Momma is still jittery." Emily Tracy put down her knitting as Tyler came in followed by Alex, then Anna Hanson.

"Tyler offered to show me the kittens," Anna said with a smile. "Where are they hiding?"

"At the moment, under the bed. She may move them back to the closet, though."

Tyler lay down on the floor and lifted up the bedspread. "There they are" he whispered as Alex lay down beside him. "They're up against the wall."

Anna lay down next to them. "How old are they?"

"The vet said about four to five weeks. That was a week ago." Emily picked up her knitting. "They should be coming out from under the bed to explore soon. I've been putting mom's food right next to the bed. The litter box is on the other side. I know she's used it."

"Have you planned on what to do when they come out?" Anna didn't take her eyes from the kittens.

"I'll handle them as much as I can. I've tried to touch them when mom's not looking, but she almost never comes out from under the bed. I've thought about moving the food into the closet but I suspect she'd just wait until I've left the room before eating." Emily looked at her two youngest grandsons. "Now, when they do start exploring, I need you to come in and play with them as much as possible. Mom will probably hiss at you, but she won't attack unless you're hurting one of them. I've got some cat toys already; some small balls with bells inside, a kitty fishing pole and a ball in a circular tube. And a cat tree should be here sometime this week."

"What's a cat tree?" asked Tyler.

"It's kind of like a cat playhouse/tree house combination," replied Anna. "I have one at home. It has toys and places for them to climb and to hide. Cats like them, although my last kittens liked toilet paper tubes and empty 12 pack boxes just as much." Anna pushed herself up to her hands and knees and from that position stood up. "I'm getting to old to crawl on the floor anymore."

"I wouldn't put your hand under there, Alex. At least not in range of Big Momma." Grandma Tracy looked at the clock. "I better go out and help with dinner. Now boys, you can watch them as much as you want, like I told you before. It will get mom used to you. But don't try to grab the kittens. When they're a bit older they'll come out to sniff your hands. Pet them for a few minutes, then leave them alone. Wait another week before you try to pick them up. By then they should be exploring on their own."

A muffled "OK, grandma." came from under the bed. It was impossible to tell which brother had spoken.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 01:03:41 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 3/18/2007 4:55 PM

Thursday, August 16, 9 PM; College Park, Maryland (1 PM August 17 on Tracy Island)

Lena sat in the lounge chair in her room at Matthew and Amelia's house, her laptop on her thighs. I tink I should email Dianne first ting. I might not otterwise have a chance to before Amelia checks in on me. She opened her computer. In minutes she was typing one-handed.

Dear Dianne,

I'm sorry I haven't been in contact with you before now, but -- as you well know -- it's difficult to get anything done when you have watchdogs keeping an eye on you to make sure you are following doctor's orders. Plus it isn't easy to type one-handed.

I was so sorry to hear about your accident, and I hope you are well on the way to recovering completely. I heard through channels that your uncle was one of the doctors who worked on you in the operating room. Nice having family who can be there to help, isn't it?

I'm currently staying with my son and daughter-in-law, since the doctor feels I can't handle day-to-day chores on my own just yet, due to the concussion I received in the crash. They have been wonderful to me, but I miss my home and my privacy (among other things). It's very frustrating, not being able to do what I want when I want, for as long as I want. I'm beginning to get antsy. But you probably know the feeling, too. So we can commiserate with each other.

When you are able, please give me a holler and let me know how you're doing. Maybe we should make a bet: whoever is declared by her doctor to be fully recovered, the other one buys lunch for both of them, the next time you are in the states on the East Coast. How about it? Are you game?

Give my love to everyone, and keep plenty for yourself.

Lena.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 01:09:15 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/18/2007 5:16 PM

Thursday, August 16, Afternoon, Tracy Island

"John, I'd like you to meet Anna Hanson." The picture of John in his IR uniform had been replaced by a video screen showing John with a background of blinking lights. "Mrs. Hanson, meet my son, John."

"Ms. Hanson." John looked at his father. "How's Tyler doing? I saw him eating cake at Virgil's party."

Jeff sighed. "Much better than a few days ago. He's eating again and keeping it down. I was pretty worried for a while there, though. Dianne had been considering bringing Ms. Hanson on board to

help with Callie and Elise before this. I called her and asked for her help with Tyler. She came here instead of asking me to bring him to the mainland."

"And I got several surprises while here. Including an explanation of why you left NASA. Get Tyler to tell you the story." Anna leaned forward in her chair. "I wanted to talk to you because I understand you are the brother closest to Tyler. Had you noticed anything?"

"Yes. He was too well-behaved when I visited him in LA."

"Maggie told me. Any time a kid wants to go to bed early any mother worries." John nodded and Anna continued. "How was he after the tsunami?"

"He kept getting quieter and quieter, and eating less and less. He's always been a picky eater so I didn't notice it at first. But he started losing weight."

"Do you do things together a lot?"

"We usually do things together whenever I can. I always play pinball with him the first night I'm home." John hesitated a second then went on. "The last time I was down, I'd agreed to have dinner with Kat. Tyler wanted to play pinball the same night. He was pretty upset when I said I couldn't. He hasn't mentioned it since then, though."

"Gordon told me about that," Anna commented.

"Gordon?" John looked surprised. "How did he get involved?"

"Apparently Kat went looking for you one day. She asked Tyler where you were and got the brush-off. According to Gordon, Kat said she was being friendly to Tyler but he was rude. Tyler told Gordon Kat was making 'goo-goo eyes' at you and she was only trying to be nice to him in order to get on your good side. He doesn't like her. By the way, Gordon said he has already talked to Tyler about his behavior, so please don't bring it up. It's been handled for now. He didn't talk to Kat about her behavior. I met her over lunch yesterday and I want to talk to her later to see what she has to say about this. Apparently Tyler has met and liked all of the other new hires. He's done things with all of them outside of the normal interaction at parties and such. But not Kat. And Alex hasn't been all that impressed with her either, although he likes everyone else."

Jeff was surprised. "I hadn't realized there was a problem with Kat."

"There isn't, not really. But the others have done things with your two youngest boys. Kat hasn't. It's not that she's done anything wrong; it's more like she's missed opportunities. Right now Kat is not a problem. Tyler's feeling that she's coming between him and John is the problem. And we need to work on Tyler's side of it before we work on Kat's." Anna looked thoughtful for a moment. "John, when are you due back here?"

"September first. Do you want me to come back sooner?"

"No, for two reasons. I don't want Tyler to feel he can misbehave and get you to come down to be with him, and I want more time to figure this out. I need to talk to Kat as well as to Tyler and

Gordon again. Does Tyler talk to you while you're up there?"

"We email, but we don't use the communications set up. That's for IR business only."

"What about regular phone calls? Are you set up for those?"

Jeff hit his head with his hand. "Talk about overlooking the obvious. I never thought about letting Tyler call you!"

Anna raised an eyebrow. John was amazed how much polite disbelief she could put into that one movement. "No one here ever wants to talk to anyone on TB5?"

John answered. "When we started out, Alan and I would call home once a day using the IR communications system you're on now. Sometimes someone would call me, just to talk. It kept me in touch with everyone. Alan and Tin-Tin used to talk a lot when he was up here. When we started to worry about someone tracing our transmissions, we cut back on the number of calls and usually used email for anything not IR related."

Jeff picked up the subject. "Before Thunderbird Five was operational, we had to set up our own communications satellite to allow cell phone calls, or any other sort of long distance communications to and from Tracy Island. We're just too far from anywhere else. We lease part of it to NOAA and to various communications companies. A security protocol was put into it to recognize when the cell phone being called was for whoever was on TB5. A quick code punched in by the person on duty would let the satellite know what phone was there. The satellite would do a security check on any incoming calls to that phone, then send the call on. As far as the phone network is concerned, the cell phone is on the island. A program is also in place to have the satellite detect when the emergency call frequency is in use. It automatically transfers personal calls to voice mail."

"It also helped hide the Thunderbirds from any other satellite surveillance while we were building Five. But now Five handles that. We really haven't used the satellite for anything in quite a while except for the usual phone traffic. The system hasn't been updated for some time. I need to talk to Brains to see if we need any upgrades. But as long as they aren't talking about IR business there shouldn't be any problems with them talking on the phone."

"Does Tyler have his own phone?"

"No. I didn't want the kids to have a phone until they were older. Dianne agreed with me on that. It's not like we need them to have phones to keep in touch with them while at school or visiting friends. Plus, we had some problems with the older boys and cell phones."

"What, Scott was on the phone all the time with his girlfriends?"

John cleared his throat which sounded suspiciously like a laugh.

Jeff grinned and continued. "No. Now Virgil's girlfriends were a different matter. But someone got Gordon's cell phone number when he was eight. The guy was smart; he only called once a week or so and he made friends with Gordon. He knew who Gordon's scout leader was, who the pastor

of our church was, the name of Alan's favorite stuffed animal, everything. So Gordon figured he must be ok. It was 3 months before we found out what was happening. He was trying to get Gordon to meet him somewhere and bring Alan."

Anna whistled. Jeff nodded. "I was out of town and Virgil overheard him on the phone. Virgil called me in Paris and I was on my way home in a half hour. After I'd called the police."

"Mrs. Magnusson was staying with us. Unfortunately, Mrs. Mags was out shopping that night and Scott was at football practice," John added. "Dad told Virgil not to let anyone in the house until Mrs. Magnusson was there. Virgil made the police wait outside for three hours until they found her. He didn't let the FBI guy inside either."

"Good for him."

"That's what the FBI agent said. He told Virgil he'd get him a job as an agent anytime he wanted. Virgil strutted for a week. When he wasn't being terrified." Jeff took a deep breath. "This could have happened without Gordon having a phone. But the phone made it easier. Dianne and I have considered getting Cherie her own phone for her next birthday. She is getting to the age where calling friends is important and is old enough to be responsible. But not the boys."

"Could Tyler call John from a household phone?"

"Sure. We have three different lines that can be picked up on any of the phones around here. There's one in my office, another in the sick room, our bedroom, the kitchen and a couple of others. He could use any of them. We just never thought of that."

"And, of course," John added, "I could call him."

"OK. I don't want Tyler feeling he can get whatever he wants if he's sick. I do want him to feel secure. So I would like you to call him just to talk for a bit. Make sure he knows he can call you. Don't call him more than every two or three days for now. But make sure he knows you're thinking of him."

John nodded. "I should be reassuring. And this is just a normal, everyday sort of call. I'm not checking up on you or anything."

"Exactly. Ask about the kittens. I have a feeling that will be a major topic of conversation for a while. Later, when the phone system is secure, get him to tell you about showing me Thunderbird 3." Anna cocked her head. "By the way, how did you feel during the trouble with Gordon? You must have been about ten?"

John thought for a moment. "I wasn't sure what was happening. It was exciting, with the police car out front with its lights on. Gordon and Alan kept sneaking looks at it out the window. Virgil just sat there watching them and looking stubborn. He made me stay with Gordon when he took Alan to the bathroom. He wouldn't let him go alone. We all fell asleep on the living room couch. The next day we didn't go to school. Then Dad came home early and he was crying and hugging us. Scott and Virgil were really jumpy for a while. Scott almost quit football. Virgil played the piano a lot instead of going out with friends."

Anna looked at him and said softly, "John. I didn't ask how everyone else felt or what they did. I asked how you felt."

John froze for a second. Then slowly, as if he had to hunt for the words and drag them out, he said, "It was exciting. I knew Virgil was scared but I wasn't sure why. Then I realized Dad was scared, too. I tried to stay out of everyone's way. Whenever I'd been upset before, I would go look through my telescope. But I couldn't concentrate on it, so I sat by the window and just looked out at the stars. Even on the cloudy nights. Then we moved to Grandma's and I felt safe again." He looked surprised as if he hadn't realized he'd felt that way until he'd said it.

Anna turned back to Jeff. "Is this why you moved to Kansas?"

"Partly. We'd had some trouble with the press before this and I had considered moving the family to Kansas then, or just sending the boys to Grandma's for a while. Most of the press coverage had died down by the time this happened; this stirred it up again. I thought about sending the kids to private boarding schools, but I didn't want them to grow up without each other, or without me. They'd already lost one parent; I didn't want them to feel like they'd lost the other. I didn't want to break up the family. The boys supported each other. And," Jeff smiled, "I'd have missed them."

John looked out at Anna from the screen. "Do you always analyze the whole family like this?"

"Yes. I do work with trauma patients. Any sort of trauma affects the whole family. Besides," Anna grinned, "you meet the most interesting people. I think that's enough for one day though. I do want to talk to you some more when you get back to earth."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 01:13:30 GMT
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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/18/2007 7:32 PM

Friday, August 17, 2068, 2:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Nikki stepped into the sickroom. It felt odd to be in there as a patient, and not as a nurse. The signs of Dianne's occupancy were there, as was Maggie, dressed in her pink flowered scrubs. She looked up as the door opened.

"Come in, Nikki," she said with a smile. "They're waiting for you."

"Thanks," she said, then paused to frown a bit. "They?"

"Drew and Dianne," Maggie said, shaking her head. "Dianne would not let Drew alone when it came to your follow-up. Dominic's, too. He finally caved and said she could observe, but from her wheelchair." She shook her head again. "Stubborn... just like the rest of her family, and the one she married into!"

Nikki chuckled a little, thinking of Alan, and stepped into the short corridor that led to the surgical suite. She knocked on the door jamb, and Drew, who was poring over a data pad, looked up.

"Come in, Nikki," he said. Turning, he handed off the pad to Dianne. "Here, girl. Make yourself useful."

Dianne snorted, then smiled at Nikki. "Good to see you again, Nikki."

"Good to see you, too," the nurse said, coming to give her erstwhile boss a hug. "You're looking better, even better than you did at the party."

"You're looking fit, yourself," Dianne replied, glancing down at Nikki's ankle. "No limp that I can see."

"You'd have been appalled the day after the party," Nikki replied. "Swelling, pain... I danced too much."

"Well, let's see if you've recovered from that night of excess," Drew interjected dryly. "There's a gown behind the screen."

Dianne rolled her eyes, and Nikki shrugged, then disappeared behind the screen. She emerged a few minutes later in one of the sick room gowns. Drew patted the scanner, and Nikki climbed up awkwardly.

"Let's see how your neck is doing." Drew had Nikki turn her head first one way, then the other. He told her to drop her chin, lean her head to the left then the right, then lean it back. "Any pain?"

She raised her hand to one side. "Just a twinge when I turn my head this way."

"All right." He probed her neck with firm fingers. "Does it hurt to the touch?"

"No," Nikki replied.

Drew nodded, and glanced toward Dianne. "No edema or tenderness felt on light palpation." She nodded and added it to the data pad.

"Now, let's look at this ankle." He helped Nikki turn so she was sitting on the scanner bed with her leg outstretched. "Looks like the swelling's gone down." He applied pressure. "Does this hurt?"

"No," she replied.

He nodded, and began to move Nikki's foot around gently. "Any pain?"

"Not really. Perhaps a dull ache."

"Got a bit of sand between your toes here," he said with a grin.

She returned the smile. "Took a trip to the beach today. It was lovely."

"All right." He patted the scanner. "Let's take a deeper look." He helped her lie back, then covered her with a sheet. Dianne keyed in a code, and the scanner began its work. Both Drew and Dianne watched it as it moved beneath Nikki's neck and shoulders.

"Everything looks good, actually." Drew nodded at the scanner. He turned to Dianne. "Skip down to the ankle, please."

"Yes, Doctor," Dianne replied with a smirk in her voice. It was Drew's turn to roll his eyes and shake his head. Nikki saw this and chuckled.

The scanner moved down quickly to the ankle, then slowed as it scanned the afflicted part. Both doctors glanced up at the screen. "A little bit of swelling left in the tendons. I think that some anti-inflammatories and a bit of continued rest will help clear this up." He motioned to Dianne to turn off the machine, then helped Nikki sit up. "Stay off your feet as much as possible for the weekend, and take aspirin, then light duty for the rest of next week."

"What if there's a rescue?" she asked.

The two doctors exchanged glances. Drew turned back to Nikki. "Not over the weekend. If there is one before the end of next week, let Jeff's decision be your guide."

"All right, Doctor," Nikki replied with a sigh.

Drew took a deep breath before asking his next question. "Have you been down to see Thunderbird Seven yet?" Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Dianne sit up straight as if stung.

Nikki moistened her lips, then said softly, "No. I haven't."

The doctor folded his arms. "I'm not saying you have to, but if you're having trouble with nightmares or flashbacks, you should tell someone, or talk to someone. Mrs. Hanson is here, and will continue to come here to help anyone who needs it. Consider speaking with her about it."

"I will," she replied with a sigh. "I'll consider it."

Drew nodded sharply. "Good. Now, I think we're done. Do you have any questions, Dianne?"

Dianne shook her head. "No."

"Then I'll let you get dressed, Nikki, and wait for my next vic... uh, patient." Drew's grin and quick quip broke the tension in the air. "If you have any questions, I'll be staying through the weekend at least."

"All right, Doctor." She took his hand to slide down carefully from the scanner. "Thanks for the follow up... and the advice."

"You're entirely welcome, Nikki." He picked up the data pad, and left the room. Nikki went behind

the screen to change back into her clothes.

Dianne finished downloading the scanner results, deep in thought. She almost didn't hear Nikki come out again.

"I'll take care of the gown," she said, smiling at Dianne.

"Huh? Wha?" Dianne looked up, startled. "Oh, yes. Thanks."

"You all right, Di?"

Dianne drew in a deep breath. "Yeah. I'm okay. It's been a rough day, that's all."

Nikki frowned a bit. "You sure? I mean, if there's anything I can do..."

The doctor smiled. "I'm sure. But thanks for the offer."

"Okay." Nikki took the gown and headed for the door to the surgery. "Talk to you later."

"Yes, later."

The nurse left, and Dianne sighed. I'm just not ready... all the way around.

A noisy squeal from the other room announced the arrival Dominic... and Joshua.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 01:17:23 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/18/2007 7:48 PM

Tracy Island, August 17th, late afternoon

Lady Penelope came out of the house and looked down at the pool. Anna was lying in the sun with her eyes closed and a book on the table next to her. Penny sat in a lounge chair near her and put her drink on the same table. She lowered the back of the lounge a few notches and sat down leaning back and relaxing in the sun.

Anna gave a contented sigh and opened her eyes.

Penelope smiled at her. "Ms. Hanson. I didn't get much of a chance to talk to you last night. Do you prefer Ms. or Mrs.?"

"I'll answer to either. Or just Anna, as long as I'm not working. I somehow don't think you are likely to become a patient of mine."

"Since I don't live here, I doubt I ever shall. How is Tyler doing? And of course poor Elise?"

Anna hated hearing anyone being referred to as 'poor' so-and-so. To her it felt patronizing, as if the person was a lesser being because of their problem. "You would have to ask his parents about Tyler. And Ms. Collins is capable of speaking for herself."

"I see. Patient confidentiality. But Tyler is just a child."

"Confidentiality is even more important to a child. It is extremely important that he feels he can trust me. In fact, even if Tyler was my patient and I had reason to believe you already knew Tyler was my patient, I wouldn't confirm it."

"Why would you think I already know?"

"Jeff told Dianne you were coming while I was visiting her. I gather you are a good friend of the family?"

"Yes. And I know about Jeff's 'family business'."

"Indeed." Penelope waited for Anna to continue, but Anna didn't say anything more. She simply leaned back in the chair and closed her eyes again.

Penny watched her and waited. When no further comments were forthcoming she decided to try again. "I understand you are retired?"

Anna didn't open her eyes. "Sort of. I retired from the city of Christchurch last month after 30 years of working for the government. I was setting up a private practice when Jeff contacted me. I understand you are also retired?"

Penny's eyes narrowed. Parker wouldn't have said anything. Is she fishing or does she know about my work for the Federal Agents Bureau? Out loud she responded, "Oh, no. I still model for dear François sometimes. I enjoy it. You've probably seen me in some of the latest fashion magazines."

Model. Right. Read anorexic/bulimic. Now be fair, Anna. She doesn't show any signs of any eating disorders. She's not underfed. And she ate sensibly at Virgil's party.

"I don't follow fashion much. I'm afraid the last time I looked at a fashion magazine I was 15. My mother bought it for me. Were you around then?" Anna, get a grip on yourself. That was uncalled for. Why does this lady set your teeth on edge? She seems nice enough. Mr. Tracy obviously likes her and he's no fool.

Penelope's lips thinned. She was past thirty, but really. "I noticed you didn't have anything appropriate for the party." Her voice hadn't changed in the slightest. A lady never loses her cool.

Anna never claimed to be a lady. "I only brought one suitcase when I came. I hadn't expected a party. When do the rest of your things arrive?"

"The rest of my things?" Penny put a look of mild interest on her face.

"Yes, from the amount of luggage brought to the Round House, I assumed you were moving here." Anna had finally figured out what was bothering her. She reminds me of Shelly. That 'I am a lady, you are a peon' manner.

Shelly had been the bane of Anna's high school existence. She didn't look at all like Penelope but had carried herself with the same 'admire me' air. As if the adoration of all the boys, including Anna's older brother, was simply her due. No, not her due. More like it was the natural order of things. If she'd been empty headed or even just average Anna could have stood it.

Unfortunately, she was just as smart as Anna and could beat her in several subjects. They could have been friends; they shared several classes each year. But Anna was already plump and Shelly despised anyone who 'let herself go' and she didn't mind saying so to Anna's face. She also said it to her brother where Anna could hear. Anna was simply not worth knowing. If there was one thing Anna had never been able to stand it was being dismissed as unimportant.

She undoubtedly is a nice person. Jeff likes her. So do Dianne and Alan. Apologize and start over. She opened her mouth to do just that.

Unfortunately, she'd waited a bit too long. Penny was fed up with comments about the amount of luggage she carried with her. "Oh, my luggage!" She smiled. "I had been traveling before this; it seems Tracy Island is my final stop, though I had been given to understand that I would leave for England from Paradise Peaks. I do like to be prepared for every contingency, and it is so difficult to find a good dry cleaner when one is traveling. Don't you agree?" She decided it was time to take Ms. Hanson down a peg. "If you'd like help choosing clothing, I'd be happy to be of assistance."

Anna's lips thinned. Penny had just said, almost word for word, what her mother had said every time she wanted Anna to go shopping. The tone of voice was the same, too. Somehow everything Mom insisted on buying wound up making her look either fatter or washed out. Then Mom complained that she never wore what she bought. A counselor in college once asked her if her mother had ever actually looked at her and seen what she really looked like instead of what Mom thought she should look like.

I can't afford the type of clothing that she wears. And I don't want them. Sorry dear, but I work for a living. Out loud she replied, "I wear clothes appropriate for what I'm doing. Part of my old job included helping the families with whatever they needed help with. Sometimes that included watching the kids while mom and dad were seeing the doctor, mowing the lawn, fixing dinner or whatever. Pant suits are simply needed for some of the things I did. They made me look more approachable to people. And more trustworthy."

"I see. Lure them into a sense of security."

Anna had used that phrase herself several times. But when Penelope said it, Anna felt she heard a note of scorn in her voice.

"I'm here to help them in any way I can. To do that, I need people to trust me. And I need to be worthy of that trust. Moreover, I need to be reliable. I can't leave after a few years just because I

get bored. I am still occasionally seeing patients from ten years ago."

"Ten years? And they still need help? I hope you don't take that long with Tyler. He'll need to leave for college before then."

Anna thought about the multiple rape victim whose husband couldn't figure out why she wasn't over it after a month, whose parents said it was her fault, and whose sister wanted her to 'just forgive' i.e. pretend nothing happened. She was one of the most incredibly courageous people Anna had ever met. It took a lot to make Anna lose her temper but Penny had just managed. "It shouldn't. He is usually surrounded by a very supportive family and has made friends with almost all of the other inhabitants of the Island. You don't visit too often, do you?"

Penny didn't usually lose her temper either. At that comment, she started to. "Jeff and the entire family are old friends. I normally trust his judgment." The anger in her voice was obvious.

"Dianne interviewed me, and Jeff agreed with her assessment after meeting me. He trusted me enough to show me around." Anna kept enough of her cool to not be more explicit about Thunderbird 3. You never confirm private information, even if someone apparently knows about it.

"Well, I am not sure I agree with him telling someone about International Rescue without my doing a background check. Particularly someone who had a breakdown for no apparent reason, even if it was twenty years ago!" Penelope's voice was icy.

Anna went white. She stood up, shaking, and stared down at Penny with a look between fury and pain. "You know, Jeff doesn't strike me as a man who normally hires incompetent people. He must have been very lucky to not have any security breaches while you've been around. If you want to know what caused my 'breakdown' I suggest you read the newspapers!" She turned and stalked off towards the beach. Penelope sat frozen, watching her.

Thanks for Tiquatoo and Liz for help with Penny's dialog

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 01:33:38 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/18/2007 7:51 PM

Tracy Island, August 17th, Dinner

"Isn't Mrs. Hanson joining us for dinner tonight?" Gordon looked around the table. It was full, except for one place next to Tyler. The place was set but the chair was empty.

Kyrano set his platter down in front of Jeff. "She said she would be here when I asked her at lunch. In fact, I told her I was fixing salmon. She had told me it was one of her favorite dishes."

"She was out by the pool earlier. We were talking then she walked off toward the beach. Perhaps she just lost track of time." Penelope sipped her wine.

When she hadn't returned by dessert, Jeff began to worry. "Gordon. Why don't you check her room? See if she is taking a nap or something. We can send a tray over."

Gordon nodded and left the table. He returned a half an hour later. "She's not there. She's also not on any of the beaches I could see. And she's not with any of the recruits either. None of them have seen her since this afternoon." He hesitated for a second. "Dad, the tide is just starting to come in. It's going to be a high one, so she shouldn't stay out there too long. She doesn't know the beaches and could get trapped."

"She was going to help Alex and me play with the kittens tonight. She said we need to be around them a lot so they get used to people." Tyler sounded upset.

"Well then, Tyler, you and Alex will have to help me play with them. I'm still trying to make friends with Momma. Kyrano, was there any salmon left over?" Emily Tracy stood up and moved toward the kitchen.

"Yes, Mrs. Tracy. I put some aside for her. Durian wanted it all and complained mightily when I would not give it to him."

"A cat is always hungry when there is fish to be had. Come along, boys." Emily led them out to the kitchen.

"Dianne, you need to go back to the sick room. In fact, you should have gone back a while ago." Drew stood up and went to take the wheelchair. "You are looking tired."

"In a moment. Jeff, Drew, Anna has a heart problem. It is minor, and it shouldn't be giving her any trouble, but I'm beginning to worry. She's not the type to have forgotten a promise to Tyler."

"Jeff." Penny's eyes were troubled. "Ms. Hanson and I exchanged a few heated words while we were by the pool. She was fairly upset when she marched off."

"What did you say?" asked Jeff.

"I made a comment about her unexplained time off twenty years ago. She went white, stood up, and made a cutting remark. She told me I should read the papers. Then she marched off."

Drew swore. "Maggie, get your jacket. Find an extra one for Anna. Jeff, she's probably all right, but we should find her. It is getting dark and she doesn't know her way around."

"You know something you're not telling us."

"I didn't just recommend Anna to you because I'd met her once. She's actually fairly well-known in her field. She's written several papers. One of them gave a short biography."

"I will come also." Penny stood up.

"No. Right now, you would only make things worse. If you really want to know about the

'unexplained' time off, I suggest you read the Christchurch newspapers for the period just before then. She was using her maiden name professionally at the time. I'm not sure what it was."

"You're sure she went toward the beach?" Jeff asked.

"Yes, although I'm not sure she went all the way down."

"Ok. Scott, Virgil, get the hover bikes and check the trails that branch off from the beach trail. Gordon, Maggie, take one of the beach buggies and search toward the pier. Drew and I will look in the other direction. If you find her, give us a call."

"She should be fine," Drew added. "But she may not realize how much time has passed. She may also still be upset. Don't worry about it. Just tell her we were worried and she needs to come back. Tell her Tyler missed her."

A chorus of "FABs" came from around the room. Coats were grabbed and people headed out various doors. Jeff went over and kissed Dianne. "Back to bed for you, dear."

"I want to stay up until she's found." Dianne had a stubborn look on her face.

"You can stay up as late as you like as long as it's in the sick room," Drew replied. "We may be rather late, though. I don't think she's in any trouble, but I don't want her spending the night outside. And what happened isn't my story to tell. Although she will probably tell you if you ask." Drew leaned over and kissed her cheek.

Lisa and Tin-Tin helped Brains wheel Dianne down to the sick room and put her to bed. Tin-Tin stayed to keep her company while Lisa went to start getting the boys ready for their bed. Penny went over to the computer on Jeff's desk. She found the website of Christchurch's newspaper and started reading the headlines from 22 years ago. Every so often she would skim an article but didn't find anything. Finally she saw a story from about two weeks before Anna's leave started. Four paragraphs down, she came across the name Anna Peterson. Her face went pale as she read the story.

xxxx

Drew and Jeff found her about a mile up the beach. She was sitting on the sand with her arms wrapped around her knees, watching the waves. Jeff stopped the cart and called the other searchers. Drew got out, grabbed a blanket he'd put in the cart, and sat down beside her.

"Here," he said, handing her the blanket. "I thought you might get cold."

"Oh. Thanks." She took the blanket and looked at it for a minute. Then she looked around her. "It's dark. I hadn't noticed." She wrapped the blanket around her shoulders.

Jeff came over and sat on her other side. They sat in silence for a while then Anna gave a shudder and pulled the blanket closer.

"Are you all right now?" Jeff asked.

"Yes. I will be. I guess I missed dinner." She made no move to get up.

"More importantly, you missed playing with the kittens with Tyler. He was getting worried."

"Oh dear. I better go talk to him." She started to get up but Jeff put a hand on her arm.

"He's just getting into bed. The official story is that you went for a walk on the beach, went farther than you thought, and you couldn't get back before dark. This has the advantage of being mostly true. I talked to him and told him we'd found you. He's should be in bed and asleep by the time we get back. You can grovel tomorrow." She smiled briefly at that then settled back into silence. After a moment, Jeff continued. "Penny sends her apologies. She said she looked at the papers and, quote, is appalled at her behavior, end quote."

"It wasn't entirely her fault. We were both being rude and losing our tempers. She couldn't have had any idea her comment would affect me like that. Still, I think I better avoid her for a couple of days. I'm going to be sensitive for a while. Maybe I should go visit the kittens. A purr fest might be just what I need."

"As long as you're sure you won't take out your anger on them," Drew cautioned.

Again, the brief smile. "I spent a half hour throwing rocks at the cliff back there. I broke a few, too. I think I've got most of the anger out of my system for now. I'm sorry, Mr. Tracy. I haven't reacted like this in over ten years."

Jeff looked at her. "If you don't want to answer this, you don't have to. I won't ask again. But what were you reacting to?"

Anna was quiet for a long while. Just when Jeff was ready to suggest they go back to the house, she answered. "I started out as a social worker. Helping people on public assistance, checking handicap claims, helping make insurance claims, that sort of thing. I found I was really good at talking to the people, but was getting frustrated. Sometimes it seemed nothing ever changed.

"I was assigned to help a battered wife. She was filing for divorce. She had left him a year ago and was currently six months pregnant by someone else. I was helping her get through the court system and arranging for transitional housing. She was living in the domestic violence shelter.

"The day of the divorce hearing, two volunteers from the shelter brought her to the courthouse. The primary social worker met them there. They went upstairs to the courtroom. Her husband was waiting outside the courtroom door. I was running late and was just getting out of the elevator.

"I never found out how her husband got the gun through security. But she belonged to him and he wasn't going to let her get away. He put the first bullet through her head. He put the next one through her abdomen, killing her unborn child. He then shot the two volunteers who had 'helped steal his wife from him'. The social worker tried to grab the gun but he shot her before she could reach him. He saw me on the steps and was just pointing the gun at me when a police officer who was in the courthouse to testify in another case shot him.

"I knew all the victims. The social worker had been a colleague for 5 years. I knew both volunteers; one of them was from my church. I'd helped to persuade the wife to leave. And I'd helped her pick out a name for the baby.

"I didn't have a breakdown, but I couldn't return to work. I started seeing a counselor. But she specialized in grief therapy. I knew both trauma counselors personally and didn't like either one.

"You know, the best drug and alcohol counselors are people who've been through it themselves. That's one of the reasons AA works. They know what it's like and can understand, but you can't B.S. them. I started doing research into trauma to try and help myself. I joined survivors of violence support group. I watched what the leader was doing. I took over when she went on vacation. And I found out I was good at it, and liked it. So I went back to school and got my second Master's degree.

"My husband and I talked about moving somewhere else and starting over. I was having problems with the notoriety. But my main support system was here. I'd always used my maiden name professionally. There had been a problem changing the name on my original degree. So all the news stories said 'Anna Peterson'. I went back to college as 'Anna Hanson'. My supervisors knew; it wasn't a secret exactly, but the press never found out -- or at least they never mentioned it. Except for one article in 'The Journal of Modern Psychology' that had a short biography. Not many people read medical journals for fun.

"I think it was the unexpectedness of Penelope's comments that upset me so much. She really didn't say anything that far out of line. I got out of the line of fire and did what I needed to do to take care of myself. I just didn't realize I had been gone so long. And I'm sorry if I upset you."

"We were more worried than upset. I'm going to have to figure out what to tell everyone, though. Ready to go back?" Jeff stood up and offered her his hand.

"The truth usually works. Tell them Lady Penelope said something that upset me and I went for a walk to calm down. I lost track of time. I should probably tell Dianne the full story. Do you think hearing this will upset her more than wondering?"

"Let me worry about Dianne. I'll give her the 'official' version and tell her there was more to it than that but you aren't up to telling the story twice," Drew replied, standing up. "She'll accept that from me, for now. You can tell her what you want later when you're both stronger. Come on. Let's get you someplace warmer."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 01:51:00 GMT
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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/18/2007 8:09 PM

Friday, August 17, 2068, 10:45 p.m., Tracy Island

""International Rescue wishes to thank all of those involved in the treatment and care of our

personnel following the recent crash of our medical vessel. We would like to particularly extend our gratitude to the Kansas Region II EMS team, to the staff of Mercy General Hospital in Los Angeles, including Dr. Theresa Mercado-Tucker, Dr. Andrew Carmichael, Dr. Rajeev Singh, Dr. Stephen Mansfield, Mr. Geraldo Montoya, and to Mercy General's Ms. Carol Ferris and the LAPD for their sterling work in helping us maintain our security.

"Our personnel are recovering well, with no complications whatsoever. We would also like to express our heartfelt thanks for the letters, gifts, prayers and support from so many people in the Los Angeles area and around the world. We appreciate everything you have done, and it gives us the strength and courage to get back on our feet, and back out doing our job. On behalf of International Rescue, God bless you all.

"The Commander"

"That sounds good, Jeff," Emily said as she listened to him read it aloud. "But how are you going to send it?"

"I plan on having our transportation gurus in both Los Angeles and in New York hand deliver it," Jeff explained as he saved the final draft and attached it to an email.

"New York?" Emily asked, puzzled. "Why New York?"

Jeff glanced up at his mother. "Confirmation. If Ned Cook gets a copy of this at the same time that the hospital does, it's more likely to look like it has come from us, and not be something concocted by the hospital. I was also thinking of having Scott call, or add a recorded, 'Yes, this is legit' bit for Cook. He'd recognize Scott's voice as the man who helped save his life."

"I see." Emily nodded. "Shouldn't you get Scott up here, then?"

"He'll be here in just a minute," Jeff said, frowning. "Hm. When did that arrive?"

"When did what arrive?" Emily asked, a slight exasperation in her tone.

Jeff paused to rub his temples. It had been a long day, one filled with drama and high emotion, and it occurred to him that he and Dianne still hadn't spoken with the children about their vacation. Finally, he stopped his massage and replied to his mother's question. "An email from the human resources department. I asked them to flag Luke Morel's application and interview if or when it came through. Seems he had an interview with the Los Angeles office yesterday afternoon -- their time." He put his fingers on the keyboard again. "I'll read it over, then decide if I want to have him come out."

"Luke Morel? Who is he? And why do you want him out here?"

Jeff sighed. "Since you're so all-fired curious, Ma, Luke Morel is a rescue expert, one of the people who pulled Lena Matumbo out of the ravine where her plane crashed. He applied to Tracy Industries for the position of Environmental Specialist. Lena suggested he'd make a good addition to the IR team, and with the uncertainty of Brandon's return, we could use another hand or two."

"So, you plan on bringing him out here?" Emily folded her arms. "How's he going to get here? And when? We have so many guests here already... and I'd like to know where I'm going to put him!"

Jeff sounded weary. "There's plenty of room in the Round House, Ma. And if things work out, he could be here as early as Saturday. Callie's due to return; maybe we can work it out that he flies out with Alan and Elise when they pick her up in L.A." He glanced at his mother. "I'll let you know one way or another. But first, I have to read over his application and interview results."

Both mother and son glanced up as the sound of someone opening the grillwork door reached them. "You wanted me, Dad?" Scott asked as he came down the steps. He stopped to give Emily a kiss on the cheek. "You're up late, Grandma."

"I know. I needed to get a few things straightened out with your father. Now that you're here, I'll say goodnight." She glanced up at Jeff. "Let me know if this Morel person is coming and when."

"I will, Ma," Jeff replied. "Goodnight and sleep well."

"I'll try, but with Big Momma and those kittens crying..." She shook her head and her words trailed off as she left the room.

"Goodnight, Grandma." Scott watched his grandmother go. "Morel?" He hooked a thumb over his shoulder as he turned back to his father. "What was that all about?"

"I'll explain later. Right now, Scott, I need you to record something for me..." Jeff began to explain to his oldest son just what he wanted.

A few hours later, two emails, one with an attached sound clip, appeared in the IR email boxes of Hernando Garcia and Bernie Levine for printout and hand delivery to their respective destinations. And an email also appeared in the Tracy Industries box of Bob Rawlings, Human Resources director in Los Angeles, informing him of his employer's desire to meet personally with one Luke Morel.

--thanks to both Lillehafrue and Hobbeth for their help on this one.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 01:53:27 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 3/19/2007 8:07 PM

Friday, August 17; Dothan Regional Airport, Alabama; 6:45 a.m. (Same day, 11:45 p.m. on Tracy Island)

Her family accompanying her to the airport, Callie felt sad to have to leave them again.

The drive to the airport had been silent, until her brother Joseph mentioned a joke about someone swallowing a large amount of dollar bills. He then said, "No change is expected." That caused

everyone to laugh hard, which broke the sadness for a little while.

When they arrived, Callie went through the motions of getting her plane ticket and all. Before she walked through the security gate, she turned to face her family. "Well, I guess it's time." She sniffled as a small tear came down her right cheek.

Her father Richard hugged her tightly. "Oh, honey, don't be sad. You know where you come from, and you know where you can always go home to. Even if you can't make it home for the holidays, that's okay. A simple call's enough for us."

Her mother walked up and said, "I've packed some homemade lemon cookies in your carry-on. They'll give you some sustenance during the flight."

"Thanks, Mom. I'd rather have these than the ordinary airline meal. I hope I won't have to buy any food from here to Honolulu." She embraced her mother.

Her two older brothers, Joseph and Brian, both walked up to Callie and hugged her. "Hey, Sis," said Brian, "take care of yourself out there, okay?"

"Don't worry, Bri. I will. You and Joe have to take care of yourselves, along with Mom and Dad. Make sure they're okay, all right?"

Joseph smiled. "Count on that, Callie. And maybe we'll watch the Alabama game at the same time."

I only wish that could work, she thought. It'll be the wee hours of the morning by the time the game comes on live. "Hey, Joe. No matter where I go, it's always 'Roll Tide' all the way."

"Yeah, even in Hawaii!" He couldn't resist giving her a bear hug. "Be careful, Sis."

Feeling the hug, she said, "I will, but can I breathe first?"

He let go of the hug quickly. "Oh, yeah, sorry."

Lorraine gave her a kiss. "We love you, Callie. Take care of yourself."

"I will. I love you all, too."

After one final hug to all her family, she walked through the security gate and started the long journey back to Tracy Island.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 01:56:48 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 3/21/2007 7:50 PM

Tracy Island, August 18th, 8:30 AM (August 17th, 9:30 PM, England)

Kat finished rinsing her teacup and placed it on the rack to dry. She turned and grabbed her work gloves off the table and started towards the door. A sudden ringing startled her.

"What on earth?" She quickly identified the sound as coming from her satellite phone. "Who could be calling me?" She answered. "Hello?"

"Katy?"

"Mother? This is a surprise! Is everything all right?" Kat asked. "It's not your heart, is it?"

"No, dear, I'm fine. But I am afraid I have some news," Kat's mother answered.

"What is it?"

"Well, you remember Melanie's brother, Colin? His RAF squadron is being deployed ahead of schedule so the Winchesters have decided to move up the wedding. It will take place in two weeks."

"Oh no! I shall have to ask Mr. Tracy if I can get the time off." She frowned in thought. "I don't think it will be a problem."

"Good, then I will tell them that you will still be able to be in the wedding party. Melanie is frantic over this. It's all your brother can do to keep her calm."

"Poor Melanie," Kat sighed.

"There is one more thing."

Mrs. Williamson had a strange note to her voice. "What is it?" Kat asked.

"Well...it seems that that man who harassed you has been arrested. He assaulted a young lady and the police arrested him. When they talked to Mr. Patterson, he mentioned that it had happened before." She paused. "Katy, darling, the police want to speak to you. They are planning on pressing formal charges against that awful man and want you to testify in court."

Kat felt the color drain from her face and her legs went weak. She sat down at the table. "No...I can't..."

"Oh, sweetheart! I know how awful that was for you. But I'm afraid you have to. I have a letter here from the solicitors. They're expecting you next week."

Kat bit back tears. "I suppose I have to then."

"As soon as you get your flight information, let me know. I will have your father pick you up at the airport."

"I will. I'll go talk to Mr. Tracy now and let you know as soon as I can," Kat told her.

"Very well. I look forward to hearing from you. Good-bye for now, dear."

"Good-bye, Mother." Kat hung up the phone and put her face in her hands. I don't want to have to face Ernie again. And what if they don't believe me? After all, no one did when it happened. She took a deep breath and sat up. "Pull yourself together, Kat. He can't hurt you again." She got to her feet and marched towards the door. "Now I just have to explain all this to Mr. Tracy."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Thu, 26 Jul 2012 01:58:17 GMT

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From: lillehafrue Sent: 3/21/2007 8:01 PM

Los Angeles, August 17th, 1:45 PM, (August 18th, 8:45 AM Tracy Island)

Luke peered into the refrigerator with a frown. I know Barry is a health nut, but he must have something sweet around here. He closed the door and tried the cupboards next. I'm going to kill someone if I don't find a chocolate bar soon.

Finally giving up, he snagged an apple out of the bowl on the table and plopped down on the couch. He grabbed a magazine off the coffee table and scowled. It was the latest edition of GQ. Luke rolled his eyes at yesterday's memory...

"You are not going on a job interview at Tracy Industries wearing that," Barry stated firmly.

"What's wrong with this?" Luke asked, hanging his navy suit coat on the back of the door.

Barry just shook his head in disgust. "Four years I have you. Four years! And you still dress like a redneck."

Luke grinned. "But you love me for it."

Barry groaned. "Come on, babe. We're going shopping."

Barry had dragged him down to a department store and Luke spent the most part of the afternoon trying on suit after suit until Barry found the one that he said was perfect. And grudgingly, Luke had to agree it did look good.

His interview this morning had gone well. The woman Luke had spoken to seemed impressed with his credentials and he felt he had answered her questions well. She told him they would be in touch with him in a few days.

He sighed and tossed the magazine back on the table. Well, with any luck, I'll get the job. Who knows, maybe Barry and I can work things out after all. He got up and paced the room, too antsy

to sit still.

Barry's apartment was nearly double the size of the one they had shared in Colorado. This one had a good sized spare bedroom, which was where Luke was currently staying. He looked out the window, unused to seeing cars and buildings. He sighed again and rested his forehead against the glass, closing his eyes.

Could I do this? Could I live in the city? And what about Rom? It wouldn't be fair to keep him locked up inside all day. It's weird not having him around. Feels like part of me is missing. He opened his eyes and stared, unseeing, out the window. Maybe Mom's right. Maybe I have to stop thinking about Barry and start thinking about me and what I want for a change.

The buzz of his cell phone startled him out of his reverie. He pulled it out of his pocket, not recognizing the number. "Hello?"

"Mr. Morel?"

"Yes."

"This is Mr. Rawlings from Tracy Industries." Luke held his breath. "Mr. Tracy would like to talk to you. Is it possible for you to meet with him today?"

Luke was startled. "Yeah, sure." He glanced at his watch. "What time?"

"I'll send a car to your address in two hours. Please pack an overnight bag."

"An overnight bag?" Luke raised an eyebrow in question. "Where am I going?"

"To Mr. Tracy's place of residence. Where should I pick you up?" Luke rattled off Barry's address. "Very good. I shall see you soon."

Luke hung up the phone, and just stared at it for a minute. "Jeff Tracy wants to talk to me?" He shook his head in disbelief. "Well, guess I better go get packed then."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:22:20 GMT
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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 3/23/2007 10:55 AM

August 17, 1:45 PM, San Diego; 8:45 AM August 18 on Tracy Island)

Brandon walked down the quiet path of the cemetery, stopping in front of his siblings' graves and putting a bouquet of flowers next to the headstones.

"Hey, Sis, Bro," he said, sitting down in the cool grass. "I'm sorry I haven't been to visit you in a while, but a lot has happened since I talked to you last. You wouldn't believe what I've been

through in the seven months I've been with International Rescue." Brandon thought back to the situations he'd been in and one came to mind.

"One of the most dangerous rescues I went on was a rescue in the North Sea," Brandon said, describing it to Shauna and Thomas as if they were sitting next to him.

"After Gordon and I cut the mine loose, Captain Bowers wanted to thank us for saving him and his crew. But, before he could, we were washed overboard. It took time for me to find him; it took the team a bit longer to find us. But, thanks to the team and a bit of McCain tenacity, we both survived the ordeal."

He went on to tell them about a couple of other rescues he'd been on and his feelings about living on a tropical island.

"I wish all the news was that good, but it isn't." Brandon took a deep breath and said, "Mom and Dad were involved in a car accident. Some guy decided to drink and drive and broadsided their car. Mom broke her hip and Dad suffered temporary paralysis." He stopped to collect his thoughts then continued, a light smile on his face.

"Shannon and I thought Dad wouldn't be able to walk again. However, with determination and lots of physical therapy, he should be able to stand on his own again; it's just going to take time. As for Mom, her hip is healing quite nicely. She should be able to work in her garden soon."

After getting them caught up on 'current events', Brandon stood up to leave. Looking at the headstones, he said, "Well, that's it for now. I'll be back when I can." Then he turned, walking back the way he had come. [/color]

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:24:33 GMT
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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/23/2007 9:28 PM

Saturday, August 18, 2068, 9:30 a.m. Tracy Island

"You wanted to see us, Dad?" Alex asked as he entered the study, his younger brother in tow.

"Yes, I needed to see all three of you," Jeff told him. "Sit down please."

Alex stared pointedly at his sister, who was sitting comfortably on the love seat. She gazed back at him, a sweetly stubborn look on her face. Instead of asking her to move, the older boy plunked himself down next to her, folding his arms, and leaving Tyler as last man standing.

Dianne, recognizing the situation, sighed and said, "Theah's room enough foah all three o' you on that sofa. Cherry, Alex, move ovah. Tyler, sit down. None o' you are contagious."

There was some sotto voce grumbling, but the children obeyed. Once all of them were more or

less settled, Jeff sat back. He took Dianne's hand and squeezed it lightly. "I'm afraid I don't have good news for you all. Your mother and I have decided that it's wisest if we postpone our vacation..."

"What?!" Cherie threw herself forward, consternation on her face. "We're canceling our vacation?!"

"Postponing it, Princess," Jeff said calmly. "Your mother isn't ready to travel..."

"That is so unfair!" Cherie cried, jumping from her seat. "How am Ah gonna see Stephanie befoah she moves?"

"Cherie! Sit down!" Dianne said sharply. The teenager folded her arms belligerently as she sat down sharply, making her brothers shy and lean away. She turned her face toward the door and refused to make eye contact.

"As I said before I was interrupted," Jeff began again, his voice showing his irritation. "We are postponing our trip because your mother is not up to traveling." He softened his tone. "We will make arrangements at some other time to see your cousins and bring them to the ranch or to the lodge in New Hampshire."

"When?!" Cherie demanded to know, her face red and her voice sounding both defiant and on the verge of tears.

"I don't know yet. I'll have to contact your uncles and find out when their vacations are..."

The teen shook her head vehemently, all but screaming, "No! You'll nevah find the time! We're nevah goin' on this vacation! And Ah'll nevah see Stephanie again!" And with that she lunged from her seat and ran out through the lounge, slamming the metal door behind her in her fury.

As the clang of the door faded, Jeff closed his eyes and rubbed his forehead, sighing heavily. "That could have gone better."

Dianne laid a hand on his arm. "Ah'll have a talk with her latuh, when she's calmed down." She turned her attention to her sons. "Boys, do you have anythin' to say? Any questions to ask?"

"Ah thought you were getting better," Alex said simply. "We thought maybe you could rest on vacation."

"Ah am getting' bettah, Alex," Dianne said with a small smile. "Uncle Drew is gonna look me ovah again latuh today and maybe release me from the sick room." She shook her head. "But Ah've still got a long road ahead of me. Physical therapy to build up mah strength... an'... well, an' some othah things have gotta happen before Ah can even go back to work. Besides," here she gave her sons a wink, "d'you really think Ah wanna stay at the lodge while you and yoah cousins go out and do all the fun stuff? Ah wanna be able to go horseback ridin' too!"

"I want you boys to understand that we're not doing this because we're being mean or anything," Jeff said. "We're doing this because it's what's best for your mom, and for all of us as a family." He

squeezed Dianne's hand again. "I know I wouldn't have half as much fun if I knew your mom was sitting back in the lodge and not out on the trail with us."

"Wouldn't you have fun with us?" Tyler asked, sounding slightly hurt.

Jeff smiled. "Yes, Ty, of course I'd have fun with you. Just not as much fun as I'd have if we were all together, like we should be on this vacation."

"Oh." Tyler sat back, slumping on the couch.

"Alex? Do you understand why we're doing this?"

Alex shrugged, a sort of one shoulder motion. "Yeah, I guess so."

"Tyler?" Dianne asked. "Do you understand now?"

Tyler nodded. "Will we go when you're all better?"

"I'll do what I can to make sure we do," Jeff told him. "I have to talk to your uncles today. We'll discuss it."

"Promise?" Alex suddenly asked.

"I promise." Jeff said, nodding.

There was a sudden silence, then Dianne opened her arms. "C'mere, you two. You both need a hug and so do I."

Each of the boys came to her arms in turn; Alex's hug was more dutiful, while Tyler's was heartfelt and sealed with a kiss. Tyler also turned to hug Jeff, while Alex asked, "Can we go now?"

"Yes, you can go," Jeff said, nodding. The boys left, Alex plodding behind his more animated brother, his hands in the pockets of his jeans.

Jeff let out a long breath, and slumped against the back of his chair. "That could have gone better, too."

Dianne sighed again. "Yes, it could have. But I think they understand that it's best for us all."

"I hope so." Jeff rose from his seat, groaning a little as he stood and stretched. "Well, I'd better get on the horn to your brothers. I think the time zones are fairly well aligned for it; it should be around six in the evening... yesterday."

"If you need help with Dougie, let me know." Dianne undid the brakes on the wheelchair.

"Your mother has already offered her assistance," Jeff told her. "And, remember, I have Andy as back up. You don't need to raise your blood pressure; it might put your escape from the sick room in jeopardy."

"All right, all right," she replied, waving a hand. "I'll go ask if anyone has seen where Cherry went. She and I need a little mother-to-daughter talk."

"Tell Scott what happened and send him after her," Jeff counseled. "He might be able to get through."

"You may be right. I'll also let Anna know. She might have some insight into how to deal with Cherry."

"Good idea." He leaned over to kiss her. "I'll see you at lunch."

Once outside the study, Tyler tugged on Alex's shirt. "Hey, wanna play some air hockey or some foosball? I bet I can beat you."

Alex shrugged once more. "Nah. Not right now. I think I'm going to go see if Grandma has some cookies or something. I'm kinda hungry."

Tyler shrugged. "Okay. Suit yourself."

Meanwhile, Cherie had finished her headlong run down to the airstrip and the beach beyond, and now sat on the sand, sobbing, her arms wrapped around her knees.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:27:34 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 3/24/2007 1:36 PM

Friday, August 17th, 2068; Memphis International Airport; 9:55 a.m. (2:55 a.m. Saturday, August 18 on Tracy Island)

Callie was about to board the commercial flight taking her to Los Angeles International after laying over for about 30 minutes. Her flight from Dothan Regional to Memphis was about as smooth as it could possibly be.

The plane took off about 15 minutes later, and she was on her way to meet with whoever would be picking her up.

Sitting in the window seat, she enjoyed looking out over the open land from a high altitude.

However, the passenger next to her in the aisle seat was slightly unnerved. She was breathing heavily and looking around nervously.

Callie looked at the passenger. "Excuse me, Miss. Are you okay?"

The brown-eyed, brown-haired passenger looked at her with anxious eyes. "I'm trying to be. It's

only the third time I've ever flown in my life, and just the second by myself."

"Oh, where are you going?"

"I'm going to Los Angeles to meet up with a couple of friends. I'm going to a comic book convention there. First time for me going to the West Coast."

Callie looked at the passenger calmly. "Hey, just think about the fun time you'll have at this convention. That should take your mind off being on the plane."

"Maybe you're right. I'm probably worrying over nothing. I'm Deanna."

"Nice to meet you, Deanna. I'm Callie." She put out her hand, and the two women shook hands. "I'm having a layover in L.A., on my way back to Honolulu."

"Now that's a challenge for me. I don't know if I could handle flying over the vast Pacific."

Callie smiled. "Believe me, I understand. When I first had to fly places, I was just as nervous. Nowadays I'm fine."

Just then, an announcement came over the intercom. "Ladies and gentlemen, this is your pilot speaking. We're at our cruising altitude of 35,000 feet, and the weather looks clear all the way to LAX. In fact, these winds should get us there about 20 minutes early."

Deanna said, "That'll be great. My friends may not have to wait that long for me."

After talking for another 20 minutes, Deanna decided to take a nap while Callie looked outside the window again.

*****20 miles east of LAX, 11:25 a.m. PDT (6:25 a.m. the next morning on Tracy Island)*****

Awakening after a good nap, Deanna looked outside the window. "We're close to the airport, and I'm looking forward to seeing my friends."

"I can tell you're excited about this trip," said Callie, noticing Deanna smiling.

Suddenly, the plane shot upward, causing Deanna's stomach to retch badly. "Oh, man...my stomach..."

Callie quickly gave her the air sickness bag. "Here, use this."

Deanna had lost some of the food and water she had eaten during the flight. Her complexion becoming pale, she asked, "What's...going on?"

The pilot spoke again. "I apologize for the sudden raise in altitude, folks. We ran into some clear air turbulence. This is a common occurrence. We'll just have to come in a little faster in our landing."

"It's common?" Deanna asked in disgust. "How about for someone who isn't used to flying all the time?"

Callie patted her shoulder. "Take it easy, Deanna. Everything's going to be fine."

Deanna lost her food three more times before the plane finally came in for a landing.

After getting off the plane, Callie accompanied her to her waiting friends. "She's suffering a bad case of air sickness. Make sure she doesn't eat anything heavy for about 24 hours."

Deanna looked at her fellow passenger. "Thank you for helping me keep calm. If you weren't there, I probably would've gone crazy."

"I'm glad I could help. Just remember, no heavy foods or drinks until you get better."

After the three friends left, Callie went to the baggage claim to pick up her luggage. After doing so, she started walking to the private air terminal, where she would wait for one of the Tracys to pick her up and head back to the island.

Meanwhile, Luke was sitting in the private air terminal, watching the planes take off. He had called Barry and explained the situation, then his parents, asking if Rommel could stay a few more days. Now, he was waiting for the plane that would be taking him to meet Jeff Tracy. Despite having asked, no one would enlighten him to where exactly, that was.

He heard the door open and turned to find a blonde haired, green-eyed woman, her arms full of bags, looking at him in surprise. "Hi there!" she said.

Luke smiled. "Hi. I'm Luke Morel."

"Callie Spencer." She put the bags down and shook his hand. "Are you lost?"

Luke shook his head. "No, I have an interview with Jeff Tracy, of Tracy Industries. I was told to come here and someone would be flying me out to talk to him."

Callie's eyes opened wide in surprise, but she recovered quickly. "That's terrific. What position are you applying for?"

"Environmental specialist. I guess the company is looking for someone to scout out areas for potential building sites. They want a liaison between the company and the towns involved. Also I'd be checking the environmental impact on the surrounding region."

Callie nodded thoughtfully. "I see." Then she smiled. "Well, Luke. I hope you get the job!" And I mean that. What a hunk!

"Me too." They both turned as the door opened again.

"Hey, Callie! How was the visit?"

"Great, Alan! I did some shopping while I was home," she grinned sheepishly at the young man who walked in the room.

"Yeah, I can see that," Alan replied. Then he turned his attention to Luke. "Hey there, you must be Luke Morel. Dad said I'd be bringing you back. I'm Alan Tracy."

They shook hands. "Pleased to meet you." Luke glanced at the two of them. "Can either of you tell me where we're headed?"

Alan grinned. "You'll see soon enough. Is that your bag?"

The smile faded from Luke's face and he folded his arms across his chest. "I'm not going anywhere until someone tells me where I'm going."

Alan didn't waver. "Please, there's nothing to worry about. We live on a private island in the South Pacific. Helps to keep the press away. I promise you, we're got no hidden agendas up our sleeves." Well, not many anyway, Alan thought to himself. "If it makes you feel any better, you can call your family at each refueling stop. Let them know where you are."

Luke stood still for a moment, then nodded. "That will be fine." He picked up his bag. "After you."

Alan winked at Callie and together they picked up Callie's luggage. Alan then led them both outside to the plane. Callie quickly climbed aboard, and after a wary glance around, Luke followed. He'd never been in private jet before and stopped to stare. The seats were large and comfortable looking, with quite a bit of space between them. At least I won't be twisted like a contortionist for however long this flight lasts. There was a small refrigerator on one wall, and another door that lead to what Luke guessed was a bathroom. The door leading to the cockpit was opened and the copilot waved a greeting.

"Hey there! I'm Elise and I'll be your co-pilot today." Her grin was contagious and Luke found himself smiling despite his nerves.

"Hi, Luke Morel." He held out his hand and Elise shook it.

"Welcome aboard, Luke. Callie, how was your trip?"

Callie smiled as she buckled herself in. "Great! I'll fill you both in as soon as we get to the island."

"Can't wait to hear it," Elise said.

Alan had entered the plane and seated himself in the pilot's seat. "Everyone all set?"

Luke quickly sat down and stowed his bag under the seat. He fastened his seat belt and nodded to Alan.

"Off we go then." Alan started the plane and within a few minutes they were airborne.

Luke watched the coastline disappear and the blue waters of the Pacific sparkled in the late

afternoon sun. Why all the subterfuge just for a job interview? He sighed to himself as Alan, Callie and Elise started talking and laughing. He pulled a book out of his bag, and settling himself more comfortably in the seat, prepared himself for a long flight.

Luke and Callie meet in L.A. on the way to Tracy Island, by TracyFan4Ever and Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:29:12 GMT
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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/24/2007 10:19 PM

Saturday, August 18, 2068, 2:45 p.m., Tracy Island.

"Well?" Dianne turned her head toward her uncle, who was reading the scanner data.

"Patience, girl, patience," Drew said, good-humoredly. "I'm nearly through."

Jeff wasn't sitting next to his wife this time; he was peering over his friend's shoulder and trying to make sense of the readings from the scanner. Drew glanced over his shoulder to frown at Jeff. "Do you mind? You're getting in the way." He pointed to a rolling stool behind him. "Sit there so I can finish my work."

Jeff blinked, frowned, then sighed and sat down where Drew had indicated. "You may be the CEO of one of the largest companies in the world, but here, now, you're being a pain in the neck," Drew said, a note of teasing and satisfaction in his voice. He peered at the scanner's screen one last time, then gave a sharp, satisfied nod, and pressed a couple of keys. "Okay. I'll save this, and we're done."

"Well?" Dianne asked again, this time struggling to sit up. Jeff strode over to offer his help, but she managed to get into a reclining position under her own power, propping herself up with her elbows.

"The infection is gone," Drew told her, referring to his notes. "Your ribs are well on their way to healing, though they'll need another couple of weeks before they're back to their full strength. They should be strong enough for you to use crutches or a cane. You'd better make sure you've got enough calcium in your diet for the growth stimulator to work with."

"So, I can sleep in my own bed tonight?" Dianne asked pointedly.

There was a pause, then Drew nodded. "Yeah. You can. Consider yourself released from the sick room." He held up a finger. "But... not back to duty. You're officially grounded from rescues. You can go back to light medical duty sometime next week. And by light, I mean no lifting whatsoever."

"I have at least one new recruit I have to do a physical for," Dianne warned.

"As long as she can get herself on and off the table, you can schedule that for late next week."

Drew put the data pad down and folded his arms.

"What else?" Jeff asked, rubbing his fingers over Dianne's shoulders.

Drew snorted. "Do I have to paint a picture for you? Those ribs have got to heal more before you can resume sexual relations, okay?"

"Andy..." Jeff sounded dangerous.

Dianne hushed him. "There are ways, love," she whispered. "There are ways."

Her uncle pretended not to hear. "In anticipation of this blessed event, I set up an appointment for you with the physical therapist you have listed as a referral. You go Monday and Tuesday morning to learn the basics. You can take who you like with you to learn the routine and keep you on track when you return."

The couple glanced at each other. "Gordon?" she asked. Jeff nodded.

"Any more questions?" Drew asked.

"When did you say I can get back to rescues?" Dianne asked as she cautiously got down from the table. Jeff offered his support, but she waved it away, grimacing as she stood by herself, one foot flat on the floor, the other gingerly touching the tile with toes and ball. She stepped forward slowly, limping, heading for the screen where she would change back into her regular clothes.

"I didn't. But I'll expect Brains to run a scan on you in two weeks and to upload it to me without comments. I'll give you an answer about your return to full duty then."

Dianne disappeared behind the screen, and Drew left the room. "The first thing I want to do is soak in the Jacuzzi until I'm a prune," Dianne said.

"Sorry to disappoint you, love, but we have a guest coming." Jeff leaned up against the wall near the opening to the little dressing room alcove. "Alan and Elise should be bringing him and Callie here around four."

"Callie's coming home?" Dianne's voice was full of surprise, with just a hint of concern. "I'd better let Anna know."

"I already have." Jeff reached in to help his wife fasten a button on the back of her top. He planted a kiss on her neck and smoothed his hands over her shoulders again. "Work before play, I'm afraid."

"Yoo hoo!" Maggie bustled into the room and both Tracys came out from behind the screen. She leaned a cane, smooth and black, with a bird's head, and a pair of strong, light gray metal crutches against the scanner bed. The crutches were made with a single, slightly curved stem, but were still adjustable. "Drew says you have your choice."

"That looks familiar," Jeff murmured, indicating the cane.

"They both do," Dianne said. She stepped over gingerly and chose the cane. "Maybe we can get something more stylish when I go for my therapy next week. But for now, this will do."

"All right. You know where the crutches are if you need them," Maggie said. "Now you two scoot so I can clean up in here."

"Yes, ma'am," Jeff replied, giving her a salute. He followed Dianne, who haltingly made her way out to the sick room. The bed she'd been occupying was already made up with fresh linens and there was a bag holding the many items she'd used to while away her time. Jeff picked up the bag. "I'll take that."

Drew came out of the office. "Be careful. Don't overtax yourself."

"Don't worry; she won't," Jeff promised.

Dianne shook her head and sighed. She motioned to her uncle to come to her. When he did, she kissed him on the cheek and gave him a long, firm hug. Her eyes were filled with tears. "Thanks, Uncle Drew," she murmured. "For everything."

"You're welcome. What else is family for?" he replied, smiling. He returned her embrace with a quick hug, then let her go. "I'll see you at dinner, if not before."

"Right."

The couple left the sick room, and no sooner had the door closed behind them than Jeff wrapped his arms around Dianne, and planted a deep kiss on her lips. "God, Di, it feels good to kiss you standing up."

Dianne began to chuckle and raised her face toward Jeff for another kiss. "And it feels good to have my arms around you properly again," she replied, placing her head briefly on his chest. They stood that way for a moment, then Dianne said, "Let's go spread the good news. Since I can't sit in the Jacuzzi, I'll settle for a quick sunbath on the balcony, if it's not too cool out."

"Sounds good to me, love." Jeff kissed her once again, then the two of them made their way down the hall toward the lift.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:30:45 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 3/25/2007 6:14 PM

Tracy Island, Saturday, August 18th, 4:00 PM

The plane touched down lightly on the runway. Alan guided it deftly and soon they came to a stop. He turned and grinned. "Well, here we are, home sweet home!"

Callie yawned and stretched her arms over her head. "It's about time!"

Luke nodded. "I agree." He stood up, wincing at the kinks in his back.

Alan opened the door and Callie and Elise quickly stepped outside. Luke followed, blinking in the bright sunlight. The first thing that hit him was the heat and humidity. "Wow, big difference from Colorado."

Alan laughed. "I would think so." He looked up. "And here's Dad. Luke Morel, Jeff Tracy."

Luke held out his hand, "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Tracy."

Jeff took it, smiling. "Welcome to Tracy Island, Mr. Morel." They shook hands, and Jeff turned to Callie, grinning. "Welcome back, Callie." He gestured to the cart where Kyrano waited. "Let's get your luggage and go up to the house. Then we can get Mr. Morel settled."

"I can take Callie's bags up to the Cliff House for her," Elise offered.

"You sure?" Callie asked.

"Yeah. I'm sure Dianne wants to see you, and hauling this stuff up there is counter productive."

Alan helped load Callie's luggage onto an antigravity float, then Luke's bags onto the cart for the trip up to the house.

"Please, sir, call me Luke." Luke looked around. "Wow, this place is beautiful." He loosened his collar, "Bit warmer than what I'm used to at the moment though."

Jeff chuckled. "And we're in winter now. It gets a lot warmer in the summer."

Luke raised an eyebrow. "Warmer?" He shook his head. "Give me snow any day." He was about to say something else when a huge yawn interrupted him. "I'm sorry. I'm still on Colorado time. In fact, I don't even know what time it is!"

"It's around 4 in the afternoon... Saturday," Jeff replied with a smile. "And I understand fully how the time zone changes wreak havoc on your system."

"That's for sure." Luke stifled another yawn.

"Would you like me to show you where you're staying, or would you like to conduct your interview now?" Jeff asked.

"Now would be fine," Luke replied

"All right. Get business out of the way first," Jeff said. He glanced up to the top of the steps, where two people were waiting. "Luke, I'd like you to meet my second oldest son, Virgil, and my wife, Dianne."

"Dianne!" Callie cried. She ran quickly up the steps. "You're looking so good! You're even walking!"

Dianne chuckled as she embraced Callie. "You're looking pretty good yourself, much more relaxed. Come on, tell me all about your vacation."

"Dianne, Virgil, this is Luke Morel," Jeff said, corralling his wife before she could hobble off.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Morel," she said, offering her hand.

Luke took her hand and shook it gently, his eyes taking in her posture and the cane next to her. "Mr. Morel is my father; I'm Luke."

Dianne chuckled. "Welcome to Tracy Island, Luke."

"Thank-you."

Virgil stepped forward. "Hey there, how was the flight?"

"Long," Luke replied wryly. "But not as uncomfortable as I had thought it was going to be."

"We'll talk to you later, Jeff." Dianne turned to Callie. "Come, let's get you unpacked. I want to hear everything." They wandered off into the house via the door to the dining room. The men jogged down the steps to the pool area, then back up the curved flight to the balcony. Kyrano stayed behind, and took Luke's things to the Round House.

Jeff led Luke inside the villa and into a large office. Luke looked with interest at the portraits lining the walls. Jeff sat down behind his desk and gestured for Luke to sit down. Virgil took a seat next off to the side.

Jeff opened up a folder, and scanned it, then leaned back in his chair. "First, I want to say that I don't usually interview people from my home; however, your application intrigued me because your name was mentioned by a high-level employee of mine: Mrs. Lena Matumbo." At Luke's puzzled look, he added, "You recently rescued her from a downed plane in the Rockies. She spoke very highly of your skill and the way you related to the passengers on the plane."

Luke shook his head. "I'm sorry; I saw a lot of people that day."

"Ah, yes. Of course," Jeff replied, nodding. "The fact is that she remembered you, and when your application came through, I was interested." He tapped a stylus on his desk. "Tell me, Luke, why are you applying for this job?"

Luke paused for a moment, collecting his thoughts. "I wanted a change, sir. I've been with the Forest Service for over ten years now. I took a few courses in college on environmental studies. When I saw the job in the paper, I thought I would look into it and see. I did some research on your company, Mr. Tracy. You always take the time to assess your surroundings before you build anything. There were even a few instances where you scrapped your plans because of something

your surveyors had found. I'd like to work for a company that thinks like that."

Virgil shifted his position a little and asked, "Does this mean you're dissatisfied with rescue work? Looking for better hours? Less danger?"

"No." Luke turned to Virgil. "Mostly I want to get away from the politics." He faced Jeff again. "I'm good at my job, sir, very good. I was offered a desk job, but turned it down. Unfortunately, the person who got the position and I didn't often see eye to eye."

"Did you feel that the conflict hindered your work?" Jeff asked, his tone one of polite inquiry.

"Truthfully? Yes." Luke sighed. "There are times in rescue work where the dead are just as important as the living. Take that plane crash you mentioned. There was this girl, college student. She and her boyfriend were on their way back to school. He was killed instantly. She wanted to stay with him, apparently he was afraid of the dark. I told her I would stay with him until the forensic team came. It calmed her down and allowed us to get her treatment. I kept my promise and stayed until they got there. The rescue was under control, I wasn't needed at the time. Derek, my boss, didn't like that. I tend to overstep authority on occasion."

"Hmm." Jeff looked thoughtful. He glanced at the application again. "I see you've had training with rescue dogs. Do you have one?"

Luke laughed. "More like he has me, but yes, Rommel is a three year old German Shepherd. Only, don't mention the fact that he's a dog around him. He thinks he's human."

The Tracys both laughed, and when the laughter had died down, Jeff asked, "What would you do with him? Would you perhaps volunteer your services if there were an emergency of some kind?"

Luke nodded. "I would. I'm only a few courses shy of a full paramedic certification. But this job entails a lot of traveling; it would be hard to join a group not knowing when I would have to leave. Rescues don't exactly wait until the opportune moment."

"True," Jeff admitted.

The Tracys continued to ask Luke questions, surprisingly focused on his rescue experience, then out of the blue, Virgil asked, "How do you feel about learning to fly?" At Luke's surprised expression, he added, "It's not required for the position, but you may find it helpful, especially to some of the more remote places we're considering."

"I never thought about it really. I mean, I'm usually on the jumping out of them end as opposed to piloting." He grew thoughtful a moment. "I guess it wouldn't be a problem. Might be kind of fun, actually." He shifted in his chair. "Can I ask you something, sir?" Jeff nodded. "Why all the questions about my rescue experience? I mean, that's not really going to be an issue in this position, will it?"

Jeff smiled a little. "No, Luke, it's not going to be an issue. Understanding how you look at your old job gives me insight into how you may regard your work with us... should we offer you the position." He took in a deep breath, and glanced toward Virgil. "Do you have any more questions

for Luke here, son?"

Virgil shook his head. "None that I can think of."

"Good. Do you have any other questions of us, Luke?"

"No, sir, none that I can think of right now." He stifled a yawn. "I'm sorry, jet lag is getting to me."

"Not to mention the whole dateline thing," Virgil added.

Luke groaned. "That's right, I forgot about that. It's Saturday here."

"That it is." Virgil got up. "Come on, I'll show you to the guest rooms."

"Dinner's at seven," Jeff said, rising to shake hands with Luke again. "We'll send someone to get you then. You should have an hour or so to rest."

"Thanks." Luke followed Virgil out the door, and only half listened as the Tracy son pointed things out on the way to the guest rooms. Luke's mind was foggy with fatigue and he wanted nothing more than to crash on a bed for a while. Finally they reached the room.

Virgil opened the door and stepped aside so Luke could enter. "I had someone bring up your bag; if there's anything you need, please feel free to ask. I'll be back to take you to dinner in a bit."

Luke entered the room and looked around. It was well decorated, a large bed near the windows, with a couch and desk at the other end of the room. He wandered into the bathroom and took a quick shower before throwing himself down on the bed. He lay there with his hands under his head, thinking back to the interview.

I don't think it went too badly. All the rescue questions confused me though. I thought this was for an environmental specialist? Who cares if I have a rescue background? Unless they somehow talked to Derek and he badmouthed me. They could be wondering about those insubordination marks. Luke sighed and shut his eyes. Well, what happens, happens. For now, I'll just enjoy my brief stay in paradise. Within moments, he was fast asleep.

Luke's Interview, written by Tikatue and Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:31:51 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 3/25/2007 6:25 PM

Saturday August 15th, 8.30pm, Tracy Island

Dominic leant against the doorframe and watched as Joshua slept. The child's breathing was deep and quiet. He kicked and stirred a little, before settling down again and turning so Dominic

could see his face. He was a little cherub with his round cheeks, blond downy hair and serene expression. It made a nice change from him being a little terror. Dom watched for some time before he leaned the door over and walked into his own bedroom.

His sheets hadn't been changed for a while, and he hadn't made the bed that morning. A half-full laundry basket sat in one corner, and some of the books on one of his shelves had finally fallen over, leaving a spill of pages and ink just inside the door. Dom sighed and stepped over them, and sat on the edge of the bed. His eyes landed on one particularly large and thick book. It wasn't a text, but a photograph album. His mind ordered him not to pick it up, but his hands disobeyed, and it was suddenly lying open on his lap.

The first picture was of himself only hours after birth, his mother cradling him in her arms. A tall, hawk-nosed man with jet black hair and a fine complexion had his arm around her shoulders, but his smile was clearly half-hearted. It was one of the only photographs of his mother and father left intact. There had been quite a few to begin with, but whenever Dominic began to ask why he didn't have a daddy like the rest of the boys in school, Roisin told him the truth, and the rest of the photographs had their eyes scratched out. Dom turned the page with a set face, and watched as time passed before his eyes.

He grew taller; his mother grew greyer. Sometime just before his sixteenth birthday the photographs had stopped. His mother had sold their only camera and drank the proceeds, and even between working two jobs, Dominic couldn't afford to buy a new one. His mother stopped going to work. The next photo wasn't until his graduation at twenty-one, where Roisin looked older than his grandmother. It was followed by a few pages of assorted photographs from family functions that had been donated by his grandfather, but then they stopped again, and there were no more in the album. Roisin had died.

Dominic closed over the book with a sigh, and rested his elbows on its cover. She would have been fifty-five that day. Dominic rubbed his eyes, stood and set the album on the newly-empty shelf, before reaching into his chest of drawers for an old half-burnt candle and a matchbox. The candle was set inside a plastic tube, with a decorative gold-coloured top, and a picture of some saint or other on it. He wasn't religious generally, but he thought it couldn't hurt to pretend on his mother's birthday. He struck a match and lit the candle. He pressed a few fingers to his lips. She would have been fifty-five.

The tiny flame flickered briefly before settling down. Dom sighed. His mind started to wander, and he slid one hand up to cover his face. He had nearly died. It was only beginning to hit him. He had been worrying about Dianne and Nikki, recovering from his own injuries. And then there was Joshua, who was a distraction from the moment Dom stepped back on the island. Then there was the party. But now...this particular day seemed to bring it all home. He closed his eyes briefly. He had nearly died.

Get out of this mood, Kelly, he thought. It does you no good. Usually all he had to do was call up Tom, and his wisecracking brother would lift his spirits right back up. But now he wasn't so sure he wanted to. I don't understand where Tom comes off with all of this anti-IR stuff, he thought. We talked about it before and he was in total support of us. Maybe Nikki's right. Maybe he did just make it up. After a few more minutes, Dom stepped forward and blew out the candle, before going to his satellite phone and dialling Tom's number.

It rang for quite a while before he got an answer, but Dominic knew one would come. It was two-forty-five am in Kansas, but Tom didn't keep regular hours.

"Dak! Wassssssssaaaaaap!"

Dom smiled.

"Hey Tom. Just thought I'd give you a buzz. It's been a while."

"Yeah, man! How are you? How's Josh? Still a terror? Bet he is. You look pretty tired. What's up? Anything wrong?"

"Ack, just general lethargy," Dom lied, "nothing in particular."

"That sucks."

"Josh is grand. Gettin' bigger by the day."

"I'm sure he is! I'm sure he is! I still miss having the little guy around. How's the job going?"

"It's cool. It's challenging, and I've met a lot of great people."

"Anyone in particular?" Tom asked, wiggling his eyebrows.

"No, nothing like that," Dom said with a chuckle.

"That also sucks. But I'm glad things are good with you. Things are GREAT here. You will never guess what's happened to me, so I'll just spit it out. I landed myself an article in 'Newsweek'!"

Dom's lightened heart sank like a stone.

"Oh, great!" He said, trying to sound convincing. "What, uh, what was it on?"

"They were doing this special on International Rescue, you know, because of that big crash?"

You don't know how well I know...

"Well, I got myself right in there with a bit on how greedy they are with their technology, and how they're 'philanthropic' and yet won't share it to save more lives."

Dom pretended to consider his brother's point's validity, and tapped his chin.

"I don't think they're greedy," he said. "I mean, what if the technology got into the wrong hands?" He found himself thinking of the Hood and his yellow glowing eyes.

"Lots of countries have gotten the tech for nuclear weapons," Tom said, "and yet none have been used in attack since 1945. That was one hundred and twenty three years ago, Dak. In this case,

the tech would be actively used to save lives. Think about it."

"I don't really think it's fair to compare International Rescue's technology to nuclear weapons, Tom," Dominic said, feeling the hairs rise on the back of his neck. "It's not really the same thing."

"How is it not? Just because there would be a potential for harm doesn't mean there will be definite harm."

"I just... I just can't agree, Tom. I can't see your point."

Tom was silent for a moment.

"You can't see my point? So what, you're saying I can't express myself properly?"

"No! That's not what I meant at all!"

"Yeah right. You know what? You're just jealous because I'm getting ahead in my career. Unlike you, who can never be anything but a plain old nurse!"

The screen abruptly flashed up the call ended screen, and Dominic sat dumbfounded for a moment.

"What the hell was that?!"

He growled and put his hands on his hips, shaking his head.
"What on earth is wrong with that child?"

Tom usually had a strong tendency to overreact but never that quickly. I guess he's just really touchy about his article, Dom thought. I shouldn't have bothered calling. What a bloody waste. He sat back in his chair for a moment, before going to check on Joshua one last time and heading to bed himself, feeling much the same as before.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:33:31 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 3/25/2007 9:04 PM

Tracy Island, Sunday, August 19th, 9:30 AM...

Knock-Knock

Luke opened the door to find Alan smiling up at him. "Good morning! Mom and Dad sent me to see if you wanted any breakfast."

"Breakfast sounds great. Lead the way." He followed Alan out the door and down the steps towards the villa. When they got to the dining room, there seemed to be a large group of people

there. Luke paused in the doorway for a moment.

Dianne looked up and smiled. "Good morning, Luke! Please come in and join us."

Luke stepped into the room, uncomfortably aware of all the eyes upon him. He took an empty seat near Dianne. Kyrano approached him. "Would you like some coffee, Mr. Morel?"

"Yes, please. And it's Luke." Kyrano merely smiled and placed a steaming cup in front of Luke. He picked it up and took a sip, smiling in contentment.

Dianne chuckled. "One of those, huh? Need your caffeine to wake you up?"

"That's for sure. Ba-a friend told me a grizzly was easier to talk to than me in the morning," Luke answered.

Jeff chuckled. "I know someone like that," he said with a sidewise glance at Scott. Scott merely grinned and held up his mug in a toast.

Kyrano stepped in again and placed a large plate of pancakes in front of Luke. "Thank you," Luke said and turned his attention to his breakfast, unobtrusively listening to the conversation around him.

Dianne reached across the table, trying to reach the maple syrup. She gave a wince and she pressed one hand against her ribs. The table went silent.

"Di?" Jeff asked, concern evident in his voice.

"Ah'm fine," Dianne replied as Virgil passed her the syrup. "And no, Ah'm not going to go lie down," she stated firmly.

"Never thought to mention it," Jeff muttered, turning back to his own plate, but keeping a sharp eye on his wife.

Luke watched Dianne closely. "Mrs. Tracy?" he started.

"Mrs. Tracy is my mother-in-law. Dianne or Dr. Tracy will do fine." She sighed. "It's all right, Luke. I was in an...accident a few weeks ago. Still a bit sore."

Breakfast continued, if a bit more subdued. Jeff pushed back from the table and walked over to kiss his wife on the cheek. "I have some work to do. Make sure you take it easy."

"Ah will." Dianne smiled up at him.

"You'd better," he winked, then straightened up. "Luke, would you mind joining me? Virgil, you too."

Luke nodded and, thanking Kyrano for breakfast, followed Jeff out the door.

Jeff led them down the corridor and around two corners to a wing with doors leading to the outside at the end. Just before he reached those doors, however, he stopped and put his hand up to the wall. Luke's eyes widened as a panel slid back, and Jeff laid his palm on a dark panel. The palm was scanned, and he keyed in a code for good measure. A door slid open, revealing an elevator car.

"What's all this about?" he asked, frowning. "Where are we going?"

"Not everything on this island is above ground, Luke," Virgil said as he stepped inside the car. "And there's something important we need to show you. It has to do with the job... which we're offering you, by the way."

Luke looked over at Virgil, who had a grin on his face, then turned to Jeff. "I got the job?"

"Yes," Jeff replied. "But there are just a few more things we need to go over with you. Please."

Luke got into the car next to Virgil. Jeff climbed in after them and closed the doors. The elevator rocketed downward at a high rate of speed. Moments later, the elevator came to a stop. Jeff opened the doors and Luke found himself in a small room cut from the very rock itself. Before them stood a pair of red cars, suspended on a single rail.

"What's this all about?" Luke asked, sounding suspicious.

"As Dad said, there's something we need to show you, a component of the job that you should know before you make a decision." Virgil gestured toward the car. "This takes us to our desalination plant, our power plant, and a couple of other beauty spots beneath the mountain."

"Caves?" Luke asked.

"Lava tubes," Virgil told him.

"Hm," hummed Luke as he got into the car.

The little car took them along a well-lighted track. Branches split off in tantalizing directions, but finally the car stopped at a junction to some stairs.

Jeff and Virgil stepped out of the car and Jeff gestured to Luke to follow them. He led the way down a dimly lit corridor. It opened up into a giant cavernous room, also in near darkness.

"Luke, I'd like you to meet my baby." Virgil stepped in front of Luke and hit a switch on the wall. Floodlights blinked on, illuminating the space, making Luke realize that it was even bigger than he first thought. Then his gaze fell on the giant green ship in the center of the room.

"No..." his voice trailed off. He stared at the ship, his eyes taking in the giant "Thunderbird Two" emblazoned on its side. "You have to be kidding me."

"I can assure you we're not," Jeff replied.

Luke finally tore his gaze away and looked at Jeff. "You're International Rescue?" Jeff nodded. Luke turned back to the ship. "Holy..." His head snapped back to Jeff. "Then Mrs. Tracy's injuries. She was the operative in that tornado crash, wasn't she?"

Boy's quick, Jeff thought to himself. "She was. As you know, rescue work can be dangerous."

Luke nodded. "So this job you're offering me; it's not really for an environmental specialist, is it?"

"Well, that will be your official title, on the books. We all spend some time in the office, for appearance sake," Virgil told him. "But no, that won't be your primary job focus."

Luke looked back out over the hanger bay. "Amazing, absolutely amazing."

Virgil grinned. "I like to think so."

"And the others? Callie, Elise? They're part of this too?"

"Everyone on the island is part of our organization. We have another operative on personal leave at the moment, and another of my sons, John, is manning our space station, Thunderbird Five," Jeff said.

"Space station? You have a space station?!" Luke shook his head. "This is almost too much to take in."

Jeff chuckled. "There's plenty more to see. We have five other ships here on the island. Well, Thunderbird Seven is out of commission at the moment, but we're working on that. Plus the pod vehicles and equipment."

Luke shook his head. "Wait a sec, I'm not going to have to fly that thing, am I?"

Virgil looked slightly offended. "Eventually yes, but for now you'll be assigned to her to assist with the rescues. We all know or are being trained to operate all the equipment. Never know what will happen out there."

"Wow," Luke breathed. "I-I don't know what to say!"

"Take your time. Think about it. I don't need an answer today," Jeff told him. "But I do have to insist that no matter what your decision, you reveal this information to no one. Not your co-workers, not your family, no one."

Luke nodded. "Yes, sir."

"Do you have any questions?"

Luke started to shake his head, then paused. "Just one, sir. And I'd like to talk to you in private if you don't mind." He nodded towards Virgil.

Jeff sent a puzzled glance in Virgil's direction. Virgil merely shrugged. "I'll see you later then. Feel

free to come find me if you have any questions, Luke."

"I will, thanks." Luke waited until Virgil had left before turning back to Jeff. He took a deep breath. "I have to tell you something about myself that may affect the dynamics of your team. I'm gay. It's not something I'm ashamed of; it's who I am. None of my friends or family have a problem with this, but some of my former co-workers did."

"I see." Jeff nodded thoughtfully. "Was one of these co-workers your boss you mentioned?"

"Yes. Derek never came out and said it, he's too smart for that, but I'm sure it was a sticking point." Luke glanced back at Thunderbird Two, then back at Jeff. "Before I even consider accepting your offer, I need to know if my preferences will be detrimental to your team."

Jeff stood still for a moment, thinking. A person's sexual preferences, to him, had always been a matter of "don't ask, don't tell". Not that he had any personal problem with homosexuals; he judged people on how they acted with other people, not what they did in private as consenting adults. He had to admit that if one of his sons came to him one day and told him he'd rather sleep with men, it would knock him back a bit, but wouldn't change the love he had for that son. But he didn't know how the others would take it.

"I'm not going to jump in here and say it definitely wouldn't be a detriment, Luke," he finally said. "I don't know the minds of the rest of my team on this matter. However, should there be a problem, I will treat it as a sensitivity issue in the workplace, just as I would if it were in Tracy Industries." He spread his hands. "I can't say anymore than that. Personally, I'll judge you by what you do, not who you are."

"That's all I ask, sir. Now, if you don't mind, I'd like to go think this through. I'm sure I'll have questions at some point. At least after the shock wears off." Luke grinned good-naturedly.

Jeff chuckled. "Come and find myself or one of my sons. We'll be happy to help you out."

"Thank-you, sir." They started back towards the tunnel. Luke took one more glance back. "International Rescue...man, never saw that one coming."

---An Unveiling, by Tikatu and Lillehafrue---

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:44:10 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/25/2007 9:55 PM

Tracy Island, Sunday, August 19th, 11:00 AM...

"Callie? I'm Anna Hanson." Anna held out her hand and Callie took it. "Please sit down."

Anna sat back down in one of the easy chairs. Callie sat on the small love seat across from it. "Dr.

Hanson. Did Dr. Tracy talk to you about me?"

"First, I'm not a 'Dr.' I have a Master's in counseling. Actually I don't want a PhD. And yes, she has talked to me about your physical problems."

Callie still wasn't sure what to say to this lady. She'd never been through any type of counseling before. She said the first thing that popped into her head. "Why don't you want a Doctorate?"

"Because PhD's either get the major cases like multiple personality disorder, or get into theory. I like working with everyday people who have everyday problems. Granted, some of the problems are major, but they are the problems that are a normal part of life."

"Well, my problem might not qualify as 'normal'."

"Dr. Tracy told me about your encounter with the Hood. I've also talked to Kyrano, Tin-Tin and Brains about him. Why don't you tell me about your encounter?"

Callie retold the story of her encounter with the Hood. Anna listened intently and took some notes on a notepad sitting on the arm of the chair. When she finished, Anna stared down at her notes for a minute.

"You don't believe me," Callie said flatly.

"It doesn't matter if I believe you," Anna started to say.

Callie cut her short. "Yeah, I only matters that I believe it. I know."

Anna looked at her mildly. "Actually, that wasn't what I was going to say. What does matter is: how is this affecting your life? Can you still function? And how can I help you deal with it? Dr. Tracy told me you were having nightmares. Are the sleeping pills helping?"

"Yes, they seem to be."

"Tell me about the nightmares. What happens in them?"

Callie described her latest nightmare. "The Tracys and the other recruits are hunting for me. They want to punish me for betraying them. All the nightmares were like this but they've been getting worse. In the last one they all had glowing yellow eyes, and they shot me for betraying them."

"How do you feel when you wake up?"

"Scared, terrified, ashamed."

"Why ashamed?"

"I should have been stronger. I should have resisted him." Callie balled her hands into fists and hit her legs. "I wasn't physically hurt. I should be over this by now!"

Anna thought for a minute, then asked, "Callie, if the Hood had kidnapped you, taken you somewhere, tortured you, and you told him just what you did, the code names of everyone, would you feel like you had breached security?"

Callie froze for a second, then a look of surprise slowly came to her face. "No. I didn't tell him anything he could use."

"Exactly. But if he had done that, you would have major emotional and physical problems to deal with. No one would be surprised at them. But, since there were no physical injuries, it's easy to pretend nothing happened."

"I get a lot of patients who are told they should put it behind them, and move on. But what a lot of people mean when they say that is you should pretend it never happened. And that is a recipe for disaster."

"In a lot of ways, what happened to you is closer to rape than assault. You lost control over your own body and mind. You were helpless even to think your own thoughts. Most of the problems you are having are normal for that kind of assault. And you should be able to deal with them with a little help."

Anna entered something on her computer. "I want to talk to Dr. Tracy about a possible prescription for anti-depressants. I don't think you will need them for too long, but they will help you through some of the rough patches."

"I hate the thought of being on pills."

"Makes you feel like you are weak?" When Callie nodded, Anna went on, "If you broke a leg you wouldn't feel that way about a cast and crutches, would you?"

Callie smiled. "Mr. Tracy felt that way when he was in a wheelchair."

"Typical former military. 'My body will do what I want it to do; I'm in charge here' attitude. But if he hadn't used them he would be crippled for life. Or he would have had to stay in bed until they healed. And then had to do a lot more work to get his legs back in shape."

"You know, depression is a physical disease. You can measure the difference in body chemistry. Anti-depressants just help your body to cope while you heal. If you choose not to take them, that's fine. You can still heal. It will just hurt more. Fortunately, that's not my problem."

"It's mine?" asked Callie.

"No, it's Dr. Tracy's. I'm not a doctor. I can't prescribe anything." Anna looked at her watch. "The hour's up. Do you want to meet again next week?"

"I think so," said Callie. "You've given me a lot to think about."

"One other thing," said Anna as she stood up. "Do you keep a diary?"

"No."

"You might want to write your feelings down each day. Handwritten is better, but a computer journal will do. You don't need to show it to me, but some people find it very helpful. Write about whatever you want. Just try to write at least once a day."

Callie nodded and left the room.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:45:10 GMT
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 3/25/2007 10:04 PM

Sitting on the beige striped couch with pink and blue threads, Heather sat studying the near empty walls. Dressed in the lounge clothes she bought at the Regis, she gazed about the living room. Every room in the apartment was tastefully furnished, but there were no pictures to hang on the walls. Her favorite family photo, her Naval Academy graduation photo, and Jeff Tracy's official NASA photo had all been destroyed. On the whole, the apartment was beautiful, but she had no good way to personalize it.

"I'll have to write Mom and Dad and Aunt Jenny for new photos to be made of everyone. I might be able to write to the academy about my graduation picture. Maybe Mr. Tracy would be able to print his official NASA photo for me, and I'd have a perfect opportunity to get it signed. Hopefully, he won't be too busy to do that, but that will have to be the last thing on my list, of course. His hands must be too full right now, I imagine."

Annoyed with herself for such sad feelings, she walked over to the window controls and cleared the opaque sheers. The glass cleared, displaying a grey and misty morning. "Oh great. Looks like a perfect day," she murmured, leaning on the window. The white capped ocean waves slapped the beaches in the distance and the palm trees seem to droop.

Heather thought back when she lived across from her aunt. Jenny would make a pie for a friend who was worn out over caring for a brand new baby, or a injured farmer next door to her own farm. That thought had Heather thinking about Dianne. After getting dressed, she set about making two batches worth of cookies. Dr. Tracy has to be a bit moody herself. She must still be pretty sore, and the weather won't help matters I'm sure. I think I have all the ingredients to make my rum and chocolate chip cookies. If I don't do something nice for somebody, I'm going to have a perfectly maudlin day!

As she grabbed bowls and ingredients out of the various cupboards in the kitchen, a beeping sound came from the living room coffee table. Uh oh...there goes the cellphone. I hope it's Tin-Tin. If not, I should call her. She's really gone out of her way to help me blend in with the others. I ought to come up with a way to thank her.

Setting the ingredients down on the kitchen counter, Heather walked into the spacious living room, and picked up the phone she left on the coffee table. Looking at the number, Heather crossed

herself and answered it. "Hi Mother. I love you. How--?"

Martha's grating, scolding voice interrupted her daughter's greeting. "Heather, do you want to explain to me why your father and I have only received a post office box number to send mail to you?"

Deep breathing, Heather said brightly, "Hi Mother. How are you?"

"I'm fine, but your father is upset and so am I!" Martha answered sharply.

Honestly, Mother! If Dad was that upset, he would have called me directly! "Mother," Heather began patiently. "I'm under contract not to give out any other address. I have to honor it in order to take on the work. Working for Mr. Tracy is a dream a lot of people have and can't get. He pays very handsomely. I'm getting probably three times what I was making at the testing grounds."

"Where exactly are you?" Martha asked again, ignoring Heather's explanation.

"I just can't give out that kind of information. Mr. Tracy is quite adamant about that," Heather insisted. "That's all there is to it."

"Do you know I found naval academy brochures in Amy's room?! So help me if she's got any idea of following you--"

Suddenly, Heather's hard earned patience drained out of her. This is all I need. Heather thought to herself. "Mom? Why can't you just once say 'I love you'?" she sighed wearily. Just once I wonder what it would be like to have another mother--

"What do you mean by that?!" Martha said with righteous anger. "I am appalled at what you just said and I want an apolog--"

Heather cut the connection on her satellite cellphone and looked at it, concerned. "I'd better check with Jeff and see if my cellphone could be traced out here."

A moment later, her cellphone rang again. This time it was her father. When they're united on one thing, it's almost impossible to fight against. Two against one is not fair, she decided. "Hi Father," Heather said, preparing for the coming battle she knew she had to win. "I take it you talked with mother?"

"Uh--yes, Heather. I have to say that I agree with her on this--"

"Will wonders never cease!" Martha called out in the background, causing both Heather and Jim to roll their eyes.

"Martha! Let me get a word in edgewise!"

"All right!" Heather heard over the phone.

With a deep breath, Jim began, "Heather, all we have is a post office box for you. I would feel a lot

better if I knew exactly where you were. What if something happened to you? How would we find out? You could be anywhere in the world, and we wouldn't know--"

"Dad, I signed a contract with Mr. Tracy not to ever give out the location. If something happened to me, he would call you immediately. I can't say any more than that."

On the screen of Heather's cellphone, Jim ran his fingers through his hair. "All right. Since it's Jeff's idea for all the cloak and dagger, I'll talk to him directly. He can explain it to me."

"Dad, he's taking very good care of me. Trust me. Dad," Heather insisted.

"Bye, honey." The contact was broken and Heather stared at the ceiling. There was nothing more she could do, and she trusted Jeff to be able to deal with her father. Going back to the kitchen, Heather began dumping ingredients into the biggest bowl on the counter.

Two hours later, Heather pulled out the last pan of cookies and filled two large plates with the warm gooey treats. With a chuckle, Heather found a small basket that would fit both plates. "One for the men and the other for Dianne. We slip the first plate in the lounge where the boys will make like bumblebees in the honeysuckle vines. While they discover the first plate, I sneak the rest of them in Dianne's room. Might be the first time she ever got that many cookies all to herself!"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:46:07 GMT

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From: Tikatue Sent: 3/25/2007 10:20 PM

Sunday, August 19, 2068, 12:45 p.m., Tracy Island.

Kat sat before her computer, staring at the letter on the screen. She had started the email the evening before, after she had discussed the matter with Jeff.

"If you're needed at home to see justice done, then certainly you should go," Jeff had told her. "We can leave the time frame open-ended -- at least two weeks so you can attend that wedding." He'd smiled and given her a wink. "Just keep us posted so we can arrange your flight back."

When she'd spoken with Penelope about the matter, the aristocrat had been very supportive. "I am so glad that the man who had harassed you has been arrested, Kat," Penny had said. "As for flying home, you shall come with me when I leave on Monday."

Kat had begun to protest, but Penelope was adamant. "There is no reason why you should not fly home with me. We are, after all, going the same way."

"Thank you," Kat had finally said, smiling. "I am very grateful for your offer."

Now she was trying to explain herself to John. She read over what she had already written.

"Dear John,

"This morning - Better change that to yesterday morning -- I received a telephone call from my mother. She had two pieces of news for me. One was that the date of my brother's wedding has unexpectedly been moved forward. His fiancée's brother - who is with the RAF - is to be deployed soon, and the wedding will be held two weeks from now so that he may attend.

In addition, the man who..."

Here was where she had stopped. The memories of the harassment were still uncomfortable and upsetting to her; the situation had come up so quickly, too. She could still smell the miasma of Ernie's sweat, mixed with cigarette smoke and motor oil. She shuddered slightly, then swallowed, and sat up straighter. She was past that now, well past it, and now she had an opportunity to say her piece to people who would listen. She put her hands on the keyboard.

"In addition, the man who..." She read the words aloud, then continued to type, "... harassed me at the garage where I worked before being hired by Lady Penelope has been charged with assaulting a woman. I have been called to testify against him. I am not quite sure if this will be at his trial or not, but the solicitors have written my mother and I must go. I am to leave on Monday with Lady Penelope.

"I don't know how long this will take, but your father has generously allowed for at least two weeks' leave so I may fulfill my role as bridesmaid. I am so sorry I will not be here to greet you on your return from Thunderbird Five; I shall miss you dreadfully. But I expect to be back soon after the wedding so we may resume our visits and our times of getting to know one another."

She smiled as she thought of the surprise she had planned for John. I can still do it, but I shall have to postpone it until my return.

"Please take care. I will write again soon.

"Love, Kat"

She reread the missive, then addressed it to John and sent it off. I am sure he will understand, she thought, sighing. She headed for the kitchen to get a quick snack, and sniffed the air appreciatively. The aroma of some fresh-baked treat had begun to filter into her apartment. Mmmm! I wonder if Heather is the one doing the baking, or if it's Nikki, or even Elise. Whoever it is, what they're making smells simply divine!

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:46:55 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 3/26/2007 10:30 PM

Sunday, August 19, 2068, noon p.m., Tracy Island.

"Mrs. Hanson," Jeff said, as he waved her toward a seat, "sit down, please. Ready to return home?"

"Yes. My daughter is due to return to college in a week and I do want to spend some time with here before she goes," Anna replied. "Plus, their royal highnesses, the cats, are undoubtedly waiting to show their disapproval of my leaving them. It certainly has been an interesting week, though."

"I asked you in here to talk about two related things. One is to arrange payment. The other is about becoming an IR agent."

"IR has agents? What do they do? Sell insurance policies in case Thunderbird 2 has to land and messes up someone's lawn?"

Jeff sniggered. How can she say things like that with a straight face? I wonder if she plays poker? "No, although I have considered issuing policies against Gordon's practical jokes. Mostly what they do is keep an eye open for anything that might concern IR. You remember the imposter problem a couple of years ago?" When she nodded, Jeff continued. "Lady Penelope and another agent tracked down the culprits and cleared IR."

"But what most of our agents do is much easier. They liaison with any local officials and arrange for security for our machines. They let us know about any potential problems. Generally they do whatever they can to help make the rescue easier and to hide us from prying eyes."

"You would receive a monthly stipend beyond what I would pay for your counseling work. It would be up to you to decide if you wanted to tell your husband. Some agents work with their spouse, some don't. We would also install some communication gear in your home and add a security system." Jeff leaned back. "Are you interested?"

"It sounds like I would enjoy it. Would the stipend come from Tracy industries?"

"We usually set it up that way. Or it could come from my household account."

Anna leaned forward. "So I would receive a monthly amount deposited in my account. I would have to tell my husband where it came from. My husband, the engineer. Who for the past thirty years has worked for Boeing, in the satellite division, one of Tracy Industries biggest rivals."

Jeff let out an exasperated sigh. "I hadn't even thought of that. Would your seeing my family be considered a conflict of interest?"

"Not really. As long as I'm paid by you, not Tracy Industries. But I'd rather not put him in an awkward position, so I'd rather not tell him anything. He knows I can't talk about my work except in very general terms, so if I don't say anything he won't be surprised. But I think we would both be better off if I simply bill you for hours spent working with patients. Keep it simple."

"All right. I know you haven't set up a private practice yet, so I checked into the billing rates of some of the other counselors my wife had appointments with." He passed a sheet of paper over Anna. "Is this acceptable to you?"

"Honestly? It's about twice what I had expected to charge."

"It's what the doctor my wife calls 'Oh, I would be happy to help the Tracy family' charges. He's the one that she claims had cash registers in his eyes." Jeff grinned at her.

"I think I know the one you mean. He not only has cash registers in his eyes, he has 'best selling book' in his heart. You spelled my name wrong, though."

"I did?"

"It's HanSON, S-O-N, not Hansen. It's not a problem." Anna hesitated. "There is one thing I need to ask you though."

"Go ahead."

"Did Gordon tell you about how I feel about computer security?"

Jeff nodded. "He said you were almost paranoid about it."

"With good reason. I'm sure you don't want to risk anyone breaking into my notes about your family or IR. I will need to either keep my laptop here or have a very secure place in my house to keep it and any disks. If I leave it here, I will need to come here for appointments. And I would definitely need an office."

"Hmm." Jeff looked thoughtful for a minute. "Do you have any problem coming here once a week?" Anna shook her head. "We have some guest rooms in the Round House. Why don't I just assign one to you permanently?" Jeff continued. "We are going to be doing some remodeling there soon." Jeff thought it might be better not to mention that the remodeling was being done to give Lady Penelope a permanent guest suite. "We could design one of them to have an office with an attached bedroom. We'll have a safe built in. You can leave all your records there, along with anything else you want to leave here. It will also give you a neutral place to meet with your patients. Or will the walk be a problem with your heart? I assume you would still eat with the family; there isn't a kitchen in any of the guest rooms. We could send dinner over, of course."

"Sounds wonderful. I'm supposed to walk some every day. Although, if I'm tired, it might be a problem."

"If you need to, someone can run you over to the round house with the cart. Or I could set you up with a bedroom here and an office there."

"Sounds like you're running out of bedrooms. This isn't the Biltmore. No, a suite in the Round House would be fine. That way, if I need to get away from everyone, I can. I can be a real witch, spelled with a 'b', if I let myself get too tired. If I want to troll for patients, I can hang out around here or out by the pool."

"Troll for patients?" Jeff looked at her, taken aback.

"A lot of people need to talk about something, but wouldn't dream of calling a counselor. That's for 'sick' people. If I sit in a public place, they tend to stop by and talk. Ask any pastor about it. Usually they just need to get something clear in their own head. All I need to do is listen. I helped a lot of family members of trauma victims just by being available. Calling it 'trolling for patients', well," she shrugged, "it just seemed to describe it perfectly."

"Now," she continued, "coming here once a week for appointments. Does anyone make regular trips to the mainland?"

"Not really. Kyrano has fresh food items flown in once a week. And the mail plane comes by a couple times each week."

"Could you arrange for me to fly back and forth on one of them? I hate the idea that someone has to fly and pick me up and then do it again to drop me off." Anna smiled slightly. "I suppose it's a hold over from the energy crisis, but it just seems so wasteful. And setting a certain day of the week for appointments is usually a good idea."

"That might work to get to the island. If the boys were out on 'family' business, I wouldn't need to worry about sending someone to pick you up." Jeff looked up at her again. "Would it cause a problem if you were late getting back sometimes?"

Anna shook her head. "As long as I'm back by Sunday if I'm assisting in the service. And I do volunteer work Monday afternoon and night at the women's shelter. Other than that, my time is free."

"All right. Let's set you up to get here Tuesday on the supply plane and have someone return you Wednesday. That gives you Tuesday afternoon and evening as well as Wednesday morning and afternoon if you need it."

"Great." Anna chuckled. "Tuesday is my husband's poker night. I have a feeling they will be meeting at our place from now on."

Jeff grinned and stood up. "Mrs. Hanson, it has been a pleasure meeting you. I want to thank you again for all you've done."

"Thank you for all you've done. Giving people hope in a sometimes bleak world is a treasure beyond price. We all need heroes," she paused for a second and stood up, "and something to remind us to think of more than just ourselves, to strive for something and to dream." She smiled wryly at Jeff. "For me the space program did that. That and old 'Star Trek' reruns."

Jeff chuckled and offered her his arm. "It's time for lunch. May I escort you, ma'am?"

"I never say no to cute gentlemen." Anna put her hand on his arm and they went to lunch.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:53:00 GMT

From: Tikatu Sent: 3/28/2007 8:51 PM

Sunday, August 19, 2068, 1:30 p.m. Tracy Island

With the basket hanging off of Heather's right arm, she envisioned herself as Little Red Riding Hood. The basket came with two compartments. The bottom compartment was built for putting silverware, dishes, and cups for two. Dianne's plate of cookies went there. A flat divider covered the first plate, while the boys' cookies sat on top of it, making it look like she had only one plate.

One plate for 'Grandma' and the second for the 'wolves'. The best scenario I could hope for is to have an empty lounge. All I'd have to do is leave the first batch on a table and duck out to the sickroom, provided she's there. She might have gone back to her bedroom, but I'll try the sickroom first. That would be the easiest. If there is even one man in Jeff's office--just one--then I offer the cookies as a gift, drop the plate on the table, and politely ask how Dianne is, guiding the conversation to find out what her location is. There is just one hang up with all this, Heather thought to herself. Rum and vanilla flavoring makes for an irresistible smell. I'll have to work fast either way it goes.

Slipping into the elevator, she could smell the odor of the cookies pooling in the elevator. Hopefully, I won't meet anyone taking the monorail to the Villa. When the door of the elevator opened, she was pleased to discover that the monorail was empty. Wincing slightly as she stepped into the car, she quickly found a seat upfront. Her left foot rubbed against her right. Her feet still suffered the aches and pains of walking and dancing the night away at Virgil's birthday party.

Serves me right dancin' in brand new heels fo' the first time! My feet hurt, my legs hurt--and I'm almost to the Villa. First step--make a beeline for the lounge the moment the doors open. So long as I don't see Gordon or the Tracy kids I should be home free!

The monorail car came to a stop and the door slid open for her. She took the elevator to the Villa, the smell of the fresh baked goods filling the compartment. A quick duck into the sickroom, then on upstairs if necessary.

There was no one in the sickroom, at least, no one Heather could see. Both of the beds were made up and unused. Onward and upward then.

Now this is a real mission impossible. Faint voices could be heard as she entered the hallway that would take her past the lower bedrooms, and to the lift and stairs to the upper level.

Running International Rescue as well as his own high tech business, Jeff must run to his master bedroom often for peace and quiet. I can sure relate to that. Maybe I'm just imaginin' things, but it just seems like Mother never stops. One phone call and all I can think about is how far away I kin git! Maybe when Jeff isn't busy, I'll ask him if he's got an island fo' sale.

Scott sat in his customary easy chair with a magazine called the Air and Space Aeronautics. He knew the the jet aircraft he'd designed, the X-Star III, would be featured in it. Heather had meticulously inspected and tested the military aircraft to a fault and had given it her own personal

rating according to author.

I'll have to let Heather know about the article and tell her she's been mentioned in it. That would make her day. I know it did--mmmmmm! His thoughts were interrupted as a rich, sweet smell wafted into the lounge, growing stronger by the moment. Looking around, he became aware that someone was coming, but couldn't hear their footsteps.

"Hi, Scott," Heather greeted him, looking around carefully.

"Hey, Heather." Scott couldn't help noticing the basket that she carried. He got up from his seat and wandered over, magazine in hand. "Did you happen to see this issue of Air and Space Aeronautics? There's an article on the X-Star III. They even mention your name."

Shaking her head, Heather forgot the basket on her arm and glanced at the magazine eagerly. "No I haven't. May I borrow it after you're done? Or would Jeff mind if I hung around after I see Dianne? I'd love to read that. Look at that ancient B-52 on the cover. I can't get over how that thing could fly during World War Two. Just looking at it makes me wonder how they even got it off the ground."

"Oh, sure. No problem. You can look at it now, if you like." Scott peered at the basket, not quite daring to lift the lid. "Something smells great!" He glanced up at her and gave her a charming smile. "Been doing some baking?"

"Yes, I have. I came bearing gifts." Lifting the lid off the basket, she revealed the plate of cookies that held the first batch. "This is for everyone in the lounge--"

"That's great," he said. "What are they?"

"Chocolate chip cookies with a touch of rum," answered Heather with an innocent smile. I wonder if I dare consider him 'the wolf'? She almost chuckled at the thought.

"Sounds delicious!" Scott started to reach in and, remembering his manners, asked, "May I?"

"Certainly. Here ya go." She handed him a cookie. "By the way, is Dr. Dianne out of the sickroom yet? I thought I'd go see her and see how she's doing."

Scott took a cookie, reveling in the fact that it was still warm. He took a bite. "Mmmm. That is GOOD." He glanced at Heather again. "Mom? You want to know where Mom is? Well, she is out of the sickroom; Drew released her the other day, but I don't know where she is right now." He took another bite, thought a minute, then added, "Gordon might know. Let me ask him."

He walked over to the balcony doors, cookie still in hand, and went outside. Gordon was down at the pool, doing the daily balance testing, and Scott waved to him. "C'mere, Gords! Got a question for you!"

Dressed in his swim trunks, Gordon heard Scott's call and saw him holding something in one hand. Scott bit into whatever it was, waving his other hand.

"Just a second! I'll be up in a flash!" he yelled back.

Gordon entered the lounge where Heather caught his physique. I must say he looks better in swim trunks than a tux!

"Hey, what smells so good?" he asked. He peered at the plate. "Cookies? For me?"

"Answer the question and you get a cookie," Scott said, raising an eyebrow.

"What's the question? I know! The answer is: forty-two!"

Scott rolled his eyes. "The question is: do you know where Mom is right now? Heather would like to know."

"Oh, hey there, Heather!" Gordon said brightly. "Didn't notice you there. Did you happen to make these cookies?"

"Yes, I did. I was getting moody sitting around and decided to make like a mad scientist in the kitchen. So take one and tell me what you think." Heather sighed inwardly wondering how patient she'd have to be for the answer to her question. I'm really having to go all out to find out where the good doctor is. For Pete's sake guys, I didn't think it would be this hard to bait the question with cookies.

"Hm." Gordon took a cookie, and looked thoughtful as he bit into it. Then his eyes widened with delight. "Mmmmm!" He took another bite. "Ooh. This is so good!"

"Yeah, yeah, the cookies are great. But do you know where Mom is?" Scott asked.

His mouth occupied with cookie, Gordon shook his head. "Nmph." He put up a finger, finished chewing, then said, "Pardon me. No, I don't. But Alan might."

"Where's Alan?"

"He said something about needing some caffeine. Probably down in the kitchen, making coffee."

Scott went to the Villa intercom and called to the kitchen. "Hey, Alan! You down there?"

"Yeah, Scott, I'm here." Alan poured a cup of coffee into his favorite mug. "Why? Do you need me for something?"

"Yeah. Wait right there." Scott came across the room and offered his arm to Heather. "Let's go down and ask Alan. I could use a cup of coffee right now."

"So could I," Gordon said, thinking of another cookie with the coffee.

Heather sighed inwardly. When I said it would be a 'mission impossible', I didn't think it would be this bad! Come on, guys! Somebody's got to know! Continuing her patient look with all the innocence she could muster, Heather admitted, "Boy I could sure use a cup right now."

"Well, then, let's go." Scott said, smiling and opening the door for her.

The trio traipsed downstairs, Scott being very careful with Heather so that none of the cookies fell off the plate. They met Alan, who was coming from the dining room, mug in hand. "Hey, what's going on?" he asked. His face brightened when he saw the plate. "Cookies? May I have one?"

"Hi, Alan!" Heather said. At Scott's baleful expression, she added, "Okay, Scott. It's nice to share." She turned back to Alan. "Now, do you know where Dr. Dianne is? I wanted to go see how she was doing," she asked with the patience of St. Theresa.

Munching on a cookie, Alan thought a moment. In mid-munch, he said, "I haven't seen her since lunch. Other than that--oh man these rate--other than that, I don't know. Maybe the squirts do. They're in the game room."

I'm going to scream! thought Heather.

"Okay. That's just over here... have you seen our game room yet, Heather?" Scott asked, guiding her to the door just down the hall.

The door slid open to reveal the well-stocked room... and two little boys intent on playing a game of foosball. Intent, that is, until Alex looked up and cried, "Cookies!" He abandoned the game and hurried over. "Can I have one? They smell so good!"

Tyler, not to be undone, came up behind his brother saying, "What about me? Can I have a cookie?"

"Yes, you can have a cookie, both of you, but first: do you know where Mom is?" Scott asked.

"I dunno," Alex replied, shaking his head.

Of all the men I've ever known, this bunch could strain even St. Peter! Heather mused.

"Me neither," Tyler said. "But maybe Cherie does. She and Virgil are in the theater. I'll go get her." He dashed off to the door at the far end of the room. There was a loud, offended shriek, then Cherie emerged, chasing Tyler. Virgil hurried after her, but both stopped as they saw the small group gathered around Heather.

"Hey, Sis," Scott said with a smile. He held up one of the treats. "Wanna cookie?"

"I suppose so," Cherie huffed ungraciously.

"Hey, I'll take one," Virgil said with a smile.

"Do either of you happen to know where Mom is?" Gordon asked.

"Not me," Virgil said as he took a cookie.

Scott felt Heather dropping her head on his shoulder. "This is getting--I can't think of a good word

for it," she remarked.

Cherie sighed, an exasperated huff. "She's up in her suite, catching up on her ice skating recordings."

"Yes! Finally!" Heather replied. "Enjoy the cookies!" Good thing I made such a large batch. Grief! They watched as the redhead hurried up the stairs with basket swinging on one arm. Time I made a very hasty retreat!

"What was that all about?" Virgil asked as they all watched her rush out of the room.

Alan shrugged. "I dunno." They went back to eating the cookies.

Finding Dianne's suite, Heather touched the annunciator. "Dianne, this is Heather. May I come in?"

Dianne paused the program she was watching. "Heather?" she said to herself. "Just a minute!" she called, heaving herself to her feet and picking up her cane. She was determined to get as much exercise as possible, and hobbled over to the door to unlock and open it herself. "Heather! What a nice surprise!" she said with a smile. "Come in!"

Heather walked in with her basket, being mindful of Dianne's injuries. "You might want to lock that door again. I'll explain as soon as you sit down. I'm on a secret mission and it's imperative that no one knows why I'm here. It cost me a great deal of patience getting this far."

Dianne locked the door with an amused look on her face and hobbled back to her chair. Facing Heather with the air of a wise queen, she waved a hand at the seat opposite to where she sat. "Okay, I'll play along. What does this secret mission entail? Sounds interesting!" she asked, curious as to why Heather brought a basket within the confines of the room. A wonderful aroma came seeping out of the basket.

Heather replied, "I have gone through a great deal to bring you these." She opened the basket and the aroma came out full force.

"Ooh, what is that?" Dianne asked, her eyes wide as she peered into the basket. "It smells delicious!"

Heather pulled up the divider in the basket that revealed the the hidden space underneath. The prairie gal lifted out a full batch of cookies. "My own concoction. Chocolate chip cookies with a touch of rum. It draws mouths to the plate like bumble bees to Hibiscus flowers."

"Oooh." Dianne picked up one of the cookies, then looked down at the plate. "Are these all... for me?"

"Every last one of them. I got these in here by making two big batches. I hid your plate in the bottom of the basket and then put the second batch on top. That way, when the boys saw the cookies, I could sneak away, making sure you had the first plate entirely your own."

Dianne laughed. "And how many cookies did you have to give out before you got an answer?"

"Good jumping fireflies!" Heather answered with a deep sigh. "First I went to Scott. Scott called to Gordon. Gordon suggested Alan would know. Virgil was next, and he suggested the kids might know. No, wait. Not Virgil. Alan suggested the kids. Finally, Cherie gave me your location. I should have asked for a latitude/longitude reading!"

"Ah yes. Rule of thumb: always go to the girl first," Dianne said wisely. "Baked goods tend to cloud men's minds." She bit into the cookie. "Oh, that is sooo good." She sighed heavily with satisfaction. Cocking her head to one side, she asked, "Hey, are you into figure skating?"

"Oh yes, I am. When I was living in Virginia, I took lessons. Dad got me a pair of professional skates. Unfortunately, I grew out of them, and went on to other sports," Heather said. "I enjoy watching."

"Well then, why don't we enjoy these cookies and this recording of the European women's program together?"

"I'd love to, and thank you. You know, I haven't had any yet. I figured being a mother you didn't get too many cookies, because of the kids. That's why I made sure they were kept busy so I could bring these to you. They are all for you and you won't have to share. You'll have to swear Jeff to secrecy or there'll be trouble with a capital T and you won't get any rest."

"Thank you so much!" Dianne said with a grin. "You're right. I don't often get many whole plates of cookies all to myself. In fact," she dropped her voice to a conspiratorial whisper, "I'd be surprised if Jeff gets any of these at all!"

--Mission Impossible by AmandaTracy and Tikatu

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:55:40 GMT

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From: Tikatu Sent: 3/28/2007 9:35 PM

Sunday, August 19, 2068, 11:15 p.m., Tracy Island

It was late that evening when Kat received an answer from John.

Hello, Kat,

Just wanted to let you know I got your email. Are you okay? It sounds like all of this came on pretty suddenly.

Your brother and his fiancée must be going crazy trying to get everything in order for the wedding. An event like that takes a lot of time and effort; I know, we went through it with Dad's second wedding. I'm sure Melanie can count on you to give her a hand in making things work. It's

nice of them to make the sacrifice so her brother can be there before he's deployed to who knows where.

I went to the 'Net to try and find the case where you'd be testifying. I didn't remember you mentioning his name, or what the assault was, but the closest case I could find in the media for your area was a rape involving a mechanic named Ernie Grover. Is he the guy who harassed you? Seems like a nasty piece of work from what I was able to glean. If your testimony will put this creep away, then more power to you, Kat. And if you have the opportunity to press charges against him yourself, go for it.

It's too bad that this all has come about just now, but I'll be home for an entire two months. We'll have plenty of time to talk and stargaze and what have you... rescues permitting, of course. Take care and keep me updated on the situation as you have time.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon,

John

Kat sighed, smiled slightly, and printed out the letter. She tucked it into her handbag, and looked around her apartment. Everything was neat; the crockery was washed and put away, and she'd done a final load of washing that afternoon. She had spent some time with her friends earlier that evening, saying her goodbyes. Her bags were packed, and she'd been invited to have breakfast with the family before she left.

She glanced at the clock. Breakfast is to be very early as Lady Penelope wishes to get an early start on our flight, and it is late. I shall write John again when I arrive home.

With that thought, she had a warm, milky drink, washed out the cup, then brushed her teeth, and put on her night clothes. She glanced over the email on the screen one more time before shutting down the computer. Then with a melancholy feeling, she climbed into bed. She lay there for a little while, listening to the wind as it came off the sea, and slowly it lulled her into a deep, dreamless sleep.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:58:06 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 3/28/2007 10:14 PM

Monday, August 20, 8:00 AM; Tracy Island

Kat signaled the elevator, then went to where she'd left her bags. She swung her carry-on over her shoulder and picked up her suitcase as a chime let her know the elevator had arrived. She headed to the door and, just after opening it, looked back into her apartment to make sure she hadn't forgotten anything. Then she headed to the ground floor, and to the area where FAB-4 waited.

She'd said her good-byes to Heather, Callie and Dom the night before. When she expressed her uncertainty at being able to testify, Callie unexpectedly spoke up.

"Don't worry, Kat. You can do it. All you have to do is tell them exactly what happened."

"What if I have to do it with him in the room?"

"Don't look at him. Look at the lawyer instead," Heather had replied. "He can't hurt you now, remember."

"Kat go bye-bye?" She looked down to see Josh standing next to his father, looking up at her with sad eyes. She squatted in front of him.

"Yes, I'm going bye-bye for a while. But I'll bring you back a present when I return. Okay?"

"Kat bring present?" Joshua looked up at his father.

"Yes, Jak. Kat c'n bring you a present." Dom turned to her and said, "Don't make it anythin' fancy, okay? Just a little something. And have a good time, too."

"I will." She hugged Joshua, saying, "You be a good boy while I'm gone." Then she stood up and hugged each of the others.

When she arrived at the plane, she found all four of the older Tracy brothers helping Kyrano and Parker loading Lady Penelope's bags into the jet. Brains, Tin-Tin, Dianne and Jeff were chatting with Penny; Elise and Nikki were talking to a man Kat had never seen before.

"Here, Kat. Let me take those." She looked over to see Virgil coming toward her. She handed him her suitcase and slipped the other bag off her shoulder. He took it as well, and headed back to the jet.

"Kat?" Elise walked over to her, followed by the man. "I want to introduce you to Luke Morel. He'll be flying with you as far as L.A. Luke, this is Kat Williamson, our mechanic."

"A pleasure, Miss Williamson."

"Call me Kat, please," she replied, while thinking, What am I going to say to him on the flight to the States? I don't know a thing about him. I hope Lady Penelope will be able to find something we can all talk about.

"Of course, Kat. And I'm Luke." He smiled and turned to see if he could help with the loading.

Kat chatted with Nikki and Elise for a few more minutes, then noticed the brothers and butler/pilot heading toward them.

"H'everything's h'aboard, Milady," Parker said. "We can leave when-h'ever you're ready."

"Thank you, Parker." Penny hugged Dianne and Jeff, then turned to Tin-Tin. "I hope you can get time to join me when François comes out with his newest collection."

"I do, too, but if I can't come, I'll depend on you to tell me all about it," the young Malaysian replied with a smile. They embraced, then Penny turned to Kyrano.

"I have high expectations when I visit, and you always exceed them. The cuisine was excellent, as usual. Thank you for pampering me so beautifully."

"It is always a pleasure." Kyrano bowed slightly, then stood aside to allow her to go to her jet.

As Kat said her good-byes to Elise and Nikki, Brains and Tin-Tin joined them. Kat turned to her immediate superior and said, "I hope things don't get too hectic around here whilst I'm gone. Although I know you can handle it, I also know how busy you already are."

"Don't worry about that, Kat. Just take care of your business in England." He grinned. "I'll try to have plenty for you to do when you return. But you're only going to be gone for two weeks, so I don't know what I'll come up with."

She laughed. Then she heard Lady Penelope calling her to board the jet, so they could leave. Giving Tin-Tin a quick hug, she waved to Jeff, Dianne and Kyrano. "Good-bye, all. I'll be back as soon as I can. And I'll miss you in the meantime."

Followed by Luke, she climbed aboard the jet, hearing choruses of, "Good-bye, Kat", "Have fun at the wedding", "If you catch the bouquet, we'll want to see it", and "Take care of yourself". Then she went to the seat indicated by Lady Penelope and belted herself in.

Parker taxied the plane to the runway, and a few minutes later they were airborne.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 18:59:08 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 3/29/2007 8:33 PM

Tracy Island, Monday, August 20th, 8:30 AM

Jeff watched until Penny's jet cleared the runway and was airborne before glancing down at his watch. A little over an hour until we leave for New Zealand. Just enough time for a quick meeting. He turned back to his desk and punched a few buttons on the phone, "Boys, Dianne, can I see you in my office, please?"

A few minutes later, they were all gathered. Dianne was seated comfortably on the couch, her leg propped up on a pillow. Gordon sat next her, and Alan had grabbed the recliner. Virgil and Scott sat in the office chairs. Jeff finished up on his computer then turned to face them. "So, Luke Morel, first impressions."

Alan spoke up first. "Cautious. You should have seen him in L.A. He wasn't getting on the plane until he knew where we were going."

Virgil chuckled. "Got a taste of that myself, Al."

"There's nothing wrong with a little caution." Jeff looked pointedly over at Gordon. Gordon merely grinned.

"I liked him," Scott spoke up. "He'd be a hell of an asset to the team. Not often we get someone that well-trained. I'll bet he could even teach us a thing or two."

Virgil frowned. "I didn't like the whole insubordination issue. What if he balks during a rescue? Can we afford someone like that?"

Jeff shook his head. "I don't think that will be a problem. I think it was merely a conflict of personalities between Luke and his superior."

Virgil nodded thoughtfully. "Hmm, maybe." Then he looked up. "What did he want to ask you anyway?"

"Nothing of any concern. Dianne, what about you?"

"My first impression is that yes, he's cautious. He's not going to jump in head first to something without knowing all the details. He's very quiet, not as boisterous as some we have around here." She winked over at Gordon.

"Hey! Starting to feel picked on here!" Gordon protested.

"If the shoe fits...," Scott drawled.

"Boys," Jeff said warningly. "Does anyone have anything else to add?"

"What did he think when you showed him Thunderbird Two?" Gordon asked.

"Surprise mostly." Virgil's eyebrows furrowed. "He called her a 'thing'."

Scott snickered. "Sounds like he has good taste." They all burst out laughing. All but Virgil.

"All right, dismissed. Gordon, you're still coming with us?" Jeff asked.

Gordon nodded. "Just have to go prep the plane."

"Get to it then. I want to leave within the hour." Gordon nodded again and he and his brothers left the room. Jeff walked over and sat down on the couch next to Dianne. "Are you all ready?"

She leaned into his arms and turned her face up for a kiss. "As ready as I can be." She pressed her lips to his again.

Jeff pulled back a few minutes later, his eyes dark with emotion. "Patience, love. Soon, I promise." He pulled her close and wrapped his arms around her, resting her head on his shoulder. "Soon."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:00:34 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/3/2007 7:55 PM

Monday, August 20, 2068, 10 a.m., Wellington, New Zealand (same day, same time on Tracy Island)

"So, Dr. Tracy," Ed Haenga said as he looked over the data pad containing her medical notes. "How'd this all happen?"

"Automobile accident," Dianne said with a sigh. "Got my leg caught on the steerin' column. They had to cut off the metal to even get me out of the car. And even though the airbag deployed, the wheel was shoved up into my gut."

"Sounds painful and dangerous," he replied, still looking at the pad. He tapped the surface with a strong, dark finger. "Andrew Carmichael..." Looking up, he asked, "Wasn't that the surgeon who worked on the International Rescue operatives?"

She glanced up at Gordon, who succeeded in keeping from rolling his eyes. Nikki, along to learn how to guide Dianne in doing her exercises, hid a smile behind her hand. "Yes, he was," Dianne said, sounding weary. "He's also my uncle."

"Really?" Ed sounded very surprised. An eyebrow rose as he asked, "Did you get to see any of the Thunderbirds? See any of the operatives? I hear there was quite a crowd there."

"I managed to miss most of that," Dianne said. "I arrived after they took the CMO away to... wherever they took him."

"Her," Ed corrected. "The CMO is a woman... at least, that's what the news reports said."

"Ah," she replied, nodding. "You'll understand that I wasn't exactly coherent during all of the hullabaloo. Pain meds, you know. Most of what I heard was third or fourth hand."

"I see." It seemed the subject was now closed. "Well, then, let's get down to business and start with a heat treatment on that abdomen. Then we'll go through the first set of exercises. Better to do the abdominal muscles before lunch." He beckoned to the trio. "Come along with me."

xxxx

"So, why aren't you staying with Dianne?" Anna asked. "I could have called for a pick up from Wellington."

"I know," Jeff said with a grin. "But taking you to Lake Colenge gives me a good jumping off point for an errand I want to run in Sydney. A surprise for Dianne, actually. It's only an hour's flight time at Mach 2."

"You had to put that deviation in your flight plan, didn't you?" Anna asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Yes, I did, but Dianne hasn't seen the flight plan. I've sworn Gordon to secrecy, and given him a plausible story to use should she ask where I am. With luck, I'll be able to keep the trip quiet."

Anna chuckled. "Hope it doesn't cost you too much."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:02:29 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/4/2007 5:24 PM

Monday, August 20, 2068, Noon, Wellington, NZ

Dianne looked around the restaurant, frowning. "I wonder where Jeff is?" She turned to Gordon. "Didn't he say he'd meet us for lunch?"

Gordon shook his head. "You mean he didn't tell you? He's got some errands to run, said he wanted to look into getting a safe for Mrs. Hanson's suite. He told me he'd be back in time for dinner."

"Oh." Dianne looked disappointed. "I was hoping he'd be here for the afternoon session."

"I'm sure he'll be here in time for dinner, Dianne," Nikki said, smiling. "He said he would be, and he's a man of his word."

Gordon grinned. "Right! Let's flag down the waiter; I'm starved!"

"I'm not," Dianne replied with a little grunt, rubbing her abdomen. "I'm just sore."

xxxx

same day, 10 a.m., Sydney, Australia (noon, NZ)

Jeff hummed as he got out of the company car near the exclusive jeweler's establishment. He'd made the appointment the day after he'd found his wife's rings. The velvet box resided in his trouser pocket and he closed his hand around it, absently running a thumb over the surface. This was the same place he'd gone to when he'd had the rings designed and made, and to him, it was only fitting that he return there now.

The elegantly dressed receptionist looked up as he walked in. "Mr. Tracy! A pleasure to see you again," she said, her accent sounding far more of London than of Sydney. "Please, sit down and allow me to tell Mr. Symmes that you are here."

"Thank you, Alicia." Jeff sat down in one of the well-upholstered chairs. The small waiting room had the look of a posh, period drawing room; in fact, Jeff had no trouble imagining the furniture in

Lady Penelope's home. There was a middle-aged red-haired woman sitting across from him; she gave him an annoyed look with an arched eyebrow. Jeff wondered if perhaps she was also waiting for the jewelry designer. He glanced over at Alicia, who was speaking on the vidphone. She nodded, said something, and put down the receiver. Then she glanced his way, and smiled.

"Mr. Symmes will see you now, Mr. Tracy. Please follow me."

Jeff rose but had only taken a few steps when someone cleared their throat. Loudly.

"Excuse me, miss." The emphasis on that last word was dripping with sarcasm. "I believe I was here first."

Alicia stopped in her tracks and turned back. Her voice was cool but unruffled as she told the other client, "Indeed you were, Mrs. Chauvelin, but Mr. Tracy has an appointment." The slight stress on the last word was meant to put the other woman in her place. Alicia inclined her head. "Mr. Tracy?"

Jeff nodded, and followed the receptionist.

"My apologies, Mr. Tracy," Alicia said as she opened a door and motioned him inside.

"None needed," he replied amiably. "I hope she doesn't give Mr. Symmes too much grief."

Alicia smiled, a slightly pained expression, then Jeff went through the door.

"Hey, Mr. Tracy!" Julian Symmes stood from behind one of his work benches and offered his hand to Jeff. "Good to see you again."

"Good to see you, too, Mr. Sym..."

"Ah-ah!" Julian waved a finger in the air. "For you, it's Julian."

"Julian, then," Jeff replied.

The artisan rubbed his fingers together. "So, what's this I hear about my creation? Something's wrong?"

"No, not really," Jeff said, extricating the box from his pocket. "It's just that my wife was in a car accident..."

"An accident?" Julian sounded both surprised and concerned. "Is she all right?"

Jeff nodded. "Well, she was hurt, but is recovering very nicely." He handed over the box. "I wanted to make sure that all the gems were safe and sound before returning the rings to her. She was fortunate they were able to remove the rings without cutting them off," he said, rubbing his own, empty ring finger with his thumb. "But there still may have been some damage..."

"Of course, of course!" Julian exclaimed. "I'll look it over right away. Was there anything else?"

Jeff smiled, a sort of "aw, shucks" expression on his face. He rubbed the back of his neck. "Well, yes. I finally decided on an inscription."

Julian chuckled. "Finally? It's been, what? Two years now?"

"Yes, about that... since the engagement, anyway. Nearly two years since the wedding, too." Jeff sobered. "It took this... accident for me to realize how much she means to me." He shrugged. "There's no way I can put it all on that ring, but I can say something meaningful."

"I understand." The designer handed him a data pad. "What would you like me to inscribe?" Jeff took the pad, and wrote a very brief statement, then handed it back. Julian smiled, and nodded. "You need this while you're here in Sydney?"

"Yes, definitely. She has no idea that I'm here, and I promised to be back to Wellington in time for dinner." Jeff paused. "She's started physical therapy today."

Julian paused, his loupe in one eye. "That bad?" When Jeff nodded, the jeweler sat down behind the bench, fixing his spotlight to his head, the bulb not yet lit. "Well, then. I'll make sure you can get back to Mrs. Tracy by dinnertime... in New Zealand." He turned and picked up the vidphone. "Alicia, cancel my appointments until three, or redistribute them to James and Gabrielle. Who? Mrs. Chauvelin? Tell her she'll have to settle for Jamie or Gabby, or come back tomorrow. Right. If she gives you trouble, tell Shang. He'll take care of it."

He glanced up at Jeff. "Where's your car?"

"Around the corner," Jeff said, frowning.

"You might want to go out the back. Mrs. Chauvelin is given to histrionics."

Jeff laughed. "I can handle it. I have a teenaged daughter."

"If you're sure..." Julian settled down and turned on his light.

"I'm sure. When should I come back?"

"Two o'clock. I'll have this completely done by then."

"Thanks. I'll see you then." With a wave, Jeff opened the door he'd come through. There was the faint sound of a raised voice. He turned back and saw the craftsman already at work on Dianne's engagement ring. Then he squared his shoulders, and headed out.

xxxx

same day, 3 p.m., Wellington, NZ (1 p.m., Sydney)

"That was a rough session," Nikki said, shaking her head. She sat on the divan in the suite's sitting room with a cup of hot tea. "I didn't realize how much muscle was involved."

"Yeah, it was sort of like John's leg when Mom first came on board," Gordon said. He was in one of the plush armchairs, the remote control in his hand. "That was a nasty situation, too. You see, though, why the massage is so important."

"Yes, I understand." She made a wry face. "In fact, I understood before we came here. I did have a unit on PT when I was at uni, you know."

Gordon opened his mouth, reconsidered what he was about to say, then went, "Ah!" He nodded, then turned back to the televid. "Let's see if there's something worth watching here."

"What would you consider worth watching?"

A surfing contest flashed by and Gordon changed the channel back so he could watch it. "Here, this'll do. Would you like to double up?" He offered the remote to Nikki.

"Hm." She considered his offer for a minute; to double up would mean a split screen, and both of them watching their choice on it. She shook her head. "No, I like sports. But you'll have to explain this one to me; I'm a virgin when it comes to surfing."

"A virgin, huh?" Gordon eyed her speculatively. "Maybe I need to do something about that."

"You dare," was her saucy reply. She nodded toward the screen. "Explain it to me, but keep it down so we don't wake Dianne."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:04:38 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/4/2007 5:47 PM

same day, 5:30 p.m., Wellington, NZ (3:30 p.m., Sydney)

Dianne looked at her watch again, and peered in the mirror. She picked up her brush and ran it through her hair... again. Where is he? Why is his errand taking so long? Reservations are for six; at this rate, he'll barely have time to get dressed.

There was a sound at the door, then it slid open and Jeff walked in. Dianne let out a sigh of relief.

"I'm sorry, love," he said as he crossed the room, dropping something on the bed as he did. "Things took longer than I expected." He put his hands on her shoulders, and kissed her cheek, then her lips as she turned toward him.

"I was getting worried," she said, looking up at him with an anxious expression. "Did you get everything done?"

He smiled, kissed her again, and began to pull at his tie. "I most certainly did. There'll be a safe on its way to the island in a few days. I think I've been inside every security system place on the

North Island! And what a pain trying to get it shipped! You'd think they didn't want to take my money or something!" Well, that wasn't quite true; he'd worked with the purchasing department in the Tracy Industries Sydney offices to buy the safe and arrange for shipping. He shook his head as he pulled his shirt from his trousers and began to unbutton it. "Then I had a couple of other small errands to run, including looking for... this!"

He handed her the package he'd dropped on the bed, and continued to divest himself of his clothes as she opened it up. Her eyes grew wide as she pulled out... a cane. Collapsible for easy carrying, the straight metal tube was covered with a dark, paisley print, and had a simple though elegant handle of carved mahogany.

"Do you like it?" he asked, moving over to the garment bag to fetch a shirt. "I know you won't be using it for long..."

"It's lovely!" she said, reaching out for the cane she had been using. "I'll have to adjust it."

"I can do that." Jeff shrugged into his clean shirt and took a few steps in Dianne's direction.

"Nonsense. You finish getting dressed. I can fix this myself."

They were quiet for a few moments, but finally Jeff was putting on his shoes, and Dianne stood, using the new cane for the first time. She had a necklace in one hand. "Would you please help me with this?"

"Of course, love." Jeff stopped tying his shoe and came to her. She turned, taking little steps, and he took the necklace from her hand, drawing it up to fasten. He kissed her lightly on the neck and sighed heavily, his warm breath tickling the hairs at her nape. She looked over her shoulder at him and their lips met once again.

"You'd better finish getting dressed," she murmured. "We're going to be late."

"All right," he replied softly, kissing her once more. He moved back to put on his other shoe, thinking about the velvet box that rested in the hotel safe, and trying to figure out how to retrieve it without his wife knowing.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:05:57 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 4/4/2007 7:24 PM

Monday, August 20; Murray Gill, Kansas; 4:30 PM (9:30 AM August 21 on Tracy Island)

Michael Hart sat in the back of his limo, on his way to the Valerian residence. He would have preferred to drive himself, but his left leg was still in a cast - although it was a shorter, lighter one -- and he was still susceptible to headaches that made driving out of the question for the time being.

He thought back to the day Mrs. Valerian -- Carol -- came into his room, three days after he'd made the bet with Peter.

"Hello, Michael. May I come in?"

He put down the newspaper he'd been reading. "Carol! Please do.

I'm glad to see you. How's Peter?"

"He's much better, thanks in part to you. And you?"

"I've been told that I can get out of here and go home in a couple of days."

She smiled mischievously. "That's great! But I'm afraid that means you lose the bet you made with my son. He's being released today. And he's already got the restaurant picked out. It's been around for decades." She sobered. "It's the one his father took him to once a month for a father-son dinner."

"Are you okay with that?" he asked, concerned about the look on her face.

"Y-yes, I think I am. I'm sure I will be, by the time you two are well enough to go out together. As a matter of fact, I came here to give you our address and phone number, so you can let us know when that day will be." She handed him a card. "And don't try to rush it; we're patient."

"Carol, I want to put one condition on my paying off the bet."

"What's that?"

"That you come, too. Have you ever been to this restaurant?"

"Oh, yes, several times, though not since my husband died. It's very good."

"What's it called?" She told him. "Ah, I've heard of it. Are their fries as good as they claim?"

"Better. They aren't as greasy as you get in those fast food places. They're crisp and golden brown on the outside, and tender on the inside. My husband used to say that they were so good, putting ketchup or anything else on them would spoil the taste."

"Well, I'm certainly looking forward to dining there. So you'll come, too?"

She smiled. "Yes, I accept. But now I have to go. They were getting Peter ready to leave, but he wanted me to let you know right away." She turned and headed toward the door, then looked back. "See you soon, Michael."

"Bye, Carol. I'm looking forward to it."

His reminiscences ended as they pulled up in front of the house. The driver got out and helped

Michael emerge from the vehicle. It was a special one, able to handle someone in a wheelchair as well as on crutches. But I'll be glad when I can get rid of these things, he thought. He hobbled up to the front door and rang the bell.

Carol opened the door and he saw Peter in the living room beyond her, wearing his Special Olympics medal over his tee shirt. But what Michael noticed even more was the big grin on the boy's face. "Hey, Peter. I hope you're hungry. I sure am. Ready to go?"

Peter nodded vigorously, and both adults laughed. With the driver's help, everyone was soon in the vehicle and on the way to the restaurant. Michael and Carol chatted like old friends, and he found himself able to correctly interpret some of the expressions on the boy's face.

"Hey, Peter, isn't this some fancy limo for people like us?" The boy nodded, but looked sad. "Oh, come on now. I know you don't like the thought of being in that chair, but I also know that if you work at it, some day you'll be walking and running like most other kids. Of course, that would mean that you couldn't compete in the Special Olympics any more, but maybe you could compete in the regular ones then. What do you think?"

Peter looked at him, surprised. Then he began to smile tentatively, and looked questioningly at his mother, then Michael.

"Sure you could. Why not? Let me tell you something I read about. There was a woman whose name was Wilma Rudolph. When she was a little girl, she suffered from double pneumonia, scarlet fever, and even polio, which was a crippling disease. But she overcame all that and won a bronze medal in 1956 and three gold medals in 1960 in track competitions. That was over a hundred years ago. I bet that now you could do something like that. Am I right or am I right?" Michael told him.

Peter's smile grew to a grin and he wiggled all over with glee.

Michael was about to say something more, but the limo drew to a halt and the driver got out. "We have arrived, sir," he said as he opened the door.

Soon they were outside looking at the restaurant's sign.

Liz's Broadway Burgers

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:09:00 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 4/5/2007 6:50 PM

Tuesday, August 21, 7 PM; College Park, Maryland (11 AM Aug. 22 on Tracy Island)

After dinner, Lena helped Amelia load the dishwasher while Matthew took care of some work he'd brought home. Afterward, they headed into the living room, but Lena was restless "I feel de need

to take a walk. Do either of you want to come?"

"That's a good idea, Mom," Matthew replied. "I had no court time today, and was chained to my desk. I could use a little exercise, especially since my wife is such a good cook." He leaned over and kissed Amelia, who blushed and giggled a little.

"Well you two go on, then," she said. "You need some time together, and I have a magazine article I want to read before my favorite show comes on at 8."

It was a clear, balmy evening with a light breeze sending the fragrance of several different flowers for all to enjoy. When they got to the sidewalk, they both took deep appreciative breaths. Matthew linked his mother's right arm in his, and they began to stroll down the block, chatting about inconsequential things along the way.

Finally he had to ask his mother the question he'd been avoiding. "Mom, are you going to continue to work for Tracy Industries as both head of I&M and I&M coordinator?"

"Of course I am. I'm not ready to retire, not by a long shot."

"And what about flying? Are you going to have a problem with that?"

She hesitated. "I don't know, Matthew. I have to fly; it's part of the job I took on. I may have some fear the next time I get on a plane, but I think I can work through it. Anyway, I intend to try."

He smiled and patted her hand. "You know that I'll support you whatever happens, don't you? I love you very much."

"Of course you do. I'm your mother." They both laughed, then Lena added, "I love you too. You're so much like your father. When we're together like this, I don't miss him as much."

"Do you get lonely still, Mom?"

"Sometimes. But it isn't nearly as bad as it was at first. And I have enough to keep me occupied so that it doesn't happen as often as it used to." She looked up at her son. "Don't be concerned; I'm doing fine."

"I'm glad. But you don't mind if I worry about you now and then, do you?"

"I can't keep you from doing that; we all worry about those we love. So how can I say otherwise?"

He released her arm, so he could hug her, which she returned gladly. Then once again linking arms, they strolled on in silence, just enjoying being together. But ten minutes later, Lena stopped suddenly, causing Matthew to look at her in concern.

"What's wrong, Mom?"

"Nothing, honey. I just had an idea about a project I was working on before I left for Denver. There was a bit of an obstacle to what I wanted to do, and I think I just figured out how to get around it."

"And here I thought you were enjoying my company."

Lena snorted. "I was and I am; don't you try to kid me, young man." She paused, thinking. "I'm not sure how de idea came into my mind. I was just remembering when you and Joy were little and I was doing freelance work. De idea suddenly popped into my head."

"That happens to me sometimes. Do you think it's the answer to getting around the obstacle?"

"Possibly. I won't know until I'm able to work on my own computer at home. I'll have to add a note to myself about it in my laptop. I'm amazed dat de airline company was able to locate it and get it back to me."

"I was amazed to see that it was still working."

Lena smiled. "Tracy Industries makes sure deir computers are de best, and built to witstand just about anything. But you're right, son; I was surprised, too. Now all I have to do is remember dis idea so I can input it when we get back to your place."

"Do you want to head back now?"

"Not unless you do. I'm enjoying dis too much."

So they continued their walk.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:11:03 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/7/2007 10:53 AM

Wednesday, August 22, 2068, 10 a.m., Tracy Island

"Well, I guess this is it," Maggie said, squaring her shoulders and turning to her sister-in-law.

"For the moment, yeah," Lisa replied. She held out her arms and the two women embraced. "I'll let you know the date and all the pertinent details as soon as we've decided on them."

Maggie drew back and shook a finger at Lisa. "I'll be waiting for them. Don't be too long about it now."

Lisa chuckled. "We won't. I promise."

Maggie moved to Kyrano. "You heard what she said," Maggie told him, gesturing toward Lisa with her head.

"I did indeed," Kyrano replied gravely. He bowed to her. "It has been a pleasure to have you here, Mrs. Carmichael."

"Kyrano, you are on the cusp of becoming an in-law," Maggie cautioned him. "Please call me Maggie."

"I will try... Maggie. Old habits are hard to break."

"We'll work on it, Mags," Lisa assured her, moving close to her beau and taking his hand.

"I know you will," Maggie said. She then turned to Dianne, who was standing beside Kyrano, both hands on her cane. "Now as for you, young lady, I expect to hear you working hard on your therapy and getting back to work soon."

"I will," Dianne promised as she embraced her aunt with one arm. "I'll keep Drew posted on a regular basis."

Maggie squeezed Dianne gently, then moved to Jeff. "Take good care of them."

"Don't I always?" he asked with a wink. He gave her a hug and a kiss on the cheek.

As Maggie moved along to say her goodbyes to the Tracy offspring, old and young alike, Drew passed her to say his farewells to the adults. He shook Kyrano's hand heartily. "Thanks, Kyrano. You've done so much for my family in a lot of ways, best of which is take this sister of mine into your heart and life. I look forward to becoming your brother-in-law."

"As do I," Kyrano replied, smiling a little. "Travel safely."

"We will." Drew turned to squeeze his sister tightly. "You behave yourself, and let us know the date."

"I will, as soon as it's decided," Lisa replied. She looked up at him, her eyes moist. "I love you, y'know."

"I know, and the feeling's mutual." He glanced over to the rest of the Tracys. "I'll call you when we get to L.A." He sighed. "I bet my workload has been piling up while we've been gallivanting around here."

"Who's been gallivanting?" Dianne asked as she limped over. "We put you to work!"

"And you'd better get back to work yourself, girl," Drew said. "I expect you to be rid of that cane very soon."

"Don't worry, I will. Gordon will see to that," she replied with a grimace. She hugged her uncle. "Take care."

"We will," Drew promised. "And if you want to go with that idea Maggie had, give us a call. We'll work out the details."

Dianne glanced behind her, to where Cherie was giving Maggie a hug. "Believe me, I'm thinking about it," she admitted.

Jeff came up, and offered his hand, then when Drew took it, pulled him into a back-thumping hug. "Thanks for all you've done, Andy. There's no way we can repay you."

"You just keep on with what you're doing. That's repayment enough," Drew said with a serious nod. "And if you need me again, you know where to find me."

"Right." Jeff said with a smile. They shook hands again.

"Maggie! Let's load up!" Drew said as he released Jeff's hand. He waved. "Goodbye, y'all!"

There was a general chorus of goodbyes from the Tracy clan and Scott darted inside the hangar. He headed up to Flight Control, one level below the Cliff House patio. It was seldom used these days, but sending his uncle's plane off from there was easier than running back up to the Villa to do it.

Jeff made sure that all the doors and hatches of Drew's jet were secure, then herded his family well away from the plane. Virgil and Alan ducked into the hangar to close the small aircraft door. Tyler put his hands over his ears, but the rest of the family waved as the Carmichael's plane taxied down the short runway and headed into the sunny morning sky.

"The house is going to feel a little empty now that they're gone," Lisa remarked sadly. "I miss them already."

"You will see them again soon, my love," Kyrano assured her. "As for us, we have duties to attend to, and a wedding to plan." He tucked her hand into the crook of his elbow. "Come. Let us return to the Villa and begin the preparations. It is time we did what we set out to do."

Lisa smiled and squeezed his arm as they headed back to the little carts that had brought the family to the airstrip.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:11:51 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 4/7/2007 11:55 AM

Wednesday, August 22, 8:00pm (10:00pm Tracy Island) Outside Bundaberg, Queensland, Australia...

The two men watched the fire from the edges of the field. The sugar cane was burning steadily, the darkening sky above reflecting the orange flames. Soon, the excess leaves and waxy stalks would be cleared and the cane would be ready to harvest. The threshers and harvesters stood ready at the edge of the field.

"Looks like we'll get a decent crop this year," one commented to the other.

"Yeah, considering we've had no rain, that would be a good thing!" They both chuckled.

"So, Justin, you and Kerrie set a date yet?"

"Nah, nothing official. We're thinking of end of summer. Maybe in March sometime."

"Good idea, won't be so hot."

"Yeah, we can save money on beer!" Both laughed.

They stood in silence for a few minutes before Justin looked up and frowned. "Sam, feels like the wind's shifting."

"I hope not." They hurried inside one of the buildings. Sam picked up a phone. "Hey, what's the wind out there?" His eyes widened as he looked over at Justin. "I thought things were going to be clear?...No worries, we'll ring you back if anything changes." He hung up the phone. "Weather bureau says to expect winds to pick up. A low or something moving through."

"We'd better go have the crew wet the perimeters. God help us if it jumps the field." Now it was Justin's turn to go pale. "Cripes, Sam, the rum plant!"

"Damn! If the fire jumps and hits the mill..." Justin's voice trailed off.

"We can't let that happen. The 'back's too dry. The fire could wipe out the whole area!" Sam replied as the men ran back towards the field. "Get the rest of the crew out there, double!"

Justin nodded as he climbed into a truck. He gunned the engine, picking up the radio as he drove off. Sam watched him go then got into another and hurried off in the opposite direction. Please, don't let it spread...

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:12:42 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 4/9/2007 7:12 PM

Bozeman, Montana, Thursday, August 23rd, 7:30 AM (Wednesday, August 24th, 1:30 AM, Tracy Island)

Luke pushed his breakfast around his plate and sighed. He glanced out the window, not really seeing anything. After a few minutes, he got up and stretched, then turned to his parents. "I'm going to drown some worms. I'll see you both later. Rom, c'mon." He flashed them a brief smile, then left the room. A moment later, they heard the door slam and the jeep start up, soon fading in

the distance.

Melisa turned to her husband. "Your son is moping."

Richard looked up over his newspaper. "My son? Why is he only my son when he's in a mood?" he griped good-naturedly.

Melisa smiled. "Because you're where he gets it from."

Richard frowned at her but smiled. He folded his paper and got up, putting his coffee mug in the sink. He placed a kiss on his wife's lips. "I have to get to the store. When Luke comes back, I'll talk to him."

"I know you will." She smiled back. "I'll be there soon."

XXXX

Luke drove down the dusty dirt road in silence, not even bothering to put on the radio. Rommel had his head out the window, grinning into the wind. Finally, Luke pulled off, and with a whistle to his dog, grabbed his fishing pole and headed down the path.

Fifteen minutes later, he was sitting by a good sized brook, his line in the water. Rommel was sniffing around the edge of the water, but knowing better than to dive in. He finally settled himself at Luke's side and dozed off.

Luke rested his hand on Rommel's back, idly rubbing his thick fur. "Well, Rom, it's just you and me. Let me tell you that interview was a doozy. International Rescue! The chance of a lifetime." He stared out at the water. "But do I really want to stay in rescue work?" He tensed a moment as his fish-line tightened, then went slack again. He reeled it in, and cast out in a different spot, letting the lure float on the current.

"Rommel, what do you think I should do?" The dog looked up at his name and his tail thumped. Luke grinned and ruffled his fur. "I know what you'd do, you'd eat!" Rommel merely rolled over onto his back so Luke could rub his belly. Luke sighed again and complied, his thoughts still in turmoil. I'm in a rut. Not happy with anything at the moment. The Tracy Industries job took a turn I certainly wasn't expecting! But is it what I want to do? He was interrupted but a sharp tug on his line. Luke quickly jumped to his feet and grabbed his pole. He reeled in as fast as he could, the pole bending nearly double. After a few minutes of fighting, he landed a good sized rainbow trout. He deftly cleaned the fish and put it in his creel, then set his line again.

"OK, Rom, let's think about this." Once again, the dog looked up at him, ears cocked. "Am I avoiding this job because it's rescue work? Or is it something else?" Luke sat down again. "I love my job; it's Derek that makes me nuts. And, am I wavering on the International Rescue thing because I don't want to deal with the potential of the same situation?" He sighed. Or is Mom right? Was I hoping this job in Los Angeles would bring Barry and I back together again? He reeled his line in and paced along the shoreline, Rommel trotting next to him.

He paused to stare out over the water. "I miss him, Rom," he said, his voice thick. Rommel

sensed his master's discomfort and nudged his nose into Luke's hand. "I love him, and I miss him."

Luke crouched down and put his head in his hands, finally allowing his feelings to come free. Rommel whined and tried to lick Luke's face, offering comfort the only way he knew how. Luke pulled his dog close, burying his face in Rom's thick fur.

"Face it, Morel, you and Barry are over." Saying the words out loud sounded so final. He swallowed the lump in his throat and looked up at the sun reflecting on the water. "Time to move on with my life. Or try to anyway." He got to his feet and took a deep breath. "They say God makes things happen for a reason. Maybe International Rescue is where I was meant to be all along." Rommel gave a happy bark; glad to see whatever had been bothering his master was gone. Luke grinned down at him. "So, mutt, think you'll like living on a tropical island?"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:18:03 GMT
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 4/10/2007 8:38 PM

(Tracy Island August 24, 2068; 9 a.m./ Richmond, VA August 25, 2068; 5 p.m.)

On Tracy Island, Jeff was rapidly reading a report from a subsidiary company who'd sent information on a new development in lightweight polymers, when he heard Thunderbird 1's gantry exit hiss open. Heather was the first one to walk in. Scott followed seconds later. The two highly skilled jet pilots came out in the middle of a noisy discussion.

"Look, Scott. On a regular basis, you describe Thunderbird 1 as 'my baby, my baby!' Good jumpin' grief! Thunderbird 1 doesn't belong to you!" At this, Jeff hid his grin in the electronic reports in front of him.

"Heather, you're just jealous. C'mon! Admit to the fact! Thunderbird 1 is under my chief command, and that's all there is to it! If you want to fly her, you've got to do it to my satisfaction," Scott countered, making Jeff wonder if there were two separate conversations going on and the two 'kids' weren't really listening to each other.

Turning around in the middle center of the lounge, Heather placed her hands on her hips, defiantly. "Face it, Scott. You can't stand the idea, but the truth will out!"

"And the truth is?" Scott countered.

"Thunderbird 1 doesn't belong to you."

Scott's mouth fell open, feeling as if he'd been hit square in the head. "Come again?"

"I said Thunderbird 1 doesn't belong to you!" Heather insisted more firmly.

"Explain this one, Heather."

"International Rescue is for all intents and purposes a quasi-military installation. Thunderbird 1 and all the other equipment used to carry out your missions belongs to International Rescue. Right?"

"Well... right," Scott agreed.

"Okay, that means that Thunderbird 1 belongs to International Rescue. Not you."

Still looking at his paperwork, Jeff slid into the conversation. "She's right, Scott."

Heather grinned at the field commander. "Gotcha!"

"Now hold on a minute. What about Blue Streak?"

"Am I prideful about Blue Streak? Yes, and I'm not afraid to admit it, but you have to remember, too, Blue Streak is mine! I own her. She belongs to no one else. Thunderbird 1, however, cannot be considered your own private jet plane. It does not belong to you. You. Just. Borrow. Her," she said, emphasizing the last four words.

At that moment, Heather's cellphone rang as they stood glaring at each other. She pulled it out of her phone holster and looked at the screen. Scott witnessed Heather crossing herself, raising her hands in prayer with the little cellphone between her palms. Taking a deep breath, Heather stepped outside the lounge. "Hi, mother."

"Heather? You and I have to have a discussion and now!"

"I'm all ears, Mom--"

"I am fed up and tired of your attitude, young lady! And that's 'mother'."

"This is what you called me about? You want to talk about my attitude?"

"You hung up on me the last time we talked--!"

Swallowing her growing anger, the new pilot straightened as the ocean roared in the background. "Mother, why do we talk this way? All my life it's been like this! I can't live the life you--want--me--to live." An idea began to take shape. I'm beginning to wish I could strangle Grandma. "That's what you're trying to do, isn't it? You're not angry with me. You're angry with your mother and Grandmother is dead now. I remind you of who you could have been if you hadn't listened to her."

From the receiver, Heather heard a strangled sound. "You have no idea what you're saying!" Martha shouted.

Calm came to Heather when she spoke aloud her thoughts. "Mother, you're angry with me because I blew you off. I'm doing what you wished you'd done to Grandmother." When Martha

didn't respond, she tried again. "Mother," Heather entreated. "You've always been free to do whatever you ever wanted to do! You didn't have to follow Grandma's footsteps! You're beautiful! You're intelligent--!"

A chilling voice came over Heather's cellphone. "How dare you desecrate my mother's memory. Don't you ever talk to me like that again. In fact," Martha intoned coldly, "don't talk to me at all! Is that clear?"

Heather exploded so loudly Scott and Jeff could hear her from the lounge. "Mom! You're the one who called me--!"

Suddenly, the dial tone popped back on, leaving Heather feeling cold all over.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:18:50 GMT
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Dressed in a black dancer's leotard and leg warmers, Amy walked into the living room, hearing the slam of a receiver down on its cradle. Carrying her gym bag on her arm, Amy saw her mother looking about the sumptuous soft blue living room with crystal based lamps and marble chess set sitting upon its white and black marble stand. Two Louis XVI chairs of blue and coral paisley embroidery on taupe silk, supported by ornate legs, sat on opposite sides of a comfortable off-white sofa. Above the fireplace, across from the sofa hung paintings of James and Martha together. Heather's hung above them. Donny was on James' left and Amy was on Martha's right.

"Mom--?" Amy began. "Why are you--?"

"Mother!" Martha snapped at her 17-year-old daughter. "Have you seen the keys to the Mercedes?"

"No, Mother," Amy corrected herself. "Who was on the phone?"

Martha looked at Amy with narrowed, angry eyes and then walked over to where Heather's picture hung and yanked it off the wall.

"Never mind. I just figured it out," remarked Amy. "How's she doing?"

"I'm writing that girl out of my will!" Martha explained as she hurried over to the rolltop desk and shoved it open. "She hung up on me! She said I've never said 'I love you'! I'm absolutely done with that girl!"

Amy groaned to herself. Heather was right. Their mother never said those endearing words to Heather or Donny, and Amy heard it once in a great while, whereas their father, James said them constantly. He would hug each one whenever he came home, showering them with little gifts he found on his travels. When they went to bed, Jim would come out of his den to wish them good

night. He would correct them when any of them needed it, and would play ancient boardgames like Monopoly with them. He had endless patience for all of them. I can totally understand why Heather ran off to the Navy. Geez, Mom!

Martha stole a look at the coffee table that sat in front of the sofa where Amy sat down. "In fact," Martha said with such firmness that Amy felt chilled, "After I drop you off, I'm going to my lawyer. I. Am. Through!"

Amy thought to herself, She's really going to do it! She's threatened to kick Heather out of the family!

"Mother, calm down," Amy said carefully.

"Where did I put them?" Martha said to herself, looking at the mantelpiece. "What did I do with them? Amy, call Rosemary upstairs and see if I left them in the bedroom."

Sighing, Amy took out her satphone and touched a button which switched the signal to the electronic intercom system. "Rosy? Pick up, please."

A bright, cheery voice answered, "Yes, Miss? What can I do for you?"

"Rosy, have you seen my mother's keys?"

"Oh no, Miss Amy. Not so far."

"Rosy, would you do a thorough check of the 2nd floor and see if Mother's keys are up there somewhere?"

"I surely will."

Setting their maid on a detailed search, Amy looked around, noticing that Martha was no longer in the room. "Mother? Rosemary is looking upstairs for your keys!"

"Good!" Martha called back on the intercom from the dining room. "I've got to find them! If we don't get on the road soon, we'll be late for your dance class. Are you ready?"

Mom always dresses as if she's going to a dinner party!

"Yes, Mother." Amy sighed, touching the bun in her hair. "Mom, I want to quit ballet."

"Quit?" Martha said with surprise. "Oh no, you're not. With the money I'm spending, you should be as good as Ms. Kovnakova."

"Mother, Ms. Kovnakova is the finest Prima Donna in the world. I have no talent for this. I'd rather be in gymnastics--"

"Gymnasts have to take ballet, so you'll be ahead of the game," Martha said firmly. "Ah, there's Rosemary. Did you find them?" she asked the maid who stepped down the stairway.

I wonder if Heather has room for me? Maybe Donny, too. Donny's a different person around Heather, thought Amy.

Rosemary walked in at that moment, dressed in a crisp gray dress with a white apron and a fresh carnation pinned above the right breast pocket. Her attire was set with a bright, sunshiny smile that frustrated Martha. Amy was grateful Father found Rosy. Many times the chestnut haired older woman gave Amy and Donny both plenty of hugs, and reassuring advice, applying both liberally whenever possible and when Martha wasn't around. It was Martha's opinion that the hired help should do their job and should not be treated like the member of the family.

"Here they are, ma'am. I found them in the bathroom upstairs." From her apron pocket, she pulled out the tinkling set of keys.

Taking the keys, Martha hurried out the door to the Mercedes waiting for her.

"Have a nice time at dance class, Miss Amy," said Rosemary, giving Amy a kiss on the cheek.

"I'll try, Rosy. I'd rather go into gymnastics."

"Come home safely."

With the beep of a car horn, Amy raced out the door which Rosemary closed behind her. "Lord have mercy!" exclaimed Rosemary as she watched the Mercedes roared off.

Once out of the long drive, Martha guided the silver Benz out onto the paved two lane road leading to an exit that would take them to the highway.

"Mother, what is it about Heather that ticks you off so badly?"

"Amy, you were taught to speak better than that. I have told you and your father over and over again what's wrong, but neither of you listen--"

"Well, I'm listening now," Amy said with a slight amount of impatience.

"For years, since the day she was born, Heather had fought me in everything! When I wanted her to go take ballet, she took ice skating instead. When she was all dressed to go to a party, she ended up going to a baseball game! Her ball gown was destroyed!"

Amy turned away, laughing silently. Heather and her date, Brad Meyers, ended up on televid because of the way they were dressed. They'd been asked if they were getting married. Father laughed till his sides hurt, while Martha was mortified.

As they drove, Martha found the exit and sped up to match the highway traffic.

"Not long after that, she was on a hiking trip and almost died from that rattlesnake bite! If she had been doing what she was supposed to be doing, it wouldn't have happened! Then she takes her round the world trip a year early, skipping her debutante season. After that she winds up joining up in the Navy! Of all things! What man is going to marry her now?"

Certainly not the ones you want us to marry! Praise God for that! Amy thought to herself. Neither of us deserve men like Mom wants unless he's like Dad.

Her mother's words pushed Amy to the end of her patience. For many years, Amy had chided Heather for not falling in with Martha's plans. Observing her mother's behavior, Amy realized what Heather had to have known from the beginning. As the Mercedes pulled into the busy traffic, Amy spoke her thoughts. "Mom, you're jealous of her!"

Hearing the words spoken for the first time, Martha shifted her gaze off the busy traffic and over to her daughter. "I'm what?!"

"Mom!" Amy said with a swallow of breath.

Martha brought her attention swiftly back to the traffic ahead, straightening the car in time. Behind them was an 18-wheeler with MACK welded on the front of the grill. A Ferrari convertible whizzed passed them on the left.

"Me? Jealous of Heather?! That's ridiculous!"

"The more independent Heather became, the nastier you became! She's doing all the things you wished you were doing!" Unaware of her mother's anger and her own frustrations, Amy continued on, venting the feelings that everyone had expressed in one way or another. "She does all the things polite society says a woman isn't supposed to do! For Pete's sake, women's liberation was a hundred years ago! She didn't put up with a man who mistreated her just to please a bunch of old women-Mom! Look out!"

Amy screamed. Martha had turned her attention back to Amy and the car followed her. They hit the guardrail with a scream of steel against steel and a massive crunch when the MACK truck slammed into the back of the car, going too fast to stop. Car after car piled into each other when the MACK jackknifed.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:25:34 GMT
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 4/17/2007 4:57 PM

After lunch on Tracy Island, Virgil and Gordon lead Heather on an in depth tour down where Thunderbird 2 was berthed. Their footsteps echoed around them in the mammoth cavern while Virgil reflected on one of his most memorable rescues with Gordon adding backup information.

"Actually, it wasn't the rescue that was scary, but what happened to me afterwards--"

"Oh, you mean when we had to rescue Ned Cook and his cameraman? Gordon asked, remembering when he had to take Thunderbird 4 on a trip to New York City. The Navy's fastest

battle ship, the Sentinel, had to transport him and his sub there after the same ship had nearly blown Thunderbird 2 out of the sky.

"That's the one," Virgil sighed. "I got the equipment back into Thunderbird 2 after stopping a petroleum fire in Texas. I took off ahead of Scott, while he had to explain to Ned why we couldn't have pictures taken of us."

"So that's what happened," Heather said thoughtfully. "I remember hearing about that on the news. Right after that, Ned was doing that crazy report on the moving of the Empire State Building and was buried alive under the rubble when it collapsed. He almost died over that."

"He's lucky he survived at all!" remarked Gordon sharply.

"Anyway, on the return trip back to the island," Virgil continued, "the Sentinel sent a total of six guided missiles after me. The first two missed me, exploding underneath the fuselage, but I got nailed on the second set--"

At that moment, Heather's cellphone began beeping. Looking down at the glowing screen, she saw her father's number flashing. "Excuse me," she sighed as she answered the call.

"Hi Dad. How are--Dad? Slow down," she said, catching both Gordon and Virgil's interest.

"Heather? You've got to come home!" she heard Jim say over the little speaker. Your mother is--"

"Dad, I can't come home right now. I just signed an agreement with Mr. Tracy and I can't leave--"

"Heather Marie!" Jim snapped. Never had her father treated her this way before, and she fell obediently silent. A knot in her stomach appeared as instinct told her something was very wrong. "There was a--I think--a 25 car, high speed pileup on the highway going into Richmond. Martha and Amy--they were pulled out of the wreckage--"

Heather's stomach clenched tighter at the news. "Oh no," she stammered in disbelief. "But--but I was just talking to her a couple hours ago!"

"Police found them at the front of the accident. They were flown to the hospital and they're both in emergency. I'm at the hospital now. Honey," he fairly pleaded, "you've got to come home."

Just the pattern of her speech and the blood draining out of her prairie tanned skin alarmed Gordon and Virgil. "I don't like this," Gordon whispered.

"Bad news," Virgil said simply. As she snapped the little communication device closed, the boys slowly flanked her. "Heather, are you okay? What's happened?" he asked firmly.

She heard nothing they said as her head began to pound. A gale force wind of emotions formed of guilt, fear, and growing anger whirled in her mind.

Virgil and Gordon flanked her. "She's goin' into shock. Come on, Gordon. Get her back to her apartment and I'll go get Mom and Dad."

"I'm on it, Virge. Heather? We're going to go back to your place, okay? I want you to come with me," Gordon spoke to her firmly, while taking her hand and wrapping his other arm around her. Sadly, she followed him subdued. This is really bad. he thought.

Virgil ran through the villa looking for Jeff who was in his study at the time. Jeff glanced up at Virgil as he knocked on the door, and then walked in without permission. The alarmed look on Virgil's face alerted Jeff to trouble. "What's wrong?" Jeff asked firmly, already getting up out of his seat.

Virgil took a deep breath to explain, while Gordon held Heather in his arms on the couch after getting her to her apartment. She hadn't said what was wrong, but she rested her head in the hollow of his shoulder making not a sound. Her entire body shivered hard as if she were freezing.

"Heather?!" he called. "You've got to tell me what happened."

Unable to speak, Heather screamed in the protective recesses of her mind. You've finally gone and done it, Mother! You found the only way I would ever come back home! You had to go and do it! And you took Amy with you!

"Heather?! Talk to me!" Gordon called louder getting into her face.

Taking several deep breaths to control her fury, Heather whispered, "Gordon, I'm so sorry. I have to go home!"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:26:05 GMT
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 4/17/2007 5:39 PM

A few minutes later, there was a chime at the door. Gordon hollered, "Come in!" hoping that whoever it was had a key. They did. Jeff came into the room, followed by Dianne with Virgil bringing up the rear.

"Hello, Heather," Jeff said, his voice solemn but comforting. He took a seat in one of the comfortable chairs, while Dianne sat on the sofa, flanking Heather on the side Gordon wasn't shoring up. "Virgil tells me that you may have gotten some bad news. Is this true?"

"Yes, it's true. My mother and sister are in intensive care in Richmond. Father called to say she was in a 25 car pileup. Sounds like more may have been involved. Anyway, he told me that they were pulled out of the wreckage in critical condition--" Heather explained, her face ashen.

Jeff's eyes widened, and Dianne gasped. Virgil, who had been looking out the French doors toward the sea, spun around on one heel, his face full of surprise and disbelief. Gordon swallowed, and gave Heather a strong hug.

There was quiet for a moment, then Jeff said, "Do you mind if I call your father? I'd like to see what we can do to help you and your family right now."

Heather nodded. "I know he'd appreciate that, Mr. Tracy." Taking a deep breath, she continued, "He thinks very highly of you."

Virgil dug into his back pocket and pulled out his satellite phone. "Here, Dad. Use mine." Jeff nodded, took the phone, and got the number from Heather.

While Jeff was making his call, Dianne was taking Heather's pulse, and checking her skin for shock. She smiled at the younger woman, hoping to be a comfort. "We'll work things out, Heather. Whatever you need, we'll provide."

In the ICU in St. Catherine's Hospital, Jim checked his cellphone and was surprised to see Virgil Tracy's name appearing on the screen. Tapping the screen directly, Jim had instant connection with Jeff. "Virgil? Virgil Tracy?"

"Jim? It's Jeff." Jeff got up and turned away from the people on the sofa. "Heather's just told me what happened. How can we help?"

Jim sighed heavily. The news so far had been dismal. "Jeff, I'm surprised to hear from you, but glad of it. I have no idea what can be done right now. I saw the accident on televi first thing. It was absolutely horrific. My wife--oh God, help me--Martha caused it--"

Dianne motioned to Virgil, who stepped forward. "Go find a blanket," she murmured as she studied Heather intently. Gordon let Heather sit up, but kept a protective arm around her shoulders.

"Why do you say this is your fault?" he asked. Out of the corner of his eye, he watched his brother go into the second bedroom in search of a blanket.

Meanwhile, Jeff was trying to figure out how to calm his friend down. "I'm sure it was an accident, Jim. I don't think your wife would do such a thing deliberately. In any case, do you want Heather to come home? And is there anyone else who needs transport?"

Rubbing his face with one hand while holding the satphone in the other, Jim held off the normal negative response and said, "Martha's sister, Jennifer, is packing right now to come here. Then there's Heather. Our maid, bless her heart, is looking after my disabled son, Donny--"

"All right," Jeff said. "I'll arrange for a private jet to fly your sister-in-law out from wherever she is. Heather... we'll get her there, but it may take longer than you expect. We don't live in Kansas anymore."

Virgil came from the second bedroom, a comforter draped over his shoulder. Between them, Gordon and Dianne managed to wrap it around Heather. Virgil gave his mother a questioning look, as if to ask, "What now?"

"Get Tin-Tin up here," Dianne said quietly. "I'm going to make some strong coffee."

"F-A-B," Virgil murmured as he headed for the elevator.

Gordon hadn't forgotten what Heather said earlier as Jeff talked to Jim. "Heather, what happened? Why in the world would you think you had anything to do with this?"

"My relationship with my mother has been near to impossible. She's the reason I ran into the Navy. I know she loved--loves--me in her own way, but she believes in arranged marriages--if you can believe it. She wanted a high society life for me and intended for me to marry into some prominent family. I couldn't even imagine it. That isn't all of it by far. But I believe I was her last call and we argued to the point where she told me she didn't want to talk to me ever. She hung up on me after that."

Gordon whistled, a low, quiet sound. "Wow. Arranged marriages. I mean... wow."

"Gordon, you wouldn't believe it. She got worse the older she became." Heather sighed.

Jeff was getting information from Jim on where Jenny was living. "Wichita's the nearest jetport? Hm. I could even have someone from the testing grounds fly her out. Okay, I'll ask Heather if there's anyone in particular she recommends."

He turned to the young woman. "Heather, I'm having your aunt flown out from the testing grounds. Anyone in particular I should ask for, or will any of the pilots do?"

"Myuh--supervisor, Blake. Aunt Jenny's met him previously. She likes him a lot."

Jeff nodded. "Got it." He turned back to his conversation.

Heather turned back to Gordon. "Gordon, I know I have to leave, but--I don't want to. I have never in my l-l-life e-ever b-broken an agreement!" Heather said before rubbing her face in her palms. Her hands' tremoring slowed slightly.

Gordon just held her and murmured, "It's okay. It's okay. This is a special circumstance. Besides, you don't know what's going to happen. Your mother and sister may come out of this just fine and you'll be back before you know it. Everyone has a tendency to exaggerate facts."

The door chimed, and Jeff hurried over to open the elevator, his ear still to the phone. Tin-Tin hurried in, followed by Virgil. The Malaysian quickly made her way to the sofa, while Jeff had a quiet word with his son, who nodded, and left again.

"Oh, Heather!" Tin-Tin cried. "Virgil told me what happened! Are you all right?"

XXXX

Jeff finished his call, and folded up the phone. "I need to get back up to the lounge and make arrangements with the testing grounds." He glanced at his watch. I don't know if I'll catch someone there, but I won't stop until I've made those arrangements." Stopping suddenly, he came over to crouch down before Heather.

Taking a deep breath in through his nose, he let it out slowly. "Heather, I don't want to sound like I'm pushing you, but... time is of the essence. Even at Mach 3 it's going to take you four hours to get to Richmond." His face was solemn as he added, "There's no guarantee that your mother and sister will survive that long."

"What Dad's trying to say is, you do have to go, and go quickly," Gordon said softly.

Swallowing hard, Heather knew he was right. Her instinct was to go hide in the deepest part of the island, but her father needed her, too. "I understand Mr. Tracy. I'll get started right now."

Jeff patted her knee. "You won't be going alone." He turned his gaze to his engineer. "Tin-Tin, you'll go with her. We'll figure out the details on getting you home a little later."

Tin-Tin's eyes widened. "Yes, sir," she said.

"But before you go haring off," came a voice from the kitchen, "come get this cup for me. I don't want to spill it."

"Of course, Dianne." Tin-Tin got up and went to fetch the mug of hot coffee.

"Now, you drink that. I made it sweet on purpose," Dianne said as she limped back to the sofa.

Smiling a little, Heather accepted the mug. "I have to admit, it smells wonderful." The warmth of the mug radiated down her fingers. She felt better already. Taking a sip, Heather looked at Dianne oddly. "You said 'on purpose'. Why specifically, if I may ask?"

"Because you've had a shock, and your system needs the energy that sugar provides," Dianne explained as she eased herself to the sofa. She glanced up at her husband. "Where's Virgil?"

"Prepping her plane," Jeff said as he stood. He gave Heather a grim smile. "I'll head up to my office and make some calls, then come up with a flight plan for you to look over. Would you like someone to help you pack?"

"Let me help you," Tin-Tin volunteered.

I want to be alone soooo bad, but there's no time! And I have to get going. The fact that it was her mother who brought about the situation inflamed her anger once more. "That would be great. I'll have to get in the air pretty quickly."

"Jeff," Dianne said. "You get moving." She glanced over at Tin-Tin. "You, too."

"I'm going," Jeff said, heading for the elevator.

Tin-Tin paused long enough to offer her friend a warm embrace. "You will get through this," she murmured.

"I hope so, Tin-Tin. I really hope so," Heather whispered. "Honestly, I want to just scream."

Forgetting Tin-Tin was supposed to help her, Heather shook her head and walked into her bedroom, closing the door.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:26:54 GMT
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 4/17/2007 6:18 PM

"Mom?"

Dianne turned to Gordon, whose eyes were on the closed bedroom door. "Is there anything I can do to help? I feel like there should be..."

"From what I've seen, you've been a help already, Gordon. But you can brief the others on what's going on, and get a float ready for any luggage..."

He sighed. "I wish there was more I could do."

"I wish there was more that we all could do. It's one thing to rescue people you don't know from terrible disasters. It's another thing when it happens to someone you love." Dianne reflected. Gordon took one more look at the closed door worriedly and ran off to pass the word along.

In the bedroom, Heather sat down on the bed feeling a growing headache. "I can't believe any of this is happening!"

Setting the cup down on the nightstand she'd used only a few days, she walked over to her closet to the few clothes she had with her. "I guess it won't take long to pack. I didn't have much to begin with." Her hands fell on the red Lamaire dress that represented the glimpse into the future during Virgil's party. An eerie desire to rip the dress into shreds overwhelmed her for a moment before she mastered it.

In the lounge, Jeff had finally gotten in touch with Heather's old supervisor.

"Heather's mom and sister?" Blake said, incredulous. "I heard about that pile up on the news."

Jeff sighed a little. Should have known something that big would make the evening broadcasts.

"Too bad International Rescue couldn't come out, like they did for that pile up in Russia," Blake continued blithely. "But then, they might not be able to with their equipment broken and all."

Fighting the urge to tell his employee off, Jeff turned the subject back to the matter at hand. "I'm sure that the locals could handle things just fine. Now, about Heather's aunt..."

The dress reminded Heather of her stay at the Regis. That reminded her about the surprise she received when she went to pay for her stay at the exclusive hotel.

Scott had to have arranged to pay for her stay. "I owe them so much. Somehow, I need to come back. At least to repay all they've done for me," she said to herself.

With resignation, she reached down to grab her set of luggage, opened them up and set them open on the bed. "I can't believe I've been here for such a short time, and I just started to settle in."

There was a knock on the door and a gentle, spritely voice called, "Heather? It's Tin-Tin. May I come in?"

Breathing a sigh of relief as the anger began to return, Heather hurried over to the door and opened it. Tin-Tin gave Heather a hug and stepped in. "I hope your mother and sister pull through. You can be sure my prayers are going with you."

She'd held her emotions in, but being in the bedroom alone with Tin-Tin, Heather felt a sense of release. The Malaysian girl's shoulder became rapidly soaked. She let Heather cry for a bit, then gave her an encouraging squeeze, and led her over to the bed. "You sit down here, and I'll fetch a wet facecloth. Let me do the packing."

It took time for all the preparations to be made, but at last, the Jet Star was ready to leave. The Tracy family and all the recruits were on hand to see Heather off.

They all came out to see me. Heather thought to herself appreciatively. Tin-Tin stood behind her, already on the ladder to get seated in the cockpit of Heather's Jet Star.

Jeff was the first to walk up to her, shaking her hand firmly, followed by a long fatherly hug. "Your contract is still active. You are part of International Rescue. I expect you to hold yourself to that. Am I clear?" he asked, initiating a sense of duty and responsibility for Heather to support herself for the days ahead.

The Navy airwoman's back straightened and she nodded. "Aye aye, sir. Thank you for everything, Mr. Tracy."

Dianne, who stood next to Jeff, gave her a hug and a goodbye. "Come back to us soon, Heather."

"I will, Mrs. Tracy."

Virgil and Scott were next. "Mother's right. You will have to come back and see us," Scott agreed as he took her hand and shook it warmly. "Thank you for the song, too, by the way."

"You're welcome, Scott." she said with a sparkle in her eye. Virgil added his hug and goodbye.

Suddenly, a slightly tipsy image of the Thunderbird 2 pilot came to mind and she smiled. "Think I can get you to send me a copy of that party CD?"

Gordon laughed and gave her a long hug. "Are you kidding? I'll send it out to you tomorrow. I promise." Pushing her back so he could see her, his expression came more serious. "Heather,

may I call you? See how you're doing? And you'll write me. Right?"

Heather laughed. "I will if you will. I'd better get going. Goodbye, everyone!" she said with a wave. This is a horrible way to say goodbye, Heather moaned.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:44:27 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/21/2007 7:15 PM

Friday, August 24th, 8:30 p.m., Tracy Island (4:30 a.m., the same day, Richmond, Virginia)

The phone in the lounge rang three times before Jeff finally reached it to take the call. He had been out on the balcony with Dianne, enjoying the cool evening air. He could see her struggle to her feet as he answered the call.

"Hello, Mr. Tracy. This is Tin-Tin." The Malaysian looked rather ruffled from her trip, and solemn.

Dianne entered the lounge in time to hear Jeff say, "Hello, Tin-Tin. How are things?"

Tin-Tin sat on the divan in the hotel suite where she'd decided to stay. "Difficult to say, Mr. Tracy. We arrived here in good time and without incident. Heather let me fly part of the way; her plane handles very well. But it was difficult getting to the hospital from the airport. They are still clearing up the accident, it seems."

"Sounds like it was a bad one."

"It was. Traffic is still backed up and being rerouted around the scene. We went straight to the hospital. It's chaos there."

"How are her mother and sister?" Dianne asked. Jeff got out of his chair and let her sit, then pulled up another seat so he could see and be seen by the vidphone.

Tin-Tin shook her head. "It doesn't look good. They are both in critical condition and are in the ICU. In fact, Heather's mother had just gotten out of surgery when we arrived." She sighed. "Since I wasn't family, the nurses politely asked me to leave. I understood, especially since they are so terribly busy with all the victims of this pileup. Heather mentioned my staying with them while I am here, but I feel it's an imposition for me to be show up unexpected on her father's doorstep at this early hour. So I've rented a suite for the moment. I'll know better what my plans are a little later in the day."

"Well, keep us up-to-date," Jeff told her. "We'll start working on getting you home somehow; with Kat gone, we'll really need you back here within a few days. In the meanwhile, get some rest."

"I will, Mr. Tracy." She smiled slightly. "Perhaps I could see Mrs. Matumbo while I'm in the area."

"Now that's a fine idea," Jeff said, smiling a little. "It'd be good to know how she was doing after her accident. I'll text you her information; you can give her a call later on."

"Thank you, Mr. Tracy." Tin-Tin stifled a yawn behind a hand.

"Get some sleep, Tin-Tin," Dianne said kindly. "Flying across so many time zones is harder than it looks."

"Yes, Dianne. I will, and I'll call again later. Goodbye."

"Goodbye, Tin-Tin."

The call ended, and the elder Tracys glanced at each other. "It's been a rough few weeks," Jeff said, shaking his head. "So many accidents."

"I know, love, but we'll get through," Dianne assured him. "At least Tin-Tin and Heather got there safely." She leaned in to kiss him softly, then hauled herself to her feet. "I just looked at the clock; there are two young men in this house that need to be chivvied to bed."

"I'll handle it," Jeff said, getting up. "You take it easy."

Dianne raised an eyebrow at him. "I think we should both take care of this. Those two are a stubborn pair."

"Yes," Jeff agreed, "and they don't get it from anyone strange, either."

"Are you calling me stubborn, suh?" she asked as she headed for the study.

"I do believe I am, ma'am," Jeff replied with a grin. He put an arm around her shoulders. "Come on, let's get the boys headed in the direction of their beds."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:44:54 GMT

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From: lillehafrue Sent: 4/21/2007 7:27 PM

Thursday August 24, outside of Bundaberg, Queensland, 9:45 PM (11:45 PM Tracy Island.)

John tapped his pen on the edge of his note pad. He gazed out the windows for a moment and sighed. It's late, but I can't sleep, not until I know how this turns out. He turned his attention back to the radio, and tweaked the dials a bit.

"...trying to keep it from spreading more. The plant's been evacuated and we cleared out as much of the rum as we could."

John quickly pulled up a map of the area and scanned it. "Damn. This doesn't look good. I'd better alert Da..."

"The chopper's down! Repeat, the chopper's down!"

John quickly keyed up another screen and scanned the data. "Base from Thunderbird Five, come in!"

"Base here, go ahead, Thunderbird Five."

"Boss, we have a potential situation in Australia." John quickly explained what was happening. "And now it appears that a helicopter full of rescue personnel has gone down."

"Have you received a call?"

"Negative, Boss."

John watched the emotions warring across his father's features. Finally Jeff sighed, "Notify the authorities; tell them we're on our way."

"FAB!"

xxxx

Justin wiped a weary hand across his eyes. After nearly a lifetime in the cane business, he'd never lost control of a fire like this. Granted, it wasn't entirely his fault. The winds shifted on their own, and who would have guessed the fire would have merged with another and then hit the petrol tanks on the outskirts of the city.

"You've cleared the area?" One of the firemen asked.

Justin nodded. "Yeah, everyone's out. We started evacuating as soon as the fire jumped the fence."

The man nodded. "Good." He smiled thinly, "It's not your fault. These things happen."

"Then why'd it have to happen to me?"

The man was about to respond when his radio went off. "The chopper's down! Repeat, the chopper's down!"

Both men looked at each other in horror. The fireman quickly picked up his radio. "What's the situation?" he demanded as he hurried back towards the control center.

"Looks like a gum tree exploded. The chop was caught in the bang and went down somewhere in the Outback. We're not getting any response to calls."

"Damn." The man closed his eyes and said a brief prayer, Please, someone help them.

"Cap! Over here!" He looked up to see one of his men waving. "You've got to hear this."

"This is International Rescue. We heard about your situation and are offering our assistance."

The captain grinned in relief. "This is Bundaberg Ladder Seven, International Rescue. We'd be grateful if you'd come give us a hand!"

"Consider it done; our people are on their way. Send me the coordinates so we can set down. We'll be coming with two ships, Thunderbirds One and Two."

"Roger that, International Rescue." The captain stepped back to let his radio man continue the conversation. He glanced up at the stars, barely visible through the thick smoke. I guess some prayers are answered. Thank-you.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:45:29 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/28/2007 3:52 PM

Thursday, August 24, 11:55 p.m. Tracy Island (9:55 p.m. Australia)

The emergency signal rang through out the Villa and the Cliff House, bringing the team members to the lounge at a run. As the recruits headed up in the elevator to the lower floor of the Cliff House, Dom and Nikki exchanged troubled glances. Dom was back on full duty, and Nikki was due to be released soon, but they both knew this was going to be a difficult rescue. No Thunderbird Seven to house and transport patients, and no Doc to treat the worst of them.

"We'll do, Nikki," Dom murmured to her, shifting his son's sleeping weight in his arms. "We'll do."

Nikki nodded quickly, then the elevator was at its destination and they were running for the lounge. As Dom turned the second corner, there was Lisa, a weary smile on her face, and her arms outstretched.

"I'll take him," she said. "If you're not back within 15 minutes, I'll know you've gone out." Dom nodded and handed his blond burden off, then hurried to join the others.

Jeff was already into briefing mode when Dom walked in. "We'll need the Firefly, Fire Truck, Firetender for this one, with plenty of dicetyline. Take the new dicetyline missiles, too. Scott, Virgil, because this one is so close to home and it won't take you long to get to the Danger Zone, I want you both to come in from different angles. Scott from the northwest, and Virgil from the northeast. We need to keep them guessing as to where we're located."

His glance flicked up toward Dom as the nurse came in, and he nodded imperceptibly. "Dom, you and Nikki are both on this one." He looked over the small crowd, his eyes resting on Callie for a moment longer than the others. "Alan, Callie, Gordon, Brains, you're with Virgil. Elise, Scott may need another pair of hands, so you're with him." He passed a hand through his hair, silently wishing he could have sent his latest recruit out to observe.

She has other, more important things to think about. There was a pause, then he said, "Everyone has their orders; off you go."

Scott and Elise bolted for the entrance to Thunderbird One's hangar, while Virgil headed for his entry way. The others crowded out of the lounge, heading down a flight, taking the steps two at a time in some cases. Once they'd gone, Dianne appeared in the doorway between the study and lounge.

"What are you doing here?" Jeff asked. His tone was irritable and accusatory, and he realized it. He softened his tone. "You should be in bed."

"You think Ah can sleep with thet alarm goin' off?" Dianne asked, her tone as irritable as his had been. "Ah'm gonna stay up and wait for the crew to come back. Ah won't get any sleep while theyah gone."

"No way, lady," Jeff said, coming around his desk and approaching his wife. "You're going back to bed, and that's an order."

Dianne raised one eyebrow as if to ask, "Oh really?" when Scott's voice made Jeff turn around. He let out an exasperated huff, and hurried back to his desk. "Thunderbird One, you are cleared for launch. Thunderbird Two, you may launch in five minutes."

"F-A-B," Scott's voice came over the loudspeaker.

"F-A-B, Boss," Virgil echoed.

Jeff abandoned the desk again and reached his wife when she was halfway across the room. He took her by the arm, steering her back toward the study. "Now, Dianne, you are going back to bed if I have to carry you there," he insisted. "You're on medical leave as far as rescues are concerned and to me, that means the lounge is off-limits... at least at this time of night."

"Jeff, you can stop treatin' me like a child any day now," she said, scowling.

"Dianne, it..." Jeff blew out another frustrated breath. "Listen. The medical equipment for Thunderbird Five...." He paused as Thunderbird One flashed by, its jets lighting up the night sky. "The equipment for Five's sickbay upgrade will be here tomorrow. We'll need you to check it over and make sure we have everything. And if anyone comes back injured... then you'll have to put on your scrubs, leg or no leg. I don't dare allow another open hospital visit, not now." His face softened and he smiled a bit. "You know you won't be your best if you don't get your sleep."

During Jeff's reasoning, Dianne looked away, a stubborn expression on her face. When he was done, she turned back to him and said in a sour tone, "All right. You've made your point. Ah'll go back t' bed."

"Thank you, love," Jeff said with warm relief, giving her a light kiss on the forehead. She gave him an irritated look, and a perfunctory peck on the cheek before she left the study. Jeff waited until she was gone, then locked the door behind her, sighing heavily.

The roar of Thunderbird Two's engines sounded as the cargo carrier took off. Jeff threw himself into his chair.

"Doc is getting antsy, isn't she?" John said.

Jeff glanced up and scowled. "Yes, she is," was his short answer. He turned to the other portraits on the wall. "Thunderbird One from base, what's your ETA?"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:45:57 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 4/29/2007 7:37 PM

Friday, August 26, 12:20 AM, Tracy Island, (10:20 PM Australia)

John glanced down at his screens. Thunderbird One had already taken off, and he knew Thunderbird Two would follow shortly. I'd better get some details to let Scott know what's going on. He keyed a button and spoke, "This is International Rescue. We're on our way. Can you fill me in so I can tell the rest of my people?"

"Roger that, International Rescue. At the moment, we've got the fire contained here in town. But, it's creeping closer to the rum plant. If she catches..." the man's voice trailed off. John suppressed a shudder as the man continued. "We've lost all contact with our field chopper, too."

John sat up straighter. "How many were on the chopper, and where about did it go down?"

"We had a full crew of six. They were landing to try and stop the fire. A gum tree exploded and we lost all contact. Don't know if any of 'em were able to land. I'll send you the co-ordinates."

"Thanks," John replied. He scanned over the information coming through his computer before forwarding it on. "Maverick, I've sent you the co-ordinates of the chopper crew. The captain hasn't heard a thing since they went down. He told me it was a crew of six that went in, and they have no idea how many actually might be injured. And they're struggling to keep the fire away from the rum plant. It's a mess down there."

"Rum plant? The fire is spreading to an alcohol producing facility?!" Scott nearly shouted. "Why weren't we told this?"

John held up his hands in defense. "Don't shoot the messenger. I thought you knew."

"Terrific," Scott muttered sarcastically. "So, basically we have no real idea what we're getting into at this point?"

"At least until you get there."

There was a short pause. "My ETA is about thirteen minutes. We'll set up Mobile Control and go

from there."

"Mav, keep me posted."

"Will do, Quasar. Thunderbird One, out."

John followed Thunderbird One's flight path, then turned his attention to another brother.
"Thunderbird Two, Van Gogh, do you copy?"

"FAB, Quasar. What do you have for me?" came Virgil's reply.

John quickly filled him in on the situation, making sure Virgil knew about the factory fire. "Maverick should be there shortly. He'll be setting up Mobile Control then giving you your marching orders."

"I'm sure he will be. I'll guess he sends us to the chopper. We have to get those guys out of there fast."

"I don't disagree with you. But if that plant goes..."

"Yeah, rum prices will go through the roof!" Gordon piped in from the background.

Both John and Virgil rolled their eyes simultaneously. "And on that note, we're out of here. I'll check in when we get to the zone."

"FAB, Van Gogh. Be careful," John warned.

"I always am. Thunderbird Two, out."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:46:36 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 5/2/2007 3:59 AM

Friday, August 26th. 10.30pm, Australia (12.30am Tracy Island).

"Holy smoke..."

Scott sighed at the relevance of his words. The fire had been visible almost since he hit land, but now that he was at the danger zone, he was struck by its awesome size in full. This won't be easy. Elise let out a low whistle that told him she felt the same way.

"Thunderbird Five and Base from Thunderbird One."

"Thunderbird Five here, receiving you strength five."

"Base here, go ahead Maverick."

"We've arrived at Danger Zone. I'm going to strafe over the downed chopper and use the dicetyline missiles to put out the periphery of the fire and make things easier for Thunderbird Two, and then return to set up Mobile Control."

"FAB, I'll relay the info to Van Gogh. Thunderbird Five out."

"FAB, Maverick. Keep us posted."

Thunderbird One shot through the air towards the chopper, slicing through the thick smoke. Elise's mouth was set in a straight line. We have to get them out, and fast.

Scott used the sensors to guide them through the blackness. He didn't reduce speed, and his hands flew over the missile guidance controls.

"Target one locked, fire!"

The sleek dicetyline missile struck the fire at the edge of the chopper, and with a mighty roar and an explosion of silver, a charred dent had been made, pushing the fire back from the victims. He repeated this several times until a decent area had been cleared around the chopper.

"Nice work, Maverick."

"Thanks, Frankie."

Thunderbird One swept around in a wide arc, and then flew in high above the flames in search of the fire crew's base. Scott landed the great craft at a safe distance. He thought briefly about security, and glanced at the automatic camera detector. I need someone to guard TB1 as well as having us at Mobile Control...

As his boot hit the ground, one of the firemen came running towards him. The man reached them as Elise hopped down beside Scott.

"International Rescue, we're more than glad to see you." The fireman held out one gloved hand. "Captain Alex Paora, Bundaberg Ladder Seven."

Scott shook the man's hand strongly and briefly, and Elise did the same.

"Glad we can help," he said. "If you'll help me with my equipment and fill us in on the most recent details, we can get started..."

Once mobile control had been set up and Captain Paora had provided a run-down on the situation, Scott opened communications with Thunderbird Two.

"What's your ETA, Van Gogh?"

"Nineteen and one half minutes, Maverick."

"Okay. Once you get here, get straight out to that chopper. I've used the dicetyline to clear a periphery for you guys, but those flames are still going strong. The heat for those guys must be incredible."

"FAB. Will keep you informed. Thunderbird Two out."

Scott caught Elise's eye, and the two shared a confident look. Soon the rest of the crew would arrive, and the rescue could get into full swing.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:49:10 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 5/2/2007 6:07 PM

As Thunderbird Two came closer to the danger zone, Callie sat quietly, her mind going over a situation which was new to her. I've never handled any type of firefighting vehicle before. I'm used to being an engineer and a scientist.

Brains noticed and sat next to her. "Are you all right? You seem nervous."

"Sorry, Brains," she answered with a shrug. "Handling a Fire Tender is something new. I don't want to drive it and have an accident."

He patted her shoulder. "Don't worry, Callie. You've had some training with the Fire Tender for the past couple of months."

"I know, but it's the first time I've put it to work in the field. I don't want to mess it up."

"You'll do fine. Think of it as driving a big pick-up truck. Surely you had one of those."

"I did. I received one for my 16th birthday after getting my driver's license."

"See, you've got one advantage already. The Fire Tender also holds two people, so you can concentrate on driving while I launch the dicetylene missiles at areas close enough to the rum plant without damaging it."

With a nod, she smiled. "That's good to know. At least we can take care of that area of the fire while Scott and the others rescue the chopper crew."

Gordon walked up and said, "Yeah. With us battling the fire on two fronts, we'll be able to contain it in no time...at least I hope."

"I know," Brains said. "We'll have to be careful ourselves because one mistake, and the rum plant blows."

"Don't remind me," said Gordon sarcastically. "I don't want to pay \$100 for a bottle of rum."

Shaking her head, Callie laughed. "You're absolutely crazy, Gordon."

In the pilot's seat, Virgil turned around. "We'll be approaching danger zone soon."

"I guess that's our cue. Let's get to the Fire Tender," said Callie, her voice with a tint of excitement. However, for her it was a sense of relief that Brains was going with her. I'm glad I'm not going alone. Right now, I don't feel comfortable being by myself anywhere.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:49:43 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 5/6/2007 3:02 PM

Thursday, August 24, 11:00 p.m. Australia (Friday, August 25, 1:00 a.m. Tracy Island)

Jake Reed checked on Tommy again. The boy, (at 45 Jake considered 18 year old Tom a boy) had been injured in the crash and had been burned before they could get him out. Outside hadn't been much better, but they had to move before the copter fuel tanks blew. They had moved as far away as they could, then crawled into their fire tents -- small survival tents that were part of every fireman's kit during forest or brush fires. They would have been no use if the fuel tank went, but they were all they had and they had put a small ridge between them and the copter.

But something other than the fuel tanks had exploded and white foam had covered his tent. When he moved out of his tent to look, he saw the foam covered everything. He also saw a ship firing a missile then flying off toward the east.

He checked on the rest of his people. Besides Tom, Will had also been critically hurt. Both men were in shock and need help fast. Jenny had broken her arm, but she would be ok. The rest of them were battered and bruised; Jon had a sprained ankle; but they were basically ok.

Jake considered his options. They could improvise a stretcher, but they had two people to carry and Jenny couldn't help carry anyone. Besides, he had no idea which way to go. A signal flare would be useless inside the fire zone. The copter's radio was dead and anyway he wasn't going back to the copter for anything. The fuel tank could still go. He assumed someone would be looking for them and he needed a way to signal where they were.

"Fred, Jon get over here." The two men obediently came over. "How are our patients?"

Jon, as senior medic, replied. "Bad, and getting worse. I think Tommy has internal injuries on top of everything. If he doesn't get help in the next half hour we'll lose him. Will is in better shape but he won't last the night without help."

Jake nodded. "OK, someone sprayed that stuff on us. So someone is probably looking for us. I need a way to let them know where we are."

"A signal fire would be counter productive," Fred commented. "The same for any flares. They'd just get lost in the smoke. What about something shiny? The shelters, maybe?"

"No we have no way of getting the foam off of them or shining them up."

"What about the lining of our jackets?" Jenny had come up behind him so quietly he hadn't noticed. "They're bright red. Tie one of them to the tree up there and it would be noticeable. Or just lay all four of them on the ground."

"We have six jackets," Frank pointed out.

"No, we don't. Tom and Will need theirs." Jake thought for a second. "Alright, let's go for it. Everyone cut out the lining of your jackets. Fred, find a way to tie yours to that tree. Jon, find some good places to tie the other 3 linings. We need them to move in any breeze. The top of the ridge might be best. Stay up there and watch for planes. If you see one, yell for us, then turn on your flashlight and try signaling. I'll relieve you in a bit. Also, keep an eye on the fire. If it looks like it's coming towards us we need to get back in the shelters."

Jake turned toward Jenny. "Jen, you and I get to stay with the two injured. There's not much we can do but someone needs to be there for them. How much water do we have?"

"About a pint." Jen replied.

"It will have to be enough. We'll give it to them if they can drink it. Let's just pray someone finds us soon."[/color]

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:50:49 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 5/6/2007 3:25 PM

Dominic watched as Callie, Brains, and Gordon disappeared down to the pod, and then as the Fire Tender and Fire Truck rolled out of the pod, and off to work. He gave them a silent good luck, and sat back in his seat as Virgil prepared to take off for the outback, and to the downed chopper. Alan and Nikki remained in the cockpit, too. Virgil went through the motions of take off procedures, and within minutes they were speeding towards the crash site.

"Boy, it looks bad down there," Alan commented. "I'll be glad for the heat-resistant suit."

"Yeah," Nikki said.

"Speaking of which, you guys had better get suited up. You too, Dom. You'll be based in sickbay but you'll need to go outside to help get the injured prepped and transported up."

Dominic nodded, and the three operatives left the cockpit to don their suits.

"Good luck everyone," Alan said, and held one hand out, palm down.

The nurses both followed his lead, and placed their gloved hands on top of his.

"To another successful rescue," Alan said.

"Amen."

They raised their hands together before giving each other high-fives (prompted by Alan), before Dominic and Nikki headed up to prep the sickroom, and Alan to the Firefly.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:52:06 GMT

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From: susanmartha Sent: 5/13/2007 7:12 PM

Gordon checked his doors to be sure they were locked. He also checked his gun. Since he was alone in the Fire Truck, he planned on being extra careful. "The paranoid mage dies of old age," he muttered to himself. Reassured, he drove the Fire Truck off of the ramp and out from under Thunderbird 2. "OK, Van Gogh, I'm clear."

"FAB," replied Virgil. "Lowering Thunderbird Two now." Virgil was soon back in the air, heading toward the last known position of the downed helicopter.

Gordon had already called Mobile Control. "Where do you want me, Frankie?"

"I have the Fire Tender going to the rum plant. According to the fire chief, the area about two miles east of you needs help. They are building a firebreak using the road to start and plowing to one side of it to widen the firebreak. They have three trucks already there but they're low on water and the firebreak is nowhere near wide enough. Plus there's a gully running under a bridge at that point. The fire will swing around behind the plant if we don't stop it at the road. You are set up for off-road use, so stop the fire from getting into the gully."

"FAB. Heading out now." Gordon turned right and started off. Ten minutes later he came to the bridge. Two fire trucks on his side were trying to wet down the gully while a third truck was pulling out. Gordon pulled onto the bridge, stopped the truck and hopped out. He approached a knot of people by the end of the bridge. "Hi. They sent me to help. What do you want me to do?"

A tired-looking man in a hard hat answered. "I don't suppose you can just put the fire out, can you?"

"Nope. Sorry. I left my magic wand at home. I was told to help with the gully. Are all your people out of there?"

The man, his hardhat said Ned, motioned someone over. "Everyone out, Frank?"

"We still have two groups below the bridge. I'm already called them back. The fire's just too fast."

Gordon nodded. You could see the flames from here. They looked about a half of a mile away -- no time at all for a fire. "How long until they're out?"

"Not more than five minutes."

"Thanks." Gordon turned back to Ned.

Ned continued. "Do you use water?" At Gordon's head shake, he continued. "Move your truck. We're going to station the trucks on each end of the bridge and have them pump water down into the gully. Hopefully they can pump enough water to stop the flames. I want you on the far side; we can get water for the trucks about a mile down the road on this side."

Gordon headed for the Fire Truck. Behind him he heard Ned snort. "Cocky kid."

"From what I've heard of International Rescue, he has a right to be." Gordon smiled at Frank's reply.

"Let's hope so. We need the help. But fires are tricky." Then the voices were cut off as Gordon closed the door.

He started fiddling with the controls on a panel. "Let's see, Dicetyline variation three. Right. Range, fifty feet out, set the angle, maximum spread..."

A group of men climbed out from under the bridge. The leader of the first group walked over to Ned and Frank as a second group appeared. "It's no use. We couldn't even complete a line across the gully, much less anything of any width."

Ned clamped his hand on the man's shoulder. "You did what you could. Let's just hope we can pump enough water down the side to stop it here." He looked over at the bridge, then frowned. "Why hasn't that idiot moved his fancy machine? I'd better..."

He was cut short by a "Boom" from the Fire Truck as it launched a shell. All 3 men ran over to the bridge to see what had happened.

Starting about twenty five feet from the bridge, white foam covered the ground. It was about 100 feet wide and spread out to cover both sides of the gully up to the place where bulldozers had dug wide firebreaks already. Gordon moved the Fire Truck to the far side of the bridge, climbed out and walked over to the three men.

Frank recovered first. "So what does that stuff do?"

"It's a variation of our firefighting chemical, dicetyline. It will act as a retardant for about two days. Then it should break down with no side effects. I can't guarantee it will stop a fire 100% of the time but it should do as good or better of a job as digging a firebreak the same size would."

"Not 100% huh," Ned commented.

"Nope. 95% was the best we could do. Unless you don't mind some really nasty chemicals sitting on the ground for the next five years." Gordon shrugged. "If something does catch, water won't wash this off until it starts to break down. So you can put any fire out with a regular Fire Truck and water without hurting the firebreak. Or I have some regular dicetyline in my tanks."

Ned's eye's narrowed. "How many more shells of that stuff do you have?"

"Three," was Gordon's quick response. "Plus two regular Dicetyline shells for use where it's already burning."

"Right. We have two more places like this we need to build firebreaks for. One of them may already be burning. And one area that's too steep to do anything with. Get moving." As Gordon headed back to the Fire Truck he heard Ned giving more orders. "Truck 53 is back. I want it stationed here. Frank, get the other two trucks moving. I want them to refill, then start patrolling the road to be sure the fire doesn't jump the break anywhere. John, how tired are your men?" Gordon closed the door and buckled himself in.

"Mobile Control from Fire Truck. One firebreak built. I've been sent down the road to help with others."

"Fire Truck from Mobile Control. The fire has moved into a gully and is about to jump the firebreak. It's about five miles down the same road from you."

"On my way."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:52:58 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/15/2007 7:51 PM

Elise was sweating, and the fire around her wasn't the only reason why. She was wearing a fire-resistant suit, one that seemed to trap her natural perspiration inside and magnify it ten-fold. The night itself was warm, though dry, and would have been despite the fire. Her hat -- worn since she didn't currently need the suit's hood -- trapped the sweat on her scalp, making her now smoke-scented hair wet and clingy. Finally, there were the keen blue eyes of Scott Tracy boring into the back of her head from behind his visor, evaluating her performance at Mobile Control.

He's the real reason for all this sweat, she groused internally.

The speakers on Mobile Control crackled to life, and Gordon's voice called, "Mobile Control from Fire Truck. One firebreak built. I've been sent down the road to help with others."

Elise waved at the captain, who came over. "We've got one firebreak built at the last coordinates you gave us, and your men have indicated they need help with others. Where do you need us most?"

Captain Paora consulted a data pad he was holding. "I've had reports that the fire is in a gully and about to jump the firebreak we've already built. It's a good five miles from your man's current position, but on the same road."

"Thanks. I'll have him move down that way," Elise said. She tapped her earphone. "Fire Truck from Mobile Control. The fire has moved into a gully and is about to jump the firebreak. It's about five miles down the same road from you."

"On my way."

"F-A-B, Cousteau. Be careful!"

"Always, Frankie. Fire Truck out."

She glanced up at Scott and sighed quietly. "Do fires always work like this? I mean, how much do you know about fires and fighting them? I... I feel like I'm out of my league here, Mav."

"You're doing fine coordinating between our people and their people, Frankie, and that's the main point," Scott told her.

"Still, I feel like..." She threw her hands up a little.

"I know, Frankie. I felt that way at first, too." Scott motioned toward Mobile Control. "Better check on Fire Tender and on Firefly."

"F-A-B." Elise turned toward the unit again. Wish it wasn't so hot!

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:54:10 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 5/15/2007 8:24 PM

Alan maneuvered the Firefly through the thick smoke. He used the blade to push aside more burning trees and other debris, trying to reach the downed helicopter.

"Mobile Control to Firefly."

"Firefly here, go ahead, Frankie."

"Maverick wants to know if you've reached the chopper yet."

Alan rolled his eyes. "That's a negative, Mobile Control. I'm trying to break through all this mess. I'll let you know as soon as I get there."

"FAB, Mobile Control, out."

Alan muttered under his breath and turned back to his task. The fire had burned through a thicker part of the underbrush, making it hard for him to move forward quickly. He zeroed in on a particularly thick knot of burning trees, then fired a dicetyline shell. Upon impact, the shell exploded, sending a thick white foam over the entire area. The flames went out immediately, and Alan pushed forward once again. A few minutes later, he broke through into a clearing. Spying the downed chopper, he moved forward, noting that the fire still burned around the edges of his sight.

"Firefly to Mobile Control, I found the chopper." He zoomed in on the area. "No sign of any movement."

"FAB, Indy," Elise replied.

"Van Gogh, can you pick up anything?"

"Negative, Indy, there's too much interference from the fire. The sensors can't distinguish between heat signatures," Virgil told him.

"Damn..." Alan drove closer. "What about--"

BOOM!

"What the hell was that?! Indy, can you read me?" Virgil called out.

There was no answer.

"Thunderbird Two to Mobile Control, we have a situation."

"Copy that Thunderbird Two, what's going on?" Scott's voice cut in as he activated his own radio.

"I'm not sure, Mav, I was talking to Indy when we lost contact."

"Indy, this is Maverick, where are you?...INDY!"

"I...I'm OK." Alan shook his head to try and clear the ringing in his ears. "What happened?"

"We were going to ask you that. Are you all right?" Scott asked, ignoring the dirty look he just knew Elise was sending him.

"Yeah, I'm fine." Alan ran a quick diagnostic. "Looks like the fuel tanks on the chopper blew." As the smoke cleared, he looked through the viewscreen to see the charred remains of the helicopter. "Well, I think I can safely say that's one piece of equipment that's unsalvageable. No sign of bodies though, they must be around here somewhere." He started the Firefly again and moved past the chopper. "I'm heading north."

"Be careful," Scott intoned.

"I will." Alan shook his head again, trying to stop the buzzing in his head. Suddenly, something

caught his eye. He stopped and stared at the place until he saw it again. Alan broke into a grin. "Got them!" He gunned the Firefly's engine, progressing through the clearing until he reached a small hill. He activated the loud speaker, "This is International Rescue!"

The man on top of the hill waved frantically, nodding that he heard. He beckoned Alan towards him, then disappeared. Alan parked the Firefly, then adjusting his helmet, stepped outside. He jogged after the man, coming to a stop at the top of the rise. A short distance away, he spied the bright yellow of a tent, with a group of people waving in his direction. Alan quickly jogged down to them. "Hi there, I'm with International Rescue."

An older man stepped forward and held out his hand. "G'day, mate, are we glad to see you! I'm Jake Reed."

"Glad to help. Call me Indy." Alan glanced around. "Is this everyone?"

Jake shook his head. "We've got two criticals in the tent. Burns and internal injuries. Another has minor injuries, broken arm."

Alan grimaced. "OK then, let me call my back up and we'll get you guys out of here in no time. Indy to Thunderbird Two."

"Go ahead, Indy," Virgil answered.

"I've found the chopper crew; they have injured and need to be evacuated at once."

"FAB, on my way."

Alan turned back to Jake. "My colleague is on his way; let's get everyone ready."

When Thunderbird Two came into view a few minutes later, the crew looked up in surprise. "Crikey, she's a big 'un," one of the men muttered.

Alan grinned and watched as the rescue platform lowered. He spied Nikki at the controls and made his way over to her. "Angel, we have two criticals inside the tent. The medic says internal injuries and burns. We also have one broken arm; the others seem unharmed."

Nikki nodded. "FAB, let's get the injured out first." She hopped down from the platform and together with Alan and the other medics, managed to get the two injured firefighters onboard the platform. They ascended up into Thunderbird Two and a few minutes later, the platform lowered again and the rest of the crew climbed up. Nikki activated the controls and the platform rose upwards again. To Alan's surprise, Nikki stayed on the ground.

"Angel?" he questioned.

"Tynan has things under control up there; in fact, with the paramedics he has more than enough help. Van Gogh sent me back to help you with the Firefly."

Alan smiled. "Great, let's get moving." Together they made their way back to the vehicle. "Firefly

to Mobile Control," Alan called out as he pulled off his helmet.

"Go ahead, Firefly," Elise answered.

He glanced up as Thunderbird Two blasted off. "The injured have been evacuated. Angel and I are going to tackle the rest of this fire."

"FAB, Firefly. Be careful and keep me posted."

"Will do." Alan turned to Nikki. "All set?"

She shook her head. "We're not moving until I take a look at you." She leaned forward and shone a light into his eyes. "Pupils are active and responsive; are you having a ringing in your ears?"

Alan nodded. "A little, but nothing like before."

Nikki frowned thoughtfully. "I don't see any signs of concussion. But I want you looked at again when we get back to base."

"FAB," Alan replied. "Now, let's get this over with; I want to get home in time for breakfast!"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 19:55:15 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/17/2007 11:26 AM

Frank rinsed out his coffee thermos with a bit of water from the communal water jug. I hope this will keep the stuff until I can get it to my professors, he thought. He glanced around to see that no one was watching him, then he loped over to the latest dicetyline firebreak that Gordon had created. Using a clean plastic spoon, he scooped some of the greenish foam into the thermos. Just this little bit won't be missed.

He had just screwed the air tight top onto the container when he heard Ned call, "Hey, Frank! We're moving out to another spot!"

Frank rose hastily. "Coming!"

As he joined the older man, Ned said, "Fascinated by that di... dice... whatever they call it?"

"Yeah." Frank nodded. "If only we had some to use ourselves. It'd save a lot of lives and property."

"I know," Ned said. "But only if it works as well as that bloke said it does. And I'll believe that when I see it!" He clapped Frank on the shoulder. "C'mon, mate. Let's move out."

Frank smiled wearily, and climbed aboard the truck, tucking the thermos into a safe nook for later

retrieval.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:01:24 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 5/17/2007 2:44 PM

Callie drove the Fire Tender in the dangerous heat of the fire. Whew, it's hot...just like in the jungle. No, this is a different rescue and a different location. And I'm not alone this time, either. "How's it going, Brains?" she asked.

"We're ahead of the fire now, and about 10 miles from the rum plant. Keep going for another three miles and we'll stop there."

"I assume we're making a fire break before it can reach the plant."

"Correct, Callie," he said while adjusting his glasses. "Hopefully with the three dicetyline missiles, we can stop this fire from getting that far." Looking at the GPS monitor, she saw that they had reached their destination. "Okay, we can stop right here."

Applying the brakes, she brought the vehicle to a complete stop. "There's so much dry brush around here. Alabama's got nothing on this area."

"All right. Now I'll need your help for this part."

She shifted over and said, "Okay, what do you want me to do?"

"Get ready to work your nozzle. We're going to create a dicetyline fire break, mine on the left, yours on the right."

"Sounds good to me." Taking the controls, she started calculating where to fire the stream. Okay, I need to go over about two degrees. I need to make sure the fire break's in the best possible position. When the nozzle locked into the proper position, she said, "Activating nozzle now." Watching the dicetyline launch into the area just ahead of the perimeter, her mind went back to the time she was with the World Space Agency. Man, I can't believe I was trying to understand dicetyline only a few months ago.

Just then, they heard another voice. "Fire Tender from Mobile Control," said Elise through the radio. "Need a status report, please."

"It's looking good so far, Frankie," said Callie. "Einstein and I have launched two streams of dicetyline at the perimeter of the fire seven miles from the rum plant. I think we'll be able to make the fire break hold up, at least I hope."

"Well, maybe this will help. The chopper crew's been rescued, but just in time. Now it's your turn. If the alcohol and molasses explode--"

"F-A-B, Frankie," said Brains. "We'll make sure that doesn't happen."

For Callie, being on a rescue mission at all brought a sense of calm. She focused so much on the job she had no trouble casting the Hood from her mind. This is great! I've got such a rush right now. If this works, I won't have to hear Gordon ranting about rising rum prices. She smiled to herself as she noticed the results of the dicetyline. "Looks like the break's holding up," she said.

Brains nodded. "You're right. The fire's not advancing in the line over here, either." He then contacted Elise. "The fire break here's working well. We'll give it another few minutes, Frankie. If it breaks before then, we'll let you know."

"F-A-B, Einstein. Good luck."

They looked carefully for the next several minutes, but the fire was unable to advance past the dicetyline line. "Mobile Control from Fire Tender," said Callie. "Fire break successful. The fire will not reach the rum plant."

"Good work, both of you. The other fire breaks are holding up, so I think we've completed the mission. I'll contact base for stand-down."

"F-A-B," said Brains. He looked at Callie, who had a relieved smile on her face. "You seem satisfied."

"Yeah, I am. At least Gordon will be happy to know rum hasn't been completely lost yet."

"That's good," Brains said with a chuckle. "I'll contact Thunderbird Two to have Virgil come pick us up."

As Brains radioed him, she sat back in the chair and just relaxed. Boy, that felt really good. When we get home, I'm going to see if I can find a romance novel in the library.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:04:26 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/17/2007 5:19 PM

Friday, August 25, 2068, 1:30 a.m., Tracy Island (11:30 p.m., previous day, Australia)

"It's no use." Dianne sat up, throwing aside her covers. She rubbed the fingers of both hands over her forehead. "Ah can't sleep."

Swinging her legs over the side of the bed, she pushed herself to her feet, leaning on the bed for support as she edged around to the closet, where her favorite bathrobe lay. She sat on the edge of the chair to put it on; she slipped her feet into leather moccasins, then stood carefully and tied the robe's sash. She found her cane and headed out of the master suite.

On reaching the study, she tried the door again, muttering under her breath. "Still locked." She reached into the pocket of her robe, but there was nothing there. "Damn. Forgot mah key." With an irritated sniff, she turned and headed back to her suite.

Picking up the remote, she began surfing the televid channels, looking for something to occupy her long enough to make her drowsy. The household had satellite feed, which meant dozens of channels to choose from, quite a few of them in languages other than English. She put her legs up on the spacious ottoman, staring at the screen as the shows flickered past, each lasting a second or two before she advanced to the next one. Finally, she resorted to doing a subject search, and input the words "ice skating" into the search bracket. The televid did a quick flash of images, and finally rested on a show where a perky young teen glided across the ice. Dianne frowned as she heard the commentary. "What's that in? Russian?" She muted the sound as low as she dared without losing the background music, and settled back to watch.

The girl finished her routine, took her bows, and exited to the kiss and cry area to wait for her marks. The results came up... in Cyrillic. Dianne sighed and shook her head.

The program kept her busy for a half hour or so, then she changed the channel again. This time, it was a news report on the fire in Australia that caught her eye.

"...Breaking news. We have heard from official sources that the firefighters whose helicopter went down have been rescued and that Thunderbird Two is airlifting them to a local hospital. The name of the hospital is being withheld for security reasons, but the families of the firefighters will be notified as soon as possible." The commentary was accompanied by video of the fire from above.

Dianne looked carefully but couldn't find any sign of the Thunderbirds. "Least somethin's goin' right t'night," she drawled, folding her arms.

"Tell me, Julie," the anchor said to the on-site reporter. "What can you tell us about this foam that International Rescue is using?"

"Well, Brent, from what I've heard, the stuff is really amazing," Julie said. She was outside, the wind blowing through her hair and the fire burning in the distance. "It seems to smother the fire instantly. There had been some danger to the nearby rum plant from the spreading fire, but International Rescue's speedy response -- and their fabulous foam -- made quick work of that."

"We've heard of this foam before." The scene went back to the anchor room, where a bulky, balding man sat next to the young anchor. His name appeared near the bottom of the screen: Dr. Daniel Eberhart, PhD. "If you'll recall, a NASA spokesman recently revealed that the foam they used at Cape Canaveral mixed with some fuel to create a super fertilizer. There's no telling what it will do when mixed with the materials found in the outback."

"So you believe it could be a hazard to the environment, Doctor?" Brent asked, his face serious.

"It could be. We won't know until we see the results of its usage during this particular fire."

"Pffft!" Dianne sputtered, waving a hand. "What d'you know? Yoah just an ol' Fud!"

"Julie, any sign of Thunderbird Seven or of its operatives?" Brent asked.

"No sign of Thunderbird Seven reported, Brent," the correspondent replied, "but we have heard rumors that at least one medic accompanied the rescue crew today. Whether or not this was one of those involved in the tornado disaster..."

Dianne abruptly turned off the televid, and sat silent with the remote in her hands. Then she put it aside, and reached for her cane, sighing.

"Ah might as well do this now an' get it ovah with," she said. "Ah need t' do this by mahself an' foah mahself. A final step in healin'." She hauled herself to her feet, and limped back into her bedroom.

Need something a bit warmer down below, she reasoned as she shrugged out of her favorite robe and into something thicker. She hesitated, wondering if she should tell her husband where she was going, but shook her head. I won't be long, she said to herself as she left the suite.

She took the lift downstairs, and proceeded quietly through the silent hall. She thought very briefly of waking her mother, but pushed the thought away just as quickly. She's tired and I have to do this myself.

Dianne waited for the elevator car, leaning against the wall, giving her still stiff leg a rest. She leaned in the corner of the car all the way down, and sat in the monorail as it took her to the lab. The light was green next to the lab door, and it opened to her easily, the lights coming on as she stepped within.

For a long while she stood at the door to the pod vehicle repair bay, then she licked her dry lips, reached out to turn on the lights, and opened the door. Stepping through, she stood at the metal landing looking down at the parts of Thunderbird Seven. Didn't realize it was so scratched up, she thought as she descended the stair, keeping her eyes on the large medical section. Needs a good cleaning, and a new paint job.

Slowly she made her way to the back of the medical cabin. There was a gaping hole there now where the dent used to be. The back corner, back door, and the entire morgue section had been removed, and she could see into the storage lockers and part of the surgical suite. A panel, the one with the biggest dent in it, lay to one side propped up against the wall. She crouched uncomfortably and reached out to smooth a hand across the dent, but stopped before she touched it. A flash of memory; a vision of the medical cabin filling the view screen, the sudden, heart-stopping horror of realization, all came back to her in a rushing flood of sight, sound, and emotion. She closed her eyes convulsively, and drew her hand back with a gasp. So forceful was the withdrawal that she fell on her rump, barely catching herself from falling full length by a flailing hand. She sat there on the cold concrete for a long while, staring at the panel, until finally, she rolled onto her side and began the awkward process of regaining her feet.

Wrapping her arms around herself, Dianne rubbed her upper arms, the action providing a warmth that was more emotionally than physically soothing. Leaning on her cane more than before, she circled the back of the medical unit to the side. The ramp was down, and the side doors were

opened, but it was dark inside. She stood at the base of the ramp, looking up into the darkness, but made no move to enter it. Finally, she took a deep breath, let it out slowly, and turned from the doors. To her left, she noticed a pile of salvaged materials: the bare diagnostic beds, which were stacked neatly in three piles, two of four, and one of five. The surgical bed was there, too, in large, unwieldy pieces, its overhead screen covered in plastic and lying beside the bed itself. Guess they think they can reuse them... if they rebuild this. She smoothed a hand over one of the beds, noticing a light accumulation of dust that gathered on the edges of her hand. So much else to do that's more important, especially since Kat's away.

Dusting her hand off by clapping it against the other, she finally turned to the cockpit. Slowly, she approached it, noticing the wavy lines where the door had been cut.

Dom, giving her a grim smile as he covered her leg and donned the protective visor and gloves, picking up the cutter's nozzle... the trembling of her own limbs as he began to cut... the faint smell of oxyhydrite in the air, growing stronger as Gordon cut through the door...

She circled slowly around to the front, and stood staring up at it. The engine was exposed and covered in plastic, the hood and front of the chassis were nowhere to be seen. The windshield was cracked, and dirty, and marred further by a sizable, angular hole.

The... whatever-it-was... smashing up against the windshield, shattering to pieces against the polyhexane and sliding away... the dizzying view as the cockpit tumbled over and over... the nauseous feeling in the pit of her stomach as they rolled, helpless, tossed about like an empty paper cup in the wind... Nikki's scream of horror as the medical cabin came straight for them...

Dianne gasped, almost a sob, and shuddered, wrapping her arms around herself again. Then she took a deep breath, and walked back to the open rectangle that had once been a door.

She bit her lower lip as she came close, gazing up into the semi-darkness of the cockpit. Gotta go inside.

She leaned her cane on the scraped metal of the cockpit's side. Reaching a hand up inside the door -- the outer hand holds had been sheared off -- she began to pull herself into the cockpit. One rung, then another, she got her right knee onto the control cabin's floor. Using it to lever herself further inside, she glanced upward... and stopped. On the ceiling, illuminated by the light of the repair bay, was a dark spot, one that had little streaks of dusky color running from it, forever staining the ceiling. She collapsed to one side, ending up sitting half in and half out of the door, back leaning up against the cut, her damaged leg dangling out. Her moccasin dropped to the floor.

She swallowed heavily, and breathed deeply. The sudden, acrid, metallic smell of the cockpit filled her nostrils, and abruptly she was upside down again. Her unseeing eyes focused on the dark spot; she wrapped her arms around her abdomen. Her breath began to hitch.

Oh, God, it hurts... it hurts... make it stop! I can't breathe! Help me! I can't breathe! Dom! Nikki! Where are you?! I can't breathe! My leg! It's bleeding... make it stop! It hurts! Help me! I can't... I can't move! Pain! Oh, God! Get me out of here! Scared... so scared! I can't breathe! Please, get me out of here! It hurts!...

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:05:38 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/17/2007 5:42 PM

Friday, August 25, 2068, 3:17 a.m., Tracy Island

"Oh, man," Callie moaned as she got up from her seat in Thunderbird Two and stretched. "All I want is a shower and my bed."

"I'll second the shower," Nikki said. She yawned widely. "What time is it here, anyhow?"

Virgil glanced at the chronometer on Thunderbird Two's control panel. "Three seventeen a.m.," he said. "Let's get the pod vehicles cleared out before we go up for debriefing."

The thought of debriefing made the others groan, but Brains merely said, "Right. I'll want to run a diagnostic on the Firefly later since it got banged around out there."

"Then we might as well drive it up to the repair bay now," Alan said. "I'll take care of that."

Thunderbird Two lifted smoothly off the hangar floor, leaving behind the pod. Virgil opened it from the inside, and there was the roar of engines as the fire fighting vehicles prepared to roll out. Alan was first, and made a left hand turn toward the smaller aircraft hangars and the access ramp to the repair bay. He frowned as he noticed something out of place.

"Hey, Brains?"

Brains tapped his hands-free communicator. "Yes, Alan?"

"Did you leave the lights on in the repair bay?"

The engineer's eyes widened, and he hurried from the pod to see what Alan was talking about. Sure enough, there was a glow emanating from the access ramp. "Alan! Stop for a moment and let me catch up to you. I know I turned off the lights before I left the lab for the evening."

"Okay, Brains." The Firefly came to a grinding halt and Brains ran to it, making a mental note of the noise it had made. He climbed aboard, accepting a hand up from Alan at the last bit. Once he was settled in the copilot's seat, Alan released the brake, and the Firefly rolled on.

"I can't understand it," Brains said, a puzzled frown on his face. "I know I turned the lights off."

"Maybe Dad needed to come down for something and forgot to put the lights out," Alan suggested

as they chugged up the inclined pathway.

Brains shot Alan a disbelieving look. "Do you think that's something your father would do?"

Alan thought for a minute, then said, "Uh, no. Not really."

They lapsed into silence as they came to the top of the ramp and to the flat, wide area where the engineering and repair crew worked on the pod vehicles. Alan expertly pulled the Firefly in beside Thunderbird Seven.

"Alan!" Brains cried, as he glanced out the window. "It's Dianne!"

"What the hell is she doing down here?" Alan muttered as he secured Firefly. Brains had started climbing out before Firefly had come to a stop. He tapped his communicator. "Father?"

In the lounge, Jeff frowned, and glanced at Scott, who had arrived home fifteen minutes before Virgil. They were no longer on open communication with John; Jeff had temporarily dismissed the space monitor so they both could prepare for the debriefing. Elise had a cup of coffee in her hand, provided by Kyrano, who had been up preparing a snack and providing Jeff with coffee since shortly after the rescue started.

"Alan...", Scott began, tapping his own communicator.

"Father," Alan said again, using the title succinctly. "Dianne is down here in the vehicle repair bay, and something's wrong."

Jeff's eyes widened in concerned confusion. "What's she doing there?"

"I have no idea, Dad." Alan climbed out of Firefly, grabbing the vehicle's medikit as he did so. "She's sitting in the cockpit of Seven. She's... I don't know. There's just something wrong."

"I'm on my way," Jeff said. He headed for the study, and called over his shoulder, "Start the debriefing without me if you have to. And wake Mother and Lisa; we may need them both."

"Yes, sir," Scott said.

Meanwhile, in the repair bay, Brains approached Dianne gingerly, quietly calling, "Dianne? Dianne? Can you hear me?"

Somewhere, far away, someone was whispering her name...

He was concerned because she was wheezing; she was breathing as if it were hard to do so. Her arms were wrapped tightly around her abdomen, and she was staring at some point that he couldn't make out from his position on the floor.

"Brains?" Alan joined him, looking up at his stepmother with concern. "Dad's on his way. What can we do?"

Brains had moved to see if he could see what Dianne was looking at. "I'm at a loss, Alan. She's

obviously not exactly with us, but I'm not sure how to bring her back to the here and now." He stood on tiptoes, peering up and around. "I think I see what she's looking at, that dark spot on the ceiling... the bloodstain."

Someone was outside somewhere, talking softly. Who's there? Help me, please! I can't breathe! My leg! Who's there? Dom? Help me, Nikki!

"Maybe if we knew what happened during the whole thing we could bring her out of it," Alan suggested as he put the medikit down and began to rummage around in it. "Or maybe a sedative? Knock her out and pull her down from there?"

"A sedative would work to get her out, yes, but at what price? This is something she's got to work through..." Brains climbed up and reached for her neck, taking her pulse. "She's cold. Is there a blanket in the kit?"

"Yeah, here it is." Alan pulled out the shiny Penelon blanket, and was about to hand it to Brains when the door from the lab slammed open and Jeff barreled through. He took the stairs down two at a time, and vaulted over the railing when he got halfway down. He was followed by a dressing gown clad Lisa, who bustled after him at a less explosive pace.

Jeff skidded around the far end of the medical cabin and ran up to the cockpit, slowing only as he got near. Alan had handed the blanket off to Brains by this time, and the scientist was trying to tuck it in around her.

More voices were murmuring around her. Is that you, Dom? Please help! Get me down from here! I can't move! I can't breathe! Lean the chair back! My leg -- cut it free!

"What's the situation?" he asked, slightly breathless.

"She hasn't responded to us," Brains replied. "She's cold; she's been overbreathing; her pulse is up."

"Damn," Lisa said, coming up behind Jeff. "Why'd she go an' do this? Ah meant t' come with her when she wanted to come. Give her someone t' lean on."

"I don't know why she chose to do this now, but I'm sure she had a reason," Jeff said. "Once we get her out of there, we can ask. Right now, let's concentrate on first things first." He walked up and gently touched her dangling leg, rubbing the knee, then the calf. "Di, honey? Come on back, love. Come on back to us."

She could feel a bare touch on her leg. That's it, Dom! Cut it free! You have to cut it free! I can't move! I can't breathe! Nikki! Help me!

"Brains, let me get up past you."

Brains obligingly slid down to the concrete floor as Jeff took his position, facing Dianne. "Come on, love," he cooed, putting a hand on either side of her face, trying to turn it gently away from the stain. "Look at me, dear heart."

Someone was there, touching her face. Who's there? Nikki? Is that you? Get me out of here! I'm so cold! I'm so scared! Please, get me down!

Her neck was stiff, and he didn't want to force her to turn her head. Instead, he moved over so his body was directly in her line of sight, keeping his hands cupped to her face. "Dianne! Look at me. It's Jeff. Come on, love; look at me!"

Someone now stood between her and the dark. Scott? Is that you? Have you come to get me out? Gordon? Are you cutting the door? Scott? Get me down from here. Please. That's it, Gordon, cut the door. Dom, cut the metal... yes! Get me out of here!

She began to blink, once, twice, and her head moved downwards, enough to break her vision's lock on the ceiling. Her wheezing began to ease. "That's it, love," Jeff called in encouragement. She's not seeing me, not yet, but at least she's not looking at that damned spot anymore! "Come on, love; that's it. It's over now."

She looked up at him, her eyes still unfocused, her voice confused. "S-S-Scott? Scott? You've come to t-take me out... thank God! You've come to g-get me down... I...I can breathe... now."

"You're safe, love; it's all over," Jeff murmured again and again. He pulled her as close as he could, and kissed her on the forehead.

At last she squeezed her eyes closed tight and whimpered a little. She raised her face to him, and opened her eyes, half-lidded. "J-Jeff?"

"There you are," he murmured.

She started to glance to her right again, and Jeff intervened. "No, look that way. Your mother's here; she's worried about you."

"Di, sweetie." Lisa stood on the bottom rung, reaching up to rub a hand across Dianne's arm. "C'mon out o' theah, honey. C'mon out." Dianne nodded, and Lisa took the Penelon blanket away, then stepped down and back a little. "Alan, give her some help, please."

"Sure, Grandma." Both Alan and Brains stepped forward. Brains offered a hand, while Alan reached up with both hands to steady her. Jeff helped her turn slowly. She put a foot down on the top rung, and reached down with a hand to Alan... then slipped and fell with a little cry.

"Oof!" Alan staggered under her sudden weight, but he didn't fall. "Gotcha, Mom."

"S-Sorry 'bout that. M'legs are numb," she murmured.

Jeff dropped down behind her as Alan helped steady her and set her on her feet. Lisa came up with her lost moccasin and helped her put it on.

"C'mon, love," Jeff said, wrapping the Penelon blanket around her shoulders. "Let's get you upstairs." He leaned over as if to pick her up, but she shook her head.

"Don', Jeff. Ah c'n walk."

Jeff and Lisa exchanged glances, and Lisa shook her head slightly. Jeff sighed; he took Dianne's arm, draping it over his shoulder and putting a firm arm around her waist. "Alan, head on up to the dining room and see if Scott's started the debriefing. If not, tell him to start."

"On my way, Dad," Alan said. He hurried off up the stairs and disappeared into the lab.

"Brains, will you come up to the sick room and give Dianne a once over?"

"Yes, sir," Brains said. "I'll go prepare the sick room now. Will you want one of the nurses to help?"

"Em is getting the sickroom ready," Lisa said as she picked up Dianne's cane.

"It's up to you if you want to call one of the nurses." Jeff started toward the staircase, walking slowly, matching Dianne's shuffling gait. She leaned on him heavily as they took the stairs one at a time. Lisa followed, her eyes widening as she saw the sharp slits in the back of Dianne's thick robe.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:06:47 GMT

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From: Hobbeth Sent: 5/18/2007 3:27 PM

Friday, August 24, 9:30 AM; Silver Spring Maryland (1:30 AM August 25 on Tracy Island)

"Mrs. Matumbo, your shoulder is healing very well. How has it felt? Do you need any more pain medication?"

"No, tank you, Doctor Bennett. I haven't needed to take any for de last few days."

He checked her eyes. "Any headaches?"

"Not since my last visit to you."

"Any blurring of your vision? Any confusion?"

"No, notting like dat. Everyting seems to be normal, like it was before de crash."

Doctor Bennett put away his instruments. "Well, everything looks good. We won't need to keep your arm so immobile, so I'll put it in a sling. I want you to keep it there as much as possible. And I think that you are able to be on your own again. So you may go back to your home."

Lena sighed in relief. "Tank you. I've been very comfortable wit my son and daughter-in-law, but

I've been looking forward to being in my own home again."

"There are conditions, however."

"Which are?"

"No driving more than short distances -- five miles round trip. No heavy lifting. You can't go back to work yet, and any work you do at home must be limited to no longer than two hours at a time. And you must relax for at least three hours between times. I'll want to see you in a week."

Lena looked at the doctor, who gazed back at her unrelentingly. "Okay, I agree to dose terms," she said finally. "I can live wit dem for a week or so."

"Good. Now I'll let you get dressed. I'll see you again soon." He left the room.

Ten minutes later Lena and Amelia left the office and were on the way back to College Park. Amelia said, "Are you sure you're ready to go home now, Lena? You know we've enjoyed having you stay with us, and want you to remain as long as you need to -- or want to."

"Yes, I'm sure, Amelia. I've loved being wit you and Mattew, but I would feel more comfortable in my own home. I promised de doctor I wouldn't do too much, and I intend to keep my word. But I do look forward to being in my own bed."

"Okay. Then we'll get your things packed, and I'll take you home, stopping at a supermarket on the way. I know there's some foodstuffs you'll be needing."

"Dat's true. And tank you, Amelia. You've been a wonderful hostess. I know I haven't been de best of guests, and I'm sorry."

"No apologies necessary. If it had been me in your situation, I'd probably have behaved far worse. You weren't much trouble at all. I only wish I could have done more for you."

Lena smiled. "I know, honey. And I appreciate it more dan I can say. But I need to be in my own place."

"I suppose I can understand that. So let's get you moved back home. And I'd better call Matthew when we get to our home, and let him know. He'll probably object, you know. He's good at that."

"As a trial lawyer, he'd better be," Lena replied with a chuckle. "But if he gives you a hard time, just pass de phone to me. I'll handle him."

Amelia just laughed, as they continued into College Park.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:09:03 GMT

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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 5/19/2007 5:14 PM

Friday, August 24, 9 AM; San Diego (Saturday, August 25, 4 AM on Tracy Island)

Brandon had awakened earlier in a good mood. His parents were together again, after having been moved to a convalescent home. Three contractors had come in and given him estimates for renovations. After much consideration, Brandon had made his choice. (Shannon had said, "You make the call, bro. I'm not good at this sort of thing.")

He'd notified the contractor, who'd assured him that the job would be done in a timely fashion. Then he'd told his sister. She'd exclaimed, "That's terrific! Let's go out to dinner to celebrate."

"Good idea. Where should we go?"

There had been a brief pause, then they'd looked at each other and said at the same time, "Anthony's!"

That evening, they'd left home for some good food and fun. They'd enjoyed themselves and had returned home feeling more relaxed.

He sat at the table sipping his coffee. This is the first time since I've been home, that I haven't felt like I need to be doing something. An idea began forming in his mind, and he mulled it over. He went to the phone and dialed. After three rings, there was an answer.

"My name is Brandon McCain. I'd like to make an appointment to go skydiving this afternoon."[/color]

With thanks to hobbeth for help with some of the wording.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:13:54 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 5/19/2007 6:01 PM

August 24th, 10:30 AM, Boulder, Colorado, (4:30 AM August 25th, Tracy Island)

Luke looked around the apartment and sighed. Barry had taken all of his belongings which included most of the art work, leaving the place rather barren looking. Luke had most of the furniture and his books, but the majority of his things had been packed. He marked the box in front of him and stood up, stretching. Rommel looked up from his place on the couch and gave a short 'woof'.

"Hello to you, too." Luke grinned at his dog. "So, mutt, what should we do today? Go for a hike, do some fishing, how about..." The ring of his cell phone interrupted him. "Hold that thought." Luke fished the phone out of his pocket. "Hello?"

"Morel!"

"Hey, Irwin! What's up?" Luke shoved Rommel over and sat down on the couch.

"Just what kind of hornet's nest have you stirred up?"

Luke laughed. "I'm guessing Derek got my resignation letter."

"Yeah, you could say that. He went ballistic. He's actually going to have to work now." There was a pause. "So, you're really leaving us?"

"Yeah, I am. I'm all packed up here. Hoping to get on the road within the next couple of days." Which reminds me, I should call Mr. Tracy, Luke thought to himself.

Irwin let out a breath in a huff. "Well then, we need to make this a proper good-bye. How about we all meet at Bucky's around eight tomorrow?"

Luke rolled his eyes. "Irv, you know I hate--"

"Too bad, buddy boy, you're not skipping town without me buying you a Coors," Irwin replied.

"Fine, only make it a Guinness or I don't go. See you then." Luke hung up and turned to Rommel. "I suppose I'd better make that call to Tracy Island." He glanced up at the clock and tried to figure out the time difference. "Yeah right," he muttered and grabbed his laptop. A few moments later he had the page up and shook his head. "Four in the morning...tomorrow?? I'll never get used to that." He paused as the news flashed across the screen.

"International Rescue mops up fire in OZ."

"What the..." Luke pulled up the story.

"Earlier today, International Rescue offered its assistance to an out of control cane fire, outside of Bundaberg, Queensland. They volunteered when a rescue helicopter went down while trying to stem the fire's movements. They also aided in preventing the fire from spreading to a local rum distillery, saving countless lives.

"In addition, local authorities are investigating the substance International Rescue used to douse the flames. There is some concern of its impact on the eco-system."

Luke shut the computer in disgust. "As if they'd use something harmful; give me a break." He pulled a business card out of his wallet and stared at it a few moments before dialing the number. It rang a few times before connecting to voice mail. Luke took a deep breath. "Mr. Tracy, it's Luke Morel. I'd like to talk to you about accepting your offer."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:14:26 GMT

From: Hobbeth Sent: 5/19/2007 8:09 PM

August 24, 1:30 PM; Silver Spring, Md. (5:30 AM Aug. 25 on Tracy Island)

Amelia pulled into the driveway of Lena's home and they both got out of the car. While her daughter-in-law got her bag out of the trunk, Lena unlocked the door and went inside to disarm the alarm. Then she returned to hold the screen door open.

"Are you sure I can't help carry something in, Amelia? I'm not dat incapacitated, you know."

"Lena, you heard what the doctor said as well as I did. No heavy lifting for another week."

"My bag isn't dat heavy. Neiter are de grocery bags," Lena replied, somewhat frustrated.

Amelia relented a little. "Well, okay. There are a couple of bags that shouldn't strain your shoulder, especially if you leave your left arm in the sling and bring those bags in one at a time. Come on."

Together the two women got the groceries inside and put away quickly. "How about staying for some lunch?"

"Lena, why do you think I bought that pasta salad we both like so much?" was the laughing reply.

Chuckling, Lena and Amelia quickly set out the necessary items. Adding rolls and iced tea ("Good ting tea doesn't spoil," the older woman remarked with a grin), and sat down to feast. "Lena, are you sure you're ready to be on your own again? I know the doctor said you could if you took it easy, but I worry about you. And you know you're welcome to stay with us as long as you want to."

"Amelia, we've been over dis. Like I said before, you've been wonderful to me while I stayed wit you and Mattew, but dis is my home. As much as I enjoyed being wit you two, I'm more comfortable here. I promise not to overexert myself, and if I need any heavy lifting, or work done, I'll call your husband, or Tom."

"As long as it isn't something that needs repairing," Amelia said with a laugh. "Handy isn't one of the words I'd use to describe my husband."

Lena chuckled. "He takes after his fadder dat way. Mark couldn't tell one end of a hammer from de otter."

They soon finished up the salad and rolls, then Amelia helped her mother-in-law unpack and get settled. Finally she said she had to leave. "But I'll call to check on you from time to time, and so will Matthew, I'm sure."

"Ah, wit all my family living fairly close by, I'm sure I'll be hearing from you all at least once a week each. Now don't worry. I'll enjoy your calls, but I promise to be good and follow de doctor's orders."

"Okay, Lena. I'll try not to be too anxious." Amelia kissed her, then got into her car. She pulled out of the driveway and, waving, headed down the road.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:15:23 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/19/2007 8:15 PM

Saturday, August 25, 2068, 9:15 a.m., Tracy Island

Jeff reached over to hit the alarm clock, his hand flailing before making contact. He groaned and rolled over, toying with the idea of sleeping later. After all, between dealing with Dianne and the end of the debriefing, it had been five a.m. before his head hit the pillow.

The thought of his wife made him open his eyes. She was lying on her side, facing away from him, and her back was clearly visible. Two thin, angry red lines scored her back, but they weren't deep, just scratches that looked worse than they actually were. "They'd be deeper if she hadn't been wearing such a thick robe," Brains had said as he examined them.

He'd wanted to talk to Dianne, ask her just why she'd decided to go down to Seven when she did, find out what had happened to put her in such a state, but she'd been so obviously exhausted that he decided to postpone his questions. Brains had checked to see that Dianne's blood oxygen levels were satisfactory and her pulse had eased back down to normal. He'd suggested that she spend the night in the sick room, but she'd balked at that. "Ah'm not sick anymore. Ah'll sleep in mah own bed, thank you very much." Lisa would have argued, but Jeff had shaken his head, and helped his wife upstairs.

I'd better wake her. There's a lot to do today. She can have a nap later, he thought as he listened to her soft breathing. He moved closer, then kissed her on the neck, smoothing a gentle hand over her arm. "Need to get up, love. It's morning."

She sighed, and stirred a little. Jeff kissed her again, and got closer to her ear. "Dianne, love. Time to get up."

"D'Ah have tuh?" she said with a whine.

Jeff sighed. "Yes, love. You do. We do. The kids will be looking for us, and the plane coming..."

She drew in a deep breath and huffed it out. "All raht, all raht." She started pushing her covers back, and Jeff rolled back out of the way. He sat up, then hauling himself to his feet, he stumbled off toward the shower.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:16:30 GMT

From: Hobbeth Sent: 5/19/2007 8:58 PM

Friday, August 24; 4 PM; Richmond, Virginia (Saturday, August 25, 10 AM on Tracy Island)

Tin-Tin was once again on the divan, putting through a call to Tracy Island. It was answered on the third ring by Jeff.

"Hello, Tin-Tin. By the look on your face, I don't think you have good news."

"No, Mr. Tracy; I don't." The sadness on Tin-Tin's face deepened as she continued. "I'm afraid both Heather's mother and sister passed away this morning. I've only just left Heather and her father a little while ago."

Jeff's face grew serious. "I'm very sorry to hear that. It sounds like they are having a difficult time handling this."

"Heather was, but has calmed down. In fact, she was given a sedative to take when she and her father returned home. I made sure she took it, and she was asleep when I left. Her father, however, immediately took charge and pulled some strings. The funeral for both women will be on Tuesday." She saw a movement to Jeff's right (her left) and paused until the other person came into view. "Oh, hello, Dianne."

"Hello, Tin-Tin. I heard what you told Jeff, and I'm so sorry for their loss." Jeff had gotten up from his chair as she spoke, and she sat down. "How are you holding up?"

"I'm managing, but I miss my father."

Jeff, who had pulled up another chair, smiled slightly. "I know what you mean, Tin-Tin. He can be a comfort and a rock of strength and serenity at times like these. Has Jim said anything to you about the funeral, other than when it will be?"

"Only that he hoped someone from Heather's new job would be there for the service. I presume that's what you mean."

"It is. But I don't really see how I can come. I don't want to leave Dianne, and she's not well enough to travel, as you know. I'm not sure if any of my sons or the recruits would want to go. Are you willing to stay and represent us?"

Tin-Tin sighed. "I will do so, Mr. Tracy. But I don't think I need to stick around here until then. The Kennedys don't really need me at this point. I have Lena's cell phone number, and I'll see if she's up to a visit. If she is, I'll go to Silver Spring. Then I'll return for the funeral, and leave for Christchurch immediately afterward."

"And if she isn't able to have you stay with her?" Dianne asked.

"I think I'll go there anyway, stay in a hotel nearby and visit her once or twice. I can rest the remainder of the time, perhaps do a little shopping or sightseeing."

"That sounds like a good plan," Jeff said. "I'll arrange for a car to take you there tomorrow morning, your time, and for the flight to Christchurch. Email me when you know where you'll be staying when you get to Maryland."

"I will, Mr. Tracy."

"And get some rest now, young lady," Dianne added. "You must have had a rough few hours; you look all in."

Tin-Tin smiled wanly. "It has been rough, but I'll be okay. First, a nice hot bath, then a few hours sleep." Her smile grew slightly. "I may even call room service, and have dinner here."

Jeff chuckled. "You do that. We'll need your help when you return. Besides, Brains would probably kill someone if you came back totally exhausted."

"Jeff!" Dianne slapped him lightly on the arm as Tin-Tin blushed. "Now don't you worry about anything, Tin-Tin. Just take care of yourself, represent us at the funeral, and come back safely."

"I will, Dianne. I'll see you both in a few days."

"Tin-Tin, if anyone here wants to attend, I'll email you to let you know," Jeff said.

"Thank you, Mr. Tracy. Good-bye."

Tin-Tin leaned back against the divan when the call ended and closed her eyes. She sighed, then thought, I do so want to get into that bathtub, but I think I'll call Lena first. Then I'll know for certain where I'll be going, and I can get that part over with. She opened her eyes, sat up, found Lena's number and placed the call.

"Hello?"

"Lena, it's Tin-Tin."

"Tin-Tin! Let me put de earplug in, so I can see you. You are on a vidphone, right?"

"Yes, I am."

There was a pause, then Lena's face came into view. "Tin-Tin. You look tired and distressed. What's wrong, honey?"

"Oh, Lena! I'm in Virginia. I flew here with our latest recruit, Heather Kennedy. You never met her; she just came recently. Anyway, her mother and sister were in a terrible car accident. They both died earlier today. I will be going to their funeral on Tuesday. But I really don't want to stick around here until then. Are you up to having a guest?"

"Don't be absurd, child. Of course I am, especially if it's you. And your timing is perfect; I was just allowed to return to my home today. De guest room is ready for you; when will you be coming?"

Tin-Tin's smile grew larger. Hearing and seeing Lena like this was a breath of fresh air to her. "I'll come tomorrow; I don't know what time yet. I'll email you when I do. Oh, I'll need directions to your house for the driver."

"Ah, you're hiring a car. Good. I don't think you'll be in any shape to drive a couple of hundred miles. Do you have something ready to enter the information in?"

"Yes, Lena. Go ahead."

Lena gave her the information, then said, "Now you get some rest, honey. You can let me know tomorrow when you'll be arriving."

"I will, and thank you, Lena. I look forward to seeing you."

"And I you, Tin-Tin. Until tomorrow."

Tin-Tin terminated the call, sighed happily, and went to start her bath.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:17:39 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 5/19/2007 9:51 PM

Saturday August 25th, 10:30 AM, Tracy Island (3:30 PM August 24th in San Diego; 4:30 PM in Boulder, Colorado)

Jeff sat at his desk, finishing up the final reports from the fire. We really could have used the full team on this one. I wonder if I should step up my search for a firefighter, one would have come in handy; that thing with Alan was too close. And thinking of the team, I haven't heard from Brandon or Kat since they left.

He pulled up a file on his computer and glanced at the clock. Too late to call England, but not California. He quickly dialed a number and waited for an answer.

"Hello?"

"Hello, I'm looking for Brandon McCain."

"I'm sorry, but he's gone skydiving. This is his sister, Shannon. Can I take a message?"

Skydiving? What about his parents? Jeff thought to himself. "Yes, please. This is Jeff Tracy; I was calling to see how your parents are doing."

"Oh! Well, they're doing better, but we have a long road ahead of us. Thanks for asking, Mr. Tracy."

"And Brandon? How is he?" Jeff continued.

"He's fine; I'm sorry you missed him."

"Has he mentioned when he might be returning to work?" Jeff asked.

Shannon paused. "No, he hasn't. I don't think he's even thought about it, to tell you the truth."

"Hmmm...." Jeff frowned in thought. "Well, could you please leave him a message that I called and ask him to call me back as soon as he gets in?"

"I'll do that."

"Thank-you, Shannon. I hope things work out with your parents."

"Thanks, Mr. Tracy, I'm sure they will. Good-bye."

Shannon cut the connection and Jeff sat back in his chair. So, Brandon hasn't said anything about coming back. I hope that doesn't mean he won't be returning. He moved onto his next message.

"Mr. Tracy, it's Luke Morel. I'd like to talk to you about accepting your offer."

Jeff sighed before picking up the phone again. "I hope this is good news. We could use some for a change." The phone rang a few times before someone answered.

"Hello?"

"Luke? This is Jeff Tracy."

"Hello, sir. You got my message."

"Yes I did," Jeff replied. "Have you reached a decision?"

"I'd like to take the job."

Jeff breathed a sigh of relief. "I'm glad to hear it; you'll be a welcome asset to our organization. How long do you think it will take you to wrap up things there?"

"I'm just about ready now. I gave my resignation this morning, effective immediately. No use me being where I'm not wanted."

Luke's voice held an edge of anger to it, but he went on. "What about Rommel, sir? He is coming with me?"

"Of course." Jeff thought for a moment. "You can't put him on a commercial flight with all the quarantine regulations. We'll send a jet to pick you both up. Bring what you feel is essential; we can handle the rest."

Luke paused. "I do have a slight problem. My hunting rifles. I can't leave them with my folks; they'd wonder why I wasn't keeping them in L.A. Will it be a problem if I bring them? They have trigger locks and I won't be bringing any ammo."

"That won't be an issue. We have a weapons locker you can use or keep them in your own rooms, whichever you prefer," Jeff told him.

"Great, thanks."

"I'll be in touch as soon as I figure out when and who is coming to get you."

"I'll be waiting. Thank-you again, Mr. Tracy."

"You're welcome. And Luke?" Jeff smiled. "Welcome to the team."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:18:21 GMT
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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 5/20/2007 7:32 PM

Friday, August 24th, 1:30 p.m. San Diego Municipal Airport

Brandon arrived at the airport, eager to get airborne. I wonder if I'll see any of my friends, he thought. He needn't have worried.

"Yo, McCain, where ya been?" "Hey, Big Mac; it's been a while." "Hey, Brandon, how's it hangin'?"

He looked at the person who made the last remark and answered, with a twinkle in his eye, "Same as always."

"Tell me about it." The banter continued for a few more minutes, then Brandon headed to the door that led to the airfield.

As he stood waiting for his turn, Brandon looked around, thinking about the last time he and Aaron had jumped together.

Man, he came so close to buying it. If I hadn't been with him, he would have wound up just a memory. His musings were interrupted by the door opening followed by the sound of voices.

"Man, that jump was fantastic!"

"Chris, you are a show-off, you know that?"

"What can I say, man?" he replied with a grin.

"How about you, Bradshaw? How'd you enjoy the jump?" At the mention of that name, Brandon turned to look at the group of men, spotting his friend among them.

"I really enjoyed the jump," Aaron replied. "The winds were perfect. Brandon would have loved it! I wonder how he is; I haven't heard from him in a while.

Brandon smiled and said loudly, "Why don't you just ask me, Aaron?"

His friend looked in the direction of the voice and his eyes widened in surprise. "BIG MAC!" Aaron shouted, going to Brandon and giving him bear hug and a high five. "How ya been? I haven't heard from you in a while; I thought you were in Hawaii working for Tracy Industries. What brings you back here?"

"Glad to see you, too," he said, returning the gesture. As they continued talking, Brandon got his friend up to speed as to what had been happening since he'd left San Diego, being careful with what he said.

After he had finished talking, Aaron replied, "Hey, I'm sorry to hear about your parents. If there's anything I can do, let me know."

Brandon smiled at his friend's offer. "Thanks, but everything's under control. If I need any more help, I'll be sure to call you."

Waiting for the plane to make altitude, the two men continued talking, having to speak loudly to be heard above the sound of the plane's engine.

"Hey, I bet I beat you to the ground! Aaron said, teasing his friend.

"In your dreams!" Brandon said, rising to the challenge.

"Let's make it interesting. Last person down buys the beer."

"You're on! Be prepared to pay!"

As the two men exited the plane, they separated quickly. Brandon watched for a moment as his friend did a couple of flips before continuing his free fall. Rather than following Aaron, he did a few stunts of his own, reveling in the wind on his face. From his radio he heard Aaron calling to him.

"Hey Big Mac, you better get a move on or you ain't gonna beat me to the ground!"

"I've got time!" Brandon shouted back. He streamlined his body, quickly closing the distance between him and his friend. But it was too little, too late as he saw Aaron's chute open. As he reached for the ripcord of his parachute, he thought, Well, looks like I'm buyin'.

Later, the two men sat at the bar, enjoying their drinks and reliving the day.

So what if I had to buy the beer; it was worth it. Brandon smiled, thinking of the time he had spent with his friend. [/color]

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:21:45 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/20/2007 7:52 PM

Saturday, August 25, 2068, 1:30 p.m. Tracy Island

The cargo plane eased to a stop, its engines still whining loudly as it pulled as close to the cliff as it safely dared. The noise ceased, and the little golf cart with its anti-gravity trailer edged down the switchback trail toward the tarmac. The hangar door opened in the cliff, disgorging Scott, Gordon, and Alan, the latter pulling a hover float.

The cockpit doors opened, and Juan jumped down from the pilot's seat, while Gary emerged from the co-pilot's side. The ramp at the back of the plane lowered, as all the parties concerned converged on the spot. Jeff and Virgil climbed out of the cart, while Dianne remained behind, sitting in the passenger seat.

"You've got quite the load today, Mr. Tracy," Juan said. "Medical equipment, drywall, a safe..."

Scott glanced over at Jeff. "A safe?"

"It goes to the Round House. So does the drywall," Jeff told him. "We'll bring it up ourselves."

Gary approached the golf cart with a data pad. "How are you doing, Dr. Tracy?"

Dianne gave him a wan smile. "I'm getting there, Gary." She glanced at the pad as he handed it to her. "Do you need my signature here?"

"Yes, ma'am," Gary said. "Your signature and thumbprint for the medical equipment. We've also got some of the drugs you ordered; they're under a thumbprint lock."

"I'll take care of it, Gary. Just need to look over the manifest and the crates; make sure we have everything we need."

She turned in her seat, sliding her legs out of the cart. Jeff saw this and called, "Dianne!"

"I'm not going anywhere, Jeff," she called back. "It's just easier to see the crates this way."

Jeff gave her a calculating look, then nodded. "We'll bring the float by."

"Dad." Alan came up to his father, shucking his leather-like Penelon work gloves. "We'll need the forklift. Brains has got some sheet metal here."

"Okay, Alan. Get the lift, and give Brains a call. It looks like we'll need him down here, too."

As Alan went back into the hangar, and Gary joined the other Tracy sons in loading up the float, Jeff took Juan aside. "Did you get my request about bringing Mrs. Hanson out with the mail on Tuesdays?"

"Yes, I did," Juan replied, frowning. "I don't mind bringing her, but it's not going to be a comfortable ride."

Jeff huffed a laugh, and smiled wryly. "I don't think that will matter to her as much as saving time and energy do. She's a very practical woman."

"All right," Juan said, finally nodding, "if that's what you want. How will she get back?"

"Don't worry; we'll see to that," Jeff told him. "Thanks for being flexible." He clapped the pilot on the shoulder, and glanced up at the unloading crew. Brains had joined the group, and was guiding Alan, who was driving the forklift. "Let's get the rest of this unloaded so you can be on your way." Juan nodded, and the two men rejoined the work crew.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:22:54 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 5/20/2007 7:54 PM

Tracy Island, Saturday August 25th, a little after 10 PM....

Alan threw himself down on his bed with a groan. It had been a long day, starting with the fire and ensuing rescue, then coming home to face the drama down in the repair bay. Even after sleeping for most of the morning, he still felt drained and could feel a headache starting.

He settled himself more comfortably on his bed and closed his eyes. His thoughts immediately returned to the events of the day...

Flashback.

Alan helped Brains tuck the blanket around Dianne, looking up as his father came racing into the room.

"What's the situation?"

"She hasn't responded to us, she's cold; she's been over breathing; her pulse is up."

Alan and Brains stepped aside, letting Jeff get to his wife's side. They watched as Jeff managed to get Dianne back to the present, and down the ladder. When Dianne slipped, Alan caught her, clinging to her for a moment longer than necessary before Jeff started leading her away.

"Alan, head up to the dining room and see if Scott's started the debriefing. If not, tell him to start," Jeff told him.

"On my way, Dad," Alan replied, heading out the door and up to the dining room. He paused in the doorway, then stepped inside.

"...fired a shell and...Alan?" Gordon stopped in mid-sentence as everyone turned.

"Hey," he said wearily, plopping himself down on a chair. "What did I miss?"

"Forget that, what's going on?" Scott demanded.

"It's Mom," Alan said as he poured himself a mug of coffee. "She went down to Seven."

Silence gripped the room. "Is she all right?" Scott asked, his voice gruff.

Alan shrugged. "I think so, now anyway." He proceeded to tell them what had happened downstairs, causing the others to gasp in concern. "Dad's getting her calmed down and probably headed back to bed."

"The infirmary I hope," Gordon muttered.

Alan shrugged. "I guess so. Unless she decides to go back to her room."

"Stubborn woman," Scott growled.

"Yeah well, look who's talking." Elise frowned in Scott's direction.

Scott ignored the jibe. "Well, let's finish this then; I for one would like to get to bed."

End Flashback.

Alan shivered, not from being cold. I'm glad Mom faced her demons, but I don't think she should have done it alone. Hopefully she'll talk to Anna next time she comes to the island. He felt himself drifting off, despite the headache, and a moment later was fast asleep.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:24:09 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/20/2007 7:55 PM

Saturday, August 25, 2068, 10:45 p.m., Tracy Island

The night breeze ruffled Jeff's hair, and he pulled his wife closer to him. They sat on the swing in Kyrano's garden, enjoying the few flowers that still bloomed. The swing rocked gently back and forth, creaking a little with the motion. The quiet was soothing, and Jeff sighed deeply, a satisfied sound.

Dianne leaned her head on his shoulder, her eyelids growing heavy. Even with her afternoon nap, she still felt tired from the day's events. Jeff glanced over at her, planted a kiss in her hair, then spoke quietly.

"Why'd you do it?"

She sighed; she knew what he was asking even though he hadn't explained himself. Shifting so she was sitting up straighter, she took his free hand in hers, linking their fingers, staring at the fingers but not really seeing them. Jeff kept an arm around her shoulders.

Finally she said, "Ah couldn't sleep. Tried watchin' the vid... nothin' suited." She paused for a moment. "There was a news report on the fire. They mentioned Seven; said that it hadn't shown up and though theyah were reports of a medic, they didn't know if it was one of..." her voice dropped in volume, "... us."

She turned her face to the sky and sighed; her grip on his hand tightened slightly. "Just all of a sudden, Ah felt Ah had to go. A last step in healin', Ah thought. So, Ah went. Thought about takin' Ma along, but she was sleepin' an'... Ah had t' do this foah mahself." She looked back at their entwined hands, and traced over his knuckles with a wandering finger. "Ah had no ideah Ah'd react that way. Everythin' Ah looked at, everythin' Ah touched, it all brought back the memories so vividly. An' when Ah climbed into the cab an' saw the stain... Ah was back there again, unable t' breathe, mah leg drippin' blood." Closing her eyes, she swallowed heavily. "Ah thought... Ah thought Ah could handle it." She looked at him and gave him a rueful smile. "Good thing Alan and Brains came along when they did."

"Mm hmm," Jeff hummed in agreement.

They sat quietly for a while, Dianne still aimlessly tracing her husband's knuckles. Finally Jeff shifted a bit and pulled her closer with his encompassing arm. "Now that you've been down there, what are you going to do about it?"

She looked out at the garden, and softly replied, "Ah think Ah'll be Anna's first patient come Tuesday."

"Good idea," he murmured. Disentangling his fingers from hers, he put a gentle knuckle under her chin and guided her face toward his. He kissed her lips and was surprised to see the sparkle of tears in her eyes. He cupped her face in both hands and gently wiped the tears away with his thumbs, then kissed her again, deeper this time. Her fingers went to his face to stroke along the jawline; the brushing of his five o'clock shadow sounded loud in his ears.

"I think it's time we went inside, love," he said softly. "We've had a long day."

She nodded, and they rose together, the swing bumping gently into the backs of their legs. Fingers entwined once more, they sauntered slowly up to the house, and to the sleep they'd so long denied themselves.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:25:42 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 5/20/2007 8:55 PM

Saturday, August 25, Silver Spring; 11:30 AM (3:30 AM Sunday, August 26 on Tracy Island)

Lena stepped out her front door and walked down to the curb to watch for the car bringing Tin-Tin to her home. A few minutes later, a light colored sedan pulled up to the curb. The driver got out, touched his hand to the brim of his hat to Lena as he moved to the passenger door and opened it for the young woman. Tin-Tin emerged and moved quickly over to her friend, carefully hugging her.

Lena returned it with enthusiasm, saying, "I'm so glad to see you. How was de drive over?"

"Very smooth, and the traffic wasn't bad at all."

The driver in the meantime got the bags out of the trunk. "Where do you want me to put these, ma'am?"

"Just put dem inside de front door. We'll take dem from dere."

He followed the two women as they walked inside, their arms around each other's waists. He put the luggage down in the foyer, then touched the brim of his hat again. "Have a nice visit, Miss Kyrano. I will return for you on Tuesday."

Tin-Tin nodded at him and smiled as she handed him a tip. "It was a very smooth, enjoyable ride. I'll see you at ten Tuesday morning. Thank you, Preston."

"Thank you, miss. Until Tuesday." He left, closing the door behind him, and a minute later they heard the car move off.

Lena picked up the smaller of the two bags and said, "Let me show you your room. You can freshen up, den we can have some lunch and chat."

"That sounds lovely," Tin-Tin replied as she picked up the other bag and followed Lena down the hall. "I'm looking forward to my visit. Oh! What a charming room! I'm sure I'll be very comfortable here."

"Tank you." Lena put the bag she was carrying on the dresser and indicated where the suitcase should go. "De top drawers are empty, if you want to unpack. And dere are hangars in de closet. Take your time, and come out when you're ready."

"I will. It's going to be so nice to have a few days where I don't have to be anywhere or do anything at a particular time."

Lena smiled at her, then turned and left.

When Tin-Tin left the room twenty minutes later, she found Lena in the kitchen. "Oh please, let me help with that," she said as Lena tried to pour some lemonade into glasses, with some difficulty.

"Tank you, honey. Some tings take getting used to doing wit only one hand."

The younger woman filled the glasses, then took them over to the table in the "breakfast nook".

The food had already been set out, along with silverware, plates, and napkins, so they sat down to eat and talk.

"Lena, did you hear about the fire in Australia?"

"No, I didn't. I haven't had de television on, nor have I been on my computer to get any news. I take it International Rescue was called."

"I heard about it on the way here. I was too tired to check the news last night, and too busy getting ready to come here this morning. I found out on the way here. It sounded like International Rescue offered their help, instead of being called. But things are under control, thanks to them."

Dat's a relief. And I take it no one was injured on dis rescue -- from de rescue group, I mean."

"Right." Tin-Tin smiled at her friend. "A chopper did go down and there were injuries among that crew. But they were all rescued. And so was a rum plant. So Gordon won't be complaining about prices going up." She laughed, and Lena joined in.

"Dat's good to know. But who went? Some of de field personnel must still be out of commission."

"Well, actually, only Dianne still is. But Kat had to go back to England to testify against a man who harassed her at a previous job, and has been accused by another woman of trying to assault her. Plus, her brother's wedding was moved up, due to the bride's brother having to ship out sooner than expected. And I had to accompany Heather here, or she might have crashed."

"Oh my. Dere seems to have been some drama back dere. I should have called, if only to chat and find out how everyone is."

"Lena, you were doing some recuperating yourself. And you did email people."

"It's not de same as talking to dem. Oh well, maybe we can call dem later. Right now, I want to hear from you what else has been going on. Tell me more."

Tin-Tin smiled, and the two women had a nice long chat about the events of the last few weeks.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:31:11 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/20/2007 9:33 PM

Saturday, August 25, 8:15 p.m., Los Angeles (Sunday, August 16, 3 p.m. Tracy Island)

"Maggie and Drew said they'd meet us at the airport," Lisa said as she turned to watch the skycaps unloading the luggage from Tracy Two's cargo compartment. She sidled up to Kyrano, who was giving instructions to a hangar employee about the jet. The young woman nodded, then went off to park the plane. The skycap touched his cap as he maneuvered the float with the

luggage toward the Tracy Industries lounge.

"And how is our passenger?" Kyrano asked quietly as he offered his arm to his fiancée.

Lisa glanced back to see Cherie, her eyes focused on her little music player, trailing along behind them. She sighed, waving the girl to follow closer. Cherie looked up, and rolled her eyes slightly, a stubborn set to her mouth reminding Lisa all too well of her own daughter. But the girl picked up the pace and was soon tagging along directly behind her grandmother and grandfather-to-be.

"Kyrano and I will only be staying overnight with Uncle Drew and Aunt Maggie," Lisa explained once again. "But you'll be staying for the week while we head to Greenville and settle things there. Maggie thought it would be nice for you to get away from the island for a bit. She's got plans to take you shopping and sightseeing around L.A."

"You told me that already, Grammy," Cherie said with a sigh.

"Well, I hope you have a good attitude for your great-aunt," Lisa rejoined. She smiled, an impish look in her eye. "Who knows? You might even have fun."

By this time they'd reached the terminal and the lounge designated for Tracy Industries employees and guests. "There they are," Kyrano said. He smiled. "Greetings!"

"Hello, Kyrano! It's great to see you again, Lisa!" Drew moved forward, his hand outstretched. Kyrano took it to shake it, and Drew moved to hug his sister. "Hey, there, Cherie! Welcome back to Los Angeles!"

"Hey, Uncle Drew," Cherie said in a desultory tone, not looking up from her music player. Drew gave his sister a knowing glance and a sly grin as he put a hand on the teen's back and gently pulled her into the small knot of people.

Maggie turned to greet her sister-in-law, and suddenly a voice asked, "Well, Fruitcake? Aren't you going to say hello?"

Cherie glanced up, and her eyes widened in surprise and delight! "Steph!!" she squealed, all but launching herself into her cousin's arms. "Steph! Oh, Steph! How'd you get here? What are you doing here?" The words tumbled out quickly, and Stephanie laughed as she hugged her cousin tightly.

"Uncle Drew and Aunt Maggie sent for me. They thought it would be cool if we spent some time together before my school starts on Thursday," Stephanie explained. "Dad was kinda leery about it, but Mom thought it was a great idea... and here I am!"

"Oh, I never thought... wow! This is such a cool surprise!"

Cherie turned to her grandmother. "Did you know about this? Wait a minute; of course you knew! Whose idea was this?!"

"Mine, mostly," Maggie admitted, opening her arms to hug her great-niece. "After your mom and

dad postponed your vacation, I thought it would be nice for the two of you to get together while your grandma and Kyrano went to close things up back east." She shrugged a little. "It's not the same as Wyoming, I'm sure..."

"No," Cherie admitted, "but it's the next best thing!"

By this time, Lisa had the opportunity to greet her other granddaughter, and suddenly there was a moment of quiet as Stephanie came face-to-face with Kyrano.

"I heard you're going to marry my grandma... sir," Stephanie said quietly and respectfully.

"Yes, I am," Kyrano replied, a little unsure of where the conversation was going.

The girl bit her lower lip, then sketched a little bow. "My name is Stephanie Parkhurst, sir, and I am honored to meet you, sir."

Kyrano smiled, and returned the bow. "We met briefly at your aunt's wedding, Miss Stephanie, but I am glad to make your acquaintance once again. And I am looking forward to becoming your grandfather, even if only by marriage."

There was a brief pause, then Drew clapped his hands. "Well, now that we're all together and everyone's been properly greeted, let's hit the road," he said. "Maggie's got a light dinner planned, and I'm hungry!"

The small group laughed, and the two girls fell into step as they followed Drew and Maggie out. Stephanie gave a quick glance over her shoulder at Kyrano and Lisa, and Lisa chuckled to overhear Cherie inform her cousin, "...and you'll have to call him 'Grandfather'."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:34:23 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/21/2007 5:54 PM

Monday, August 27, 2068, 11:10 a.m., Tracy Island

"Back off, Gordon!"

The door to the Tracy's workout room slid open, and a livid Dianne hobbled out, dressed in shorts and a t-shirt. Gordon, a scowl on his face, followed. Alan stopped in the doorway and watched his brother confront their stepmother.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked angrily. "Don't you want to get that leg back in shape?"

The door to the laundry room slid up, and Virgil stood in the doorway. He watched, surprised, as Dianne stopped and pivoted on her good leg so she was facing Gordon. "Ah do! But Ah'm gonna do it accordin' to mah physical therapist's ordahs!" She speared him with a finger. "That means Ah

do as much as Ah can stand an' no more! Ah'm surprised you got outah that rehab hospital walkin' if this was yoah attitude!"

Gordon's eyes widened in shock, and he stood rooted to the spot as his stepmother turned sharply again and limped off. "Tomorraah, Ah want Nikki t' help me with mah therapy!! Yoah fired!"

As she disappeared around the corner, Gordon blew out a stunned breath. Virgil came up behind him, empty laundry basket in hand. "What was that all about?"

Alan stepped out into the hall. "Gordon wanted Mom to do one more rep than she did yesterday."

Virgil frowned, one eyebrow going up in surprise. "Just one?"

Gordon folded his arms over his chest. "Yes. Just one." He turned back to the workout room to put away the equipment they'd used. Alan and Virgil followed. "When I was in rehab, that was my goal. Just one more rep than the day before. Sometimes I made it, sometimes I didn't. But I wanted to get out of there and back on my feet so I tried to do better than the day before." He whipped a towel over the weight bench in frustration. "It's what I did when I was training for the Olympics. One more lap, pushing myself beyond my limit to get better, faster." He huffed. "It's what got me home sooner than the doctors predicted." He turned to glance out the open door. "I don't understand why she doesn't want to do that." He really looked at his brothers for the first time. "Do you think she doesn't want to get back to 100%?" Motioning to Alan, he said, "You saw her the other day. What do you think?"

Alan shook his head quickly. "I don't know what to think. The other day was scary; it left me thinking she shouldn't have gone down by herself."

"Probably not," Virgil said, "but I have the feeling that Mom is more of a Tracy than any of us want to admit."

"Whatchu talkin' 'bout, Virgil?" Gordon said, frowning.

Virgil shook his head, raising his eyes to the ceiling in silent supplication, and sighing. "I think Mom wants to heal, both emotionally and physically, on her own terms. Just like any of us would want to do." He put his basket on the bench, and spread his hands. "Look. You pushed yourself to get better, Gords; it was what you felt you had to do. Just because she doesn't want to push doesn't necessarily mean she doesn't want to get better. It means she doesn't want to push... if that makes any sense."

He paused to think a moment, eying his younger brother, then shifting his position a little. "Gords, who worked with John on his PT? You or Mom?"

Gordon's frown cleared to a thoughtful look, and he stroked his chin with a hand. "She did, mostly. John used to tell me how gentle she was about it. I helped him work in the water, or if she was busy." He shrugged. "He didn't mind doing one more rep when I was working with him."

"But did she make him do that?"

Gordon held up his hands. "I dunno."

"I bet that if you ask him, he'll say no, she didn't."

"What did the physical therapist tell you to do?" Alan asked, sounding curious.

"To work the muscles until things get easy, then step it up," Gordon replied. He scratched the back of his head, and sighed. "I suppose I'd better follow orders and stop pushing her."

"She's been doing her share of pushing, too, Gords," Alan replied, a sour look on his face. "The more I think about what happened the other night, the more I think she was pushing things to go down to Seven."

"She probably was," Virgil agreed, nodding.

There was a moment of quiet, then Gordon sighed. "Guess I should go see if I can get my job back."

"Do you really want it back? Mom was pretty pissed," Virgil said with a grin. "She might whack you with that cane of hers."

"Begging might work," Alan suggested with a snicker. "Grovel, and she might just give you a little tap."

"I can handle Mom," Gordon said, confidently.

Alan and Virgil looked at each other and burst into laughter. "Riiiiiight," Virgil drawled. "Let me know when you're going to talk to her... this I've got to see."

"Don't you have laundry to do or something?" Gordon asked irritably.

"It's in the dryer," Virgil said. He picked up the basket. "I'll just pop this back in the laundry room then we can go find Mom so you can show us how well you can handle her."

"Who's being pushy now?" Gordon growled.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:35:12 GMT
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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 5/22/2007 12:38 PM

Monday, 27, August, 2068, 22:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Nikki yawned and stretched as she looked out her window at the darkened sky. Gathering up her book and her glass of water, Nikki was about to head to bed when she noticed the glare of her computer screen on its desk.

She was just heading to the computer to close it down when a chime sounded out, telling her that she had a new e-mail. Sitting down in the chair, she opened up the new e-mail and began to read the message. Nikki felt as if she could hear her friend's voice with each word she read.

Hey Nik,

How are you? Sorry I didn't get back to you quicker. Between work, minor problems and family I've hardly had time. In reply to your comment about me being caught on camera at my cousin's wedding, I DON'T THINK SO. I will find ways to hide, trust me.

Now, onto the main part of this e-mail. I'm happy that you've met someone who you feel comfortable talking, working and hanging out with. I can't tell you what I would do because...I just can't. The decision has to be your own and not based on what I may or may not do. That's the best advice I can give you.

You know only a true friend would tell you to follow your heart when it comes to feelings for others and not tell you what you should or shouldn't do.

Well, that is it from me for now. I look forward to hearing from you again. Don't work too hard (like that would ever happen, lol).

Take Care

Emma

xx

P.S. If things go well with this guy, send me pictures and give me details about what he does. I want all the gossip.

Signing out of the e-mail and closing down the computer, Nikki thought about what she would do. *I don't want to ruin the friendship I have with Alan by making a bad decision. She sighed. I should have guessed that was what Emma would say, she thought.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 20:36:33 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 5/23/2007 8:51 PM

Tuesday August 28th, 11:00 AM, Tracy Island...

Gordon stopped in front of the doors to the gym and took a deep breath. Then, squaring his shoulders he stepped inside.

He instantly spotted Dianne and Nikki on the opposite side of the room. Dianne seemed to be

working on leg lifts, and he moved closer. Dianne shot him a look, but didn't say anything, just turned her attention back to her therapy. Gordon folded his hands across his chest and watched.

"That's it, Dianne, you're doing great!" Nikki encouraged as Dianne worked through her routine.

He continued to glower as Dianne went through all the exercises he had tried to get her to do the day before. Why is it she gives me such a hard time and not Nikki? Suddenly he noticed the expression on his step-mother's face. She was pale, and there was a thin sheen of sweat on her forehead. He was about to step forward when Nikki spoke up.

"OK, Dianne, that's enough for today."

Dianne nodded wearily. "Ah think yoah right."

Nikki looked down at the chart in her hands. "You were able to do more than you did yesterday."

"And Ah'll do more tomorrow."

Nikki smiled. "Of course you will, but for now, let's finish up here."

Gordon slipped out of the room before he heard Dianne's reply. He leaned against the wall and rubbed his hands over his face. Virgil was right...I have to fix this.

Dianne settled herself down in a chair on the balcony and was just reaching for her book when there was a knock on the door. "Come in," she called out.

Gordon walked in, his hands behind his back. "Hello, Mom," he said cautiously.

Dianne set her expression. "Hello, Gordon. What brings you heah?"

"I wanted to talk to you," he replied as he sat down on the chair next to her. "I watched your PT today."

"Ah know," Dianne said curtly.

Gordon ignored her tone. "I was being a jerk yesterday. I'm sorry," he said simply. "I wasn't thinking of what was best for you. I was remembering how I felt; the fear that I'd never use my legs again. Sometimes being able to do that one extra rep was enough to get me through to the next day. Other times, when I couldn't do it..." His voice trailed off.

"Gordon..." Dianne spoke softly.

He shook his head, refusing to meet her eyes. "I wasn't trying to be pushy; I just want to see you get well. But after watching you today I realized what you said was right. You have to do this at your own pace. You were right to fire me." His voice hitched and he cleared his throat. "So again, I'm sorry. I guess I'll talk to you later." He got to his feet and started towards the door.

"Gordon, wait." He turned. "Get ovah heah and sit back down." She waited until he had seated himself. "Now, you were right about the fact that you were pushing me too hard. Ah know mah limitations, Gordon. What worked foah you won't necessarily work foah me." Gordon merely nodded as she went on. "Ah know yoah trying to help, and believe me when Ah say Ah love you foah it." She leaned forward and took his hand. "And Ah'm sorry too. Ah shouldn't have lost mah temper."

Gordon finally looked up and smiled. "Truce?"

Dianne smiled back. "Truce." She arched an eyebrow. "What were you hiding behind yoah back?"

Gordon leaned over and picked up a plastic container. "Just a little peace offering." He grinned. "I swiped a bunch of Grandma's brownies."

"Hand 'em ovah!"

Gordon laughed and gave Dianne a brownie, also taking one for himself. He held it up to her. "To stubborn Tracy spirit. May we never change!"

"Hear, hear!" Dianne 'clinked' her brownie to his and then they both burst out laughing.

Gordon leaned back in his chair and shot his step-mother a devilish grin. "Does this mean I get my job back?"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:09:22 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/26/2007 7:34 PM

Tuesday, Aug 28, 12:30 pm, Tracy Island (Monday, Aug 27, 8:30 pm, Md; 6:30 pm, Denver)

"So, when is Tin-Tin coming home?" Gordon asked. He took a sip of his iced tea, and looked to the head of the table where his father sat, a data pad in hand.

"Tomorrow, our time," Jeff said, distractedly, waving a hand. "After the funeral."

Those at the table sat up straighter, glancing at each other with looks of shock and surprise.

"Funeral?" Tyler asked, sounding concerned and scared. "Did Miss Heather die?"

Dianne put a hand on the data pad, getting her husband's attention. "Didn't you tell 'em?"

Jeff glanced up, blinking as he thought for a moment, then he sighed heavily. "No, love, with everything going on, Luke moving to the island and all... I'm sorry." He turned his attention to the rest of the family. "I'm sorry that I didn't tell you this before. Heather Kennedy's mother and sister died the other day. The funeral is on Tuesday in Virginia; I don't have any more details than that. I

asked Tin-Tin to represent the family. She's staying with Lena for a couple of days, and will fly via commercial airlines as far as Wellington. I'll designate someone to pick her up there."

"So, Miss Heather didn't die?" Tyler asked, sounding as if he didn't quite believe.

"No, son, Miss Heather didn't die," Dianne assured him. "She went home 'cause her mother an' sister were in a very bad car accident. The doctors tried to help but..." she smiled sadly, "... they were hurt too bad." Cocking her head to one side, she asked, "Do y' unnerstand?"

Tyler considered it for a moment, then nodded solemnly.

Dianne nodded back, then turned to her husband. "Do th' recruits know about this?" When Jeff shook his head, she continued. "They should. They may want t' send condolences and show theyah support. It'll help with th' team bondin' when Heathah returns."

Jeff nodded. "I'll make sure they do once lunch is over."

"Is Miss Heather coming back?" Alex asked.

"As far as I know, she will be, Alex," Jeff said, "though it will take some time for her to be up to returning to work. This was a very sad thing to happen to her, especially since it was so sudden."

"Maybe we can cheer her up when she comes home," Tyler said, thoughtfully. "I wonder what she likes?" He turned to his grandmother. "Do you think she'd like a kitten?"

"Hm. I don't know. Why don't you give that some more thought, Tyler?" Emily said. "Not everyone likes kittens."

Dianne smiled softly at her youngest. Brains cleared his throat and everyone's attention turned to him. "Uh, if you don't mind, Mr. Tracy, I'd like to be the one to pick Tin-Tin up at the airport."

Jeff glanced up from his data pad again. "Brains? Oh, yes. Fine. That'll be fine, Brains. I'll forward her itinerary to your email."

"Thanks, Mr. Tracy." Brains turned back to his meal, a slight blush covering his cheeks. Gordon gave him a strong nudge in the ribs, followed by a saucy grin and a knowing wink.

"What's got you so distracted?" Dianne asked, peering over to try and view the data pad.

Jeff shook his head. "Just some notes from the debriefing. I'm going to talk with a few of the people who went out on the rescue. I need some more information." He turned to smile wearily at her. "Don't worry about it. I can handle it."

"Can you handle th' recruits an' tellin' them about Heather?" she asked. "Or would it be easier foah me t' do it?"

"I'll do it. I'll have them gather in one of the lounges at the Cliff House. Let them know about Heather's family and about Luke's arrival, too." He put down the data pad to tend to his food.

"Anna will be here soon and you have an appointment."

"Yoah right," Dianne said with a sigh.

Jeff glanced at her briefly as she went back to her lunch.

She's been using that drawl of hers entirely too much lately. She's upset, and that accent tells me just how much.

"May I please be excused?" Gordon asked. "I need to get back to the Round House. Anna's suite won't be quite ready for her this trip, but it won't be from lack of trying."

"I'm right behind you, Gords," Alan said. "Please excuse me, too." He glanced over at Scott. "You coming?"

"Let me finish my lunch, guys; I'll be there soon," Scott said.

"Okay, but you'll have to walk," Gordon warned.

"No, Gordon," Jeff said. "Leave the cart here so I can get Anna when the mail plane arrives. Scott will catch up."

"All right, Dad," Gordon replied with a small sigh. "You ready, Alan?"

"Yeah." Alan nodded. "Dad?"

"Go ahead," Jeff told them. Both young men stopped to kiss their grandmother and thank her for the meal, then they headed out the door and off toward the Round House.

"Those summers the boys spent on the farm making repairs to the house sure paid off, didn't they, Jeff?" Emily said wistfully.

"Yes, they did, Ma," he said, giving her a sympathetic look. "You and I need to sit down and figure out what to do with the property. I know that it'll never be the same again..."

"We can discuss it later," Emily told him, waving a hand. "When you're not so busy."

"I'll make time for you, Ma; you know that," he said, his tone soft.

Emily looked down at her plate. "I know. I'm just not ready to deal with it yet, that's all." She stood up suddenly, and picked up her plate. "If you all will excuse me, I'm going to start cleaning up." Glancing over at her youngest grandsons, she asked, "Alex, Tyler, please help me clear the table. Then once we get the auto-washer running, we can go see the kittens."

"Okay, Grandma," Alex said. He got up to take his plate, and stacked it on Gordon's. Tyler did the same thing, and reached for Alan's plate, then asked his mother for hers. The three of them quietly cleared the table, piling the dirty plates on a cart. Alex carefully pushed it into the kitchen.

"I'm off to the Round House, Dad," Scott said as he rose.

"An' Ah'm goin' upstairs t' see t' the guest room," Dianne said, taking her cane in hand. "Anna may as well stay heah in th' house this time; we have the room an' it'll be too noisy in th' Round House with the boys workin' theyah."

"Where do you want to meet Anna?" Jeff asked, frowning slightly.

Dianne paused for a minute. "Mebbe out on the deck at the back o' the house. Nice an' quiet out theyah an' it's neutral," she replied. "Ah'll see about brewin' a pot o' coffee or somethin' when she gets heah."

"Sounds like a plan," Jeff said, his frown clearing into a smile. She smiled back, gave him a kiss, and hobbled out to the hallway. Jeff noticed that she wasn't limping quite as strongly as before.

"See you later, Dad." Scott gave him a wave as he headed out.

"I've work to do in the lab," Brains said as he finished off his iced tea. "I'll take this into the kitchen, and Scott's plate, too."

"Let me contact the recruits and then we can travel in the monorail together," Jeff said. He took a last gulp of water, and lifted his wrist communicator to his lips. "Dom? This is Jeff. Please meet me in the A lounge of the Cliff House in fifteen minutes. I have some news..."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:10:41 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 5/27/2007 12:24 PM

Monday Aug 27th, Denver, Colorado, 6:30 pm, (Tuesday Aug 28th, 12:30 pm, Tracy Island)

Luke stared out the window in the private lounge at Denver International Airport, watching the planes landing and taking off. Beside him, wearing a red "SAR Dog on Duty" vest, Rommel sat, seeming to watch too.

Most of his things had been boxed up and shipped, but his clothes, equipment, some music, a few books and Rommel's things, were all piled in bags and boxes next to him. "Well, Rom old boy, are you ready for this?" Luke asked, absently rubbing the dog's head. Rom gave a "whuff" in reply and nosed his master for another pat. Luke chuckled and obliged, then his attention was caught as a sleek looking jet cruised up in front of him. A few minutes later, two figures emerged from the jet and waved up at the window. Luke recognized Virgil and Elise.

Virgil walked into the room, smiling. "Hey, Luke! Is this Rommel?" he asked.

Luke nodded. "Go ahead and pat him."

Virgil held out a hand and the dog sniffed it then gave him a lick. Elise did the same and Rommel whined in pleasure as she scratched his ears. Luke rolled his eyes. "He's such a pussy cat."

"Yeah, he's a killer, this one," Virgil chuckled.

"I think he's beautiful," Elise said, still rubbing the dog's head.

"He's something all right." Luke smiled fondly at his dog.

Virgil looked around the room, spying the bags. "Are these your things?"

"Most of it. I had the bigger stuff shipped; this is the stuff I'll need until it all gets there." They gathered everything up, and with the three of them managed to get it all to the plane in two trips.

Virgil hefted the last bag, giving a grunt at its weight. "What do you have in this thing? Rocks?"

"Close, sticks."

Sticks?" Elise asked in confusion.

Luke grinned sheepishly. "Yeah, I carve; it's a hobby of mine. I wasn't sure what kind of wood you had at the island, and wanted to bring some in case I couldn't find anything to work with."

"Carving? Sounds interesting. I paint; we'll have to compare artwork sometime," Virgil told him as he closed the door to the cargo compartment. They climbed aboard the plane, Elise immediately heading to the cockpit and sitting down at the controls. Virgil glanced at Rommel. "Will he be all right?"

Luke nodded. "He should be fine. We've flown in a lot of aircraft." He looked around at the plush interior of the jet. "Nothing this classy though," he added with a grin. Virgil laughed and Luke went on, "I figure he can get out and stretch his legs when we refuel."

Virgil shook his head. "No refueling with this baby. We'll be landing on the island in a little over six hours."

"Six hours?" Luke sounded doubtful.

Virgil nodded. "Mach-1.5 will get us there that fast."

"Wow." Then a shrewd look came into Luke's eyes. "And how long with Mach-2?"

"My brother, Scott-the Speed Demon, is going to love having you around." Virgil laughed as he settled himself into the pilot's seat. Luke sat down and buckled himself in; making sure Rommel was secure in the seat next to him. "Hey, Luke?" Luke looked up to see Virgil with a devilish grin on his face. "Want to find out?"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:16:58 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/27/2007 2:46 PM

Tuesday, August 28, 2068, 2 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff stood by the cart as the mail plane came in, shielding his eyes with a hand. The wind kicked up by the engines made him wish he'd worn a hat of some kind with his shades; the sun was fierce for this time of year.

Juan brought the small plane to a stop after turning it around at the end of the runway, closest to the cliff face. Jeff glanced up to see someone looking over the edge of the Cliff House patio: Nikki, he decided. The recruits had been positive about Luke's impending arrival; Callie had even snickered and asked, "You mean that hunk who was here last week?" But they'd had mixed reactions to his announcement about Heather.

Once the engines had ceased, he strode out to open the co-pilot's door. "Hello, Anna," he said with a smile. "How was the flight?"

"Interesting. I had no idea there were so many small islands with people on them out here." She gave Juan a quick smile as he handed down a small suitcase. "Thanks. See you next week."

"Next week. Ok." Juan turned toward Jeff. "Mr. Tracy, we have one thing that needs your thumbprint." Juan handed down a small data pad. After Jeff signed it and added his print, Juan handed him a large envelope and 2 bundles of other mail. Then he waved and pulled the steps back up into the plane.

"So, what happened this week? I read about the fire in Australia. The commentators said it was only the second time IR had ever offered help before they were called."

"Gordon was worried about rum prices." Jeff grinned

"He would."

"What happened? Let's see," Jeff mused aloud. "Well, Cherie's gone off to visit with one of her cousins at Andy's place. Kyrano and Lisa dropped her off in L.A. on their way to Greenville. Lisa's closing up her little hairdressing shop and selling her house. That young man I was interviewing while you were here last took the job." He sobered. "Our newest recruit, Heather, had to go home. Her mother and sister died in a massive traffic accident."

By this time, they were at the cart and Jeff had put the suitcase in the back. Then he sighed, and before taking the wheel, he said, "And Dianne went down to see Thunderbird Seven."

"Who went with her?" Anna got in the passenger seat and Jeff started the engine.

"No one. She couldn't sleep and went down there while everyone was out at the rescue."

Anna's lips tightened. "Doctors. They make the worst patients. How bad was it?"

"Bad. Alan and Brains found her down there frozen in place. She wasn't responding to them so they called me. Lisa and I went down there and managed to get through to her. She said she was having a flashback."

Juan's plane took off, garnering not even a slight glance from Jeff as he drove, a troubled look on his face, up the switchback path.

"How have things been since then?" Anna asked.

"Quiet... if you don't count her blowing up at Gordon yesterday. But her drawl's been heavy and in this situation, that's a bad sign."

"Any idea why she got angry at Gordon?"

Jeff shook his head slightly. "Something to do with the physical therapy. You'll have to ask her for more details. They seem to have gotten past it, though. The air seemed clearer between them at lunch."

He glanced her way. "Speaking of lunch, have you eaten?"

"No. No in-flight meals on that plane. But I had a late breakfast."

Jeff hesitated for a second. "Dianne wanted to see you first thing. We've just finished eating but Mother could make you something up, quickly."

Anna waved that aside. "I can eat after I've talked to Dianne. If she's waiting for me, I don't want to give her time to get worked up about it. Besides, as a gracious Southern hostess, I bet she has some sort of snack waiting."

"She did mention something about coffee," Jeff commented as they pulled up to the villa. "We put you in the main house today. The renovations to the Round House aren't done yet."

"You didn't have to renovate anything for me." Anna climbed out of the cart.

"Yes, we did. You need an office, not just a bedroom. Besides," Jeff grinned. "It kept the boys out of mischief. The older ones that is."

Emily came to the top of the stairs. "It's good to see you again, Anna. Let me show you to your room."

Briefing Anna by susanmartha and Tikatu

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:26:50 GMT

From: susanmartha Sent: 5/27/2007 7:59 PM

Tuesday, August 28, 2068, 2:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Anna walked out to the porch. Dianne sat there with a cup of coffee and a plate of cookies. In the shade, it was just cool enough that the coffee seemed like a good idea.

"It's nice out here. A bit chilly out of the sun."

"Ah thought you might like some coffee. Then Ah realized you wouldn't have had lunch."

Anna poured herself a cup and added cream from a small pitcher. "Thanks. I realized that might be a problem so I had a large breakfast. Emily has promised some sandwiches when we're through."

"Good," Dianne said, nodding. "Ah thought she might." She took a sip of her coffee. "Hope you find th' guest room up heah to be comfortable."

"Its fine," Anna said, trying to gauge how to approach the subject. Finally, she decided to take the bull by the horns. "Jeff told me there was an incident the other night. He said you went to see Thunderbird Seven. How did that happen?"

"Thought he might've said somethin'," Dianne replied. She took a sip of coffee, then a deep breath. "How did it happen? Well, Ah couldn't sleep, so Ah went down t' see if th' rescue was done." She pursed her lips in annoyance. "It wasn't, an' Jeff had locked the doah aftah orderin' me away from th' lounge."

"So, Ah went back t' owah suite an' tried t' tire mahself out. Watched th' televid foah a while, until a news bulletin came on about th' rescue." Her voice dropped. "Theyah were talkin' about Seven an' whether or not any of us - Nikki, Dom, or me - were theyah."

She took another sip and shrugged. "It just came t' me that Ah hadn't been down t' see Seven since Ah'd gotten home. Ah was still wide awake, so Ah figured, why not now? An' Ah went."

"Did you want anyone to go with you?"

Dianne shrugged again. "Ah'd planned on takin' mah mother with me but Ah didn't want t' wake her. So Ah went ahead alone. Ah figured seeing Seven would complete mah healin'. Apparently, Ah'm not as healed as Ah thought."

"Did you expect to be? You haven't exactly had a lot of time to start healing yet."

Dianne shook her head. "Ah suppose not. But Ah haven't had a flashback or a nightmare since Ah got home. Not one. Ah figured Ah was handlin' things." She sighed. "An' Ah figured Ah could handle that."

"And what happened?" Anna's voice was neutral.

"Ah was doing all right; just had little snippets o' flashback as Ah walked around an' looked at things. Until Ah went t' th' control cabin. Ah started tensing up, then Ah saw the stain in the roof. I froze. Ah guess that was when I started reliving the accident." She shivered and her accent became even more pronounced. "Ah kept hopin' Dom or Nikki would come cut me down. But they didn't come."

Dianne's eyes unfocused a bit. "Ah... Ah was theyah again. Upside down, tryin' t' catch mah breath. Ah could almost feel th' blood..." She closed her eyes and bit her lower lip. "Ah called foah them. Foah Dom an' Nikki an' Scott an' Gordon... it felt like an eternity." She took a deep breath and blinked; her eyes were moist.

"What finally got through to you?"

"Ah heard Jeff callin' me. He was holdin' me and callin'. Ah came back and was looking out the doah. Ah'd never even gone inside - just sat in th' doah and looked in. I was so cold." She shivered, just remembering.

Anna refilled Dianne's coffee cup and pushed it toward her. "Here, drink some." Dianne took a sip and brought herself under control. They sat in silence for a minute.

"I understand you and Gordon had some problems yesterday. What was that about?" Anna wanted to give Dianne a chance to compose herself. She also wanted to see if the trouble with Gordon was connected.

Dianne took a deep breath, a deep gulp of her coffee, then waved a hand. "Jeff told you about that?" She sighed. "He was pushin', tryin' to make me do moah than Ah was capable of. An unnerstan' now why he was doin' it; it's how he got through th' PT after his accident. But... that's not how Ah do things. Ah know what mah limitations are."

"Physically." Anna's look was as neutral as her voice.

Dianne's mouth twitched. "Yeah. Ah suppose so. But Ah didn't expect anythin' like this. Ah thought Ah was doing fine."

"You were." Anna took a cookie, bit into it, then followed it with a sip of coffee. "You still are, as far as I can tell. But you tried to do too much, too fast. When a runner has a sprained ankle, you don't expect him to run a marathon the day the ice packs come off. Or even the day he doesn't need the ACE bandage anymore. But for some reason people feel emotional wounds aren't real - or at least not as real. They won't even give them as long to heal as they do the physical ones. Doctors can be the worst with that. Just because they've intellectually handled what happened they think they should be able to emotionally handle what happened. And they aren't the same at all."

Dianne scratched the back of her neck lightly, and her lips trembled slightly. It took a deep breath, blown out slowly, for her to be able speak. "Ah know. Damn it, Ah've been through this befoah. Different wounds, same principles."

"And just as hard to do the second time. I know you had major emotional problems after the bomb

that killed your husband." When Dianne looked at her, frowning, Anna added, "Drew told me a little. Most of my information came from all of the 'let's look at the emotional health of the survivors' articles there have been in medical magazines. But, have you ever been this badly physically hurt before? And have you ever been trapped with no control over what happens before? Most doctors are control freaks. There is nothing worse for a control freak than to be helpless - powerless, if you prefer." She shook her head. "I shudder to think what Jeff must have been like after his accident."

"He was unconscious during most of the rescue," Dianne said wryly. She sighed. "In answer to your question: no, Ah can't say as Ah have. Not trapped physically." She sipped her coffee again. "Sometimes Ah felt powerless... after Richard died. Powerless over everything it seemed. But not like it was in Seven. Not that horrible feeling of being... stuck and unable to even breathe."

Freshening her coffee, Anna sat back, her cup in both hands. "Going over every injury in your mind? Trying to think through the pain? Knowing what needed to be done but being unable to do it?" Dianne nodded. "After the bombing I would guess you went through a period of depression. Quite understandable. You were helpless to clear your husband's name, helpless over events and had no way of fighting back. You came out of it and took steps to take care of yourself and your kids. Here, you've been physically hurt. That can sap your strength as much as depression. You're trying to take control of the situation as best you can. Tyler getting sick only made the pressure worse. So let's heal as fast as we can, then put the whole thing behind us. Right?"

Nodding, Dianne replied, "Right. Only it doesn't work that way, does it?"

"Nope. So what can we do to deal with your feelings and get you back some control?" Anna sat up and tapped a finger on the table between them. "Consider this the emotional equivalent of your physical therapy."

Dianne chuckled. "As long as Gordon isn't in charge of it." She thought for a minute. "Ah need to deal with the helplessness. Ah guess you are not a proponent of the 'get right back on the horse' theory?"

Anna raised an eyebrow, and sipped her drink again. "Not if the horse broke your leg. You need to let the leg heal. But in the meantime you need to be around horses so you don't become scared of them. So how do we do that?"

"Ah'm not sure," Dianne replied, frowning slightly.

Looking at her watch, Anna said offhandedly, "Well, I'm sure I want some lunch. It's been an hour. Why don't you think about how to handle this and we'll talk again tomorrow."

Dianne finished her coffee, and chuckled again. "Thereby giving me back some of that control. All therapists and counselors are sneaky, right?"

"Right." Anna sounded amused as she rose from her seat. "We have to be in order to outsmart our patients so they'll let us heal them."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:28:07 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 5/27/2007 8:17 PM

Tuesday August 28th, 2:45 PM, Tracy Island (Monday August 27, 7:45 PM, San Diego)

Jeff frowned at the paperwork in front of him. We'll have to go up to Five a few days early to install the new equipment. Callie shouldn't mind and it'll be good to see John. He glanced up at the clock. Virgil should be back in a few hours with Luke and Rommel. Where to put them...He pulled up a screen on the computer. There, top floor next to Brandon would work. We'll see what he thinks when he gets here. Speaking of Brandon, he hasn't called back yet.

As if the thought has summoned it, the phone rang. Glancing at the ID, Jeff took a deep breath and answered. "Hello, Jeff Tracy."

"Hello, Mr. Tracy? This is Brandon."

Jeff leaned back in his chair. "Brandon, I was hoping I'd hear from you. How are things with your parents?"

"As well as can be expected at this point, sir. They're in a convalescent home and my sister and I are in the process of refurbishing the house for when they're released."

"I see." Jeff nodded thoughtfully. "And your reason for not calling me back two days ago? After you had returned from skydiving I believe it was?"

Brandon flushed and looked away. "I'm sorry, sir. I know I should have called but it slipped my mind."

"Brandon, you've been gone over three weeks, and we haven't heard a word from you. An update would have been appreciated. And then I call you and discover you had gone skydiving?" Jeff questioned, a touch of anger in his voice.

"I needed the break, Mr. Tracy."

"That's understandable, but my point is the lack of contact. You never even bothered to return my call. Am I to assume you don't intend to return?"

Brandon's head snapped up. "No, sir! I mean..." He sighed. "I'm not sure what's going to happen at this point. We have the house repairs almost completed, but need to wait until my folks get home to see. I have no idea what kind of care they'll need or if Mom is going to be able to handle Dad by herself."

"Then I should have been told this. We had an...incident...that we could have used your help with," Jeff said sternly.

Brandon nodded. "I saw on TV." He sighed again. "You're right; I should have been in touch. It

won't happen again."

"See that it doesn't. I'll expect a bi-weekly report from you from now on." Jeff paused. "I'm not trying to be a hard-case, Brandon, but you must understand my position."

"I do, sir."

Jeff smiled. "Very good. I'm glad to hear things are looking better for your parents."

"Thank-you."

"I'll talk to you soon, Brandon."

"Good-bye, Mr. Tracy." Brandon's image disappeared from the screen.

Jeff got up and walked out to the balcony, looking out over the sea. I'm starting to wonder if bringing in more people was the right idea. Things have certainly gone downhill fast in the past month. He sighed. I wonder how Dianne's session with Anna is going. Then an idea struck and he brightened. I've got just the thing; I'll set up dinner for two in our suite tonight. Some wine, candle, the hot tub...A little alone time is just the thing we both need.

His spirits considerably lightened, Jeff turned back to his desk, determined to get his work done so he could get back to his wife.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:29:14 GMT
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From: lynnbrody Sent: 5/28/2007 4:08 AM

Tuesday, August 28, 2068, 3 p.m. Tracy Island (Monday, August 27, 2068 11 p.m. locally)

Taking her gym bag out, Cassie shut her locker. She was glad the day was over. It had been one call after another today, ending with the ten car pile-up on the George Washington Bridge. Though several victims had to be cut out of the vehicles and were taken to the hospital with serious injuries, there had been no fatalities. Still, Cassie was relieved that she would have the next day off.

"Cassie, Alex is here. Says he want to talk to you. Told him to wait out front," Fire Chief Frank Calloway said from the doorway of the locker room.

"Okay," Cassie replied, wondering what her ex-husband could possibly want. She hadn't spoken with him since the divorce was finalized a month ago.

The split had been mutual and therefore the divorce relatively quick. Neither of them had been happy for a long time but they had stayed together for Nathan. After Nathan died in the car accident, there had been no point in pretending anymore. No point in staying in an unhappy

marriage.

"Want me to come with you?" Jackie Johnson asked from across the room. The only other female on Ladder 124, she and Cassie were good friends.

"No, I'm fine. I'll see you Wednesday," Cassie told her friend. She shouldered her gym bag and headed downstairs.

She passed a few more fellow firefighters on her way out. It seemed to Cassie they all knew Alex was here as they sent her looks as she walked by. She knew if Alex tried anything, she'd have plenty of back-up.

Alex was leaning up against the building, a box in his arms. He pushed off the building as Cassie came out.

"Hello, Alex," Cassie said neutrally.

"Cassie," Alex replied. "Was cleaning up last night. This is the rest of your stuff from the apartment," he said, holding out the box to her.

Cassie took the box from him. She had been meaning to go back and clean out the rest of her stuff but she had never quite gotten around to it. She sat the box on the ground and dug through her gym bag for her keys. Finding them, she took the key to the apartment she had shared with Alex, off. Standing up, she held it out to him.

"I won't be needing this anymore," she told him.

"Thanks," Alex said simply, taking the key from her. "I've got to go. Take care of yourself, Cassandra."

Without waiting for a reply, he turned and walked away. Cassie watched him disappear and then picked up the box. Turning in the other direction, she started her walk to the nearest subway station so she could get back to her brother's apartment.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:34:24 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 5/28/2007 5:38 PM

*****Tuesday, August 28, 2068; 4 p.m.; Tracy Island*****

Callie walked onto the balcony where she found Anna. "Mrs. Hanson?"

"Callie. Sit down." Anna waved at the pool below them. "How do you like my new office?"

With a shrug, Callie said, "I guess your office isn't quite ready yet."

Anna grinned. "I figured you'd like to be outdoors with a view, considering you won't have an outdoors for a while."

"Mm-hmm," Callie answered, nodding. "I'm heading back to Thunderbird Five in a couple of days. At least I know he won't be there to find me."

Anna didn't reply to this comment about the Hood. "How are you sleeping?"

"I can tell you it has gotten better. Doc took me off the sleeping pills but wanted to keep me on the anti-depressants for a little while longer." Taking a deep breath, Callie added, "Right now I'm scared to be alone."

"Understandable. I'd be more worried if you weren't scared. Do you think you can handle being alone on Thunderbird Five?"

"As long as it's off Earth, yes, I can. It's not like the Hood has a rocket and can get up there so easily anyway. I think I'll be okay up there." She looked up. "It's strange. When I'm thinking about being on a rescue, I can cast that creep out of my mind. I mean, the last rescue in Australia, for example. I admit, the heat did bring the memory back a little bit, but when I concentrated on the fire, he wasn't anywhere in my thinking process."

Anna nodded. "You found something to keep you preoccupied enough. When the rescue was over, did he come back into your mind again?"

"Yes, but not as bad as before. It's slowly starting to go away, but it's going to take a long time. At least I don't have to worry while I am up at Five."

"Have you talked to Mr. Tracy about this? You should. I think you'll be fine, but you and he should have a backup plan in place in case you do have a problem. Sometimes knowing there is a way out can make handling something easier. And I doubt you would take a way out unless you really needed it."

Callie said, "You're right. I'm one of those stubborn types who can wait too long for help." She sighed once more.

Again, Anna flashed a quick grin. "I have a button at home that says 'Stubborn little B---- and proud of it!'. Sometimes you need to be stubborn, to just hold on and refuse to give in. Do you feel the antidepressants are helping?"

"Oh, yes, they've helped me quite a lot. Being home with my family earlier this month also helped take some of the worry away. I felt...safe being around them. I just wish I didn't have to lie." Callie hung her head in shame when she said that.

"What exactly are you lying about? I'm sure there were things in the World Space Agency you couldn't talk about. How is this different?"

Clenching her right hand into a fist, she answered, "I have to tell them I'm working at Tracy

Industries in Hawaii. What if there's a family emergency and someone tries to call me in Honolulu?" Her anger slowly rising, she said, "They'll never forgive me for lying. I've never had to lie before."

"The possibility of someone trying to contact you in Hawaii is a problem. Have you talked to Mr. Tracy about that? And why would your family never forgive you? Surely someone in your family has had to keep secrets as part of their job before. Would they never forgive you for not talking about some other aspect of your work?" Anna's tone was one of polite inquiry.

"That's just it. I don't know." Shaking her head, Callie looked up at the sky. "I mean, sure there were some things I couldn't talk about with the ISS with my family, but they understood that was classified information. Being in International Rescue is a different story."

"Because you want to tell them and you can't." Anna's voice had become gentle.

"Mm-hmm." Tears started to come from Callie's eyes. "I've always been close to my family. I hate this. I hate lying."

"Hate lying or hate not being able to share this with your family?" Anna went on. "If you told your family you were working in a secret location but you were based out of Hawaii, it would be true. But somehow, I don't think that would solve your problem." She was silent for a second, looking thoughtful. "I had a friend once who had to conceal her marriage. Her husband's family would have tossed him out and he needed their support to finish school. She had all this joy that she couldn't share. Plus, normally you would have gone to your family for support after the Hood attacked you. But you couldn't. So a major support block was gone, pulled out from under you."

"When I was at home, one of my older brothers found the sleeping pills Doc gave me. He got worried about me."

"Does he normally snoop into your life? I mean, it's nice that he cares, but you are over 21 - aren't you? If everything else hadn't been going on would you have resented his finding the pills or laughed it off? I mean lots of people use sleeping pills. It's not a sign of a serious problem."

"I did resent him finding the pills, particularly after he asked why Dr. Tracy prescribed them to me." A hand on the edge of the chair, Callie added, "I just said having to change from Eastern Time to Hawaiian time was giving me sleeping problems. I was worried in the argument I would blurt out what really happened."

"You ought to be able to relax at home. Instead you remained tense the whole time, afraid you might say the wrong thing. You didn't feel you could relax at all. And that's not an appropriate feeling for you at home."

"It was only at that time, though. The rest of the time was relaxing...until I got a letter from my ex-boyfriend. It brought back painful memories about the relationship I had." She explained to Anna what had happened between her and her ex-boyfriend in college, leading her not to even look for someone.

"So you got really close to this guy, close enough that you thought it might be permanent then

'Bam!', he dumps you in order to look good to his friends. What a jerk. Aren't you glad you didn't get stuck with him? You certainly wouldn't be working for International Rescue if you had."

Callie was taken aback by Anna's words. "I never thought of it that way. If I were still with him now, I wouldn't even be here. I'd probably be a stay-at-home mom."

"And I'm sure you would be a wonderful stay-at-home mom. Even a wonderful not-stay-at-home mom. Instead you're here, with one of the most exciting jobs in the world. You love it; plus you're using all your training and talents. Granted, raising kids is one of the most challenging jobs there is, but you can still do that if you want. Look at Dom and Joshua. But you are a well-defined person in your own right now." Anna grinned wryly. "I just had a similar conversation with someone else. Marriage has to be between two equals. Otherwise it eats up one of the people involved." Correcting herself, she added, "Actually, that's true of any close relationship. Friend, co-worker - all of these have to be between equals."

Callie nodded, realizing she had extra issues bothering her. "Thanks, Mrs. Hanson. I guess I had a lot more on me than I thought." With a shrug she added, "I thought I was going to talk to you just about how I was doing before I went up to Five, not all these other problems."

"This is how you are doing before you go up to Five. You really can't separate one from the other. How do you feel about being up there alone for a month?"

"I'll admit, it can get lonely at times, not being around people and having to hear only the constant radio signals, never knowing if and when any one could be the call that needs to get IR going."

Anna nodded with understanding and was ready to bring this session to a close. "Ok, two things. One, do not stop taking your antidepressants while you're up there. The side effect of quitting use is usually slight, but it can become severe." Callie nodded. Anna went on. "Two, I want to set up a phone session with you next week."

"A phone session?"

"Yes, an appointment over the phone. I do it for some of my patients when they're gone for a while or when I'm on vacation and they need to see me on a regular basis. You call up and we do this over the phone. If you need to, you can call me anytime, day or night. Just don't expect coherence in the morning." This time Callie grinned. "But I'm used to being woken up for a crisis. Call me during the day, even if it isn't a crisis but you just need to talk. You can be alone up there, but I don't want you to feel isolated. Okay?"

"I'll do that," Callie said with some building confidence in her voice.

"Are you still writing in your diary?" After Callie nodded, she added, "Good. Keep doing that. If your nightmares start coming back, try to write them down, too. And if they come back more than occasionally, call me or Dianne. Got that?"

"I do, Mrs. Hanson. I really appreciate your hearing me out. I feel like I got so much off my back, but I know this isn't going to disappear in a day." She shook Anna's hand. "I have a long way to go, but at least I know I'm not completely alone."

"No, you're not alone. You still have your family, and you have friends. Do you want be to bring up the 'secret location based out of Hawaii' idea up with Mr. Tracy?"

Thinking about it for a few seconds, Callie nodded. "I think so. I just need the peace of mind, knowing my family can contact me in case something does happen."

"I suspect he already has something in place for that. He's a sneaky old guy. You know what they say about old age and treachery."

"Knowing Mr. Tracy, you're probably right. There's tight security, and then there's International Rescue."

Anna laughed. "True. Well, I think I hear dinner calling my name. If you want to talk more, see me tomorrow. Otherwise, have a good trip."

"Thanks, Mrs. Hanson. I'm so glad you're here on the island. Maybe when I get back, and if you're here, we'll take a swim in the pool."

"Maybe." With that, they both stood up and walked into the house - Callie toward the Monorail and Anna toward dinner.

Callie's session with Anna by susanmartha1 and TracyFan4Ever

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:40:51 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 5/29/2007 12:24 PM

Dominic was rhythmically tapping his fingers against his forehead. One, two, three, one-one, one, two three... The news of Heather's losses had knocked him for a loop. He sat on the couch in his apartment's lounge area and was vaguely aware that the kettle had just boiled.

Joshua was sitting on the floor surrounded by toys with his eyes glued to the colourful, most likely brain cell destroying children's vid playing on the televiewer. Horsey was being slammed face-first into the floor every time Joshua saw something he thought was funny. That was often.

One, one, one one... Pause. One, one, one, one... Pause. His thoughts were with Heather and her family...he should probably send his condolences...he wasn't really sure what to say. 'I'm Sorry' didn't quite cut it. He knew from experience.

I'm so sorry for your loss, Mr Kelly... Dominic's glazed, puffy eyes barely acknowledged the doctor standing in front of him. She... He didn't need a doctor to explain to him what his mother had done.

I hope it was sudden, at least... Dominic snorted. What a nice thing to say.

One-two-one-two-one-two. One, two, three, one-one, one, two, three...

Joshua giggled with delight and slammed Horsey down hard onto the flooring -- surprisingly hard for a baby. There was a crunch and a smash that snapped Dominic from his reverie, followed by a moment of awful silence from the child, and then the air-raid siren wail. Horsey's eye had come out.

"Give him here Jak..."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:48:25 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/29/2007 4:37 PM

Tuesday, August 28, 2068, 7:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Luke stepped off the plane into the brightly lit hangar and grinned. "Wow, big hangar space." He glanced over at Thunderbird Two.

Virgil chuckled. "We need it, and not just for my baby over there."

Rommel chose at that moment to rush down the plane steps, his whole body quivering as he tried to take in the new environment. Luke smiled and snapped his fingers. Rom came trotting back to his side.

Elise emerged from the plane and called out to Virgil. "Post-flight checks are all set."

"Great. Thanks, Elise," Virgil replied.

"No problem. I'm going to head up and grab myself some dinner. Luke, I'm sure I'll see you later."

Luke nodded. "Sure thing."

Elise made her way to the monorail, soon disappearing from view. Virgil turned to Luke. "Why don't we leave your stuff here for now; we can grab some dinner then come back for it."

"Sounds good." They too started for the monorail terminus. "Do the others stay at the house?" Luke asked.

Virgil shook his head. "No, it's just family in the Villa. We have the Round House for guests and the Cliff House for the other members of the team. You'll have an apartment there; I just have to see where Dad put you. For now you can join us for dinner and then we'll see what's going on."

A few minutes later they'd made it to the house, and Virgil led Luke to the dining room. "Hey, I'm

back, and brought company. Luke, you remember my brothers." He smiled at Anna. "Hello, Anna. Welcome back."

"Hello, Virgil. And it's Luke, right?" Anna asked.

Luke held out his hand and Anna grasped it firmly. "Pleased to see you again, ma'am."

Anna snorted. "Ma'am; I'm not eighty! Anna will do fine."

Luke grinned and sat down in an empty seat, Rommel curling up next to the chair. "Anna it is then."

"Hi, Luke. Gorgeous dog, what's his name again?" Alan asked.

"Rommel," Luke replied. The dog looked up and wagged his tail, then at Luke's hand signal, lay back down.

"How was the flight?" Scott called out.

"Smooth as silk," Virgil said as he helped himself to salad. "And Luke here got a kick out of going Mach-2."

Scott's eyes lit up. "Yeah? Wait until you go for a ride in my baby. Mach-2 will seem like a walk in the park!"

The others all groaned and rolled their eyes. "Don't get him started, dear," Grandma said as she spooned a large portion of spaghetti onto Luke's plate. "He's a bit vain when it comes to Thunderbird One."

"A bit?" Gordon whispered loudly, nudging Alan.

Tyler stood up on his tiptoes and tried to peer at Rommel over the table, then resorted to looking underneath.

"Tyler." Grandma's voice was soft but firm. "You can see Rommel later."

"Yes, ma'am," Tyler said, sitting in his chair and sounding a bit disappointed.

Luke peered around the table, trying to remember names and faces. "Let's see; you're Alex, right?"

Alex looked up, his mouth full, and nodded.

"And you're Tyler," Luke said, glancing over at the boy.

"Yes, sir," Tyler replied respectfully.

"You have a sister, as I recall..."

"Cherie's gone to the mainland to visit family," Scott said, jumping in. "She'll be back at the end of the week."

"Oh, thanks. I remember meeting you, too, Brains," Luke said. He looked puzzled. "I don't know; it seems like there are a lot fewer people here than last time." He glanced at the head of the table, where Scott sat. "Is Dr. Tracy all right? I noticed she's not here."

His comment caused all the older Tracy sons -- except Virgil - to sit up and either cough or studiously look at their food. Emily looked at them and shook her head. "Dianne's fine; getting better every day. But she and Jeff are... occupied... right now."

Her speech and the reaction of the others helped Luke make the connection. "Ah, okay," he said, nodding.

"Grandma, do you know what apartment Luke is supposed to have?" Virgil asked. "Thought we could move him in after dinner."

"Your father mentioned that he should have apartment 3C. It's one of the remaining one-bedroom apartments." Emily nodded at Luke. "If you prefer a two-bedroom one, we have two of those available, too." She sighed. "I will give you fair warning, though, the last occupant of 3C had a cat. We've done everything we can to remove any scent, but I'm sure Rommel will be able to smell it still."

"I don't think it'll be a problem, but thanks for the warning," Luke told her.

After dinner, Virgil and Scott helped Luke ferry his things up to the apartment, and showed him how the elevator system, and the monorail spur worked. Tyler was allowed to tag along; the boy was fascinated by Rommel.

"You'll find it pretty quiet up here. Your next door neighbor, Brandon, is away for a family emergency, as is your downstairs neighbor, Kat," Scott said as he lowered the bag full of sticks to the floor.

"The apartment is great! Much bigger than I expected, and bigger than my place in Boulder," Luke said as he parted the curtains on the French doors. He took in a deep breath at the colors of the sunset. Glancing back at the brothers, he said, "One thing, though. Rommel sleeps with me, and he's a bed hog. Is there any chance I can get a king-sized bed?"

"Sure, no problem," Scott said. "I can order one and it'll be here in about a week." He handed Luke a box. "Here's your satellite phone. We don't get land line service out here, for obvious reasons. You can give out the number to your family and friends; set it up just like a phone anywhere. Brains or Virgil will help you with aligning your computer for Inet use, and your televid should already be set up for satellite." He smiled. "If you've got any other questions, just give us a holler."

"Don't forget this!" Tyler said, holding out another, smaller box.

"Oh, yeah." Scott opened it. Inside was a watch. "These are our wrist communicators. We used to use them during rescues, but now just use them around the island. If you need to find someone here in a hurry, this is how."

Virgil intervened. "Why don't you let Dad go over this with him tomorrow, after breakfast? It's after midnight, Denver time."

"Oh, sorry. You're right. I'm not thinking." Scott scratched the back of his neck.

"No worries; I'm still good for a bit. But I do have to unpack," Luke said, grinning.

"Okay then, come on over to the house for breakfast around 8 and we'll get you set up with everything else you need. You can make a list of things you want from the stores, or catch a ride... damn, Kyrano's away, too." Scott turned to Virgil. "Who's making the grocery run tomorrow?"

"Hm. I'll have to ask. Brains is going to pick up Tin-Tin; Anna might be catching her ride back with him." Virgil frowned. "I'll ask and make sure. In any case, we'll help you get stocked with food as quickly as possible."

"Sounds good," Luke said. He was beginning to sound weary.

"We'll let you get unpacked, and see you in the morning, then," Scott said. He motioned to Tyler, who was petting Rommel. "C'mon, Ty. Let's get out of Luke's way here."

The Tracy brothers left, and Luke went back to the French doors, watching as the sky changed colors. Rommel came and sat by his side, nudging his hand.

"Well, Rom, this is certainly a new experience," he said as he scratched his dog's head.

settling in by Lillehafrue and Tikatu

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:49:09 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 5/29/2007 5:19 PM

Tuesday, August 28, Richmond International Airport; 5:30 PM (9:30 AM Wednesday, August 29 on Tracy Island)

Tin-Tin boarded the jet that would take her to Christchurch, and quickly found her assigned seat in the first-class cabin. Although the double funeral had lasted longer than she expected, she was able to arrive at the airport early enough to have an aperitif before the plane was ready for boarding. She chatted with a couple of other first-class passengers during the wait, trying to relax.

She settled in and sighed tiredly. That funeral was so difficult to get through. Poor Heather; she seemed to be so numb. And that brother of hers; he is a sweet person, but couldn't understand

what was going on. He was the only one she responded to. She paused in her reminiscences, thinking about the brief chat she'd had with Donny. Donny seemed to think that Heather was home to stay, and I'm beginning to agree with him. She'll want to stay close to her father and brother now, I suspect.

Her thoughts were interrupted when she realized that the jet was backing away from the terminal. She listened patiently to the instructions the attendant gave, then returned to her thoughts.

It's a good thing I was able to relax at Lena's. She was a wonderful hostess, letting me help whenever I wanted to, but not trying to get me to do anything, or coming up with any kind of schedule. I don't know what kind of shape I'd be in now, if I hadn't stayed with her. But I'm glad to be going home, and back to some semblance of normalcy.

She sighed again. I wish it wouldn't take so long to get there. Let's see; since we're leaving here on time, we'll arrive in Honolulu at 4:40, their time. Then a two hour layover and another five hours in the air. That means I'll arrive in Christchurch at 8:40 tomorrow night, their time. More than a whole day, lost! Despite advances made in commercial air travel, it still took time to get from one place to another. Tin-Tin knew this, but it didn't make her any more patient.

About half an hour after takeoff, dinner was served. She ate lightly, then decided that she was tired enough to sleep. She covered herself with the light blanket, tucked the pillow behind her head, and soon dozed off.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:55:33 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/29/2007 5:25 PM

Tues, August 28, 10:30 p.m. local time, England (Wed, August 29, 9:30 a.m., Tracy Island)

Kat put her cup of tea and a small plate of biscuits down on the desk beside her laptop. She sat, opening up the computer and starting it, trying to compose in her mind what she wanted to say. There's so much to tell John! she mused as she sipped her tea. But where do I start?

Once connected to the Internet, she opened up an email window, then sat staring at it for moment. Finally, after another fortifying sip of tea, and a bite of crisp biscuit, she put her fingers on the keyboard.

Dear John

I hope this letter finds you healthy and ready to come back to earth. It's just a few more days, isn't it? Are you excited? I can't remember if it's Callie or Alan who is to replace you. I'm sure whichever one it is, they're looking forward to getting away from the hustle and bustle of the island.

I saw the rescue in Australia on television. What a terrible job that must have been! Was this really

only the second time that IR has volunteered their help? I can't possibly believe that to be true; I'm sure there have been dozens of instances, many that the general public has no idea have happened.

How is everyone? How is your mother and how are Nikki and Dom? Are they recovering well? Has Brandon returned? What happened with Heather's family? It has been difficult to be so far away and have little or no news from my friends.

Here she paused, suddenly thinking of what had happened just the other night.

One of Melanie's other bridesmaids, a rather posh girl by the name of Teresa, had suggested they go clubbing. It had been so long since she had done anything of the sort -- the last instance she could remember had been the evening in Christchurch -- that she eagerly accepted the invitation. She wasn't sure if they would be going to the usual types of clubs or to places that would require a more dressy look, so she put on the long ivory and rose-print skirt with the matching ivory vest top that Lady Penelope had purchased for her before she'd left for the island. That shopping trip seemed like a lifetime ago, but the ensemble would do no matter where she went.

The first club they'd gone to was definitely on the posher side, and Kat was glad for her dressy clothes. She sat at the table with Teresa and Melanie, watching the couples dance and drinking a glass of wine. Melanie had gone to the powder room and Teresa was dancing, when a handsome young man had come up to the table. He looked vaguely familiar to Kat, but she couldn't for the life of her think of where she'd seen him before.

"Kat? Kat Williamson?" he asked, his bright smile flashing.

"Yes, I'm Kat Williamson," she said, Pausing, she gave the man a small, unsure smile. "Forgive me, please. I feel we've been introduced, but I'm afraid I can't remember your name."

He laughed. "Clark Kent was right. The glasses do change everything."

At that moment, Melanie came up. "Well, hello there, Toby," she said with a smile. "I see you've found dear Kat."

Kat's eyes widened. "No! You can't be! Not dear old Toby!"

The young man smiled again, though it did sting to hear himself referred to like some old dog. "Yes, Kat, it's your dear old 'Toby'." He turned around once, holding his arms out to show his smart clothes. "I've washed up well, haven't I?"

"Why, y-yes," Kat stammered. She peered at his face intently. "What happened to your glasses? I remember they were very thick and heavy."

"Surgery, m'dear, surgery," he said as he slipped into the seat next to her. "And it is you I must thank for it. Your recent email to dear cousin Melanie, commenting on my rather passé eye wear, was the catalyst. I felt it was time to finally put off the old 'Toby' and put on the new... the name is Thomas, by the way. Always has been, y'know. 'Toby', that stalwart, hound-like name, was a pet name given to me by my cousins and school chums. It comes from my initials: Thomas

O. Bentley-Edwards." He glanced up. "Ah, and here comes my lovely twin, Teresa. Hullo, Terri."

"If you want me to call you 'Thomas', then please drop the 'Terri'," Teresa said peevishly. She glanced at Kat. "So this is the Kat you kept going on about? I had no idea she was a friend of Melanie's."

"Well, she is, and soon to be related as well," Melanie said with a smile. "Now, Tob... I mean, Thomas, why don't you take Kat out on the dance floor? You've gobsmailed her once this evening; why not again?" Leaning over, she murmured into Kat's ear. "He is the best dancer!"

Thomas turned to her. "Would you care to dance with me, Kat?"

Something inside whispered, "What would John say?" but Kat remembered Anna's words of advice about relationships. She smiled at this new Thomas, and said, "Yes, I would very much." She laid her purse down on the chair, and rose. He formally offered his arm, and they two went off to join the dancers.

Kat smiled at the thought. She and Toby - Thomas, she thought, mentally correcting herself - had danced several numbers together and Melanie had been quite right, he was a very good dancer. Much better than any of the Tracy sons, if truth be told. He had purchased a refill on her wine for her, and had insisted on driving her home, leaving Melanie and his sister to shift for themselves.

But do I want to tell this to John? she mused. I will consider it as I continue the letter.

She returned to the email.

Wedding preparations are going along fairly smoothly, the only hold up being the bride's dress itself. The couturier who was to design and sew it cannot possibly have it done in time, so Melanie has had to look for something off the rack. We are to visit Harrod's tomorrow morning.

I have given my preliminary deposition and the solicitors asked some sharp questions of me. It seems that this will be going to a jury trial as Ernie -- the accused man -- insists that he is innocent of the crime. I fear facing him in the witness box, but I know my duty as a good citizen and shall gather all my courage to do what is necessary.

But it has not been all work and no play; Melanie and her cousins, Teresa and Thomas, have taken me to several clubs. We are to go tomorrow evening and Andrew will accompany us. Thomas is a wonderful dancer and quite witty; he is the life of the party wherever he goes. It is a sharp contrast to the way he used to be, very intense, with thick glasses and wearing clothes that looked positively last century.

Timothy and Suzi are to arrive tomorrow afternoon with the children. It is really very providential that Melanie's brother, Richard, is being deployed unexpectedly. Suzi won't find the flight or the wedding as tiring so early in her pregnancy, I should think.

She smiled, and decided it was time to finish her letter. Biting lightly on the end of her fingernail, she thought of how she might close it. Finally, she began to type again.

Well, I can't think of any more to say. Write when you can; I look forward to your letters.

Love, Kat

Checking her spelling and punctuation, she finally sent the email off to John. She sat back with her lukewarm cup of tea, and happened to glance at the clock. Time to sleep. Then Harrod's tomorrow morning, Tim and Suzi in the afternoon, and out to the clubs with Tob... with Thomas... in the evening.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 21:58:20 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/29/2007 10:19 PM

Wednesday, August 29, 2068, 11:45 a.m., Tracy Island.

Scott sat in a chair near his father's desk, shaking his head as Elise gave Jeff her impressions.

"I felt like I was out of my league, Mr. Tracy," she explained. "I don't have experience fighting fires." She shot a look at Scott. "And it's not as if I've had any training in it, either. In my opinion, Mobile Control training has been sorely lacking."

She's gotten bold, Virgil thought admiringly. Very few people would criticize Scott -- or Dad -- like that. Let's see if she gets away with it.

Jeff sat back, the data pad with his notes in on hand, a stylus in the other. "So you feel we need to add more training in the running of Mobile Control?"

Elise took a deep breath. "Not only that, but in coordination of rescues overall, sir."

"Dad," Scott interjected. "I had to learn by doing in a lot of cases, especially at the beginning." He held up his hands. "We worked some scenarios, sure, but there was a lot of on-the-job learning."

"With all due respect, sir," Elise said as she jumped back into the conversation. "Scott has had leadership training out the wazoo."

"I have to agree, Dad," Virgil said. "Learning to run our fire equipment is one thing; knowing how a fire works, how it spreads, how to best fight it is another." He swept a hand out, indicating everyone in the room. "I think we could all use some training, not just whoever is manning Mobile Control."

Jeff sat quiet for a moment, then asked, "Scott? What do you think?"

Scott took a minute to gather his thoughts, then said, "I can't argue with the need for more training. We need training in all areas, and upgrades in that training, too; we'll never come to a point where we say we know it all. But it's the 'how' that bothers me." He indicated Elise with a

hand. "Do you want us to go to fire fighting school? Is there someone you know who can come here and help? Is this something Luke is skilled in? Because I don't think we can learn this from some cut and dried correspondence course."

"I agree with that," Virgil said. "We've had some experience, but for all we know, we could be going about this the wrong way."

Jeff sat up. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves here, boys... and lady." When he was sure he had the attention of the others, he resumed. "Our primary focus is rescue, not firefighting. But if, as part of our rescue activities, we have to fight a fire, I want us to do it right." He looked at his sons, and Elise, fixing each with a determined gaze. "I need ideas on how to accomplish that goal."

The other three were quiet for a moment, then Elise said, "Bring in someone with experience. Hire a firefighter. You've hired aquanauts, and nurses, and now a search-and-rescue specialist. Bring on someone who's done it before."

Jeff nodded slowly. "That might work. I'll need to think of a cover for them though. This won't be someone we can hire in house."

"Like the cover you came up with for Luke?" Virgil said with a grin.

"Yes," Jeff replied, sighing. "It's getting harder and harder to frame a 'job' in Tracy Industries in terms of IR's needs."

Virgil and Scott chuckled; Elise looked puzzled for a moment, then her face cleared as she understood the situation.

"How about someone to develop fire safety programs and teach them to some of our more far flung plants?" Scott suggested. "I mean, in the States, fire safety is supposed to be written in the building codes, and taught to all the employees. But perhaps in some of our foreign properties..."

"Fire safety is still incorporated in the plans for every property we build, Scott," Jeff said seriously. "But teaching the production crews... it might work at that." He put a note on his data pad. "I'll have human resources start the ball rolling. Hopefully soon, International Rescue will have a firefighting expert to help us better our skills."

"Sounds good to me," Virgil said, smiling.

Jeff uploaded his request, then looked at his watch. "I think we're done here. Thank you all for coming, and for your input."

Scott glanced at his own timepiece, then his paint-spattered clothes. "I'd better change clothes before lunch."

"How are things going on Anna's suite?" Jeff rose from his chair. The two oldest Tracy men started out of the room, walking together and conversing quietly. Virgil turned to Elise.

"Would you like to join us for lunch?"

Elise's face lit up with a smile. "I'd love to. It's been a while since I've talked to Tyler and Alex, and I'd like to see Anna again... in a less professional setting."

Virgil hrumphed. "Tyler and Alex, huh?"

"Well," Elise replied with a twinkle in her eyes, "it's not like you asked me to have lunch with just you now, is it?"

"Hmmm." Virgil looked thoughtful. "I'll remember that for the future."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 00:34:28 GMT

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From: susanmartha Sent: 5/29/2007 11:18 PM

Wednesday, August 29, Tracy Island, late afternoon

"Hello. Can you tell me how to get back to the Cliff House?"

Anna looked up from her book. The young man before her smiled. The large dog seemed to be smiling too. "I'm not sure. I don't live here. You're Luke and this is Rommel, right? I'm Anna Hanson. We met at dinner last night. Is it ok to pet him or is he working?"

"Go ahead. He's off duty. We were just exploring."

Anna held out her hand, palm down, and let Rommel sniff it. She then moved the other hand to scratch behind his ears. He moved over and put his head in her lap. She responded by scratching down his back. "Oh, you are such a big handsome fellow, aren't you? And you know it too."

"Yes he does. Rommel, you ham." Rom looked up at him. "You're nothing but a hand slut, you know that, don't you? He's really got you figured out," Luke added looking at Anna.

"It's the bright neon yellow "Sucker" on my forehead. It's visible to all kids and animals."

Luke chuckled and sat down as Anna continued to ruffle Rommel's fur. "He's got my mom so well trained, he just looks at her and she gives him a cookie."

Anna grinned. "Spoiling her grandchild?"

"Yeah, that's what she claims. She has three human grandkids that she doesn't spoil as much though."

"Does she get to see them as often as Rommel?"

"More often, actually. They still live in Montana."

Anna looked up, surprised. "What part of Montana? I have relatives all over there."

"My parents own a sporting goods store in Bozeman. My brother lives in Great Falls, so they see each other a lot."

"About a three hour drive then. Or less in the land of no speed limits. Do they still put the white crosses up?"

Luke nodded. Montana technically had no speed limit other than "whatever is reasonable under the conditions." However they put a marker with white crosses by the road for each fatal accident. There was one corner on the state highway near his parents house with 3 markers -- one with five crosses and two with three. Luke slowed down every time he drove past them.

"Are you from Montana?" It would be nice to meet someone from home here. He was feeling a little lost.

"No, I'm from Seattle. My grandmother was from just outside of Great Falls. She had 4 brothers and 4 sisters and they all still lived there and so did most of their kids and grandkids. They would come out to see us and to catch a Mariners game."

Luke grinned. The nearest professional sports teams to Montana were in either Seattle or Denver. Most people who followed baseball in Montana were fans of the Seattle Mariners.

"How did you wind up out here?"

"The usual way. Met a guy in college and followed him home. I decided he was well trained so I kept him. I still maintain my US citizenship but my kids are New Zealanders. They've only been to the States once."

Luke was comfortable. Rommel had settled down between them, having realized there was no food to con anyone out of. Dinner was still a couple of hours away and he really didn't feel like returning to his apartment. "How many kids do you have? Any grandkids?"

"Three kids, one grandkid. Terry's my oldest, he and his wife have one kid. David's married, he and Charlie are considering adopting. Mary's still in college, studying music and computers."

"David and Charlie can't have kids of their own?"

Anna looked at him and smiled. "I'm sure they could but I think neither one of them could carry to term. And they haven't figured out how to use sperm from two people instead of sperm from one and an egg from the other yet."

Luke gazed at her for a second, then chuckled. "Yeah, I can see that could be a problem." He frowned thoughtfully. "Is marriage legal here? I mean Gay marriage and in New Zealand."

"No, just civil commitments. But I'm a lay minister in the Episcopal Church and can bless the marriage. I've done it seven or eight times. The church doesn't recognize them but it doesn't push

the issue either. The biggest problem I have is figuring out what to say at the end."

"What?"

"Well I can't say 'I now pronounce you man and wife. You may kiss the bride' to two Army officers in dress uniforms."

Luke chuckled again. "No, I don't suppose you could. What did you say?"

Anna grinned at him. "I now pronounce you married in the eyes of God. In case you haven't already, you may now kiss." She went on, remembering. "Their commanding officer was there along with most of the squadron. I could see him trying to suppress a chuckle. We wound up spending most of the reception trying to figure out how to get them into married officer housing instead of the barracks."

They laughed together, then Luke asked, still smiling, "I take it your family approves of David and Charlie's marriage?"

"My family here, yes. They think the world of Charlie. As for the rest?" Anna shook her head. "Not so much. My mother has never seen anything she didn't expect to be there in her entire life. It's one reason I really don't want to go back and visit. I didn't send her any pictures of David and Charlie's wedding either."

Luke settled his hands behind his head and was quiet for a while. His next question was hesitant, as if he were weighing his words carefully. "Do you know of anyone on the island who might have a problem with someone who is gay or lesbian? Or someone transgendered?" He glanced over at her. "Just... anyone outside the traditional sexual or gender norm?"

She sat back for a minute considering. His questions made her suspicious. If he is gay or transgendered, he needs to feel comfortable enough to tell me. I can't push. "Hm. My impression is no. I don't think there is anyone here who would cause any problems for someone like you've described."

Their eyes met for a moment. Luke nodded emphatically. "Good. Glad to hear it." He sat back, smiling. "I'm looking forward to working with this bunch." With a huff, he added, "My previous supervisor... well, let's just say he didn't like the way I did my job." In more ways than one.

"Is that why you left?"

"Because of him? Yes. And because I didn't like the way he did his job either."

Anna looked up and noticed Gordon walking toward the pool. Nikki was just coming out the patio door. "Time for the afternoon swim." Luke looked at her. "It's not official but a lot of people take a dip when the day's jobs are over. Prepare to get splashed."

A yell of "Gordon! Swim!!!" heralded Dom and Joshua's arrival.

"If I can figure out how to get back to my apartment, I might change and join them."

Anna noticed someone else coming outside. "Virgil. Come here for a second." Virgil obligingly started walking toward them. Anna turned to make a final comment to Luke. "If you're ever interested in introductions to the LBGT community in Christchurch, let me know. David still lives in town and he and Charlie can show you around." Then, turning back toward Virgil she asked "Virgil, do you have any maps of this place?"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:06:27 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 5/30/2007 8:08 PM

Wednesday, August 29; Christchurch; 9 PM

As soon as the jet stopped at the terminal, Tin-Tin was out of her seat, carry-on in hand, eager to get into the terminal and find her ride home. She got through customs with her bag, and began to look around as she walked. Then she spotted him.

"Br. . . Hiram!"

He stood there, smiling, and walked over to her. She dropped her bags and threw her arms around his neck. He returned the embrace enthusiastically and immediately, and felt her relax in his arms.

They stood there for a full minute, while people walked around them, smiling, then Tin-Tin pulled slightly away and looked up into his eyes. "I didn't know who would meet me, but I can't think of anyone I'd rather see, except maybe my father. Thank you for coming."

"When Mr. Tracy told us that you would be returning today, I asked him to let me come get you. He agreed, and asked me to fly Mrs. Hanson home. She's probably with her family by now. So it'll just be the two of us on the flight back."

"That's fine with me. But you volunteered to fly here and leave your work early? Why?"

"I believe you know the answer to that question. I missed you in more ways than one."

"Oh, Brains. That's so sweet." Tin-Tin hugged him again, briefly.

"You look tired, though. Was it rough over there? Or were your flights the rough part?" He released her, then reached down and picked up her bags.

"The funeral was the difficult part, aside from my time in Richmond prior to that," she replied as they got on a transport that would take them to the terminal where the Tracy jet waited. "But my visit with Lena was wonderful, and very relaxing. It helped me get through the funeral."

"How is she?"

"Her left arm is in a sling, and she said the doctor told her to keep it there as much as possible. She seems to have been following his orders very well. And that's nearly the only sign now that she was in any kind of accident. We did a lot of talking and catching up. I even met some of her family, and they told me to say hello to you. Oh, she told me she believes she's found the key to upgrading the communications security program, including data as well as voice. But she didn't work on it while I was there, so I don't know what she came up with."

"I'm glad she's better. And I will wait to see what she figure out." He chuckled. "I'll have to, not matter how impatient I might be."

They soon arrived at the terminal, and got out. Removing her bags, they went to the desk where a clerk awaited them. "Mr. Hackenbacker, your flight plan has been filed, and your jet refueled. You can board immediately." He handed Brains the data pad to sign and, when it was returned, added, "Have a nice flight."

"Thank you." Brains and Tin-Tin turned and headed to the jet. Soon they were aboard and taxiing to the runway. "Let's get you home. You can get something to eat, and have a good night's sleep. Tomorrow, you work." He hesitated, then continued. "The new med bay equipment for Five arrived while you were gone. I'll be going up there tomorrow with Alan and Callie to install the equipment. So the lab will be all yours. And since Kat is still gone, so is equipment maintenance." He grinned at her. "Have fun getting Gordon, Virgil and Scott to help you in that area with anything other than their babies."

She giggled as the tower cleared them for takeoff. "I'm looking forward to it. I want to get back into a routine of sorts."

"I know how that feels," he replied as the jet headed down the runway.

A few seconds later, they were airborne and on their way home to Tracy Island.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:12:09 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 5/31/2007 10:25 AM

Thunderbird Five, Thursday, August 30th, 8:00 AM...

John smiled as he finished re-reading Kat's email. It sounds like she's having a good time despite the trial. He hit the reply button and began to type.

Dear Kat,

I'm glad to hear things are going well. Hopefully your testimony will put that creep behind bars where he belongs.

You were right about the rescue; it was tough. We lost contact with Alan for a few minutes, but everything turned out fine and no one was hurt. Mom, Nikki and Dom are doing well. Getting a little better everyday.

I'm afraid I have sad news concerning Heather's family. Her mother and sister didn't survive the car accident, and she's currently in the States to be with the rest of her family at the moment. Hopefully she'll be back soon and the new job will help her put this behind her.

Brandon, too, is still away. We hadn't heard much from him until Dad called a few days ago. I guess his parents are on their way to recovery, but we have no idea when or if Brandon will be returning. He's supposed to keep us more informed; I guess we'll just have to wait and see.

It sounds like the wedding plans are flowing smoothly, except for the dress. Did you find anything when you went shopping? And meeting up with old friends must be fun. I'm glad you're having a good time.

I should be back home in a few more days. We're doing some modifications up here, so that means I get to go down a few days early. And do you remember Luke Morel? He was here when you left. Well, he accepted the job and has just moved in. His apartment is above yours so I'm sure you'll be seeing a lot of him. Tyler tells me he has a gorgeous German shepherd too. It will be funny to have a dog on the island. Wonder what he'll think of the kittens? Tyler also sent me pictures of them. Little things are getting big!

Well, I have to go run some more checks here. I'll see you soon.

John

John looked over the message, then correcting an error or two, hit send. He then leaned back in his chair, staring out at the stars. I like Kat, I really do. She's so tiny and frail looking that it seems to bring out the protective side in all of us. But watching her with a wrench in her hand really puts a crimp into that way of thinking. He read her note again. It certainly seems like she's having a good time back home. I'm sure she'll have plenty to talk about when she gets back.

John got up and stretched his arms over his head. "Better get a move on; Alan and company will be here shortly." He sat down in front of another console and got back to work.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:15:18 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 5/31/2007 8:23 PM

*****Thursday, August 30, 2068; Tracy Island Roundhouse; 9:30 a.m.*****

As the sofa entered the hub of Thunderbird Three, Alan said, "Want to fly her up from start to finish?"

Smiling, she said, "You bet." She sat at the main controls of the space rocket. Into the radio, she said, "Base from Thunderbird Three. Requesting clearance for launch."

Jeff said, "Thunderbird Three, you are clear for launch. Good luck."

"F-A-B," said Callie. She pressed the button which sent the space rocket on its journey to Thunderbird Five.

"We'll be there for a couple of days to install the medical bay equipment," Brains said.

"And as soon as we're all done installing the equipment," Alan said, "everybody returns to Earth."

Callie laughed. "Yeah, everybody except me, since I'll be flagging calls again. Oh, well, it's about time I got back up there anyway. I miss all the noise of the messages from around the world."

Brains kept a close eye on her as she flew the rocket.

They continued their banter for another hour until Three was approaching the space station. Alan said, "Callie, feel like docking her into the station?"

"Sure. Even though it's only my third time officially doing it, I think I've got it."

"All right, I'll leave it to you then."

Following the procedures exactly, Callie had no trouble berthing Three into docking bay of Five. "Okay, everyone, we're safely secured." She then pressed a button. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Three. Docking completed. We've got the medical equipment ready to unload."

John said, "F-A-B, Thunderbird Three. I'll join you shortly to help get the equipment in here. Hey, are there enough meals for us for the next couple of days?"

"No problem," said Alan. "Grandma made us pack enough food to keep us going for a week. We'll have lunch first and then get to work on moving the gear inside."

Soon, all four people were enjoying their sandwiches inside the space station. With a long job ahead of them, they needed all the energy they could get.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:19:05 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/1/2007 8:20 PM

Thursday, August 30, 2068, 2:15 p.m. Thunderbird Five

"Hand me the laser welder, Alan?" John reached out a hand, and Alan put a pencil thin instrument

into his brother's palm. "Thanks."

"So, how many of these monitor bubbles will be installed?" Callie asked, turning away from the radio console for a moment, frowning at the little black ball that John was busy installing.

"Two per cabin, four in each control room, one in every bathroom..." Brains began to list the all the places they'd be installing the monitor bubbles.

"Wait," Callie broke in. "You mean we'll be monitored in the bathroom? Nobody mentioned that to me!"

Alan and Brains exchanged slight smiles. "They say that the most dangerous falls take place in the bathroom, Callie," Alan said.

Brains shook his head slightly. "It won't be invasive, Callie, not unless it absolutely has to be. Just a general reading of body temperature, pulse, heart rate, and physical movement. If something happens, say you fall in the shower and hurt yourself, the resulting changes in your condition will signal Dianne, or whoever's on duty in the sick room that something's gone wrong. You can even call for help; the sensors are attuned to a small vocabulary of distress words, and will activate the audio automatically. I assure you that the visual portion won't be turned on unless Dianne, and Dianne alone, considers it necessary. The only ones who would see you at all in such a... ahem... delicate situation would be Dianne or Nikki." He raised an eyebrow and made a rueful face. "I've also built in a heavy duty security system; Gordon will not be playing voyeur."

"If he tried, Dad would skin him alive and Mom would rub salt into the wounds," John stated, his voice very matter-of-fact.

Callie's face went from very concerned and disbelieving to pensive to shocked at all the men had to say, especially John's last comment. She hadn't expected something so forthright and visceral from him.

"So, the little monitors will be all over the place, monitoring my vital signs for Dianne to see," Callie said slowly. "Then what's in the big boxes?"

"New biobeds," Alan told her. "Damn!" He shook his finger. "Got a little too close with that welder."

"Come with me, Alan, and let's get that fixed up." Brains cut off Alan's protest before it could form, and herded the young astronaut off to the sickbay.

"Biobeds? Like the ones in Seven?" Callie asked.

"A couple like that, and one that has the full scanner option. Ah. There." John stepped down from the small ladder he'd been using to reach the corner of the ceiling. He crossed over to pick up the data pad that had the instructions telling where the monitor bubbles were to be installed. "Looks like the next one goes... here!" He compared the spot he was looking it with the schematics on the pad, and marked the spot. "Looks good."

Brains came out of the sickbay. Alan followed, his fingertip covered with both a clear salve and a protective film. He picked up his tools as John moved the stepladder over to the next installation

point.

"So, two biobeds like Seven has, and a scanner bed." Callie kept half an ear on the incoming transmissions. "How are we supposed to get to them if something's happened to us?"

"Well, if you can get to it, that's good. Dianne will be able to monitor your vitals with far greater accuracy from there than with the sensors. And..." Here Brains sighed. "If your injuries are so great that you need surgery, Dianne will be able to perform it here, instead of waiting to get back to Earth." He raised his hands and shrugged. "It's far from perfect, Callie, but it's better than what we have now, which is little to nothing."

"Hey, Brains," Alan asked, suddenly sounding concerned. "I know it's a long shot with the power setup we have, but what if there's an outage of some sort?"

"These little sensors are all battery-operated. There'll be a diagnostic program for them to be performed at least once a week. As for the biobeds, they'll have a separate power line of their own, and the scanner bed will feed into emergency power if necessary." John shook his head and let out a sigh. "Working up here is dangerous, far more deadly than any rescue on Earth. We're surrounded by airless space, and protected from it and decompression by what is, proportionally, a thin metal skin." He glanced over at Brains, who, like the others, had become sober. "But we've done everything to minimize the risk, starting with the C/31 cahelium outer hull. This is just another way to keep us safe, and hopefully healthy up here."

John went back to his work, the control room silent except for the muted babble of the audio monitors. He broke it himself with a satisfied, "There! Done!" Turning back to Brains, he asked, "Is that the last one in here?"

"Once Alan's finished the one he's working on..."

"I'm done, Brains," Alan said.

"Good!" John folded up the stepladder and pocketed his laser welder. "Where to next?"

Brains consulted his data pad, then glanced up at Callie with a sly grin. "Alan, you can take the passageway and airlock to the left, while John works in the washroom on this level. Might as well get this out of the way, right, Callie?"

Callie rolled her eyes and made a little face at him. John and Alan both chuckled as they collected up their gear and moved out of the main monitor room.

Once left alone, Callie gave a little huff. "I'm going to have a good long talk with Dianne about this bathroom thing."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:20:51 GMT

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From: lillehafrue Sent: 6/3/2007 9:00 PM

Tracy Island, Friday, August 31, 10:15 AM

Luke made his way down the corridor, stopping in front of the infirmary door. He knocked and hearing a "Come in!" walked inside. He paused for a moment to stare at the medical equipment, trying to figure out what some of it did.

Nikki looked up from where she was working and smiled. "Hey, Luke. We met briefly the other day; I'm Nikki."

Luke smiled. "I remember." He glanced around again. "This is some top grade equipment."

Nikki chuckled. "One of our many perks."

"I'm sure."

"Where's Rommel today?" Nikki asked.

"I left him back at the apartment. He's not adjusting well to the heat and altitude. I figured I'd leave him in the AC for a while."

Nikki frowned. "Hmmm, if he isn't feeling better in a few days, we'll try and find a vet to take a look at him. How are you feeling?"

Luke shrugged. "Pretty good. A little light headed if I stand too fast, but that's fading. I did a little reading online, and there's nothing abnormal about it. Just my body adjusting from over a mile in elevation, to sea level. It's the same when some people get to Denver; dizziness, nosebleeds, dry mouth, but it goes away in a week or so."

"Interesting," Nikki mused. "Well, if you'll go behind the screen and put this on," she handed him a pale blue robe. "I'll go tell Dianne you're here."

Luke watched her go, then walked to where Nikki had indicated and quickly changed into the exam outfit. He raised an eyebrow as he discovered just how little it covered in the rear, but settled himself on the gurney to wait for Dianne.

Dianne walked in, cane in one hand, data pad in the other. She looked up at Luke and smiled. "Good morning, Luke. I take it you've been to see my husband this morning?"

Luke nodded and held up his left arm. "Just got finished there. He gave me the operating instructions for my new watch here. I'm going to meet with...Tin-Tin? I guess she'll be measuring me for a uniform."

"Yes, that's part of her job." Nikki came in with a tray of instruments and Dianne put the data pad down on the gurney and began her outer observations, gently prodding Luke's throat with warm fingers. "Nikki tells me you're having a bit of trouble adjusting to our lack of altitude." She used a penlight on Luke's eyes. "If you're still having trouble by the end of this week, let me know and I'll

see what we can do."

She continued with the examination, murmuring things into the earphone mike that was attached to one ear, and asking Nikki to hand her various implements. "Did Jeff tell you that you're to get a locator implant today?"

Luke looked startled. "No. He mentioned that they had ways to track us during a rescue, but I figured it was through the wristcomm." He shrugged. "But a locator chip makes more sense I guess. Will Rom get one too?"

"Yes," Dianne told him, "but I'll have to consult with a vet on the best place and method to implant it." She smiled at him suddenly. "Never thought I'd be doctoring dogs and cats, but it looks like I might have to. We have a mother cat and a set of kittens here now, in addition to Kyrano's cat, and my sons' fish tanks."

She asked him to get up and walk away from her, then turn and walk back. She had him stand on one foot, then the other, and perform some more physical activities. Then she motioned toward the scanner. "Please lie down on the scanner bed and we'll see what's going on inside."

Luke complied, giving a little shiver as his skin hit the cool metal. "I made sure all my vaccinations were up to date before I left," he told her. "Even had a malaria series, just in case."

"So I saw," Dianne said as she sat down behind the monitor. Nikki spread a sheet over Luke up to the chest, then began to clean up the items Dianne had used. "Just lie still for a little while. This shouldn't take long."

The room was quiet except for the scanner's hum, and Dianne's murmured comments as the results appeared on her screen. She frowned a bit as the scanner continued down around Luke's hips.

Luke caught her frown. "Is something wrong?" He shot a glance at Nikki, but she shook her head.

Dianne didn't answer. Instead, she picked up the data pad and scrolled through it again. Her frown cleared and her eyes lit up in comprehension as she noticed something in particular.

The scanner finally finished its job and she made a last comment, then stood. "Nothing wrong, Luke. I noticed you had a couple of broken bones in your right arm and wrist, and some muscular stretching that puzzled me... until I reread your immunizations again." She offered a hand to help him sit up.

"I broke my wrist and ankle a few years ago, during an avalanche rescue. Idiot reporters flew over in a helicopter, trying to get pictures of the area and triggered another one. I got caught in it," he told her as he sat up, swinging his legs over the side of the table. Luke looked up, a puzzled expression on his face. "My immunizations? Am I missing one?"

"No, not missing one, just one that I didn't expect to see." She glanced at Nikki, then decided it was something that the nurse should know, and would keep in confidence. "The HIV vaccine."

Realization dawned across Luke's face. "Oh, right. I'll bet you don't come across that one very often." She chuckled and shook her head. "I'm gay. I got the vaccine before I left for college. I'm not promiscuous, but I figured it's better to be safe than sorry." He met her gaze fearlessly. "I told Mr. Tracy during my interview. I had problems with my previous boss, and not wanting to get into the same predicament, I thought he should know upfront. He didn't think there would be a problem," he said warily.

"Good call," Dianne said, downloading her notes and adding the scan to his new record. "I don't think you'll have a problem with anyone, really, though I don't know for certain. Of course, as your new physician, I consider that information as privileged." She smiled at him.

Nikki brought up the needles for the locator chip. "Time for the locator chip. It's unobtrusive, hypoallergenic, and I'll numb the area before I insert it. Since you've been having some trouble with dizziness, I suggest you remain seated." She glanced over at Nikki, who grinned. "We had a couple of fainting incidents when we did this the first time. Do you have any questions?"

Luke shook his head. "No, I don't think so." He thought for a moment, then placed a hand on the back of his neck. "Here, I think. That way it's not in any place that might get hit during a rescue, and a helmet would protect the area too." He suddenly looked up in alarm. "Wait a sec, fainting incidents? Just how big is this chip?"

Dianne laughed. "It's tiny, really. Needs to be injected by needle. But a couple of people...let's just say they didn't react to the needles very well." She moved around behind him. "This might be a bit tricky, but we can handle it. First, the local anesthetic..." She slid the sharp needle in expertly. "While we wait for that to numb up, let me put a call in to Thunderbird Five." She tapped her wristcomm, turning it on. "Thunderbird Five from Doc. Come in, Thunderbird Five."

Callie's face filled the screen. "Doc from Thunderbird Five, reading you four by four. What can I help you with?"

"Ursa, I need a locator chip calibrated for our newest recruit." She took a little packet off the tray and rattled off some numbers. "That's the chip we're using."

"Got it, Doc," Callie replied. "Does he have a color yet?"

Luke spoke up, "Hey there. Yes, olive green." He shook his head and grinned. "Still can't believe you're...how ever many miles away you are, and the picture is clearer than a television!"

Callie laughed back. "And we get great reception for ball games, too." She paused to look down for a moment. "Looks like the chip is working fine. We're reading it at full strength."

"Okay, time to implant, and get another check." Dianne took the slightly larger needle and went around back again. "You should not feel a thing." After just a few seconds, she declared, "There, all done."

Luke brought his hand up to rub at the spot. "It's a little tingly from the local, but other than that, it feels fine."

"Still reading at full strength," Callie told them. "If there's nothing else, Doc, I need to get back to work. The natives are getting restless up here."

"F-A-B, Ursa. And thanks," Dianne replied. "I'll see you after lunch for calibrating the sensors."

"F-A-B, Doc. Thunderbird Five out."

The telecomm went dark, and Dianne turned back to Luke. "Do you have any questions or concerns?"

"Nothing that I can think of at the moment." He glanced around the room again. "I don't know if Mr. Tracy mentioned it, but I'm only a few credits short of being a fully certified paramedic. If you or someone could show me around here, I'd love to know what all this stuff does. And it probably wouldn't hurt to have someone else familiar with the equipment."

"Well, I have an appointment with my personal torturer," Dianne said with a snorted laugh. "And today, it's not Nikki." She turned toward the nurse with a grin. "You up to giving Luke the guided tour?"

Nikki looked at him speculatively, as if sizing him up. "I guess so. I'd better let him get dressed first, though. You never know when someone will walk in, needing emergency treatment. Don't want to scare them..."

Luke drew himself up. "I'll have you know that I have a superior...physique," he said haughtily before laughing. "But yeah, getting dressed is a good idea." He turned to Dianne. "Thanks, Dr. Tracy."

"You're welcome, Luke," she replied with smile. "If you have any questions at any time, just let me know." With that, she found her cane, and went off to her office, the data pad in her other hand.

"Let me finish cleaning up here," Nikki said. "You get changed, and we'll have that tour."

Luke's Exam---by Tikatu and Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:22:11 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/4/2007 7:45 PM

Friday, August 31, 2058, 2:30 p.m., Tracy Island and Thunderbird Five

Dianne rubbed the bridge of her nose with finger and thumb. A headache was threatening to form around her eyes. "Okay, let's try that again. Ursa, you stay in range of sensors fifteen and sixteen. Einstein, you get out of range until I tell you."

The calibration was not going well. The sensor bubbles weren't designed to work with so much

other electronic equipment around. Brains had written a bit of code to straighten out the problem, but this meant that each bubble had to be checked to make sure they were reading not only the biosigns of each member, but also the locator chip. The latter helped identify which of the operatives was up there, and would be keyed into the latest baseline information that Dianne had. That way, if there was something out of sync with the data Dianne had on file, a warning would sound and communications would be opened to check on the operative's physical status.

Right now, Callie's electric blue locator dot was showing up on Dianne's screen, superimposed on a simplified schematic of Thunderbird Five's layout, a constantly fluctuating reading of Callie's blood pressure, pulse, heart rate, and temperature floating to one side of the dot. I wish I could have done this when Callie wasn't so stirred up with excitement and frustration. Vital signs in space are different than those on Earth, even with the proper gravity and atmosphere. Maybe in a couple of days I can get her to let me scan her long distance and take another baseline reading. She should be calmer then... I hope.

"Okay, Einstein," she said into her microphone. "That looks as good as can be expected. How are things going with the biobeds and the scanner?"

"Quasar reports he's found the problem in biobed one," Brains said, a CGI picture of him popping up into Dianne's screen, much like it would on Jeff's. "He believes that the problem is replicated in biobed two, and he's set Indy to fixing it. Then we'll run the diagnostics again."

"F-A-B, Einstein." Someone softly clearing their throat made Dianne look up. Tyler stood there, a tray in his hands. On it rested a glass of milk, some apples slices and some chocolate chip cookies. Dianne muted her mike; the words "voice muted" appeared on the screen in large red letters.

"Grandma Tracy sent me with this," Tyler said as Dianne took the glass from the tray. "She said you should have a snack."

"Thanks, Spud," Dianne said as he handed her the plate. "C'mere. I could use a good hug right about now."

She opened her arms and Tyler came to them, giving his mother almost as hard and as long a squeeze as she gave him. Then she kissed him on the cheek. He responded by planting a short, but wet, raspberry on hers.

She smiled, and would have responded in kind, but a chiming from her computer interrupted. "What's got Callie all hot and bothered?" She murmured under her breath. Opening up her mike again, she was about to ask when the emergency signal went off.

Both she and Tyler looked up, then glanced at each other. "Well, that answers that question," she said wryly, rising from her seat. "I guess we'd better find out what's going down."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:24:11 GMT

From: Tikatu Sent: 6/4/2007 8:04 PM

Friday, August 31, 2068, 6 p.m., Tracy Island

"Rough one, huh?" Virgil asked Scott as the tired, dirty and obviously cranky pilot dropped into the nearest chair, exhausted.

"Yeah, you could say that."

Virgil waited, knowing that Scott needed a few moments before going on. Unfortunately, that moment was lost when the other tired, dirty and cranky pilot came into the lounge, followed by the guy who rode 'shotgun' on the rescue, and who was equally tired, dirty and cranky.

"Don't even think about sitting down, Frankie. We're not done!" Scott warned. Virgil, slightly taken back by his brother's tone, glanced at Gordon's dirty face.

Gordon squeezed his temples and ran his hand across his face. "Here we go again," he sighed.

Her temper already frayed, Elise turned towards Scott and angrily answered, "Don't start again with me Tracy! I've had 'it' up to here already and I am done!"

Scott was now on his feet and he wasn't happy. Gordon looked at each one of them before shaking his head in resignation and walking over towards Virgil. "Next time those two are assigned to a rescue, send Alan, NOT ME!"

"I thought everything went okay? Scott called in stand down and you guys seemed to have it all under control." Virgil was confused.

"Oh yeah, it was under control until those two couldn't decide who knew more about airport control and procedures. Brother, you only heard the pertinent info on the radio. You should have heard what I had to listen to all the way home on the other frequency between both of them."

Gordon and Virgil both looked at Scott and Elise who were now up in each other's face trying not to scream at each other. "She's got guts, I'll give her that." Gordon said.

Virgil didn't answer, knowing full well what Gordon meant. Elise was the only person outside of immediate family that Virgil had known to challenge Scott right to his face... and live another day. The generator fire at McCarran Airport, Las Vegas, Nevada had started small but quickly spread, threatening terminal buildings and shutting down computer systems across the board. Local fire crews were soon overpowered by the fierce flames, and for the safety of aircraft and passengers, International Rescue had been called. Jeff had left Virgil in charge while he went down to help Dianne with the calibrations in Thunderbird Five, using a different frequency to communicate with the space station.

Virgil had no problems with being head honcho; after all, it was a cut and dry rescue. Gordon drove the Firefly and was able to get the blaze under control in very little time. The other problem started when airport authorities, concerned with flight delays, runway shortages, energy output

and various other problems associated with daily airport operations, approached Scott with their concerns. Elise had heard over the radio and contacted Scott with her 10 cents worth. Being an experienced pilot, her points were valid, however, they'd differed from Scott's. Both acting professionally, they helped the authorities as best they could and kept their differences to themselves until they were airborne and out of McCarran's tower's range. Then the sparks flew.

Practically all the way home Gordon heard Scott and Elise arguing, yelling, insulting and generally being rude to each other. At one point, Elise cut radio contact in the middle of what Scott was saying. Gordon knew that would be straw that broke the camel's back. He had been right. Scott rarely lost his cool on a rescue, if ever, but this time Elise had pushed all the wrong buttons.

"Scott, you know damn well the repercussions of re-routing those aircraft! That runway could've been operational within hours! But no, you had to tell them that runway would be out of commission for days! Do you know how many flights that affected nationwide?"

Scott let out a slow breath and gave a deadly look to Elise. It didn't phase her at all. "I know exactly how many flights it affected! And exactly how many passengers' lives would be saved by not allowing that runway to re-open. That generator's heat and fire came close enough to damage the runway surface more than was originally thought. One unstable landing ... and there would have been another disaster! So don't stand there questioning my decision!"

Virgil had heard enough and before Elise could get another chance to reply, he stepped in. "All right! Enough, you two! It won't solve anything now so go get cleaned up and get back here for a debriefing. A quiet debriefing, please." He turned to Gordon "You too, Squirt!"

"Funny," Gordon replied, clearly not amused as he left the room. Elise slowly followed, too tired to even think anymore.

Scott sighed. "Why do I let her get to me like she does, Virge? She irks me like none of you guys ever did!"

"Thanks!" Virgil smirked.

Scott softened a little. "I swear she was put on this earth to make my life miserable! Apparently, God thinks my six brothers weren't enough punishment!"

Virgil now laughed. "Scott, she's just like you! You trained her to be the best. She thinks she is. Well, she knows she is and she'll take a stand for what she believes. You did your job well, big brother!"

Scott had always admired how his closest brother had always managed to settle him down, and he found himself laughing a little at Virgil, who merely winked and walked back to the desk.

"I'm heading for a shower, be back in 10." Scott headed for the study door. Virgil laughed until Scott stopped, turned, and threw back, "You won't be laughing when you ask her about your Thunderbird!"

"WHAT!?"

Now it was Scott's turn to laugh.

--rough day on rescue row by FrankieCTB2

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:33:39 GMT

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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/7/2007 8:00 PM

Friday, August 31, 2068, 11:00 a.m., Greenville, SC (Saturday, September 1, 3:00 a.m., Tracy Island)

Lisa sighed as she ran her hand along the smooth banister. "So many memories... and now... I can't believe it won't be part of my life anymore." She shut her already reddened eyes, and tears began to fall afresh. She and Kyrano had just come back from the lawyer's office, where she had signed the papers and sold both her home, and the little business she had built for herself. The first had been purchased by an eager young couple with a toddler and another baby on the way. The business was going to an old friend, a former classmate from her days at cosmetology school, who was moving back to the area to live near grown children and grandchildren. Though she was able to retain her composure during the actual legal doings, she had broken down in the car afterwards and cried all the way back to the house.

Kyrano came up behind her, putting his careworn hands on her upper arms. "I know it pains you, dear one. All I can offer is my own sympathy and comfort."

She turned, and Kyrano embraced her, softly rubbing her back as she lay her head on his shoulder. They stood like that for a long moment while Lisa calmed. Finally, she straightened, pulled a tissue from the depths of a pocket, wiped her tears and blew her nose. "Thank you, Tuan. I have to remember that there are many more memories to be made on the island and with you."

"It is sad now, but there is joy to come, my love," he murmured, stroking a bit of hair away from her face.

"You're right." She gave him a tentative smile, then sighed again. "Now to decide what to take, so Jeff's movers can do their job. I should have offered Dougie his choice of the furniture; I'm sure he could have used some of it. I suppose I'll end up donating most of it to a charity or something." She glanced around the room, her eyes lighting on a tapestry above the small fireplace. "I know who will want that, but I have no idea where she'll put it."

"Dianne?"

"Yes. My brother brought it back from Turkey on one of his earliest Doctors Without Borders trips. She's always been fascinated by it."

Kyrano studied the wall hanging, noting the very Middle Eastern feel of the picture. A mounted

man, perhaps a prince or even a bandit, was riding off with a princess, her veil streaming behind her, while a mounted group of scimitar-waving soldiers rode in hot pursuit. "Hm. I would suggest the lounge, as that is very Asian in feel, but I fear it would clash with the Thai dancer."

She chuckled, and her tentative smile widened. "You always know what to say, Tuan."

"I try, dear Lisa. I try." He squinted at the tapestry again, then turned to his fiancée. "If you wish to keep it, I think it might fit in our own sitting room." When he saw the surprise on her face, he added, "It will be our quarters, love, and as such, should be a combination of both our tastes." He gestured toward the hanging. "I like this very much. I would like to see this on our own wall."

"Really? You like it?" Lisa sounded hesitant.

"Yes. I do."

Lisa folded her arms. "Well, then, we have a problem, because I've always hated the thing. I kept it up at first for Drew, then for Dianne, until it finally became so much a part of the room that I didn't really look at it anymore."

She turned to her beau only to find that Kyrano's mouth had dropped open slightly in complete stupefaction. "Tuan? Are you all right?"

He shook his head briskly and blinked several times. "Y-Yes, I think so." Letting out a deep breath, he looked up at the wall hanging again. "I must say I am very surprised. But if you despise the thing, by all means, give it to Dianne. However, do not be surprised if she finds some public place to display it."

"I won't, but then, by that time, I may have some back-up."

"Back-up?"

Lisa smiled. "Emily. Somehow I don't think this particular tapestry will sit well with her either."

Kyrano looked back at the picture once more. "You know, I think you are right."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:35:37 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 6/8/2007 2:50 PM

Tracy Island Saturday September 1, 4:15 AM

Luke yawned and stretched his arms over his head. He was getting used to the time difference, but still had bouts when he was awake at odd hours. He glanced over at Rommel, who was snoring next to him on the couch. His dog was finally adjusting to the heat, which caused a huge

weight to lift from Luke's mind. He had been toying with sending Rom back to his parents and the thought had filled him with dread. Thankfully, Rom was feeling better, and even chewed a pair of Luke's old hiking boots this morning. Luke was so happy to see his dog acting normal again, that he didn't bother to scold him.

He looked over at the clock, seeing it was still an hour or so before dawn. He grabbed his laptop, figuring he'd check his email before trying to snag a couple of hours more sleep. The first few were from friends back in Boulder, wondering how he was doing. Another from his parents and even one from his nephew. He smiled and made a mental note to answer them later.

Nothing from Barry though, Luke thought with a sigh. I figured I'd at least get a hello. He's moved on; I guess I should too. A small beep signaling an incoming message made him grin as he saw who it was from.

More! Hey, are you dead? I haven't heard from you in a while and when I tried the phone, it's been disconnected. What's up with that? Have you been placed in Witness Protection and can't talk to me anymore, or maybe you've been kidnapped by a grizzly.

Things are pretty hectic here. The divorce was final a few weeks ago. Alex dropped off the rest of my stuff from our apartment so I don't even have to go back there. Which is good because I don't think I could handle it.

I'm looking for a new job. I feel like I need a change. Need out of this city. I've applied to a few places and used you as a personal reference. Listed your email as the best form of contact. Just thought I'd give you the heads up in case anyone contacts you. Hope you don't mind.

Hope things are OK with you. Drop me a line so I know you're still alive.

Cassie

Luke smiled. He had met Cassie Kishi-Marks while volunteering during a massive fire in California three years ago. The two had struck up a fast friendship and had stayed in touch ever since. Deciding to answer her email before going back to bed, he pulled up a fresh screen and began.

Cassie,

Yeah, I'm still alive. Sorry about not being around; lots of stuff happening here. To start with, Barry and I split up a few weeks ago. It was amicable, we're still friends but...hell, Cass, I miss him.

Luke shook his head, trying to sort his thoughts.

But enough about that. I, too, quit my job. Yes, I can sense your shock from here. Things with SAR and Derek just hit the breaking point for me. I took a position with a private firm doing environmental consulting for them. It'll be a nice change of pace. I'm stationed out of L.A., but not around much since the job keeps me on the road. So, if I don't answer emails right away, that's the reason why. Got rid of the cell phone, too, since half the places I go don't have service. If you really need to talk to me, get in touch with my parents; they'll know how to reach me.

And no worries with the reference thing. I'll be sure to tell them all about you...

Got to run, lots to do. Keep your chin up, girl. Talk to you soon.

Luke

He hit "send" and then closed his computer down. Getting up, he glanced out the window where the sky was just beginning to lighten in the distance. "Rom, you staying here or what?" The dog looked up and rolled off the couch, landing with a thud. Luke laughed. "C'mon, mutt. Let's grab some sleep. We both have work to do later today." Going into the bedroom, Luke flopped onto the bed, Rommel clambering up next to him. After much pushing and shoving, the two of them finally settled down, with Rom's head across Luke's legs. "I so need a bigger bed," Luke muttered to himself as he drifted off to sleep.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:36:19 GMT

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From: lynnbrody Sent: 6/8/2007 4:47 PM

Saturday, September 1, 2068, 11 a.m. Tracy Island (Friday, August 31, 2068 , 7 p.m. locally)

Cassie sat at the computer in the fire station. Not far away, the other members of the squad were playing a game of Risk. The shift had been slow. They hadn't had a call come in since they had relieved second shift. Cassie had decided to take advantage of the downtime and look to see if there had been any new job postings listed in the last few days. She had found a few but only one that interested her.

"Why didn't you join in on the game?" Chief Calloway asked, coming out of his office.

"Come on Chief, you know that game always ends up in an argument. Figured I'd just avoid it altogether."

"Point taken. What are you up to? Still job hunting?"

Cassie had told her boss she was looking for a new job when she began the search. She had been with the 66th precinct since she joined FDNY as a paramedic and had gotten close to a lot of those who had been here for a while, Frank Calloway among them. She didn't want her departure to be sudden, so she had let her co-workers know she was thinking about leaving and the reason behind that. Though none of them were happy about her leaving, all of them had been supportive. Frank had made it known to her several times that if there was anything he could do to change her mind to let him know and he'd do everything in his power to get it for her. She kept telling him that it was nothing about the job or the people that had her dissatisfied. This was something that she felt she had to do to reclaim her life for her own.

"Right now, I'm working on another application to send in."

"You have an interview upstate on what, Wednesday?"

"Yeah, Neal switched days off with me. That isn't a problem is it?"

"No, I don't care. I told you before if you needed time off for interviews I'd do what I could to give them to you," Frank told her. "What's this position?"

"It's a position with Tracy Industries."

"What would a company like Tracy Industries want with a firefighter?"

"Not sure myself," Cassie told him, as she turned back to the computer to finish filling out the application. "That's part of the reason I'm applying. I'm curious to see exactly what it is."

Frank laughed. Cassie always had been adventurous. She'd give anything a try once and had a tendency to take dares from the other firefighters just so she could prove she could do something they said she couldn't.

"The one drawback is it seems like the position might be located in Wichita as that's where the application is to be sent," Cassie said, attaching her resume to the application file and saving it to her disk. "Not sure I want to relocate from one city to another."

"Well, if Jeff Tracy wants a recommendation give him my number. I'll tell him he's crazy if he doesn't hire you," Frank told her as she sent the application to the email address given in the ad.

"I'll keep that in mind," Cassie told him. She smiled at the thought of Frank telling the head of Tracy Industries that he was crazy.

"Hey! No fair! You two are ganging up on me!" Neal called out.

"We are not," Lawrence Jefferson, or LJ as they all called him, said defensively. Frank and Cassie glanced in his direction to see a huge grin on LJ's face. "Not our fault that you just happen to have the countries Jackie and I want."

Before the situation could get any further out of hand, the alarm sounded. All the firefighters listened to see if it was for them or the paramedics.

"Ladder 124 respond to an apartment fire 84 East 72nd," the dispatcher said. The firefighters jumped into action, leaving the game where it was. It looked as if downtime was over.

Cassie was the third to hit the truck bay and she hurried over to where her equipment hung. She quickly put the pants and boots on, grabbed the jacket and the helmet and headed for the ladder truck. Climbing behind the wheel, she turned the key. Chief Calloway climbed in beside her, looking back to make sure everyone was in.

"We're good to go," he told Cassie.

Sirens blaring, Cassie eased the truck out of the bay and onto the busy New York streets. [/color]

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:37:48 GMT
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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 6/9/2007 7:43 PM

5pm Friday August 31, San Diego (12pm Saturday: Tracy Island)

Jeff had come to the game room to talk to Scott about the renovations to the round house and had stayed a moment to watch the game.

"It's your turn," Scott said as Gordon contemplated his shot, watching as he lightly tapped the ball, sending it into the pocket. "Nice shot. "Looks like I have to practice more if I want stay ahead of you."

Jeff turned and was about to leave when Kyrano's voice came over the intercom. "I am sorry to disturb you, Mr. Tracy. There is a phone call for you from Mr. McCain. If you wish, I can transfer it to the game room."

"Thank you, Kyrano, but I'll take it in the study."

As Jeff left the room, Gordon shouted, "Say hello to Brandon for me."

In the study, Jeff activated the vidphone, bringing up Brandon's image. "Hello, Mr. McCain," he said. Brandon heard the annoyance in his voice. "Cutting it a little close, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am, Mr. Tracy and I apologize for that," Brandon replied sincerely. "The last few days were hectic. By the end of the day I was exhausted and forgot to call."

"And?"

Brandon's face broke into a wide smile. "Everything's good to go. The renovations are finished and my parents should be coming home on the third. Not only that, Shannon's decided to take her classes online so she can be with them during the day."

"That is good news. Now, I have one more question to ask you. Are you coming back to the island? And, if so, when will you be back?"

Brandon thought a moment. "If things go well, I should be back on the island by the ninth; I'll let you know as soon as I get my parents settled in."

"Make sure you do, Mr. McCain. I don't want to be left hanging like I was before." Jeff replied. Brandon heard the warning tone in his voice and realized that Jeff meant business.

"I won't forget, Mr. Tracy."

"See to it that you don't."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:40:00 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/9/2007 9:26 PM

Saturday, September 1, 2068, 3 p.m., Tracy Island

"John!"

The sofa clicked into place and John was immediately attacked by what seemed to be a furless monkey. "Whoa, Ty!" he cried. "At least let me get up before you tackle me!"

"Oh, sorry," Tyler backed off, still grinning ear to ear, and the moment John stood and was steady, he launched himself at his brother again. "I'm so glad to see you! Ready for some pinball?"

Those in the lounge laughed, and John shifted his brother so he was unceremoniously draped over one shoulder. "I'm glad to see you, too, Spud. I really missed doing... this!" John quickly ran his fingertips up and down Tyler's exposed side, making the boy squirm and laugh. The squirming was so fierce that John nearly dropped the boy. Brains, who had just stood up to stretch, helped him grab Tyler, and together they eased him down to the couch.

"Well, John, you've been greeted by Tyler, so you really don't need the rest of us here," said Jeff facetiously.

"No, I guess not," John quipped, holding out his hands.

"You two!" Emily said sharply, shaking her head and huffing. She stepped up to embrace her grandson. "Welcome home, John. It's good to see you again."

"Good to be home, Grandma," John replied, hugging her firmly and planting a kiss on her cheek.

Jeff offered his hand, and John clasped it, then thumped his father on the back when Jeff pulled him in for a hug. Dianne was next, and John embraced her gingerly as she stood, cane in hand.

"You're looking good, Mom," he murmured.

"And I'm feeling better," Dianne replied with a smile. "By the way, the scans came out fine."

"Good. I'd hate to have to do that again next month." He was referring to the whole body scans that Dianne had insisted on first thing in the morning. Each member of the installation team had to lie on the scanner bed while it slowly recorded their bodily functions so she had a "space baseline" to work from. The scanner still had a few bugs to be worked out, and they had to stop and fix those, so the process was drawn out. Finally, though, she got the readings she needed and the equipment was now working properly. It was, however, the reason why John, Alan and Brains were home much later than usual.

"Hey, what am I? Chopped liver?" Alan exclaimed, watching as the rest of the family greet John.

"Yes!" Tyler cried. Those in the lounge laughed, and Alan made a face at Tyler, then went to grab him. The lithe little boy ducked out of his brother's grasp, and headed for the study, where he paused long enough to stick out his tongue and go, "Neener, neener, neener! Alan can't catch me!"

"Oh, yeah?" Alan headed for the study, and Tyler made ready to run, when Jeff's voice boomed out.

"Boys!"

Alan paused, and Tyler's gaze shifted to his father.

"No running in the house!"

"Okay, Dad." "F-A-B, Dad!"

Alan grinned and headed for Tyler again. "Now let's see who's faster!"

"I still am!" said the boy as he ducked quickly out of the room, Alan in hot - but walking - pursuit.

Jeff shook his head slowly, and Emily muttered, "Don't they ever grow up?"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:45:22 GMT

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From: lillehafrue Sent: 6/10/2007 10:04 AM

Tracy Island, Saturday September 1st, 6:00 PM...

Luke stepped off the elevator that led into the Tracy villa. Dianne had insisted on him joining the family for meals until he was able to do some shopping of his own. He appreciated the offer, but wasn't used to eating three square meals a day. Meals at the SARS cabin usually consisted of whatever someone threw together, and he and Barry had tended to go out more often than not. Sure, Luke could cook, but why bother when there was a drawer full of take-out menus? Oh well, Mom's always telling me I'm too thin.

Earlier this afternoon, he had watched in awe as the giant red rocket, Thunderbird Three, made a spectacular landing in its hidden silo. That means all the Tracy brothers are home now. What was the other one's name?....John, that's it. He looked up as Scott walked into view.

"Hey there, just in time. Come on in, I'll introduce you to the others." Scott led Luke inside and into the dining room. There was a bustle of activity going on, with people talking and laughing all at once.

Luke held back in the doorway, just watching. He wasn't a big fan of crowds; he tended to avoid even his own family gatherings. The throng suddenly parted and Luke got a clear view of a tall,

platinum haired blond. His mouth went dry. Is that John? He's beautiful. He watched as John bent to whisper something to Tyler and tussle the boy's hair.

Alan waved his hand in front of Luke's face. "Luke? Hey, buddy, you awake over here?"

Luke shook off his trance, embarrassed to be caught staring. "Huh? Oh yeah, sorry."

Alan chuckled. "No prob. Sit down and dig in before it's gone."

Jeff passed a bowl of salad to Dianne. "John, I'd like you to meet Luke Morel; Luke, my son, John."

John smiled and Luke had to concentrate on not swallowing his tongue. John seemed not to notice. "Hi, Luke. Settling in all right?"

He nodded. "Yes, thanks." He really didn't trust his voice to say anything else.

"And you remember Brains and Tin-Tin?" Jeff continued.

Tin-Tin smiled. "Luke, before I forget, please bring Rommel down to the lab tomorrow. I'll fit him for his vest. Is there any particular color you'd like it to be?"

"Orange," Luke answered instantly. "Service dogs wear red and rescue dogs wear bright orange or yellow. I hate yellow so I always dressed him in orange."

"Orange it is, then."

"I take it Rommel is feeling better?" Dianne asked.

Luke nodded. "Much better. He chewed up a pair of my boots yesterday."

They all laughed. "In fact, I'm going to be taking him down to the beach and working with him tomorrow." Alex and Tyler exchanged a glance with each other as Luke went on. "Is there anything in the jungle I need to worry about?"

Jeff shook his head. "No, nothing serious. Scorpions, spiders, snakes, but nothing too dangerous if you're careful."

"Good. I'll probably take him exploring there, too."

Dinner continued, everyone still talking.

"Hey, John," Gordon called out. "Have you heard from Kat lately?"

John nodded. "I got an email from her the other day. She said things went well in court; hopefully that guy will be behind bars soon."

"She told me the same," Jeff added. "Seems like things are nearly wrapped up there."

"She's also having a good time getting ready for the wedding," John continued. "She ran into an old school friend, and they've hit it off again." Something in John's tone made Scott and Virgil exchange a look.

When they had finished eating, Luke thanked Grandma and made his way back to his apartment.

The boys carried the dishes back to the kitchen. "So, what'd you think of Luke?" Virgil asked John as he piled the glasses in the dishwasher.

"He seems like a nice guy. Kind of quiet though," John replied.

Scott raised an eyebrow. "That's funny coming from you."

John made a face. "I'm not quiet; you guys are just so loud, you drown me out!" They all laughed as they continued to help clean up.

"So, Johnny, up to a game of pool?" Scott asked.

"Why, looking to get beaten? Heard Gordon whipped the pants off of you earlier today," John shot back.

Scott glared as Virgil began to chuckle. "Who told you that?"

John batted his eyes innocently. "I have my ways. Well, you up for a game?"

"You bet. Prepare to go down, little brother," Scott growled good-naturedly.

John grinned back. "Shaking in my boots here." Still laughing, the brothers left for the Game Room.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:50:17 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 6/10/2007 4:34 PM

Tracy Island, Saturday, September 1st, 9:00 PM...

"Five ball in the corner pocket." Scott leveled the pool cue against the table and took the shot. "Yes!"

John rolled his eyes. "So dramatic."

"Isn't he, though?" Virgil replied with a grin.

Scott shot them both an evil look. "Ha ha. Let's go, John, you're up."

John eyed the balls and bent over the table. "Seven ball, side pocket....damn."

"Ah, how the mighty have fallen," Scott quipped.

John didn't reply but walked around the table, his thoughts clearly no longer on the game. Virgil gave Scott a nudge and nodded in John's direction.

"So, you heard from Kat," Scott began as he pondered his next shot. "Two, side pocket."

"Yeah. The wedding is...was today," John answered.

"She'll probably email you later then."

"Probably."

Scott arched an eyebrow at Virgil. "Talk to us, John," Virgil said, sitting down on the edge of the pool table. "Something's bothering you; spill it."

John paced around the table and sighed. "It's Kat. I...don't think I'm missing her as much I thought I would be."

"What do you mean?" Scott asked.

"Well, I miss her and all, don't get me wrong, but not like I expected I would. I know she planned a big dinner surprise for me when I got back but I'm actually relieved that she's not here." He looked up at his brothers. "That's horrible of me, isn't it?"

Virgil shook his head. "No, it's not. Remember when we talked a few weeks ago? After Mom's accident?" John nodded. "You were having doubts back then too."

John shrugged. "I like her, I really do, but now I'm not so sure it's friendship or something more. She's been hanging out with that friend of hers and again, I feel relieved."

Scott thought carefully before speaking. "It seems that Kat feels more strongly in your relationship than you do, am I correct?" John nodded again.

"Then maybe it's time the two of you sat down and hashed this all out."

"Yeah, you're right. I don't want to break her heart, but I just don't think I'm ready for a serious relationship," John said.

"Then that's what you need to tell her," Virgil replied. "And she should understand. You can still be friends."

"I hope so," John answered gloomily, "I really hope we can." He shook his head. "Relationships, sometimes I wonder if they're worth the fuss."

"I'm with you there, buddy," Scott said, slapping his younger brother on the back.

"Oh, I don't know about that," Virgil said, remembering Elise in her red dress.

Scott laughed. "Enough gloom and doom; are we ready to finish this game, or not?"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:55:23 GMT

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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/10/2007 8:13 PM

Saturday, Sept. 1, 3 PM; Silver Spring (Sunday, Sept. 2, 7 AM on Tracy Island)

Lena sat back with a satisfied sigh and looked at her timer. I still have 30 minutes to go, but I know I got it. De communications security program is upgraded, and will work for bot voice and data, even on deir "heads-up" devices. And it can be used on all de communications devices de agents use, too. At least, I tink it can. I don't know what Mr. Tracy gave de otter agents to use. I've got it programmed into my PDA, so I can test it.

She sent a message to her computer from her PDA, and watched as, without the program activated, all she got was...

I hope Brains gets a kick out of dis. De screen will show de same ting, no matter what is sent or said. When she activated the program, the message came through perfectly. Then she reversed the transmission, and was successful that way as well.

She glanced at the timer again. Twenty minutes. I'd better email Brains. It's, she looked at the clock and did some quick figuring, 7:10 tomorrow morning dere. If he's at his computer, he probably fell asleep dere.

Chuckling at the image of him fast asleep on his keyboard, she began to type.

Brains,

Eureka! Bingo! Or as a Brit might say, "By Jove, I think I've got it!"

As you must have guessed, I have the upgrades done on the communications security program. I've even been able to upload them to my PDA and successfully tested it and my computer, sending messages back and forth between them. And I have found a way to use it on oral communications devices as well as your "heads-up" display units. So now you need to try them on your computers and display units. They might need fine tuning (although I don't think so).

Call me when you get this message, and I'll send the specs to you. I look forward to hearing from you.

Lena

She looked at the timer once again. Still twelve minutes to go. Well, I'll stop early, even if I don't feel tired or in any pain. A promise is a promise.

She sent the message, then shut down the computer and went to get some iced tea.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:57:00 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 6/11/2007 3:38 PM

Sunday, September 2nd, 2068. 10AM. Tracy Island.

Dominic was childless for a few hours thanks to the grace of Emily Tracy, and he was glad. His son was everything to him, but unfortunately that included being a little -- Dominic stopped himself short, and thought, He's only a weean, he doesn't really understand. The child had been pushing his father further and further recently. Dominic almost couldn't wait until his chick left the nest... Almost. I can almost see meself bein' one of those parents who never let their kids leave... He dropped by and picked up the mail that was waiting for him -- there was quite a bit, as he hadn't collected any in a while -- and headed back to the monorail and to his apartment. He left the mail sitting on the kitchen counter and picked up the sack of washing that was waiting for him. It smelled of dirty baby; he rushed down to the laundry room, and sauntered back up.

He put the kettle on for a cup of tea -- When did I become a tea-addicted adult? -- and picked up the pile of envelopes.

Thankfully, no junk mail companies had found his new address yet, and he somehow doubted anyone would. It was mostly correspondence from his bank, his credit card company, and even his dentist back in Kansas. How strange...I guess Matt gave it to them, he thought. One envelope had a familiar seal on it, and Dominic's hands began to shake. Is it...? He ripped the envelope in half in his attempts to get to the letter inside.

"Yeeeeeeeeeeeeoooooooooooooooooo!"

He jumped for joy and started punching the air, even back flipping over the coffee table still clutching the envelope.

"I'm free! I'm finally free of her!"

Inside the envelope was the confirmation that at long last, he was again a single man, bona fide divorced. Dominic started dancing around his apartment, periodically letting out whoops of happiness. He was smiling ear to ear.

"I never have to think about her again. Aaaaaah, the relief..."

He flopped down onto the sofa and sighed, before picking up the rest of his mail. There was one

particularly thick, large envelope, and he chose that one to open first. He read over the first few lines, then blinked, and read over them again. All of the blood drained from his face, and then rushed back to turn his skin a bright red as if he had been sunburned.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAARGH!"

Dominic wrenched himself from the sofa and ran all the way to the elevator, and then to Nikki's door. He almost put his fist through the reinforced material as he banged for attention. Nikki answered with a mix of shock and anger on her face.

"What on earth are you doing?!" she demanded.

"My ex-wife, Mags. She's -- she's -- suing for custody of Joshua!!!"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 01:58:48 GMT

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From: lillehafrue Sent: 6/11/2007 5:12 PM

Tracy Island, Sunday September 2nd, 10:30 AM

Luke stood on the beach, his hand held straight up in front of him. A few yards away, Rommel, wearing a bright red vest, held still.

"Rommel, sit," Luke commanded as he brought his hand down. The dog instantly obeyed. Next, Luke raised his hand without speaking and Rom stood at attention. "Good boy! Come!" Rommel trotted over to his side and Luke gave him a treat. "OK, now back to work."

He led the dog down the beach where he had set up some broken logs and branches. He commanded Rommel to stay and jogged to the other end of the obstacle course where he tied a brightly colored rag to a stick. He was making his way back to the dog when a movement in the bushes caught his eye. He paused and grinned to himself, then turned back to his dog. "Rommel, get it!" The animal was off like a shot, dodging and climbing over the objects in his way. Luke kept one eye on the bushes, not surprised to see a mop of blond hair showing through the leaves. A second head of auburn red appeared next to it. He turned his attention back to Rommel and soon the dog was back at his side, the rag in his mouth. Luke knelt down to take it and give the dog a rub. "Good boy." He glanced up at the bushes, which were now rustling as each tried to get a better view. "You know, if you come out of there, you'll be able to see a lot better!"

There was instant silence.

"It's no use, boys, I know you're there. Come on out," Luke called, at the same time giving Rommel the signal to "stay".

A few moments later, Alex and Tyler appeared, both looking embarrassed at being caught. "We were just watching. We didn't want to bother you," Alex told him.

Luke smiled. "You're not a bother. Why don't you guys sit right over there?" The boys scrambled over to park themselves on the rocks. Luke waited until they had settled, then began working with Rommel again. A half hour later, he called the lessons to a halt and pulled Rommel's vest off. Rom gave an excited "woof" and, with tail wagging, ran over to the boys.

They climbed down from the rocks, but held back at touching the dog until Rommel nosed his muzzle under Tyler's hand. Tyler giggled.

"Go ahead and pat him. He loves having his ears scratched," Luke told them.

"He's so big!" Tyler exclaimed as Rommel began licking his face.

"He's a rescue dog, silly. He has to be big!" Alex told him, getting over his shyness and reaching out to touch the dog.

Luke laughed. "Well, being big isn't a requirement, but I won't say it doesn't help." He watched the boys playing with the dog. Alex was tossing a stick and Rom was catching it. "You guys can play with him anytime you want, as long as your parents say it's OK and if Rommel isn't working," Luke told them.

Tyler looked up. "How will we know?"

"If he has his vest on, he's working. Any other time is fine."

"Does he work every day?" Alex asked.

Luke nodded. "Just about. How often do your brothers train for International Rescue?"

Alex thought a moment. "Scott and Virgil go to the gym every day."

"And Gordon is always in the pool," Tyler added.

"Right. So we train a little every day, too. Not too much," Luke added as an afterthought. "If I work him too hard, he gets grumpy," he said with a wink.

"Just like Alan," Tyler quipped, causing them all to laugh.

"Hey, I'm not quite done with him. You guys want to help?" Luke asked.

Both boys nodded enthusiastically. "OK, then, let's go back up to the house."

A short while later, they were gathered near the pool. Luke slipped Rommel's vest back on and turned to Tyler. "Can you swim?" The boy nodded. "Good. I want you to go in the water, as deep as you feel comfortable, and thrash around, like you're drowning."

Tyler frowned. "We're not supposed to do that."

"I know. But this time it's OK; I talked with your Dad so he knows you'll be helping me." Luke told

him. "And, Tyler, keep your shirt on."

After one last dubious look, Tyler dove into the pool. A few moments later, he was thrashing around and yelling, "Help! Help!"

Instantly people appeared on the scene. Scott and Jeff peered down from the balcony above; Nikki and Alan both got up from where they had been sitting on the patio, and Gordon practically flew down the steps. Luke grabbed him by the arm before he could dive in the pool. "Let go of me!" Gordon tried to pull his arm free.

"Relax, he's fine. He's helping me." Luke turned to the dog. "Rommel. GO!" The dog was off like a shot, diving into the water. He grabbed Tyler by the shirt collar and began towing him to the side of the pool.

Gordon pulled free of Luke's grasp and hoisted his little brother out of the water. Tyler was giggling like mad. "That was fun!"

Gordon shook his head. "Scared the daylights out of me!"

Tyler instantly looked shamefaced. "I'm sorry."

Luke stepped in. "No, I am. He was helping me with Rom. I'd never, ever do anything to put them in harm's way."

Gordon nodded. "OK then."

"It's OK, Gordon! He has my permission!" Jeff called out.

"All right, Dad!" Gordon called back. Jeff nodded and he and Scott disappeared back inside.

"I'm sorry," Luke said again. "We're done here anyway." He started taking off Rommel's vest.

"Awww! Don't I get a turn?" Alex whined.

"I think I've caused enough trouble for today," Luke told him.

"Pleeeeeease!"

Luke looked over at Gordon, who shrugged. "Fine with me. But I'm watching too."

Luke turned back to Alex. "OK then. Go to the shallow end of the pool. Can you hold your breath under water?" Alex nodded. "Good. Go hold it and sit on the bottom of the pool. Rom will come and pull you out."

"Cool." Alex ran off and threw himself into the pool.

As soon as the boy's head disappeared under water, Luke issued a command to Rommel. "Get him out!" The dog raced into the water and quickly jumped in and circled the area around Alex.

"Get him!" Luke shouted again. Rommel dove under the water and came back up pulling Alex with him. The two climbed out of the pool, Rommel shaking the water out of his fur. "Good boy." Luke grinned at Alex. "Thanks for the help! You did great!" He then turned to Tyler. "You too. I hope you know I'll be recruiting you from now on."

Tyler's eyes lit up. "Really?! Cool! C'mon, Alex; let's go tell Mom!" The two boys raced up the steps.

Luke turned back to Gordon. "I really didn't mean to scare you."

"I know. But next time warn a guy!" Gordon told him.

"I will." Luke snapped his fingers and Rommel trotted to his side.

Gordon bent down to ruffle the dog's fur. "So, big guy, what else can you do?"

Luke looked around. Spying a towel draped over a lounge chair, he grabbed it and held it up for Rom to smell. "Find him, boy."

Rommel gave the towel another sniff and trotted off, pausing to snuffle occasionally at the ground. Suddenly he looked up and giving a loud bark, disappeared into the bushes.

Gordon looked puzzled. "Where'd he go?"

Luke shook his head. "I have no idea. I figured it belonged to you or Alan," he said, nodding over to the duo on the patio. "I better go after him." Luke started across the patio, Gordon following close behind.

"Hey! Let go of me!"

Luke skidded to a stop as Rommel emerged from the bushes, pulling John by the shorts. "Oh God..." Luke groaned, slapping his forehead.

Gordon burst out laughing. "Got ya, John! Teach you to leave your towels hanging around!"

John frowned, looking from Luke's embarrassed face to Gordon's hysterical one. "Someone want to explain this to me?"

"I was just showing Gordon some of what Rom can do. Rescue type stuff. How we train together. We were just in the pool with Alex and Tyler working, too." Luke realized he was babbling and quickly pulled Rommel away. "Rom, good job. Back off, now." The dog let go of John's hem. "I'm so sorry."

"Don't worry about it." John gave Rom's head a quick pat. "Nice to meet you, Rommel. Now if you'll both excuse me, I'll get back to weeding." He headed back to the garden.

Luke knelt and unzipped Rommel's vest. "You big dork. What are you trying to do to me?" Rommel responded with a lick up the side of Luke's face. "I think that's enough excitement for one

day. Let's you and I go for a run. Later, Gordon."

"Have fun!" Gordon replied. He got a speculative look on his face as he watched Luke and Rommel head down the path. Then shrugging, he turned and went back into the house.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:01:33 GMT

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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/11/2007 6:29 PM

Sunday, September 2, 2068, 2 p.m., Tracy Island (Saturday, September 1, 10 p.m., Maryland)

"Good news, Mr. Tracy," Brains said as he strode out onto the balcony. Jeff was sitting in a lounge, reading the latest issue of Time. Dianne relaxed next to him with a thick romance novel. Both looked up as the scientist addressed Jeff.

"Good news? What good news?" Jeff pulled his sunglasses off so he could better see the engineer.

"I spoke with Lena a couple of hours ago. She's done it!"

"Done what?" Dianne asked, confused.

Jeff was getting out of his seat. "She's finished the program?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, sir, she has! She sent it to me when we spoke and I've been testing it ever since." Brains walked with Jeff back into the lounge.

"That explains why you weren't at lunch," Dianne muttered as she went back to her book. But within a few minutes, she had huffed in exasperation, put the book face down on Jeff's chair, and hauled herself to her feet to find out what was so exciting.

When she entered the lounge, she saw John's portrait activated, and Callie's face looking out within the frame. "Hello, Dianne!" the space monitor chirped.

Dianne frowned as she approached the desk. "Shouldn't you be using code names, Ursa?"

"Not necessary anymore," Brains explained. "Lena's program gives us secure communications to and from Thunderbird Five, to and from base, including any downloads to the visors, Mobile Control, and the other Thunderbirds." He held up a data stick. "I'll be downloading this to all of the Thunderbirds and the auxiliary equipment within the next day, but communications between Thunderbird Five and base is most important, so once I was finished testing it, I set it up here."

"No more code names during debriefing!" Jeff said, his eyes alight. "And we can use the system to actually talk to whoever's in Five without fear of the conversation being overheard if the signal's intercepted."

"In fact, the program will mask the signal as ordinary communications traffic from the island." Brains was almost bouncing with excitement. "Between this and the security upgrades to the actual satellite phone system that Tin-Tin's working on, we shouldn't have to worry about our conversations with Thunderbird Five being overheard at all."

"Until someone comes up with something to counter it," Callie said. When Brains and Jeff both turned to glare at her, she put her hands up and shrugged. "You know it's always a possibility that someone could figure it out."

"Yes, it's possible, but a remote one at best," Jeff said briskly. "Still, we'll keep testing the system every so often to make sure it's working properly."

Brains turned back to Callie. "I think we're done here for the moment. I may send some data files up a little later."

"Sounds good, Brains," Callie said. "Tell everyone hello for me!"

"We will, Callie," Jeff promised. "Take care now."

"I will. Thunderbird Five out."

Callie's pretty face was replaced by John's portrait, and Jeff sat back in his chair, looking very pleased. "I'd better send a thank you email to Lena for this. It's going to make life a lot easier."

"That reminds me; I need to find out how far along she is in her recovery," Dianne said with a wry grin. "She and I have a little wager on; whichever one of us is fully released by their doctor first buys dinner for the other next time I'm in the States."

"Oh? And who do you think will win?" Jeff asked, a grin spreading over his face.

"I don't know," Dianne said with a shrug. "But no matter which of us pays for it, I'm looking forward to the meal."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:04:52 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 6/12/2007 1:25 PM

Sunday, September 2, 2068. 11am. Kansas. (Monday, September 3, 2068. 4am. Tracy Island.)

Tom Hawkins thanked his mother gratefully as he accepted hot coffee in an expensive, exclusively designed cup. Waif-like Elizabeth Hawkins graciously set the designer tray down on the glass and chrome coffee table, and slipped onto her modern interpretation of a chaise lounge. She glanced briefly at her manicure, before clasping her hands on her lap and smiling serenely at her youngest son.

"Oh, Thomas," she said. "I'm so proud of you. Another big article published!"

Tom sipped at his coffee and grinned.

"Yep. I'm really on my way now. And I'm getting a pretty big following on the anti-International Rescue front. I'm thinking of setting up my own website about it."

"That's a good idea. I admire the people who do the work, but surely if they shared some of their technology, more people would be saved."

"Exactly."

"Not exactly."

Tom and Elizabeth turned to see Matt Hawkins striding in from the hallway.

"Their technology is being used for good because that's their choice. Someone could equally choose to use it for crime."

"I was thinking more that they could share their technology with governments. That way, only government-sanctioned projects could benefit."

"And you seriously think governments aren't corrupt?"

"So, now you're saying I'm stupid as well, are you?" Tom said hotly.

"Don't speak that way to your father!" Elizabeth snapped.
Matt shook his head and rolled his eyes.

"No, that's not what I'm saying, and it's most likely not what your brother was saying either."

Elizabeth pulled a face as if someone had put a bad smell under her nose, and Tom scowled and looked down at the mention of Dominic.

"What I'm saying is that you need to look at the bigger picture. International Rescue is a philanthropic organisation. In all their years of operation have they ever done anything that didn't benefit the majority? No. They work for good. Not everyone can be as strong and as benevolent as that. Me, I don't think I could do it. I've always admitted that I've made some bad choices based on my own personal gain, rather than what's right." And not just in business... "I'm not going to say I'm not proud of your achievements, Tom. All I'm saying is that I don't necessarily agree with what you're writing. I think you need to learn to distinguish between criticism and a difference of opinion. And once you do that, you need to call your brother and apologise."

Matt exited the room swiftly, and Tom scowled harder.

"Don't worry son," Elizabeth said. "Mommy is always here to support you. And you don't need to apologise to that Irish waste of space either. What's he ever achieved? No, my son is far above

that..."

Despite being twenty and usually backing off from his mother's advances, this time Tom let her come over and start coddling him. She's right. Dad's just like Dominic. They don't understand me and what I believe...

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:09:45 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/12/2007 3:07 PM

Sunday, September 2, 12:30 p.m., US Pacific time, somewhere over the Pacific (Monday, September 3, 7:30 a.m., Tracy Island)

The jet droned on, flying straight as an arrow toward its destination in the south Pacific. The quiet in the cockpit was uncomfortable. Kyrano looked ahead, occasionally glancing at the instruments. Lisa sat in the co-pilot's seat, her hands in her lap.

At last, something had to be said, or done.

"I'm sorry about that, Tuan. I should have known better," Lisa said with a sigh.

Kyrano glanced down and sighed as well. "I cannot fault you. I should have known you would want to be married in your church, among your friends. But... I did not think your priest... preacher... whatever he is called, would be so rude."

"But I should have known," Lisa responded. "My denomination can be very... anal, when it comes to extending grace to people who don't believe as they do."

"As they do? Or as you do?" Kyrano's question was swift and pointed.

Lisa sounded exasperated. "Tuan, as long as I have been going to church, it's been a place to worship. A touchstone, a community, if you will. Yes, I believe a lot of what my faith espouses. But I'm also open to other people and the way they believe. I don't think that their way... our way... is the only way to reach heaven or the only way to please God." She swallowed and shook her head. "I didn't want the differences in our faiths to come between us. I didn't think it would. The children are all grown and have chosen their own paths. And communal worship is... difficult, to say the least, when living on the island." She reached out to put a hand on his arm. "Will this come between us?"

"I... I do not know." Kyrano paused for a long moment, then finally looked at Lisa. "I do not think so."

Lisa sat back with a relieved sigh, then Kyrano spoke again. "However, I do think it will affect the form of our marriage ceremony. I cannot, in good conscience, marry in your church."

"After our interview with the pastor, neither can I," Lisa told him. "He was insufferably rude and used the Bible to justify his rudeness." She shook her head. "Maybe we should have stopped in Nevada and eloped in Las Vegas or Reno."

Kyrano chuckled. "Then we would have had to face the wrath of the family, and I do not think we would have gotten off lightly."

"No, we wouldn't have," Lisa said, smiling slightly.

The tension in the air had eased, and the pair was quiet for a while. Lisa regarded her beau for a long moment, then asked, "Tuan?"

"Yes, dear one?"

"What do you believe? About God and such?"

Kyrano fell silent as he gathered his thoughts. At last, he said, "I do believe there are beings that are greater than we humans. Whether there is one good being supreme above them all, I cannot tell. But I know there are evil ones; I have seen the temple where they were worshiped and... I know my half-brother draws some of his power from them."

"He worships... demons?" Lisa asked, trying to understand.

"I suppose you could call them such," Kyrano replied. "The powers he wields have been passed down through my family, though for some reason I do not understand, they were not manifest in my father. Either that, or his talents were very weak, and he was easily controlled. As I was, once." He shrugged a little. "I cannot say for certain that his worship of these... demons, as you call them, is what makes him so strong. But they represent power, and that is truly what he has always worshiped."

He straightened in his seat, adjusting himself for comfort. "Beyond that, I do believe in karma, and in being one with nature as much as possible. Most of my people are Muslim by faith; I am not, and by choice. I have read the writings of many wise men: Confucius, Buddha, Gandhi, even the wise men of the West; for there are many there as well. I have taken from them what I feel I need to live a peaceable life, doing harm to none unless defending my own life and those I hold dear." He made a sour face. "Indeed, this preacher of yours is the first man in many, many years to anger me to this extent."

"Again, I'm sorry I pushed you to see him, Tuan." Lisa looked down at her hands again.

Kyrano shook his head. "You did not push, my dear. I went with you freely because it was important to you. Is that not what a husband does for his wife? And you have done nothing to be forgiven of." He sighed again. "It will take time for me to feel forgiving toward him, I am afraid."

"I know. That'll take me some time, too."

There was a knock on the door to the pilot's cabin. "Yes, Cherie?" Lisa called.

Cherie stuck her head into the cockpit. "Grammy, can I have a Coke? I'm getting thirsty."

"Yes, I think you can have something to drink. I'm getting rather parched myself. Tuan? Something for you?"

"Cold water would be welcome, Lisa."

Lisa took off her headphones, and slipped out of the co-pilot's seat. "I'll be right back."

As the door closed, Kyrano smiled as he heard Cherie telling her grandmother, "I can hardly wait to get home and show Mom and Dad the stuff I got at Disneyland!"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:11:42 GMT

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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/12/2007 3:08 PM

Sunday, September 2, 2068, 11 p.m., England (10 a.m., Monday, September 3, Tracy Island)

"Goodnight," a coquettishly smiling Kat said to Thomas as he left her at her door.

"Goodnight, dear Kat," he said, softly. Suddenly, he zeroed in to plant a light kiss on her lips. "Until we meet again."

She was surprised to find herself responding to the kiss, and when it was done, her smile was wider. "Yes. Goodnight until then."

She watched him walk jauntily to his car before stepping quietly into her parents' house. The car started with a subtle purr, then pulled away; the only sound it made was the crunching of gravel. Leaning against the closed front door, she sighed contentedly, and put her hand to her still tingling lips.

Moving quietly through the house, she made her way up to what used to be Andrew's bedroom. She was now living there; it was far bigger than the little cupboard of a box room she had before. Her computer was on, the indicator blinking in a friendly way, and she sat down. A touch of the mouse brought the screen to life, and within moments, her email box was open.

There were several messages, but she sighed in disappointment to see she didn't have one from John. Disappointment that quickly turned to irritation as she realized that, though he was prompt about returning her messages, he had yet to write one to her himself. I know he has been on Thunderbird Five, and his duties there come first and foremost, but I should have thought he could take the time to email me. And he has been home well over a day now; I'm sure Tyler hasn't taken up all of his time in playing foosball or whatever silly game they play. So, why hasn't John written me?

She read the other missives, only to discover that she didn't remember their contents when she

was through. Her mind was so fixed on John and his failure to write that she couldn't enjoy what her other friends had to say. Do I wait to write him? Perhaps until he sends me an email on his own? Her petite features folded into a concerned frown. But... what if he doesn't write at all? She gasped, putting her hand to her mouth. No, he would write; I am sure of it. We have a special relationship, he and I. We are special... friends.

This thought brought her up short. Surely, we are much more than friends. We have spent so much time together. He has been so attentive when we have been together, making me cocoa, lending me his books. Suddenly, the thought of Thomas, and the kiss he'd given her, made her realize something. In all our time together, he has never kissed me. Not once. Not even on the cheek. She propped her chin on her hand, and stared at the screen. "I wonder why not," she murmured. "It's not as if his family doesn't show affection; his father and step-mother are very romantic with each other. But he has never even looked at me in a romantic way."

For a long time she continued to stare at the screen. "Well, then," she murmured as she opened up an email form. "Perhaps your response to this will tell me exactly how you see our... friendship, John."

"Dear John,

"I hope your flight home was smooth and there were no complications to keep you at your workplace. I'm dreadfully sorry that I wasn't there to greet you. Did you have a good time playing," she paused to see if she could remember which game John played with his little brother, "foosball with Tyler when you returned? I am sure he missed you very much.

"The wedding was lovely; everything went off very well. Little Estelle was well-behaved as the flower girl, however, Jake was a little scalawag. He made comments like, 'Why is Uncle Andy kissing that girl?' during the wedding. My mum kept trying to shush him, but there was always someone giggling at his comments. We all looked a treat in our frocks -- or so my father said -- but they were made of velvet and the day was hot, so we were very warm and sticky. Melanie, however, looked smashing in the gown she found at Harrod's. Richard wore his RAF uniform, which made him look very dashing, but very different from the other groomsmen. Timothy was best man, and Melanie's other brother, Colin, was also part of the wedding party. My poor mum kept getting the two brothers mixed up."

Here she paused to think over her words. I want to make him know what he is missing without being obvious about it. She smiled. I think I can do that.

"Last evening, the remaining members of the wedding party went out to a club. We had such a lovely time! Melanie's cousin, Thomas, danced several numbers with me; I'd had no idea he was such a wonderful dancer. When I knew him before, he was quite intense and had no real idea of fun. But he's changed so much, and he says I am the reason why. It is very flattering to see how one person can influence another so very much. In fact, we've just had the most smashing evening together, just Thomas and myself.

"I suppose things have been too busy for you to write, but I do hope to hear from you soon.

"Kat"

She read it over, tweaking the wording here and there, then smiling and nodding to herself as she sent it off. We shall see what sort of response I get from John now. With that, she slipped off her long, gypsy-style cheesecloth skirt, and began to prepare for bed.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:13:33 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/12/2007 9:23 PM

Tuesday, Sept 4, 8:30 AM; Tracy Island

Emily walked into the kitchen to find Kyrano putting dishes into the washer. He looked up when he saw her and said, "Good morning, Mrs. Tracy. I see you slept in this morning. Is there something I can get you?"

"I wanted to talk to you without anyone present, and that can't be done at the breakfast table." She smiled at him.

He chuckled slightly. "That is true, unless you can wait until everyone has finished, and brought their plates into the kitchen. What is it you wanted to say?"

"First, I wanted to welcome you back to the island. You - and Lisa - were missed."

"Thank you, Mrs. Tracy."

"But more than that, I came to realize how much you do for this family. I know, there have been some times when you weren't here, and we had to take up the slack, but I've never said this to you before." She paused.

He waited, and when she didn't continue right away, gently said, "Please, go on."

She saw that she had his full attention, and continued. "I know we had our differences when I first came to the island, but we managed to work them out. However, I have come to realize just how much you do for this family, to keep our lives running as smoothly as possible. I don't know how you manage to do it all each day. I found it difficult, even with the boys and Cherie to help. I was so happy to see that you'd cooked ahead and left meals frozen for us reheat; it made things that much easier. And they were delicious; even Alan said that they were better than what he ate on Five - as good as that food was."

"I can almost hear him say that."

"Yes, he would be the one to make that kind of remark." She smiled, then turned serious again. "So I want to say thank you, Kyrano. Thank you for choosing to live with us and help us with all you do. I've never said that before, and I should have, long ago." She paused, shaking her head.

Then she looked him straight in the eye. "But I'm saying it now. Thank you, Kyrano."

He bowed to her. "No thanks are needed, Mrs. Tracy, although your words are appreciated. It is a privilege and an honor to be a part of this household. But I hope my daughter was also a help to you."

"Oh, yes, when she could be. But she returned only the night before Brains went up to Five to install the new medical equipment. So she had to take up the slack there. You know," Emily said thoughtfully, "I think the relationship between those two is developing nicely. And I truly think they are good for each other."

Kyrano smiled. "I agree with you. And it is good that both of them are taking things slowly. However, I hope she finds her life partner, whether it is Brains or someone else, before I am too old to appreciate any grandchildren she may give me."

Emily laughed. "Land sakes, Kyrano. One is never too old to appreciate grandchildren. But I understand what you mean. And now, I'm going to get my breakfast. I do hope there is some left."

"I have become used to making more than enough for this family. If it is all gone, though, we'll have to track down the culprit who might have spirited away some food for a midmorning snack."

She pushed open the door to the dining room and looked at the sideboard. "Well, not today, it seems," she replied, glancing back at him. "They made a considerable dent in it, but I see more than enough there."

She smiled at him and headed into the other room. As the door closed, he could hear "Good morning, Grandma", and "Good morning, Mother" from Jeff and the older Tracy boys still in the dining room.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:16:56 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 6/13/2007 10:29 PM

Tuesday, September 4, 2068, 3:30 p.m., Tracy Island

"It's not fair," Cherie grumbled as she walked down the stairs, toward the pool.

Anna had been sitting in a lounge, reading, but now she looked up from her book. "What's not fair? Life in general or something specific?"

Cherie slumped down on the nearest lounge. "My friends started school this week. The cutest guy in the school asked Ellen to go steady with him. They all went to the mall last weekend and I'm stuck on this island. I won't see anyone until next summer." She glared at Anna.

Anna raised her eyebrows and put the book down. "You know, life's..."

Cherie cut her off. "I know life's not fair. And I have a lot to be thankful for. And I'm being childish. But I wish I could have spent this year at school with my friends."

"You've lived on the island for how long now? Two years? And you're still in touch with friends from Carolina?"

"Sure. I've known most of them all my life. We went to kindergarten and grade school together. Alex is still in touch with his friends, too."

"You're lucky. I went to 5 different grade schools in 3 different states. I haven't kept in touch with anyone from college even."

Cherie looked almost shocked at this. "How can you stand that? Grandma Lisa still has friends she's known since grade school. So does Grandma Tracy. For that matter, so do Dad and the older boys."

"I grew up with the idea that you went where the jobs were. My Dad got transferred a lot for a while. I suppose that's why moving to New Zealand with my husband didn't seem like such a big deal to me. I'm used to the idea of making new friends wherever I go." Anna looked at Cherie thoughtfully.

"You know, I wasn't going to say 'life's not fair' or any of those things. I was going to say that life is a series of trade offs. You live with you family on a tropical island. When your mom came here she decided it was worth leaving her home town to come here. What did she give up and what did she gain?"

Cherie looked thoughtful. "She got away from painful memories and people who where harassing her. She got us kids away from the harassment, too."

"Were any of your friends harassing you? What about your brothers' friends?"

"Jenny's mother died in the bombing. She screamed at me every time she saw me. Linda's mom and dad wouldn't let her go near me. It was pretty hard, since they were both in my class. The teacher thought about transferring me out of her class because of that. But the other teacher for my grade blamed Dad, too. So I just had to put up with it." Cherie looked down at her hands. "There were some problems at church, too. Mom stopped going for a while."

"So your Mom though the chance to get away from that was worth leaving her old friends. Do you?"

"We didn't leave until 2 years after the bombing. It was getting better."

"For you or for your mom?"

"It was still hard for me, sometimes. I don't know how the boys were doing. Mom seemed to be getting better but," Cherie hesitated, "I know she didn't see most of her friends anymore. And we didn't have a lot of money."

"So your mom moved here and you're stuck on a tropical island with 7 brothers and no one your age."

"Yeah. It's not that I don't like it but..." Cherie's voice trailed off as she tried to find the right words.

"You miss the social life of school, and friends."

Cherie nodded. "That's it. I was supposed to spend this school year with Grandma Lisa in Greenville. I was going to see if my cousin Stephanie could stay, too. But then Grandpa came around and Grandma left Greenville. Now she's engaged to Kyrano and will be living here. Steph and I just spent a week in California with Uncle Drew, but I don't know when I'll see her again either."

"What happened with your grandpa? Do you like him?"

"I don't know him. I'd never met him before. Grandma Lisa kicked him out when Mom was little." Cherie hesitated, not sure if she wanted to tell this to Anna. "He beat Mom really bad. Mom wound up in the hospital and Grandma divorced him. Until this summer I didn't even know he was alive."

"And he came back now? After, what, 40 years? What does your grandma think of him?"

"Grandma doesn't trust him. And then Uncle Douglas got transferred, so she didn't want to stay in Greenville any longer."

"So she made the choice to leave rather than staying and having to deal with him. And that spoiled your plans."

Cherie looked out at the ocean and was quiet for a while. When she looked back at Anna, she looked troubled. "He said he was trying to make amends, and he wanted to get to know his grandchildren. Do you think that might be true?"

"I don't know. What was your impression of him?"

"I just saw him for five minutes in the grocery store. Grandma freaked and wouldn't let us go anywhere alone after that."

"You met him in a grocery store? Does he live near your grandma's old home?"

"No, he lives in a different city. He said he'd been following her, wanting to get a chance to talk to her."

"He's faking it," Anna said confidently. "If he really wanted to make amends, he would have contacted her and set up a meeting. And it would have been with just her, not with her grandkids around. If he's been following her, that's stalking. Did he try again?"

"No. We came home the next day. Until we left, Grandma wouldn't let any of us go anywhere without her. She didn't even leave me with the kids when we went to meet Mom and John at the

airport."

"And then she moved here."

Cherie nodded. "Now we have no reason to visit Greenville. I won't see them at all!"

"You won't be able to go to Greenville alone, that's for sure." Anna hesitated. "Have your friends ever come here?"

"Not to the island, no. They've been to the ranch in Wyoming. I had them up for my birthday last summer."

"So you have two problems. One, you want to see your friends in Greenville more often, and two, you want girlfriends your own age. So what other options do you have?"

Cherie looked surprised. "What do you mean?"

"You've been looking at one solution to your problem. It isn't going to happen because of something you can't control. That's not fair, but instead of worrying about that maybe you can look at other solutions."

"Like what?"

"I don't know; let's brainstorm. Could you live with your cousin?"

Cherie shook her head, "Mom and Uncle Doug don't always get along. Anyway they don't live in Greenville, so I still wouldn't see my friends."

"And there's no way for you to make new ones here." Anna thought for a minute. "Have you thought about other ways to meet people your own age?"

"Like what?"

"A club or group in Christchurch? Girl Scouts? Maybe a boarding school? I don't know; maybe you can think of some other things."

Cherie frowned. "A club would mean someone would have to fly me over. And a boarding school would mean I wouldn't see my family except on holidays."

"Unless the boarding school was in Christchurch or somewhere else nearby. Then you could come home on weekends. Thousands of children do go to boarding schools. Thousands of others live in isolated places and never see other children. You have to decide what is best for you." Anna grinned. "Want some homework?"

Cherie grinned back. "Depends on the homework."

"I want you to write down all of the alternatives you can think of. Write down whatever comes to mind, no matter how ridiculous it sounds. Spend a day doing just that. Sleep on the ideas you've

come up with. The next day write each idea down on a separate sheet of paper. On each sheet make two columns -- "Pro" and "Con". Then write down everything you can think of, again no matter how silly, under each heading. Then summarize what you have on the back of each sheet. I'll go over them with you when I come back next week." Anna looked thoughtful for a minute. "You might ask someone to help."

Cherie was doubtful. "One of my brothers?"

"Possibly. Or Tin-Tin, or one of the recruits. Whoever you feel comfortable talking about this with. Maybe have a couple people over for a girls' night and brainstorm. And I bet Grandma Tracy would have some ideas. She must have been lonely sometimes with all these men around."

Cherie frowned. "She goes back to Kansas a couple times each year. I never thought about her being lonely."

"Keep in mind that some day you will go off to college. Learning how to make new friends now will make finding friends in college that much easier." Anna looked at her watch. "I have an appointment in ten minutes. Should I plan on talking to you next Tuesday afternoon when school lets out?"

Cherie nodded, then grinned. "If I do a good job with my homework, do I get a good grade?"

Anna chuckled and stood up. "This is strictly a pass/fail course, my dear. And you're the one who decides if you passed or failed."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:21:02 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 6/16/2007 8:00 AM

Tracy Island, Tuesday, September 4th, 10:45 PM

John sat down on his bed and opened his laptop. While it was loading, he thought back to the events of the last couple of days. Installing the med equipment on Five went well, but as with any new system, there were bound to be tweaks to work out. Hopefully nothing major.

Lena's security upgrade was a welcome relief. Calls from the island could come to Five freely, without the fear of being understood. As per Lena's instructions, John and Brains had downloaded the program to the rest of the ships and John felt he could breathe easily for the first time in days.

He had been so busy since he had gotten home that he hadn't had a chance to check his personal email. Calling up the screen, he scrolled through the messages. There were some from friends, a few from his publishing house wondering if he was interested in writing another book, and one from...What the heck? John opened the message.

Single female astronaut, desperately seeking mate. Please send me your name, picture and any

physical attributes that you feel I should need. Hope to hear from you soon.

"Who is....Gordon!" John did some minor hacking and within minutes had traced the original email address. Sure enough, the sender's real name was "Capnahab". Shaking his head but chuckling under his breath, John sent back a reply.

Sorry, but I've been abducted by aliens. I suggest you try underwater. I hear the mermen are always trolling for a bite.

Still chuckling, his smile faded as he came across Kat's email. Skimming through, he thought back to his conversation with his brothers. I can't...break up with her with an email. I'll just have to talk to her when she gets back. Hitting the reply button, he started a message.

Kat,

Yes, the flight home went fine. And Tyler beat me at pinball so nothing much has changed here. In fact, I haven't stopped once since I've gotten home. Dad, Brains and I had some upgrades we needed to do. Things went smoothly though which should make all our jobs easier.

Sounds like the wedding went off without a hitch. The kids sound like they had a good time, too. The things they come up with...your poor mom, trying to keep everyone in line. Hopefully things will settle down a bit for your new sister-in-law. It's really too bad that her brother is being deployed, but I'm sure everything will be fine.

Also glad to hear you're having a good time, despite the worries with the trial. Hitting the clubs sounds like a great idea; wish the mainland were closer, I could use a little fun myself!

I hope the rest of your visit goes well. Good luck with the rest of the trial and remember to keep your chin up!

John

He scanned the message, and then sent it. He then shut down his computer and set it down on his night stand. Shutting off his light, he lay back down and closed his eyes. Within moments he was fast asleep.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:27:06 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 6/16/2007 11:05 AM

Anna put down the book she was reading. International Rescue had been called out on a rescue last night and almost everyone had gone. They still weren't back although she'd heard they hoped to be done soon. So she was stuck here until someone could be spared to take her home. Kyrano had offered to fly her home after lunch. He didn't want to leave before then because he needed to have something ready for everyone to eat when they did get in. She wasn't too worried about it;

she'd called her husband to say she'd might be late. It wasn't like she had anything urgent waiting for her at home and the Tracys had a wonderful library.

As much as she enjoyed reading, she felt like she just needed to get out and stretch her legs. I've never walked down to the end of the island. Maybe I'll do some exploring. She headed up to her room and came back out after putting on a floppy hat and a light, long sleeved shirt over her t-shirt. There was a bottle of water in one pocket of her shorts and her book in the other.

Forty-five minutes of strolling brought her to a small beach. She noticed what seemed to be a log in the distance. That looks like a good place to sit for a while. I'll hear the boys coming back, although you can't see that side of the island from here.

However as she approached the "log" she noticed it had some distinct curves. And there were some strings wrapped around it. She broke into a run.

A soft groan came from the log as she knelt beside it. Anna did a quick once over, then helped the girl sit up. "Here drink this. Slowly." The girl gulped the water down. As she adjusted her hold on the girl, she noticed the skin where she had moved her hand. It's gone back to normal pretty fast. If she was dehydrated, it would still be white.

"Can you stand up?"

"I think so." Her eyes were wide in her tanned face. "Has anyone been looking for me?"

"I don't know. What's your name?" Anna helped her over to some shade.

"Oh, I can't tell you! They might find me!" She looked fearfully out at the ocean. One of the straps on her bikini started to come loose.

"Here, let me help you with that. We wouldn't want it to come lose at a bad time, would we?" Not that there's much left to reveal. This isn't a swimsuit; it's a pair of strings with gland conditions. Anna quickly took off her outer shirt. "Here, put this on. It will help make sure you don't sunburn." She's not burned anywhere. She couldn't have been out there too long.

"What's your first name at least? I need to call you something."

"Jasmine," replied the girl as she slipped on the shirt. It was way too big for her and covered her partway down her legs. She promptly tied the tail ends of it around her midriff, leaving her very trim looking waist showing.

"Well, Jazz, do you think you can make it up to the house? I'll help."

Jasmine looked pitiful. "Can someone come get me?"

"Sorry. There isn't anyone available right now. Most of the family is away on business. And I couldn't make it back to the house and send someone back without leaving you for too long."

"Oh." Was there a look of disappointment in her eyes? "I don't know if I can make it that far."

And just how do you know how far it is? I didn't tell you.

"Why don't you sit right here, in the shade. No one can see you from the ocean. I'll have Mr. Tracy send one of his sons out to help you."

With what was probably her first genuine smile of the day, Jasmine replied, "That would be wonderful. Thank you ever so much."

Anna nodded and walked briskly down the beach, thinking fast. When she had first been asked to come to Tracy Island, she had checked with some of her police buddies. Ron had been very helpful. She remembered the conversation well.

"No. we don't have any trouble with the Tracys. The older boys cut loose a little but not much when they visit. The one time we had to pull one in on a D&D charge, he didn't give us any trouble. He slept it off and one of the other brothers picked him up the next day. We just issued a warning. He was less trouble than the mayor's kid. In fact, the only problem they seem to have is the occasional beach babe. And that's not their fault."

"Beach babe? As in a girl they picked up?"

"I wish it were that simple. Every two or three months some sweet young thing washes up on one of their beaches. She's usually young, good looking and acts scared. She doesn't give a name and says she's too scared to leave. She'll claim she's scared of the police and might endanger her family if she tells them anything. It can take them a couple of days to get rid of them."

"They can't call you to remove them?"

"Nope. Jurisdiction problems. They've finally just taken to calling the Coast Guard to pick them up. Nothing else they really can do. If they get any bad publicity, no matter what happens, they lose."

As soon as Anna was out of sight of Jasmine, she pulled her cell phone from her pocket. "Mr. Tracy? I think you better implement Operation Cover Up. No, I'm ok. But you have a visitor. I think I can get rid of her before the boys are due back. No, leave it to me. Can I borrow Tyler and Alex for a bit? And Dom as well? And I'm going to need to talk to Gordon."

A half hour later, a beach buggy drove up to where the young woman waited on the sand. The two youngest, and arguably the cutest, Tracy sons hopped out, along with a tall, gangly young man with food stains down his shirt. The older of the two boys spoke up. "Hi! I'm Alex Tracy and this is Tyler and this is Dominic. You must be Jenny."

"Jasmine." She looked at the two youngest Tracy sons as if she wasn't sure if they were bugs or not. Then she looked up at Dom and smiled.

He smiled back. "Here, let me help you into the buggy." He pulled her up and started to help her into the car. She stumbled slightly and fell against him. Except he wasn't there, having stepped aside to get something out of the back seat. She hit her nose against one of the roll bars.

"Now," Dom turned back toward her holding a large cup. "I'm sorry! Did you hurt yourself? Alex, get one of the ice packs from the first aid kit, will you?" He helped settle her in the front passenger

seat and handed her the cup. "Brains said that you need to drink all of this down."

She obligingly took a sip and nearly choked. "What is this!"

"Vinegar and potassium salts. Just what you need to get your electrolytes back up. Now drink it all down." Dom smiled at her so cheerfully that she stifled the comment she was about to make and took another sip.

"Finish it up. The doctor said we shouldn't start back until it was all gone." Jasmine took another sip and started coughing. She accidentally dropped the cup.

Dominic thumped her in the back while Tyler picked up the cup. "We can't have you choking," Dom chirped. "Now, Alex, give the lady the ice pack and let's go, shall we? There's more vinegar back at the house." Both boys climbed in, Tyler still holding the cup by its rim. The dune buggy went bouncing down the beach, somehow managing to hit every bump on the way, Jasmine holding tightly to the door with one hand while holding the ice pack to her face with the other.

When they reached the house, Dom parked the buggy and helped her out. Brains was waiting in the sickroom when Jasmine limped in.

She looked him over and smiled, but it was rather tentative. This may have had something to do with the pale pink scrubs with bright red hearts he was wearing. Dominic walked over to help her up onto the exam table. "Oh, are you hurt? Anna didn't mention any injuries."

"I'm fine. I just got bounced around a little while Dom was driving me here." Jasmine smiled up at Dom adoringly. Her smile was beginning to be a bit strained.

"Well, let's take a look at you." Brains moved over to the exam table. "Then we can all head up to lunch."

They did a full 15 minute scan. Afterward Brains pronounced her fine. He smiled at her in a big brother sort of way then added to Dominic, "But tell Kyrano she can't have anything heavy for lunch. She still needs to re-hydrate."

Dom nodded and helped her off the diagnostic table. "Let me take you up to a guest room. You can take a shower before lunch. And I'll try to find you some clothes."

Dominic led her down the hall to an open door. Anna was sitting on a chair in the corner. "How is she, Dom?"

"Brains says she'll be fine. She just needs to rest up a bit and get re-hydrated."

"Wonderful. Jane, do you think you will need any help in the shower?" Anna gestured toward a closed door. "Lisa just put new soap, towels, shampoo and conditioner in there as well as a brush and toothbrush. There's a robe on the back of the door. When you're done, why don't you lie down for a bit? Dominic can come get you when it's time for lunch."

"It's Jasmine. I think I can handle it myself." She smiled up at Dom. "And I'm looking forward to

lunch."

"We'll leave you to it then. Lunch should be in about a half hour." Anna stood up and Dom held the door for her. He gave Jasmine a cheerful smile and pulled the door shut behind him.

Jasmine opened the bathroom door. A cat stood in the middle of the room, hissing at her. "Well, hello kitty. How did you get in here?" She reached down to pet the cat. The cat promptly reached out with a paw and proved that she had not been declawed. It hissed again, then ran past a yelling Jasmine into the bedroom. Seeing no escape from this new room, it hid under the bed.

Jasmine sucked on the puncture wounds on her hand. It took several minutes before they stopped bleeding. She found some baid-aids in the medicine cabinet. After putting them on, she took a fast shower, washing dried salt and sand off of her body and her hair. She dried herself off and put on the thick terrycloth robe she found hanging from the door. Then she went to work drying and brushing her hair.

Dominic and Lisa heard the shriek as they waited in the hall. "My hair!! What happened to my hair?"

Dom sauntered over and called through the guest room door. "Is everything all right?"

"No!!" The door opened to show a tearful Jasmine dressed in the bright red terry robe. It went very well with her now purple hair.

"Oh dear. Let me take a look at the shampoo you used." Dom moved past her into the room. He dropped a bundle onto the bed and went into the bathroom. He picked up the bottle of shampoo and poured a little into his hand. "This is John's shampoo." He looked at Lisa.

"Yes, I took it out of his bathroom. I knew he hadn't been home in months and figured it wouldn't matter." Lisa looked confused. "Was that wrong?"

"He's currently in a 'punk' phase." Dominic turned back to Jasmine. "We're hoping he will grow out of it; twenty eight is a bit old for purple hair, but..." Dominic shrugged. "Personally, I think he does it just to annoy Anna. That's one of the reasons he's not on the island right now. If I recall correctly, it should wash out after a couple of showers."

"Then I'll get some real shampoo and wash it out right now." Jasmine's fury was evident on her face.

"You can't right now. I was just on my way to tell you. Lunch is ready." He smiled down on her. "I brought you some clothes." He pointed to the bundle on the bed. "I didn't think anything of Tin-Tin's would fit you." He held up a pair of baggy sweatpants and a t-shirt along with a pair of sandals. "These are just out of the dryer."

She took a deep breath and let it out. Then she smiled up at Dom. The smile wasn't quite as brilliant as before. "Ok. Just let me get my clothes on." She took the clothes from him, moved past him and closed the bathroom door.

A few minutes later, the three of them appeared at the table. The sweat pants were rolled up at the waist several times, but were still way too long. Even with the cuffs rolled up, she kept tripping on them.

The t-shirt was also too large. It fell down below her knees, or it would have if she hadn't tied it in front. It still came down past her waist. Between the t-shirt and the sweat pants she looked like a 4 year old playing dress up in her mom's clothes. That is, if a 4 year old could look pregnant.

Jeff Tracy looked up from his paper. "Hello. You must be Jackie." He smiled briefly and went back to his paper.

"It's Jasmine." Dom pulled out a chair for her, next to an elderly lady, and she slid into it giving him a smile.

"Whatever. Is there anyone you need to call, Jazzy?" Jeff never looked up from his paper.

Jasmine opened her mouth to say something then thought the better of it. Instead she said a simple, "No."

Dominic held out the chair on the other side of Jasmine for Lisa. Alex and Tyler were already seated just past her and beyond them was a young, oriental-looking woman. Dom sat down directly across from Jasmine. There was a 2 or 3 year old next to him. A girl with 2 pigtails, one on each side, and freckles was sitting on the other side of the child and helping him eat. Brains sat on the other side of Dom and another young man, a real hunk, sat next to him. Jeff was at the head of the table still hidden behind his newspaper. Anna sat at the other end managing to look like she disapproved of everything. For some reason she reminded Jasmine of a snapping turtle.

Tyler handed a salad bowl to Lisa. She picked up some tongs and put some lobster salad on her plate. But Jasmine didn't have a plate in front of her. Just then Kyrano walked over and put a plate in front of her along with a bowl. "Mr. Brains said you were not to have any rich or heavy foods. So I made a plate for you." He nodded at her and turned away. She looked down at the plate. It contained a tuna fish sandwich and a banana. The bowl contained chicken noodle soup.

She started to eat the sandwich but couldn't seem to get comfortable. No matter how she sat, she itched. She squirmed in her chair but nothing seemed to help.

"You don't look comfortable, my dear. Is anything wrong?" The older lady next to Jasmine smiled and added, "I'm Emily Tracy, Jefferson's mother. Can I help?"

"I think I might be allergic to your laundry soap or something. My, um, seat itches."

Across from her Dom was helping the toddler eat. Brains and the other young man were smiling at each other and talking.

Jasmine caught Dominic's eye and smiled. "Oh, what an adorable child. Is he yours?"

Dominic grinned broadly. "Yes. This is Joshua. Say 'hi' to the pretty lady, Josh." Joshua smiled at the nice lady. He was having one of his favorite meals, a peanut butter sandwich.

"Is his mother around?"

Dominic froze for a second. "No. She and I were divorced soon after Joshua was born. She didn't want custody then." His lips tightened for a second, then he smiled down at Joshua, "But we do ok without a mom. Although sometimes I do think I should start looking for a new mom for him."

In the meantime, Joshua had finished his lunch and climbed down from his chair. He ran around the table to see this new person for himself. He smiled up at her and when she smiled back at him, he reached up toward her and grabbed her hair with his peanut butter smeared hands. Since he wanted to be picked up, he started climbing onto her lap, using her hair for support. Jasmine shrieked in pain.

"Joshua Aaron Kelly! You let go right now!" Dom started to stand up but Grandma Tracy had already grabbed Joshua. It took several tries before he finally released Jasmine's hair and settled on Grandma's lap.

"I'm sorry. Here, let me help you wipe that out of your hair." Dominic came over with a napkin and used it to get some of the peanut butter out of her hair.

"You better find a woman to help raise that young hellion soon." Jeff Tracy had never looked out from behind his paper.

Jasmine waved Dominic away. "That's fine. I'll get the rest out when I shower." She gulped down some iced tea, looking as if she wished it was something stronger. Her voice was considerably less friendly when she added, "You called him Joshua Aaron Kelly. I thought your last name was Tracy?"

Dominic took Joshua away from Grandma Tracy and sat back down at his place. "No, I'm not a family member. I'm a private nurse they hired when Mr. Tracy had his accident last winter. I stayed on to help with the kids."

Jeff snorted and put down his paper. "Those brats of mine from my first wife couldn't be bothered to stay when I needed help. They don't come here much since I remarried. See if they get anything in my will."

Jasmine looked around desperately. "And who is your friend, Brains?"

Brains beamed back at her. "This is my friend, Luke. Luke, meet Jacquelyn."

"It's Jasmine," she smiled. He looked good wearing an unbuttoned short sleeved shirt, but there was more fabric starting at the middle of his chest. "I'm pleased to meet you. Do you live here too?"

"I came over here to help decorate the house. But Brains and I became such good friends I just

sort of stayed." He looked adoringly at Brains, who had a "cat that ate the canary" look on his face. "He has such a brilliant mind. And such a nice body. And, of course, he doesn't need his glasses at night. We've had such a wonderful relationship these past two years...." Luke leaned against Brains and snuggled up. Brains looked even smugger, if that was possible. Jasmine suddenly realized Luke was wearing a sarong and it didn't quite fit all the way around. The pink flowers on it matched Brains' scrubs.

Kyrano brought out dessert. Plates of chocolate cake with a scoop of vanilla ice cream covered with chocolate shavings and topped with a strawberry were set in front of people. It looked simply divine. But when Kyrano reached Jasmine, he put down a small bowl of plain vanilla ice cream. He smiled at her. "No heavy foods." She returned a wan smile and started eating.

Anna looked at the clock and cleared her throat. "It's almost time to start today's Bible lesson. Then I really need to get home. I'm giving a lesson to the fallen women staying at the Salvation Army shelter tonight."

Tyler piped up, "What are we learning today?"

"We'll be continuing with the different levels of Hell. We're on the sixth level, which contains liars, cheaters and those who bear false witness. We may also talk about the seventh level, which is for loose women and people caught in adultery."

"Cool," said Tyler. "Are you going to join us, Miss Joan?"

Next to Tyler, Alex leaned forward in his seat. "Afterward, I can show you my bug collection. I've got some really neat tarantulas I caught right here on the island." His face shone with excitement.

"Can I feed the mice to Mr. Hiss this time?" Cherie asked.

"Hey. You got to do that last time. It's my turn now." Tyler looked ready to fight for his snake feeding rights.

"Don't forget to feed the alligator. We don't want Little Snapper climbing out of his pond again. It upsets the kittens," Jeff said distractedly. "Damn. The Royals lost again. They won't be in the Series this year."

Dominic wiped off Joshua's hands. "I'll just give Joshua a bath and settle him down for a nap." He looked at Jasmine. "If you want, you can come help."

"Ah, no," Jasmine replied. "I don't think I'd better go with you. I really need to go downstairs and wash my hair again. To get the peanut butter out."

"Let me get you some different shampoo. You can use some of mine." Cherie smiled at her from across the table.

"Was there a problem with the shampoo?" Anna looked at Jasmine as if it was her fault the shampoo had caused problems.

"She accidentally got some of John's. Look at her hair," Dominic called from the door.

"I thought we got rid of all of that evil stuff," Anna sniffed. "That young man will come to a bad end."

"Well, he won't come to it here. I've forbidden him to come to the island while his hair is that color." Jeff stood up, folded his paper and walked toward his study. "Nice to have met you, Jake."

"Jasmine."

"Kyrano," Anna snapped. "When will you be ready to fly me home?"

"As soon as the dishes are done, Mistress Anna. That should be in about an hour."

"I'll be down at the plane waiting. I certainly don't want to have to stay here until the supply plane next week."

In a small voice, Jasmine asked, "Can I come with you? I really need to be on my way."

Anna glanced at her. "If you're ready when we leave. Tin-Tin, don't we have anything that will make her look less like a harlot?"

"I'll see if I can find one of my muumuu that will fit." Tin-Tin smiled at Jasmine. "I'll bring it by the guest bedroom while you're taking a shower."

"Thank you." Jasmine quickly got up from the table and headed for the door. She could still hear Anna talking.

"Youth today. They have no manners."

Forty-five minutes later Dominic drove the golf cart up to Tracy One and dropped Jasmine off. She was wearing a muddy brown, shapeless dress that came down to her feet. She climbed up the stairs into the plane like she was scared it might take off without her.

Ten minutes later, Kyrano was just finishing the pre-flight checks. Anna walked up with a small overnight bag. "Our passenger on board?"

Kyrano grinned. "I do not think the combined engines of Thunderbirds 1, 2 and 3 could get her out. Do you wish to copilot?"

"This time I think I will. If for no other reason than to be sure I don't start laughing so hard I rattle the plane apart." She suppressed her own grin and went up the steps into the plane. Kyrano followed and closed up the plane behind him.

Thirty minutes later they landed at Christchurch's main airport. Kyrano opened the door and lowered the steps. Jasmine was down them like a shot. As she walked as fast as possible toward the terminal, Kyrano called after her, "I hope you enjoyed your stay on Tracy Island, Miss Josephine." She started running.

Kyrano climbed back into the cockpit. Anna grinned at him from the copilot's seat. "Is she gone?"

Kyrano replied, "I believe the correct phrase is 'she took off like greased lighting'. I shall enjoy watching the boys when we tell them about this."

"Too late. A message just came over the radio. The boys landed 10 minutes after we left. I expect Alex and Tyler are already filling them in. I reminded Jeff that I promised Gordon immunity for telling me where the itching powder and shampoo were hidden."

She changed the subject. "You don't have to fly me to the Lake Colendge airport, you know. I can call my husband and have him pick me up here."

"I do not wish to run the risk of Miss Jasmine seeing you in the airport. Also, your car is there. And, truthfully, I wish ask you some questions. How did you know she was a fake?" Kyrano taxied the plane into the line waiting to take off. Anna waited until they were in the air to reply.

"I knew she was a fake as soon as I looked at her hair." Kyrano looked at her, inquiringly. Anna went on. "It was dry. With every hair in place. Well, actually in 'artful disarray'. If she'd been in the water, it would have dried in clumps."

"This is why you started your plan before we had checked her fingerprints."

"Yes. I told Tyler to give the cup to Tin-Tin as soon as we got back to the house. She was able to lift the prints and check the New Zealand fingerprint database before Brains was through with the medical check. If I'd had to contact someone in the Police department, I would have taken a lot longer. Considering what her record was like, I'm happy we checked."

"Most of the crimes on her record were minor things." Kyrano frowned.

"Most of her convictions were minor. The attempted extortion was never proven and charges were dropped. When I saw that, I made sure she was never left alone with any of the men. Tin-Tin, Lisa, Cherie and Emily helped me there. I wanted to be sure she had no basis for any charge she might try to bring. The Tracys don't need that type of publicity."

"Now I have a question for you. I can understand Tin-Tin having the sarong. But where did she get that burqua?"

"Two years ago, she went on an around the world trip with Alan and Lady Penelope. As a joke, Alan purchased for her a dress of the type women wear in Muslim countries. She was cleaning out her closet last week and put it in the pile of things to go to charity."

Kyrano called the tower and started to land. Anna kept her eyes on the instrument panel until they were safely on the ground. When he taxied off the runway, Anna continued, "Do you really need to do some shopping? I'd be glad to drive you around."

"No. The supply plane comes tomorrow. I need to get back to Tracy Island to be sure there is enough food for all the hungry young men and women there." They both moved to the back

compartment and Kyrano lowered the steps. "But I will look forward to seeing you next week."

Anna grinned, waved and headed for the parking lot and home.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:28:47 GMT

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From: susanmartha Sent: 6/16/2007 11:10 AM

Scott stepped away from Thunderbird 1's entrance. The rescue had been exhausting and he wanted nothing more than something to eat and a shower. Base had told them to wait before coming back because Operation Cover Up was in effect so he had flown with Thunderbird 2. When the all clear had been given, he landed ASAP and Virgil had been right behind him. He headed for the kitchen and noticed Cherie waiting for him. "Sis, did you develop more freckles while we were gone? And what's with the pig tails?"

"Sandwiches and cake in the dining room. And this is part of my disguise. You can use make up to emphasize freckles as well as hide them. We," she said, grinning, "had a beach babe while you were gone."

"Oh, no," Scott groaned as he headed straight for the coffee pot and sandwiches already on the table. "Where is she?"

"Where is who? And where is Kyrano?" Virgil walked in followed by the rest of the crew.

Tyler was bringing another plate of sandwiches in from the kitchen. Luke followed with more coffee and some more mugs. Alex came last with some lemonade.

Scott did a double take. "Um, I may regret this but, Luke why are you wearing one of Tin-Tin's sarongs over your swimsuit?"

Just then Brains came in with the cake, still in his pink scrubs. The entire group seemed to freeze.

Gordon recovered first. "Mom, isn't that the set of scrubs Dad gave you for Valentine's last year? The ones you wear as pj's sometimes?" Whatever had happened, he had a feeling the explanation was going to be good.

"To answer Virgil's question first, 'who' is the young lady Anna found washed up on the beach about four hours ago," Jeff said. "And as to where she is, she's on the plane with Kyrano and Anna, headed home."

"Four hours!! You got rid of a beach babe in just 4 hours!!! How?" Scott put his drink down on the table before he dropped it.

"A beach babe? What, pray tell, is a beach babe?" Elise looked like she was trying to decide if she wanted to hit Scott or laugh at him.

"A bbbwbb. A Beach Babe Bimbo with Balloon Boobs," Gordon explained. "One of the hazards of being rich. Every 2 or 3 months some poor helpless thing 'accidentally' washes up on one of our beaches."

"She always seems to be scared of something and doesn't dare tell us her full name. She couldn't 'endanger' us." Alan sat down and grabbed a sandwich. "Her name is always something exotic, like Angelica or Melusine."

"Or, in this case, Jasmine." Jeff leaned back in his chair. "So do we debrief your rescue first, or do you want to hear about ours?"

"Yours first. This sounds too good to pass up." Virgil had already finished one sandwich and was working on his second.

"All right, then," Jeff took a sip of his coffee then began. "Anna discovered her on the beach, wearing what she described as 'strings with swollen glands'. According to Anna, the young lady acted like she was exhausted but she wasn't dehydrated or sunburned. What little there was of her swimsuit seemed about to fall off. So Anna told her to wait there while she went for help. When she was out of sight, she called and alerted me."

"That's why you told us not to leave the Danger Zone until we had all rested," John said. "We couldn't come home until she was gone."

"How long could that take?" Nikki shrugged. "Just load her on a plane and send her off."

"It's not that easy. If we put her on a plane against her will, it could be considered assault or even kidnapping. And even if no charges came from it, she could still sue." Gordon shook his head. "We can't afford the bad publicity. It usually takes three or four days to get rid of them."

"I've never decided which offends me more -- the assumption about our lack of intelligence or the assumption about our lack of taste." Virgil had finished off a third sandwich and reached for a piece of cake.

"And there was the time our bbbwbb turned out to work for a tabloid. She even found a way to smuggle a camera in with her," John added. "Her photographer was on a boat with a telephoto lens, filming the whole thing. Although," John had a predatory gleam in his eye, "it was amazing how all his film was ruined."

"One of the few times I've authorized using IR equipment for personal use. And I've never regretted it," Jeff put in.

"All right, I understand about beach babe bimbos, but how do balloon boobs come in?" By this time Nikki was actually curious.

Virgil answered. "There was this turn of the century science fiction artist named Phil Folio, or something like that. He always drew women with giant boobs. They looked like someone stuffed a basketball under their shirt. I never believed anyone could actually look like that, until this one

beach babe showed up. What was her name?"

"Azeezee," answered Tin-Tin. "Although I was never sure if that was her name or her bra size."

"I still don't know how she walked with those things." Scott shook his head in amazement. "They hung out in front and to the sides and she didn't believe in bras. I kept expecting her to fall over, she looked so top heavy."

"Then Brains came up with the theory that they were actually air sacks filled with helium to hold them up. So Alan and Gordon started to come up with a plan to stick a pin in them to see if they would actually pop." Jeff shook his head. "After she 'accidentally' fell into the pool wearing nothing but a t-shirt and a bikini bottom, I was ready to help them."

"So was I." Emily Tracy didn't normally stay for debriefings, but this time she had. After all she had been part of the 'rescue' on Tracy Island. "Fortunately, the Coast Guard showed up and took her off our hands that afternoon."

"We've finally started to call the Coast Guard as soon as one shows up. They've started calling it the 'Tracy Island Taxi Service'." Gordon grinned, somewhat viciously. "There is this one female captain who has this 'look'. She comes onto the dock, starts at the top of the girl, looks all the way down, then slowly all the way back up. Then she just looks at the girl, and smiles. She always makes me think of a third grade Sunday school teacher who just caught you taking money out of the collection plate. Usually they go with her without a problem after that."

"But it can take 3 or 4 days for a cruiser to have time to get here," added John. "We've always been terrified that there would be a rescue while one of them was here. That happened once."

"Don't remind me." Gordon shuddered. "I had to take her down to the theater and keep her occupied long enough for Thunderbird 3 to launch. Then Virgil flew Tracy One off, so we could claim that he, Scott and Alan had left for the mainland for a couple days. Alan and Scott stayed on Five until the Coast Guard could come get her." Gordon shuddered. "That hour was enough to make me want to be gay."

Luke grinned. "Having met a bbbwbb myself, I don't blame you. Although," he looked at Brains and his voice changed as he went on. "Sitting and staring into to the wonderful eyes of my beloved was," deep sigh, "such rapture." He fluttered his eyelashes at Brains.

Virgil choked and nearly spit some cake out. Scott spilled his coffee. Luke grinned. "I had a friend in college who loved to flame any chance he could. He was always winning the 'Best Poof' award at the annual P-Flag picnic."

"P-Flag?"

"Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. They had a Best Butch award, too. The year I attended it was won by a girl I was friends with. She worked on her car when she got upset. I called her when ever I needed help with an engine."

"Maybe we should just let you us tell what happened," John said, picking up his own cake.

So Jeff started with the phone call from Anna. Tyler and Alex jumped in with picking Jasmine up from the beach. When they got to the vinegar and potassium salts, Dianne started laughing. "That would actually work, but I don't think I'd prescribe it."

When they got to the purple hair, Gordon grinned. "So that was why you called me during a rescue."

"I knew you were wrapping it up by then," Jeff replied. He went on to explain about John's 'punk' phase, and the whole group started sniggering. By the time he got through with the itching powder in the sweat pants, Joshua's hair pulling, and Luke's comments, both Gordon and Alan were rolling on the floor. The Bible study sent John down there with them. When Tyler, Alex and Cherie did their 'snake feeding' routine, Dianne put her head in her hands and shook.

Gordon finally stopped laughing and caught his breath. "Hey, Dad. Does this mean I need to keep some itching powder and shampoo around at all times? For International Rescue's sake?" He put on his best innocent look. "And I can get some soap that will dye your skin blue."

"Only if Dad gets to keep it under lock and key." Scott tried to glare at his brother, but couldn't sustain it. "Dad, did you dump the rest of the shampoo and itching powder?"

Jeff shook his head. "Sorry. Anna promised him immunity if he would tell her where it was. And anyway, she wouldn't let me see where he hid it."

"Are you sure you can't get her to move to the island? We could use someone with that devious of a brain." Alan pushed himself off the floor.

"I wonder if I could recruit her to help with something." The look on Gordon's face sent alarm bells ringing in everyone's head. The "No!" was a chorus.

"My first wife's brats'. I can imagine Lucy's response to that." Emily Tracy looked at her son.

He smiled, if a bit ruefully. "She'd have been rolling on the floor with everyone else. Gordon didn't get his sense of humor from me, you know."

"Oh, I don't know about that. Your father could have kept a straight face through it all. I can just hear him going, 'youth today have no manners'. But afterward, he would have been rolling on the floor himself. The idea of popping the 'balloon boobs' would have appealed to him, too."

"Maybe we need to decide how to handle beach babes ourselves." Nikki looked like she still didn't quite believe what she had just heard.

"Pretend this is Paradise Island and we're all Amazon warriors? Send all the men into hiding and tell the beach babe she's now in basic training?" Elise looked around at the other women. "I can do a great basic training sergeant if I need to."

Nikki grinned. The ladies moved from the dining room to the lounge and started tossing ideas around.

"Mr. Tracy? I hate to say this, but I think you may have just created a monster." Dominic left the table to check on Joshua.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:33:44 GMT
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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 6/17/2007 11:02 AM

Tuesday Sept. 4th 6pm: San Diego [Wednesday Sept. 5th 1pm Tracy Island]

Brandon sat across the table from his parents. They had ordered from their favorite Mexican restaurant. While they waited for their food to be delivered, the family discussed all that had happened and what was to come.

Shannon looked at the paper she had in front of her, reading off what was written on it. "We've made arrangements for a visiting nurse to come in and help Dad and the therapy appointments have been set up for three times a week starting Monday."

The doorbell rang and Brandon excused himself, coming back a couple of minutes later with two large bags.

While eating, Sarah and Eugene talked about things they wanted to do after therapy. "I'm looking forward to working in the garden full time again. I miss taking care of the flowers; how about you, Eugene?"

He thought a moment. "I'd like to take Rocky to the dog park every day. I'm looking forward to chatting with my friends. I have an unfinished discussion with a couple of them - about the Chargers." Unseen by the family, Rocky walked over to the table and laid down next to the wheelchair, letting out a small sigh. "What's the matter, Rocky? You feeling left out?" The dog stood up, letting Eugene scratch his ears.

"Oh, Eugene," Sarah said, "you get so worked up over that team."

Brandon smiled, listening to his parents' answers. That's so like them. They just want the simple things, nothing fancy.

"Son," Eugene said, interrupting Brandon's thoughts, "have you requested a transfer back to San Diego yet?"

The question took him by surprise. "I hadn't thought about it. I've already contacted Mr. Tracy and let him know I'm coming back. I've booked a flight to Honolulu for Saturday; when I arrive, somebody will be there to pick me up."

"So soon?" Sarah exclaimed.

"Still, it's something I think you should consider," his father continued. "I've been listening to everything, and it seems most of the burden is on your sister. She'll be the one taking us to our appointments, putting her schooling on hold so she can take care of us."

Brandon replied, "If I did decide to transfer back here, I'd still have to stay at my job until it comes through. Transfers take time, and it would be unfair to leave my co-workers in a tight spot."

Shannon spoke up. "Mom, Dad, please listen." Both parents looked at her attentively. "Brandon and I discussed this at length and came to an decision. I decided to stay home and take care of you so Brandon can go back to work."

"What about your education?" Sarah asked. "You've worked so hard; it would be a shame to miss classes."

"Already taken care of, Mom. I can take my journalism classes online. That way I can be here if you two need to go somewhere."

Sarah turned to Brandon. "We miss you so much," she said. "It would mean so much to us if you came back home."

"I love you both very much and miss you a lot. But I love my career, too. It's a dream job and I really don't want to leave it."

Eugene turned to his wife and said, "It sounds like they've got this all worked out. And we don't have the right to force him to leave something he loves."

Sarah sighed. "I suppose you're right. But I don't have to like it."

Brandon said, "I promise to keep in touch and try to make regular visits home. I'll email you once a week and call when I can."

"Please do, son," Eugene said. "We worry when we don't hear from you."

"Now that that's settled," Sarah said, "who's up for dessert?"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:36:45 GMT
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From: lynnbrody Sent: 6/17/2007 1:38 PM

Wednesday, September 5th, 2068 around 3:30 pm Tracy Island(Tuesday, 4th around 11:30 pm locally)

As Cassie walked up the steps leading from the subway station to the sidewalk, her cell phone rang. She dug the phone out of her pocket and looked at the screen. It was her brother calling.

"What's up?" she asked, answering the call.

"Hey, Cass, just wanted to let you know I'm working late tonight. I didn't want you to worry."

"Okay," she told her brother. "Be careful."

"Who me?" Mark asked innocently. They both laughed at the remark. "Anyway, I probably won't catch ya in the morning before you leave as I'll probably be sleeping. The car key will be on the kitchen table next to the napkin holder."

"Okay. I guess I'll see you Thursday when I get home, then."

"Drive safely and enjoy your trip. I know you'll knock them dead at those interviews."

"Thanks, Mark," Cassie said, a smile coming to her face. "I'll see you Thursday."

"Okay, bye."

Cassie ended the call and put the phone back into her pocket. She walked the rest of the way to the apartment. Once there, she packed her duffel bag for her trip and set it next to the front door. Having showered at the station, Cassie changed into the shorts and oversized T-shirt that she slept in, and undid her hair from the braid she wore it in at work. She made herself a cup of hot chocolate. She turned on the radio, switched it to a soft rock station, then sat down in front of the computer. She had a couple of emails she wanted to write.

Cassie first emailed her best friend from high school who was a missionary in Egypt. She had enjoyed seeing the pictures her friend had sent. She then sent an email to her one cousin. Jean had just started college and had sent a whole bunch of family members a long email about her first week there. Cassie was glad her cousin was enjoying college life so far.

Finally, she got to the email that she'd been trying to find the time to reply to since Friday.
Hey Luke,

Glad to see Smokey the Bear didn't kidnap you after all!

Got your email last Friday, but though the Friday shift started out slow, the weekend made up for it. Seemed to be one call after another. Jackie - you remember her from California right? Well she spent last night in the hospital for observation due to smoke inhalation from a five-alarm fire in an abandoned factory we were called out to. She went home this morning. The doctors have cleared her to return to work in a couple of days.

Sorry to hear about you and Barry. Believe me, I know how hard it is to end a relationship. There are times I still miss Alex, times when I cry myself to sleep over him, but I know it's for the best. We had some good times, but overall it was an unhealthy relationship for both of us. Sometimes, I wonder if we were both just trying to hold it together for Nathan. I'll pass along some advice to you from my therapist - take it one day at a time, and you'll find it slowly gets easier.

You quit SAR! Good for you! Derek was a jerk and I don't think any job is worth putting up with him. I'm sure you'll land on your feet wherever you end up. Hope you enjoy the new job. Did you

take Rommel with you? How's he dealing with the change of environment? I'll try to be patient with hearing back from you, though it won't be easy. Hearing from you always reminds me of happier times and Lord knows I can use those happy memories some days.

Got a couple of interviews set up for the next couple of days. I'll see if anything pans out. Leaving the city is going to be a big step and I want to make sure I make the right decision. I love my job and the people I work with, but I need a change. No reason to go from a job I love to one I'll be miserable at just to leave behind some bad memories. I want to find another job that I'll enjoy and I know that might take a while. Hopefully, if they contacted you, you telling them all about me doesn't hurt me. You could tell some embarrassing stories that I think I'd rather them not know.

Well I should end this and head off to be. I'm heading upstate tomorrow morning for my first interview, followed by one Thursday morning with Tracy Industries. I'll let you know how things go.

Take care and stay safe. Give Rommel a hug for me.

Cass

She sent the email and turned off the computer. She downed the last swallow of hot chocolate, rinsed the cup out in the kitchen sink and, turning off the radio and lights, headed for bed. She wanted to leave by seven in the morning. The town officials in Thornville had arranged for her to stay at a bed and breakfast up there. She wanted to stop by, and settle in before her interview. [/color]

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:39:02 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/17/2007 5:51 PM

Wednesday, September 5, 2068, 10:30 p.m., Tracy Island (spice warning)

Dianne closed her eyes and laid her head back with a contented sigh. The hot water and massaging jets of the Jacuzzi were working to relax her after a long rescue and a strange afternoon. Fortunately, Lisa had been willing to oversee the children's afternoon classes and give her daughter a chance for a nap. Now nap and dinner had been long dealt with, the youngest children were in bed, and Dianne needed the opportunity to wind down.

"Here." A goblet full of white wine appeared in her vision, and she lifted a dripping hand to take hold of it. As she took a sip, Jeff came around to the other side of the hot tub and, placing his own glass on the tiled edge, eased himself into the bubbling waters. Once seated, he picked up his drink and sipped it. "So, how are you feeling?"

She sighed and took another sip before answering. "Stiff and sore... at least, Ah was stiff and sore before Ah got in here." She gazed at him, her eyes half-lidded. "Ah'm surprised you let me go on th' rescue. Ah haven't exactly been cleared for duty yet."

It was his turn to sigh. "I know, but it was late, Dom looked so weary, and Joshua was hollering so loud that I felt he probably should stay home this time." He took another sip and cocked his head. "Do you think we made a mistake in hiring him?"

Dianne shook her head emphatically. "No. Absolutely not. This is a phase Josh is goin' through an' it'll pass. What we need to do is be as supportive as possible." She took another, longer sip of her wine. "Ah think he usually has Kat's help t' give him some respite. With her gone..." She shrugged slightly.

"Yes, I'm surprised I haven't heard from Kat lately," Jeff said, his tone showing a touch of irritation. "As I recall, the wedding was Saturday. I'd have thought she'd let us know when she was returning."

"Doesn't she have some sort of legal doin's over there?" Dianne asked. She put her wine glass on the tiles, draping her hands on the edges of the tub and leaning her head back. Her eyes closed and she let out a low, short, "mmmm".

"Yes, she does, but still, she should have told us something by now." He took a large gulp of wine, emptying his goblet. Making a noise of satisfaction, he put the glass next to Dianne's. The slight clink of glass on tile didn't disturb Dianne, but Jeff's warm wet hands taking hers made her chuckle deep in her throat. She raised her head slowly, a sultry smile on her lips.

"Jeff, love, don' you worry about Kat right now," she drawled as their fingers intertwined.

"All right, I won't." He grinned, his eyes meeting hers as he moved across the tub, lifting her hands and arms from the water and spreading them wide. He let go as he reached her, allowing her to wrap her arms around him as he zeroed in to plant a hot kiss on her eager lips. "After all, I've got something far more pleasant to worry about right now," he murmured before trailing his lips down his wife's exposed neck.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:44:59 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/17/2007 5:52 PM

Thursday, September 6, 2068. 11 am. Tracy Island. (August 5, 11pm England, local time)

The house was quiet once again, and Kat had gotten back from an evening on the town. She'd needed it after the grueling day with the solicitors as they went over with her again and again what happened with Ernie. She'd been close to tears then; she was close to tears again as she considered what she knew she must do.

"I'll just ring him up and ask his advice," she murmured to herself as she pulled out her satellite phone. "But this will be so hard!"

She looked at the phone, gathering up her courage, then took a deep breath and speed-dialed his number. The connection took a few moments longer to make, then she heard the distinctive

clamor of the ringing phone.

John was lounging on the sofa in his suite, reading and enjoying the morning sunshine streaming through the windows, when his satellite phone started ringing. He set his book down on the seat beside him, and picked up the handset. The caller ID told him it was Kat, and he quickly figured out the time difference. It's late there, he thought. I wonder what's up...

"Hey, Kat. How's it going?"

"Oh, hullo, John. It's good to see you!" Kat smiled, a tad nervous. "Things are going well here, though I've had a beastly day at the solicitor's office. It seems that the case is going to trial, and I am required to be a witness."

She paused, and decided she should ask how people were on the island. "How are you? How is the family? Are things going well there?"

"I'm fine," John said. "Nothing out of the ordinary to report. Our newest recruit Luke is settling in well. The kids are all back at school. Mom, Nikki, and Dom are all recuperating nicely." He shifted forward in the seat a little. "I'm sorry to hear you're going to have to be a witness at the trial, but at least that guy'll get what's coming to him. So, what can I do you for?"

"Well," Kat said, then paused slightly to get her words just so. "I was out with my friend, Thomas, and a few friends of his twin, Teresa, this evening." She smiled, and waved a hand. "After such a beastly day as I had, I needed a bit of fun to make things better." She paused for a breath, then resumed, "Anyway, one of Teresa's friends owns a taxi company. It's an all-female concern. All the drivers are female, as are the supervisors." She bit her lower lip slightly. "As we were talking, this friend discovered I was a mechanic by trade, and was very excited. The upshot of it is that she is interested in hiring me."

Kat looked away briefly, and when she brought her gaze back to the phone, her eyes were moist. "I... I don't know what to do. The offer is very generous; not as generous as working for your father, of course, but still, a good wage. And I would be close to home, able to keep an eye on my mother. But..." here her voice dropped to a softer, more sultry tone, "I should miss the island, and my friends there, and particularly... you."

She straightened up a little, then smiled sadly. "So, could you give me advice as to which way I should go?"

John blinked in surprise. He hadn't been expecting what he had heard. He set one hand on one of his knees as something clicked inside of him, and he paused briefly before answering as he processed it. I really wouldn't be that upset if she left. I mean, I'd miss her, but definitely only as a friend and colleague. I guess this is the confirmation.

"Well Kat," he said, straightening up. "When it comes down to it, only your opinion matters on this. Of course we need you here and we'd miss you, but, it's your life. You've listed a lot of positives there: a good wage, close to home and your mother, and you seem to be having a good time despite all that's going on." He took a deeper breath. "Joining our 'family business' isn't necessarily a lifelong commitment, and you know it. If you feel like you'd be happier living back at

home, with your friends and family, then no one is going to scorn you for making the decision to leave. It's up to you."

Kat sat back, a hurt look on her face. I would have supposed he'd be at least the tiniest bit jealous! But no, he'd be happy to see me leave! Perhaps I was right about him and Callie after all.

What she said was, "I see. So you think I should take the job? Leave your family in the lurch, to put it bluntly?" She couldn't help the hurt, slightly sarcastic tone of her voice.

John's eyes widened a little, and he cocked his head slightly to one side. Uh oh. I think she wanted me to say something else. But...I'm telling her the truth.

"Kat, no one's going to be glad to see you go. You've got experience and knowledge of the equipment, and being on rescues. You're an important member of the team." He stood up, and began walking around the room as he spoke. "Your leaving certainly would leave us 'in the lurch', as you say. But you need to think about yourself. You only get one life. And if International Rescue isn't for you, then you need to let my father know."

He stopped in the middle of the room, and pinned Kat with a firm look.

"It'll take time to get someone else who's suitable to fill your shoes, but your first concern should be for your own well-being. No one is going to scorn you for doing that, because no one should expect you to do otherwise. As far as whether I think you should take the job, I've already given you all the advice I can: do what's best for you." He frowned a little. "Do you understand what I'm getting at here?"

Kat nodded slowly. Not a word about him missing me at all. "Yes, I do. You've told me all I needed to know." She took in a deep breath and let it out slowly, then went on, sounding much more formal. "I still have not made my final decision; however, when I do, I shall be certain to inform your father. Thank you very much for your advice, and your time." She glanced pointedly at her watch. "I fear the hour is getting late here, and I must retire. Good day, John."

"Goodnight, Kat. I hope you sleep well. And good luck making your decision."

The connection cut from her end, and John set his phone back on the table. That really wasn't what she wanted to hear from me. But...what was I supposed to do, lie? Tell her I'd dearly miss her and our...'special' friendship? I will miss her; there's no doubt about that. I'll miss teaching her about astronomy and languages and seeing her improve. And I was honest; I would prefer her to make a decision based on her own wants and needs, not just because she thinks she has a shot with me, especially when I know nothing will come of it. Maybe I'm being self-centered here, but I can't help feeling that was partially what all of that was about... He rubbed his hand over one side of his face, and propped his chin up on his palm. Damn...

Kat gazed a long time at the screen on the phone, then carefully folded it up and placed it on her dresser. She didn't trust herself not to fling it across the room and break the thing, and seeing as it was not her property... And never was mine. None of it. Not the job, not the apartment, not... him. Well, I think my mind is made up. I shall begin the process of disentangling myself from the Tracy family and International Rescue in the morning.

But despite her reasoned internal arguments, a terrible sadness and anger overtook her, and she flung herself down on her bed to weep bitter tears into her pillow.

Decision, by Tikatu and ArtisticRainey

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:54:11 GMT
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From: lynnbrody Sent: 6/17/2007 5:56 PM

September 7th, 2068, 4:45 am Tracy Island (Thursday Sept. 6 th, 2068 12:45 locally)

Mark was sitting on the couch watching the afternoon news when Cassie walked into the apartment.

"So, you made it back," Mark commented, looking in her direction. "How was your trip?"

"Not bad. The bed and breakfast in Thornville where I stayed last night was lovely. The food was fantastic. By the way, thanks for letting me use your car," she told him as she walked over to the couch and handed his car key to him. As he took it, she noticed the brace on his right wrist. "What happened?"

"It's nothing. Just a bad sprain," Mark told her with a shrug. "I don't recommend trying to grab a metal baseball bat that someone is swinging, with your bare hand, though."

"Oh, that was smart!"

"Now you sound like Mercy. She kept telling me what an idiot I was all the way over to the emergency room. She's my partner; you would think she'd be on my side. No, instead she chews me out about not handling the situation right. I've got the Captain to do that! What was I going to do? Let the guy keep hitting his wife with the bat even though we were right there?"

"You're lucky that's only a sprain," Cassie told him, shaking her head. Mark had a tendency to react to a situation without really thinking things through. It had landed him in the emergency room quite a few times, but he had saved a lot of lives through his actions, too. His tendency to react first and think later paired, with Mercy's level head, was what made the two a good pair.

"Okay, enough about me. How did the interviews go?"

"Well, they loved me up in Thornville. They wanted me to take the job right there and then. It's a nice town. A lot of open area. Helping them start a fire company would be a new challenge, though, and the town needs a fire company closer. The closest one right now is a half hour away. I asked for time to consider the offer and they gave me a week. I'm supposed to call next Thursday with an answer."

"What about the interview this morning with Tracy Industries? Did you finally figure out what they wanted with a firefighter?" Mark asked her. He had been curious ever since she had told him about the position.

"The position is an instructor position. Evidently, other countries don't have as strict fire and safety protocol requirements as the United States does. Tracy Industries wants someone that would be able to help establish and promote those protocols in these countries. Teach the workers over in the other countries exactly what to do in the case of a fire. They said the position would entail a lot of traveling. That in itself would be fun. I'd get to see other parts of the world."

Mark nodded. Cassie always had wanted to travel but, other than going with their mother to Japan, hadn't had the opportunity. She and Alex had spent their honeymoon in the Poconos and Cassie had enjoyed it. Alex had always said that he'd take her other places but business had always seemed to get in the way.

"The pay would be more than what I'm making now," Cassie told him as she sat down on the couch next to him and kicked off her shoes. She hated dress shoes but they were a necessity for interviews.

"That's not hard, considering what this city pays. When will you hear back?"

"They said they'd call back in a couple of days and let me know if they want me to come back for a follow-up," Cassie said as the phone in the kitchen rang. She looked at her brother, not wanting to get up. With a smile, Mark stood up to check the caller ID. "The benefits are decent and it might actually get Dad off my back, too. He keeps wanting me to get off the streets. To take a desk job or instructor position here in the city."

"Speaking of Dad, it's either him or Mom. Want me to answer it?" Mark asked, indicating the phone. He knew they were calling for Cassie. Neither of his parents had said so much as a hello to him since he had told them he was gay six years ago. His brothers weren't much better, but at least they'd call on Christmas and his birthday, though the calls were always short.

"You might as well," Cassie said with a sigh, as she stood up. "They'll only keep trying."

"Hello," Mark said, picking up the phone.

"Is Cassie there?" his father asked.

"Hold on," Mark said, holding the phone out to his sister. "Like I said, for you," he told her, not caring if his father overheard the comment. Mark took a few steps and leaned against the counter, listening to his sister's side of the conversation.

Cassie took the phone from him. She was bracing herself for another lecture about how she needed to stop being a firefighter. That it was too dangerous.

"Cass, just wanted to tell you that Philip and Lisa's baby was just born! A healthy baby boy! Jason weighs 7 lbs, 2 ounces and is 20 inches long. Your mother and I are going to drive up to Hartford to see him."

"That's wonderful news," she said, hoping that she sounded more upbeat than she was feeling. She was happy for Philip and Lisa; she really was. However, hearing about a newly born baby had suddenly made her start missing Nathan. "Tell Mom to get pictures of him for me. Do you have a number for Lisa at the hospital? I'll call her later and give her and Philip my congratulations."

Her father gave her the hospital number and, after saying a few more words, the two ended the call. Cassie hung up the phone and turned to her brother.

"You're an uncle again. Philip and Lisa just had the baby," she told him, swallowing the lump in her throat.

"Guess I'll send them some money like I did for the other two rascals," Mark replied. He noticed the sad look that had come into Cassie's eyes. "You okay?"

Cassie nodded. "Just missing Nathan again," she managed to get out.

Mark went to her and wrapped her in a hug.

"Why?" Cassie said as she started to cry. "Why did I have to lose him?"

"There's no reason to some things, Cass. They just are," Mark told her softly, holding her tightly as she cried for the son she had recently lost.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:59:04 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/17/2007 8:35 PM

Friday, September 7, 2068, 10 a.m., Wellington, New Zealand (same day, same time on Tracy Island)

"Okay, now flex your foot." Ed Haenga held on to Dianne's leg, feeling the muscle as she flexed her foot at the ankle. "Good. Now, raise your knee towards your chest."

Dianne, who was lying down, obeyed. Ed watched the range of motion, the speed, her expression, and a dozen other little tell-tale things that signaled to him whether or not a patient was moving smoothly and the muscle was working properly and without pain. He nodded slowly as Dianne held that position, then said, "All right, rest your leg."

His patient propped herself up on her elbows, watching as Ed poked at the data pad he held with a stylus. Nikki and Gordon sat nearby, waiting for the verdict on their three weeks of physical therapy.

Finally Ed offered his hand, and helped Dianne up from the floor. Together, they walked over to

the other two, Ed following Dianne and watching how she walked. "Your stride has improved, Dr. Tracy, but I see that you've still got a slight limp," he said, as Dianne sat down. "I think that you can continue to do the first exercise set for two more weeks, and spend plenty of time in the pool. That'll not only help with the leg, but with the arms and the abdominal muscles. You've nearly regained your strength, physically; only a bit more work to get you back to 100%."

"What about my work?" Dianne asked, setting herself to hear the worst.

"Well, a lot depends on what Dr. Carmichael says, of course, but I think you could go back to regular duty, with the caveat that you lift no more than half your body weight."

"In other words," Nikki said with a grin. "Let us nurses do the heavy work... not that we don't already."

The small group chuckled, and Ed stabbed at his pad again. "Okay. I've sent my recommendation to Los Angeles." He smiled at Dianne. "Now it's between you and Dr. Carmichael." He pointed at her with the stylus. "I will want to see you again in two weeks for a final evaluation."

"Yes, sir," Dianne said as she stood up, the cane in one hand.

"Oh, one more thing." Ed gestured towards her. "Ditch the stick."
Dianne smiled widely, and gave the cane to a surprised and fumbling Gordon.

11:30 a.m., Tracy Island (4:30 p.m. the previous day, Los Angeles)

"Stop fidgeting," Brains warned. "I for one don't want to do this again!"

"I'm sorry, Brains," Dianne said curtly. "But I itch!"

"Where do you itch?" Jeff said, getting up from his seat. "Maybe I can help..."

"Sit down!" Dianne and Brains said in unison. "I appreciate the offer, love, but I'll tough it out," Dianne added. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly, trying to still her body.

Brains looked up from the scanner screen. "That's better," he said, the edge gone from his tone. "Just lie still for a bit longer. We're almost through."

"I got the report from Ed Haenga earlier, Di." Drew Carmichael's voice came over the computer's speakers. "You've come a long way in just three weeks if he's recommending sending you back to duty."

"Well, he doesn't know what all my duty consists of, now does he?" Dianne replied.

"No, that's true enough," Drew admitted. "I do, however, and I'll be taking it into account when I make my own evaluation."

The room was quiet for a while after that pronouncement. Jeff, sitting apart from Dianne and watching the proceedings, couldn't stay still. He stood up to lean against the wall with his arms folded for a little bit, sat back down and put one ankle on the opposite knee for a while, then got

up, turned the chair around, and straddled the seat. Dianne saw this going on out of the corner of her eye, and resisted the urge to shake her head.

"Jeff, you there?"

"Yeah, Andy, I'm here."

"I don't suppose you and my niece have been observing that little ban I put on you before I left, hmm?"

Jeff raised his eyes ceiling-ward and huffed. "What do you think, Andy?"

There was suppressed laughter in Drew's voice. "Uh-huh. I get the picture. How long did it take for you to break it?"

"That, Doctor Carmichael, is none of your damned business," Jeff replied firmly. Behind the computer screen, Brains smiled, and Dianne stamped down firmly on the desire to laugh.

At last, Brains let out a relieved sigh. "The scan is complete." Both Tracys followed his example and sighed in relief, then Jeff was on his feet and heading to the scanner, while Dianne levered herself into a sitting position.

"Where's that itch?" Jeff asked.

Dianne put her left arm behind her back as far as it would go. "On my right shoulder blade... no, not there... a little higher... to the right... aaaahhh!" She closed her eyes as Jeff gently ran his fingertips over the troublesome spot.

"Let me know when you have the file," Brains said to Drew, whose face finally popped up on the computer screen.

"I have it, Brains, and thanks." In his Los Angeles office, Drew began to look over the data he'd just been given, paying special attention to the trouble areas and comparing them to the last scan he'd done a few weeks previous.

"Get dressed, honey," Jeff said as he helped Dianne down off the scanner. She nodded, and headed for the screen, stopping to kiss him and smooth a hand over his cheek before disappearing from view.

"How does it look, Dr. Carmichael... quality-wise, that is?" Brains asked.

"It's nice and clear, Brains, thanks," was Drew's distracted reply.

"Then I'll head down to the dining room for lunch." Brains paused at the door. "Should I tell Kyrano you'll be late?"

"Yes, please, Brains, and thanks."

"You're welcome. See you there."

Brains left, and Dianne, now dressed except for her shoes, took his place before the computer. "So, what's the verdict?"

"I'm still looking," Drew said. With his screen already split between the two scanner images, there was no room for him to have Dianne's picture up, so he asked, "Is Jeff still there?"

"I'm still here, Andy," Jeff came up behind Dianne, thinking he'd be picked up by the camera.

"Could you step outside for a moment, Jeff? I have something I need to discuss with Dianne in private."

The Tracys exchanged frowning glances. "What do you need...?" Dianne began.

Drew cut her off. "I want to know how things are going with your counselor."

"Ah." Dianne nodded in understanding, then turned her gaze to Jeff. "Love, if you'd just step outside for a minute?"

"I don't understand." Jeff's puzzled frown made that statement very clear.

"It's okay, love," Dianne said softly. "Protocol between doctor and patient."

"Oh." Jeff's face cleared somewhat. "All right. Let me know when I can come back in."

"I will."

Jeff headed out and the door swished shut behind him. Drew heard it and asked, "Is he gone?"

"Yes, Drew. He's gone." Dianne put her ankle on her knee and began to put her shoe on.

"So, how are things with Mrs. Hanson?" Drew sounded distracted and Dianne wondered how much he'd remember.

"Going well enough. I've had appointments with her for two weeks now, and we've mapped out a plan that will hopefully help me deal with getting back into... driving." She knew to be careful now; the line they were on wasn't necessarily secure.

"Good," he said, squinting at something on the screen. A touch of the mouse zoomed into the area in question. "Is there anything I need to know about this plan? Anything you need me or Maggie for?"

She shook her head, and started putting on her other shoe. "No, I think we can handle it here." I won't tell him that part of that plan was visiting Thunderbird Two, and that it went off prematurely with the recent rescue in the Gobi desert. "You should have seen her the other day, Drew. We had a... an unwanted visitor and she helped us get rid of her in record time."

"Oh, one of those washed up girls?" Drew sounded amused. "Jeff's told me about them."

"Yes, one of those."

"Well, I just wanted to make sure that things were going well in that area and address any concerns you might have had. You can give me the details later if you want."

"All right, Uncle Drew. I'll keep that in mind." She figured that he didn't want to hear any details while they were talking like this.

"Now, go get your husband. I'm ready to pass judgment."

Dianne got up and opened the door. "Jeff, he's ready."

"Okay." Dianne sat back down in the chair and Jeff went to get the one he'd vacated so he could sit beside her. "All right, I'm here, Andy. What's the verdict?"

"Well, the ribs have finished healing entirely; the bone scar looks good. The abdominal muscles could use a bit more toning, but the bruising is resolved. The leg looks good; the muscles a bit on the tight side still, but Ed talked with you about it."

Drew looked right at the camera. "I'd say that, physically, you're good for regular duty around the Island, and light duty elsewhere. Like Ed said, no heavy lifting quite yet, though I doubt I can count on you adhering to that."

"I'll try, Uncle Drew," Dianne said contritely.

"Yeah, sure." Drew did not sound convinced. "However... before you go elsewhere, I want you that plan you were talking about completed and for you to have a relatively clean bill of health from Anna. It's important that you can... uh... drive, and not get into some sort of flashback situation. Do you understand me?"

Dianne nodded slowly. "I do, Uncle Drew."

"Jeff?"

Jeff sat up as if startled. "Yes, Andy?"

"Do you understand me? Can I count on you to rein her in when she's chomping at the bit to go... driving? Can you wait until Anna gives the okay?"

Jeff exchanged a long look with Dianne. She seemed weary, but gave him a little smile. "Okay, Andy. When Anna gives the word, and not before."

Drew smiled. "Good. Now about that little ban..."

"Quit while you're ahead, Andy," Jeff said wryly, making Dianne laugh.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 02:59:58 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/17/2007 9:46 PM

Friday, September 7, 10:30 AM; Silver Spring (2:30 AM Saturday on Tracy Island)

Doctor Bennett raised Lena's left arm straight up, then brought it down and across her chest. "Any pain?"

"No, none."

"Any discomfort at all?"

"Not even a little."

He moved her arm back behind her, then out to the side. "How does that feel?"

"Fine. No problems whatsoever."

He let go, and she put her hands in her lap while he turned to check her latest x ray. "Well, it looks good; you can barely see where the break was. You heal well."

"It's a family trait, Doctor. So, what's de verdict?"

He looked at her and smiled. "Okay, you can go back to work. But take it easy the first week or so. It's been more than a month since you were there. If you feel any pain or discomfort, I want you to take a break and rest, for as long as it takes."

"All right; I will."

He turned and picked up a data pad. "I'm entering the results into your file, and the front office will send it to your company's physician. He may want to clear you himself. I presume Dr. Miller is still working there."

"De last I heard, he was. I'll stop in and see him when I go to de office on Monday."

"Good. Well, Lena. I don't expect to see you back here for some time, when it's time for your regular checkup. You've already made that appointment, haven't you?"

"Oh yes, before I went to Denver. And I have it in my computer, to remind me. So I'll see you den."

"That's fine," he replied as he helped her off the examination table. "I'll expect to hear that you've had no trouble, either with your arm, or your head." He shook her hand and turned to leave.

"Tank you, Doctor." She picked up her purse and followed him out the door. Five minutes later, she was in her car heading home. She thought about calling her office, but decided not to. If I did, dey'd probably try to have a party, and I really don't want a fuss made over me. So I'll just surprise

dem on Monday.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:00:47 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/17/2007 9:54 PM

Saturday, September 8, 2068, 4:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Blacktuft was scared. O.K., that was an understatement, Blacktuft was downright terrified! One of the smaller two-legged giants was attacking him!

He had been wandering, in search of adventure, when he made the mistake of trying to cross the Barren Flat Stones. Then out of the blue, he heard a vicious shriek, and the pounding of a giant's feet. Hoping for the best, he scurried onward.

xxxx

Alex was overjoyed! Grandma Lisa had seen a tarantula by the pool and asked him to capture, kill, or least relocate it.

Knowing tarantulas can feel vibrations, he snuck up as quietly and lightly as he possibly could. Then, seeing his quarry, he raised his net and brought it down.

Xxxx

Blacktuft scurried away as a huge ring with mesh attached landed a hairsbreadth away from him. As he moved, he spun around to see his assailant. He didn't like what he saw.

The two-legged giant brought the ring down again, this time more accurately. So much more, in fact, that Blacktuft was nearly trapped. As the ring smashed down again and again, Blacktuft found he had only one option, and that was to turn tail and flee. He did. Fast.

xxxx

As Alex gave chase, he formed a plan. He would chase the spider into the pool, where it'd be an easy target.

"I can't wait to tell Mom," he said to himself as he made his prey turn with his net.

xxxx

All of a sudden, Blacktuft was flying! He had been so worried about his pursuer that he didn't watch where he was going, and had run off some kind of cliff.

No sooner did the sensation of flying come over him, than he got the sensation of falling. He

landed in a sea of foul smelling fluid, presumably water. The water suddenly turned turbulent and he saw the ring coming towards him. He couldn't dodge.

XXXX

"Yes!" Alex cried as he removed his prize from his net and placed it in a jar. "Now to show Mom!"

XXXX

Blacktuft panicked! He was in a clear stone cage! Even worse, it was moving, and he was being taken toward the two-legged giants' stronghold! He suddenly felt nauseous; what were they going to do to him? He'd heard stories from snakes, lizards, crickets, butterflies, scorpions, and one singularly huge centipede, of what they were capable of. Oh! If only he hadn't tried crossing the Barren Flat Stones!

XXXX

"Hey Mom, look what I found!" Alex was saying. "It's a tarantula!"

"That's great, Alex; what are you going to call it?"

"Take some pictures..."

"Can I keep it?"

"No. Let it out in the jungle after taking pictures of it."

XXXX

Blacktuft was falling again, only this time onto a hard white surface. Before he could scurry away, he was nearly blinded by a sudden blast of light. Then again, and again.

XXXX

"That's enough photos. Time to get you back to the jungle," Alex was saying as he lifted the spider and put him back in the jar. He then took it out into the jungle where he released it.

XXXX

Free, and relatively safe at last! Blacktuft was so overjoyed to be back in his jungle. Unfortunately that didn't last, and soon he was itching for more adventures; or did he just need to shed?

written by Tikatu's Boy #1, aka "Alex"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:04:22 GMT

From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 6/18/2007 4:56 PM

September 8, 9 AM; the McCain home (4 AM September 9 on Tracy Island)

Brandon put his luggage in the trunk of the car, then shut the lid. Turning, he saw his parents standing just outside the front door, looking sad.

He walked over to them. "Hey, it's not like I'll be gone forever. I'll be back."

"When?" Sarah asked.

"Can't say right now; I've been away so long, I can't say when I'll get my next time off. But when I do, you know where I'll head. Besides," he replied with a grin, "this way you'll get a break from having me around all the time, and appreciate my visit even more."

He hugged them both and kissed his mother as Shannon walked out. "C'mon, bro. It's time to get you to the airport. You don't want to miss your flight."

"Be patient, sis, I'm coming." Brandon walked to the car and got in. As the car pulled out of the driveway, he waved goodbye to his parents and saw them wave back.

The drive to the airport was silent for the most part, with Shannon concentrating on the road, and Brandon thinking about what lay ahead for him. A little over half an hour later, she pulled up in front of the terminal.

"Are you sure you don't want me to stay with you until you have to go to the boarding gate?"

"I appreciate the offer, but you know how I hate long good-byes." He got out of the car, going to the trunk to retrieve his luggage.

She had popped the lid open and now was scrounging in her purse as he pulled his bags out and closed the trunk. He returned to the passenger side of the car and putting his bags down, leaned in to hug Shannon.

Instead, she said, "I almost forgot. Here, take this." She handed him a sheet of paper folded up.

As he put it in his carry on, he asked, "What is it?"

"It's a list of things you need to do over the next week or so."

"Another one? Sis, you make lists of everything," he kidded her. "You even have lists of your lists. And I bet you haven't thrown any of them out."

"Of course not," she replied in fond exasperation. "How else is anyone going to know what's been done and what needs to be? Maybe you should make a few lists of your own," she teased back. "Then you wouldn't forget to call people when you should."

"Hey, I'm normally not that forgetful," he said with a twinkle in his eyes. "I guess that's what happens when you start getting old." Brandon looked at his watch, noting the time.

"If you're that forgetful now, maybe you should get tested for Alzheimer's," she replied with a laugh. "Now give me a hug and go, so I can get back home."

He complied, then closed the door and stepped away. He watched her wave as she pulled away, then turned and went inside.

Collaboration between MagicMaster8 and Hobbeth

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:14:29 GMT

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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 6/21/2007 5:19 AM

Sunday, September 9th, 2068. 6am, Tracy Island.

It had been one week exactly since Dominic had received the correspondence from his ex-wife's solicitor, and he had done...nothing. Apart from Nikki, he had told no one. He had looked at the floors throughout the apartment, and vaguely wondered if any more pacing would start wearing them down. He hadn't been able to stop thinking about it. Mags. Mags. Mags. He couldn't stop thinking about her.

The sky was beginning to lighten as the sun started to rise. Dominic, still in his sleep clothes - though he hadn't done a lot of sleeping - walked out onto the balcony and leant on the rail. He unclenched one of his fists, and stared at the small, mildly sparkling ring sitting on his palm. He could still remember the look on Mags' face when he gave it to her. At the time, he had seen love; in retrospect, it was just relief. Now I can bring you and the baby home to Daddy... Of course, she hadn't. She eventually saw that her plan to marry Dominic, and pretend to her parents that they had been husband and wife before the pregnancy was madness. They had been married just shy of one year when she left, and two years after that, they were finally divorced.

The problem was - a problem Dominic was very aware of - that somewhere within him, for some insane reason, he was still in love with her. He shook his head and clenched his fist again. The woman had used him, betrayed him, and cost him thousands of dollars. How was it that he still felt like he wanted to be with her? He shook his head again. What was wrong with him?

A surge of anger rose up within him like a cobra, ready to strike. She was trying to take away his baby. His baby, not hers. Where the hell does she get off thinking she has any right to see Joshua? She hardly even held him after he was born. She didn't want anything to do with him, and now she thinks she can take him away from me?! Not a chance! I'll bankrupt myself if that's what it takes to get her out of my life! He could feel his face going beetroot red as adrenaline pumped through his system. She wasn't worthy of his love. I would have done anything for her, and she threw it back in my face. He stomped back into the apartment and went straight for the legal papers. Prepare for a fight, Margaret, one that you'll lose!

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:16:14 GMT
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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 6/22/2007 9:01 PM

September 9th 2:30pm

Waking up, Brandon stretched his arms and looked out the window at the ocean below. I'll be glad to get back to the island. It'll be great to see everybody again. And I bet I have a lot to catch up on, too.

He smiled, thinking about Shannon and her lists. He remembered the one she had given him and got it from his carry-on.

Unfolding it, he read the list of things she had written down. There were six items, and, at the top, in big bold letters were two words: PHONE HOME!

A few minutes later, he felt the plane descend and heard the flight attendant's voice come over the loudspeaker.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we are on final approach to Christchurch International Airport. Please fasten your seatbelt and make sure your seat backs are forward and trays are in the upright and locked position."

Forty-five minutes after they landed, Brandon got through customs and retrieved his luggage. He was looking around for his colleague thinking, Man, where is he? He said he'd be here.

"Over here!"

Brandon looked around, spotting the familiar face. Grinning, he walked over to Gordon. After greeting each other, the two men took the transport to the terminal where the Tracy jet waited. On the way, Gordon asked, "How are your parents doing?"

"They're doing much better. Mom and Dad are continuing their therapy. With a lot of hard work, we're hoping they'll be back to their normal routine soon."

"That's good. We were wondering since we only heard from you once while you were gone."

"Sorry, there was a lot to do." Brandon looked away, thinking of a way to change the subject. Finally he asked, "Anything happen while I was gone?"

"Scott and Elise got into a big argument and I was the one that had to listen to it."

"Really? I didn't think she'd go that far. I'm just sorry you had to listen to it."

They arrived at the terminal and a few minutes later continued to the plane. Brandon stowed his luggage and climbed into the seat next to Gordon.

Gordon spoke into the radio. "Tracy One to Tower, request permission for takeoff."

"Tower to Tracy One, you're clear for takeoff."

Once they were in the air, Gordon said, "Now I can tell you; we had three rescues while you were gone, and you wouldn't believe what happened on the island during the last one!"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:20:29 GMT
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From: lynnbrody Sent: 6/24/2007 3:56 AM

Sunday, September 9 th, 2068, around 8 p.m. locally (Monday, Sept. 10 th, 12 p.m. Tracy Island)

It was a slow shift. There hadn't been a call for the 124 th Ladder Company since the third shift had taken over at three o'clock that afternoon. The game of Risk, which had been started after dinner, was now being cleaned up. Frank Calloway had gotten sick of the arguing and called an end to it. He had just disappeared back into his office, having just suggested that the group use their time constructively and clean out the refrigerator.

Neal Grant exchanged a look with Cassie. "How long until he figures it out?" he asked her.

"Not long," Cassie replied with a grin.

"Okay, who switched my pen with one that writes in invisible ink?" Frank asked, having popped his head back out of his office. "Grant, was it you?"

"I was wondering where that got to," Neal responded with a grin. "Last time I saw it, Cassie had it," he added, looking over at his accomplice.

"Sorry, Chief, must have dropped it while I was in there," Cassie answered, trying hard to keep a straight face.

"Yeah, well, that's okay. I was only writing a recommendation for you, Grant. Guess I won't have to rewrite it," Frank told him. Still holding the pen in his hand, he disappeared into his office, closing the door before laughing. Neal and Cassie could be a dangerous pair, but they always liked to take credit for their pranks, so you knew when they were up to something.

"Must have dropped it while I was in there," Neal said with a shake of his head. "Good one, Cassie," he said, giving her a high five over top of Jackie's head who was still sitting at the table.

The group finished cleaning up the game and then looked at the fridge. No one was even sure when it was cleaned out last.

"Maybe we should get our masks," L.J. commented.

"Oh, it can't be that bad," Jackie said standing up and marching toward the refrigerator. She opened the drawer with the fruit in it. "Or maybe it can?" she amended, holding up a bag of soft, black and green spotted oranges.

"Here," Lexis said, holding out an empty trash can for her coworker. Jackie dropped the bag into it. Soon a half bag of apples followed them.

Reaching past Jackie, L.J. pulled out a red bowl. He took off the lid and looked in.

"Anyone remember what this was?" he asked.

"I think it was the chicken," Neal commented, looking over L.J.'s shoulder. L.J. dumped the chicken into the trash can and put the bowl on the counter to be washed.

"I really hate this task," Jackie commented as she pulled out a carton of eggs from behind some bottles of soda. Checking the date, she saw that they were good to 5/2068. She added the carton to the trash can.

"What is in that one?" Jeff asked, pointing to a clear container in the back of the top shelf.

"I don't know, but I think something just moved in it," Cassie said.

"You know, I haven't seen our furry friend, Mr. Mouse, lately. Maybe he got thirsty," L.J. quipped.

"Ewww! Someone else get that thing. I'm not even touching the container," Jackie said, standing up and moving away from the fridge.

"I'll get it," Neal said. Neal stepped forward and grabbed the container. "I think my high school served this as their mystery meat," he said, taking a closer look at it. He dropped it in the trash can without opening it.

Shortly, the task of pulling things out of the fridge was over. They looked from the pile of containers on the counter to the trash can of bad food. A grin came to Neal's face as he looked at the trash can, where a chicken leg was still visible.

"You know, I was always wondering how far a chicken leg could fly. I've got a sling shot in my locker, and the East River would make a good firing range. Anyone up for a game?"

"I bet I can get one further than you!"

"No way, Kishi!" Neal told her.

"Get your slingshot, Grant," L.J. said, picking up the trash can. "I'll meet you on the roof." L.J. headed for the stairs.

"You guys are crazy," Lexis told them, even as she followed L.J. to watch the festivities.

Neal grabbed his sling shot and joined the rest of his coworkers on the roof of the fire station. They gathered on the side that was along the East River.

"I'm going first," Neal said as he joined them.

"You may want a pair of these," Cassie told him, handing him a pair of vinyl gloves she had grabbed from downstairs.

"What are you doing with a sling shot anyway?" Jackie asked as Neal slipped on the gloves.

"It's my son's. He was shooting marbles at the cat, so I confiscated it on the way out the door," he replied. He eyed the trash can of bad food and selected his ammunition. Taking out the chicken leg, he stepped to the edge of the roof. "Bombs away!" he commented as he took aim and fired. The rotten chicken leg sailed through the air and made a splash as it hit the East River. "Beat that!" he said turning around.

Gloves on, and egg in hand, Cassie took the slingshot from him.

Thanks to Lillehafrue for batting around ideas with me on this post!

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:21:28 GMT
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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 6/27/2007 6:00 PM

September 10th, 5:30 P.M.

Brandon walked down the path leading to the beach. Wanting some time alone, he was heading to his special place. As he continued down the path, he tuned into the jungle sounds, listening to the birds and various insects. A sound behind him made him stop.

Thinking it was Gordon trying to sneak up behind him, he turned quickly around. Instead of the copper-haired prankster, he saw a German Shepherd sitting there, looking at him quizzically, his tongue hanging out.

"Well, hello there, big guy. You must be Rommel; Gordon told me about you." Brandon put his hand out for the dog to smell. After a few sniffs, he licked the back of Brandon's hand.

"Hey, Rom likes you. Of course, he likes everybody he meets."

Brandon turned his attention from the dog to its owner, introducing himself. "'Hello. You must be Luke Morel. I'm Brandon McCain. Gordon mentioned you on our flight back from Christchurch."

Luke held out his hand and grasped Brandon's firmly. "Nice to meet you. I heard something had happened to your parents. Hope things are looking better now."

"Things are looking better. My parents are undergoing more therapy and, with luck, should be back to a normal routine soon."

Rommel grew tired of the lack of attention and began nudging Brandon's leg. Without thinking, he reached down and scratched the dog behind the ear.

"You're just a big love, aren't you?" Brandon said, continuing to scratch Rommel's ear. "I think you and Rocky would get along just fine."

Luke merely rolled his eyes. "He's a vicious killer, isn't he? Rom, come." He snapped his fingers and the dog instantly trotted back to Luke's side. "We were out exploring," he explained. "It's a lot different than the Rockies."

Brandon smiled widely. "If you like, I can show you around the island some time. I've done some exploring myself and can point out some interesting places."

Luke nodded. "That'll be great, thanks." He sat down on a nearby log and pulled a chocolate bar out of his pack. "So, you're an aquanaut? Did you serve in WASP?"

Brandon nodded. "I was assigned to the Tigershark for ten years. After that, I served with the Rescue Patrol."

"Nice. Did you see any action?"

"I saw some action. The biggest incident I was involved in was the rescue of some scientists at an underwater research station off the coast of Africa."

Luke's eyes widened. "Wow. Sounds like some rescue." He idly scratched Rom's head. "I've done a few rough ones. Snow and rock stuff mostly." He shook his head. "The plane crash about a month ago was pretty bad." His eyes took on a faraway look as he remembered. Then he shook himself. "But there's always the good stuff to win out over the bad."

"I know what you mean. You get out there and do your job, wondering if what you do is worth it. Then you see the results of your efforts and know all your hard work paid off."

Luke nodded. "Right." Then he chuckled. "I never thought I'd be working for International Rescue though. Talk about hard work!"

Brandon laughed. "Tell me about it." He looked up, noticing the setting sun. "We'd better head back. It'll be dark soon."

"Good idea. I don't know the area well enough to go tromping through the jungle at night." He stood up and Rom stood with him. "I guess I'll see you around then."

"Probably will, since we're neighbors." Brandon replied as he and Luke, with Rommel between them, started down the path.

Post by Magicmaster8 and Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:24:12 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/27/2007 9:31 PM

Monday, September 10, 7:30 AM; Tracy Industries D.C. offices (11:30 PM on Tracy Island)

"Lena!"

She looked up to see Tom standing in the doorway, his look of surprise changing to one of delight. She got up and smiled back at him as she walked around the desk. "I know; why didn't I tell you I was returning? I didn't want a fuss made. My doctor cleared me to return last Friday, and I saw no reason to postpone it."

He moved into the room and hugged her. "Well I, for one, am glad you're back. I don't know how you were able to do everything. Louise and I ended up splitting things between us. She took care of representing the department at those meetings you were always going to, while I handled things right here. And somehow we were able to muddle through without causing the whole place to come crashing down around our ears."

She chuckled, then asked, "You never went to any of de meetings?"

"Well, I did go to a few at the beginning, and I've been to them when you've gone on your other trips. But I found myself growing impatient faster and faster. I asked Louise to take over going to some of them, and she was able to handle them a lot better. She even gave me very concise overviews of what went on. So we decided that she would take the meetings, and I would cover things here. It worked out well. I hope you don't mind."

"No, I don't. Has anyone else said anything about dis arrangement? I mean have any otter supervisors said anything?"

His smile was rueful. "Only one. And I bet you can guess who."

She snorted a laugh. "I'm sure I can. So I won't take dat bet."

"Lena!"

She and Tom turned to see Louise in the doorway. "Yes, Louise, I'm back. And before you ask, I didn't tell you all because I didn't want you to make a fuss."

"Well, okay," Louise replied, as she moved into the room and hugged Lena, unconsciously imitating Tom. "But I do think it's mean of you," she continued with a twinkle in her eye, "to deprive us of a chance of having a party."

When the chuckles died down, Lena said, "Okay, you two. Go take care of anything you need to at your desks. I promised my doctor I'd go see Dr. Miller, and I'll be heading to his office shortly. When I return, I'll want you two to come in and fill me in on what's been going on while I was gone. Let's say, around 10."

They agreed and left her office. She finished checking her emails and walked out around 8:30. She was spotted by another member of her team, who led the calls of "Welcome back", peppered with a "You should have told us you were coming back" or two. She dealt with them, and fifteen minutes later, was on the elevator, heading to the floor where the company doctor had his office and clinic.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:25:00 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

From: Tikatu Sent: 6/27/2007 9:39 PM

Tuesday, September 11, 2068, 1:30 p.m., Tracy Island

"Hello, Anna," Jeff said as he offered his hand to the counselor. "Welcome back."

"Nice to be back, but from what I've seen you won't be enjoying the sunshine for long," Anna said as she stepped out of the mail plane. "We flew through some rain on the way here. It's moving east."

"That's what Brains told me this morning," Jeff said as he took her bag. They fell into step, crossing the tarmac and heading for the cart. "You've got a choice this time; the guest room at the main house, or your new bedroom-slash-office suite in the Round House. Lisa and Mother put the finishing touches on the latter over the weekend."

"Well, since you went to all that trouble..." Anna replied with a grin.

Jeff's reply was cut off by Juan's approach. "I've got some registered mail for you, Mr. Tracy," he said, holding out a small stack of thick plastic envelopes. Jeff put Anna's bag in back of the cart, and took each of the pouches, one by one, affixing his thumb to the little scanner lock on each of them. The stiff plastic container would open with a small sound, and Juan extracted the contents, placing them in the bin that sat on the cart's back seat. Anna had taken the passenger's spot, and was watching the process with mild curiosity.

"That's it, Mr. Tracy," Juan said when Jeff had put his thumbprint on the last one. "If you'd just sign here..." Jeff took the proffered data pad and added his signature, as Juan continued, "The rest of the mail is already in the basket. There's a cargo plane due out on Thursday."

"All right, thanks, Juan. We'll see you Thursday, then."

"You certainly get a lot of registered mail," Anna said as they headed up to the Round House. Behind them, the little mail plane taxied down the runway and up into the darkening sky.

"Occupational hazard," Jeff said with a shrug and a chuckle. "Even these days there are contracts and such that need physical documents."

They pulled up to the Round House, where Emily waited at the bottom of the steps. "As soon as I saw Juan taking off, I'd know you wouldn't be long. Dianne's a bit busy with the children's schooling, so maybe you and I can have a chat over lunch, and I can show you your new quarters."

"Sounds like a plan to me, Emily," Anna said as she alighted. Jeff handed her overnight bag to his mother, while Anna shouldered her laptop's case.

"I'll see you two ladies later," he said as he got back in the cart. "Give me a call if you need the cart."

"See you later, Jeff," Anna replied. Then she turned and fell in step with Emily as they climbed the stairs together.

On arrival back in the lounge, Jeff pulled the pile of registered letters from the bin. He knew Cherie would handle delivering the rest of the mail once school was over. Sitting behind his desk, he began sorting through the envelopes. Hmm. This one is pretty hefty. Wiltshire, England? Why does that ring a bell?

He opened the padded envelope, and peered inside, then dumped the contents on his desk. A wristcomm, a satellite phone, and a business sized envelope, addressed to him. He frowned as he put the two bits of hardware aside, and opened the letter.

Dear Mr. Tracy,

This letter is to be considered my resignation from your employ and from the larger concern in which you are involved. I have given the matter much thought, and on the advice of your son, John, I have decided to stay here in England and pursue a career here. My decision is not due to any misstep or abuse on your part; it is in response to my own needs and some unexpected opportunities that I have been offered. I am returning the technology you generously loaned to me, and respectfully ask that my things be packed up and shipped to me at the address above.

I wish you and your family all the best and hope that we might meet again at some other time. Best wishes for all your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Katy-Jane Williamson

Jeff huffed out a frustrated breath and shook his head, then read the letter through again. Laying the letter down, he reached over and toggled a switch. "John?"

In Thunderbird Three's silo, John touched his watch and replied, "Yes, Dad?"

"Please come up to the lounge immediately. I need to speak with you."

"Yes, sir." He exchanged a glance with Alan, who shrugged. "I'm on my way."

A few moments later, John entered the lounge. Jeff was reading a letter, but he looked up and beckoned his son to come closer. When John reached the desk, his father handed him a piece of paper.

"Read this through carefully, John, then tell me: just what did you say to Kat?"

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:25:51 GMT
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From: lynnbrody Sent: 6/27/2007 10:23 PM

Tuesday, September 11, 2068, 3:30 pm Tracy Island

"So what do you two think?" Jeff asked his two oldest sons, as Virgil placed the last of the applications on the desk. "Any of the applicants HR sent us stand out."

"Well, Robert McFall has the most experience of any of them, and being from San Francisco, has experience in both the city and with forest fires."

"But he doesn't have any EMT or language skills," Virgil countered.

"We said those were a plus, not a necessity."

"Virgil has a point though, Scott," Jeff said to his oldest son. "The other two candidates both have some of the extra skills that could come in handy out in the field. Etienne Boucher knows German and English as well as his native language, and Cassandra Kishi knows Japanese along with being a paramedic."

"A paramedic out in the field could come in handy," Scott conceded. "She only has five years experience as a firefighter though, compared to Etienne's nine years. Any idea how good she is?"

"HR has talked to her current supervisor, Frank Calloway. He says Cassandra Kishi is one of his best. I also noticed that she listed Luke Morel as one of her personal references. I've asked Luke here to get his opinion," Jeff replied.

"I noticed Etienne has a wife and three children too. Once he finds out what the job really entails he may back out," Virgil pointed out.

Before any of them could say anything else there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," Jeff called out. As he expected, Luke walked into the lounge.

"You wanted to see me, Mr. Tracy?" Luke said. Seeing both Scott and Virgil there he wondered what was going on.

"Yes, Luke. Do you know a Cassandra Kishi?"

"She's a good friend of mine. I met her three years ago during those wildfires out in California. Why?"

"Well, she's applied for a position with Tracy Industries, a position that is actually another cover position for IR. I'd like to know your opinion of her."

"Like I said, I met her three years ago. She came out with a group of firefighters from New York City to help. We were part of a group that was sent out to find some missing hikers. She's very focused and knows her profession well. She can be a bit set in her ways when she knows she's right, but when she isn't sure of something she isn't afraid to admit it or ask for advice."

"Do you think she'd be a good fit for the team?"

"Definitely," Luke said confidently. "Cassie is a person who rises to a challenge. I know she loves her job. She likes being able to help people."

"If she likes her job so much, why is she looking for another one?" Scott asked.

"That's something you'd have to ask her," Luke said, not feeling it his place to reveal that kind of information. "I do know she's applied elsewhere. One place wanted an answer from her toward the end of the week."

"I think she's the best choice of the three, Dad," Virgil said speaking up.

Jeff nodded. "I agree. Scott?"

Scott nodded. Virgil had a good point when he said Etienne might be unwilling to take the job due to his family. Not to mention, Cassandra had the paramedic skills that the other two didn't possess.

"Okay then, I'll contact Marley and tell him to set up bringing Cassie out to the island for an interview. Seeing as she has other offers, I'll tell him to get it set up as soon as possible," Jeff said, looking at his schedule. "Friday looks good. Luke, if you can figure out a way to tell her not to accept any other offers before talking to me, without raising suspicion, it would be helpful. Marley will probably contact her tomorrow about the second interview so it would be best to wait until then."

"I'll see what I can do," Luke told him.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:28:17 GMT
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From: lynnbrody Sent: 6/27/2007 10:24 PM

Tuesday, September 11, 2068 12:30 p.m. locally (Wednesday, September 12, 2068 4:30 a.m.)

Tracy Island)

"Pizza is ready," Cassie called from the kitchen to the two in the living room.

Mark was playing Candy Land with his seven-year-old neighbor, Megan. Megan lived in the apartment next door with her mother, Elise. Elise had gotten the opportunity to work an extra shift, and being a single mom, could use the money. She had asked Mark to watch Megan and, as it was Mark's day off, he had been more than happy to.

"Perfect timing," Mark told his sister as he followed Megan into the kitchen. "I was getting beaten for the seventh time."

"You never were any good at Candy Land," Cassie commented, as she put a plate with a slice of pizza and a glass of Kool-aid down on the table in front of Megan.

"Don't rub it in," Mark told her, as he got his own pizza off the pan sitting on the stove.

"Can we play Go Fish after lunch?" Megan asked Mark, as he sat down at the table next to her.

"Sure," he told her. He was glad she didn't still want to play Candy Land. Maybe he'd have better luck at the card game.

Cassie was about to sit down with them when the phone rang. She walked over to the phone and checked the caller ID. Tracy Industries, it read. Growing excited, she picked the phone up.

"Hello."

"Is Cassandra Kishi there?"

"This is she," Cassie replied.

"Ms. Kishi, this is Robert Marley with Tracy Industries. We spoke last Thursday at your interview. I'm pleased to inform you that Mr. Tracy himself would like to interview you. Would you be able to leave Thursday? You'll be gone for a few days."

"It shouldn't be a problem," Cassie told him, making a mental note to talk to the Chief as soon as she got to work.

"Good. Mr. Tracy will interview you at his home. We booked you on a 9:00 a.m. flight out of JFK Airport on Thursday morning. We'll arrange for a cab to pick you up at your home at 7:00 a.m. that morning."

"Exactly where am I flying to?"

"For security reasons, I can't give you that information over the phone. Just give your name to the person at the ticket window for Delta Airlines when you get to the airport. You'll find out where you're going then."

"Okay," Cassie said, starting to feel a little uneasy. She didn't like not knowing where she was going. She had a feeling her brother would like it even less. "So, that's a flight this Thursday, at 9:00 a.m. and a cab will be here at seven that morning to take me to the airport."

"That's correct. Hope your flight is pleasant and good luck with your interview. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me here at the office."

"Thank-you. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Ms. Kishi."

Cassie hung up the phone. She looked toward the table to see her brother looking at her expectantly.

"That was Tracy Industries. They're asking me back for a second interview, this one with Mr. Tracy himself. I leave on Thursday!"

"That's great, Cassie! What are you going to do about the Thornville offer? Didn't they want an answer by Thursday?"

"Not sure yet, but I've still got two days to think about it," she told him as she grabbed her pizza and drink off the table and joined Mark and Megan.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:30:25 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 6/28/2007 7:43 AM

Wednesday, September 12, 2068. 9:30 a.m. Tracy Island.

Jeff held up his arm as his watchcomm beeped.

"Jeff Tracy here," he said.

"Mr Tracy? It's Dominic. There's something I need to discuss with you. It's rather important. Would it be possible to meet with you at some point?"

"Of course, Dominic. Come see me in my study at 9.30 tomorrow morning."

"Thank you, sir," the younger man said.

Jeff thought back on the exchange as he sat behind his wide, polished desk in the study. Dominic had been looking progressively haggard over the past week or so and he had been on the verge of asking his wife to call Dominic in and find out what was wrong when he had received the man's call. I hope this isn't something I won't like hearing. Especially since Kat has just quit.

The door knocked, and he beckoned Dominic to enter. The gangly dark-haired man seemed paler than usual. He was clutching a mess of papers in his hands.

"Hullo, Mr Tracy," he said. "Thanks for seein' me."

"Have a seat, Dominic. How can I help?"

Dominic perched on the edge of the chair on the opposite side of Jeff's desk.

"Mr Tracy, the papers on my divorce finally came through. It's official; I'm a single man again."

Jeff was about to congratulate him, but the look on Dominic's face told him not to, and he let the man continue uninterrupted.

"Unfortunately, my now official ex-wife is trying to sue for custody of Joshua."

Jeff was silent for a few moments, before shaking his head. This explained everything.

"I can't see that she'll have a leg to stand on, Dominic," he said. "I'd be happy to extend the services of one of my lawyers."

"I can't see that she'll have any luck either, and thank you for your kind offer. I've gotten in touch with my own back in Kansas. He's handling things for me right now."

"I appreciate your keeping me up to date on things," Jeff said. "Any leave you need, you can have."

"That's exactly what I was about to ask you about. I may need a few days to go back to the States. Hopefully she'll get the hint and quit while she's ahead. I mean, she only saw him on the day he was born. After that, she was gone."

Jeff nodded in agreement.

"Well, keep me informed about the situation. And if there's anything else you need, just ask."

"Thank you very much, Mr Tracy," Dom said. "I appreciate it."

Dominic stood and made his goodbyes, and Jeff watched him retreat with a straighter back and seemingly unburdened with his troubles. I recall Dianne warning of this back in April. I wonder what she'll have to say now...

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:31:49 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

From: Tikatu Sent: 6/30/2007 12:17 PM

Wednesday, September 12, 2:30 a.m. Beijing, China (same day, 6:30 a.m., Tracy Island)

The huge aircraft sat on the jetport tarmac, but not in its usual spot. It was being readied for two very distinguished and precious passengers. Spotlights surrounded the plane, moving occasionally to illuminate various sections as needed. Workers in HAZMAT suits cleaned the special cargo hold thoroughly, making sure that the passengers would not pick up some stray virus or bacteria en route to their new home. Others hosed the plane down, scrubbing the worst places, making sure everything looked clean and sparkling for any possible photo opportunities connected with this particular flight.

In all the hubbub and the intermittent darkness, no one noticed the men who were scrubbing the outside of the engines. No one noticed as one used a long pole to reach far inside the turbines, a dangerous procedure. The men did this not only once, but twice, targeting two of the jet's four engines. Then they finished their scrubbing, and departed with the rest of the cleaning crew. It would be another hour before the jet was given its final inspection, and the special passengers were loaded for transport. The inspectors would find nothing amiss with the engines; the devices that had been planted were relatively small, and placed in the turbines as to be virtually undetectable. All that the men -- and those who paid them so handsomely -- had to do was sit back, and wait for disaster to strike.

to be continued...

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:34:09 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/30/2007 1:14 PM

Wednesday, September 12, 2068, 3 p.m. on Tracy Island (Tuesday, September 11, 2068, five hours after take-off, somewhere over the Pacific, locally)

"China Airways flight 7002, Beijing to Santiago, what is your ETA?"

Cao Liang glanced over at the pilot, graying veteran Xu Cai, who sighed. She turned her head to glance at the communications officer, her companion for so many trans-Pacific flights.

"Please tell both Santiago and Beijing that we are on schedule."

"Yes, Captain." Liang gave the pilot a grave nod and turned back to the radio bank.

"Do you think both cities are asking?" queried Dou Cheng, the young co-pilot. He was new to the team, and although he had already made several flights with Cai and Liang, Cai still felt he was wet behind the ears.

"With what we are carrying within the fragile goods hold? Yes. Both will ask." Cai turned back to her instruments, then said, "Please ask Han Xiong how our most delicate passengers are faring."

"Yes, Captain," Cheng responded. He toggled a switch to change the frequency to an interior one, and clicked his microphone twice. "Han Xiong? The captain would like to know how the pandas are doing." As an afterthought, he added, "And their attendants, too."

Xiong, a good-looking flight attendant, answered the call. "I am about to descend to the hold with the attendants' meals. I will be able to tell you more when I am finished."

"Understood. Cheng out."

Xiong smiled at his co-worker, Na Shu Bai. "It seems the captain is anxious on this flight."

Na Shu shrugged, and pulled a tray of food from the warmer. "She has been taking care to make the flight smooth. I don't think we've hit even one pocket of turbulence so far."

"Watch," Xiong said with a chuckle. "Now that you've said it, it will happen."

"Here," Na said, handing him a tray, which he slid into a padded carrier. "You'd best go down to the hold and feed the pandas' attendants. I will start over the wings." She glanced up. "Mei and Shan have started with the forward section already."

"All right," Xiong replied. He closed the carrier and held it firmly as he opened a hatch across from the rear galley. "I will be back in a few minutes, then I can help."

Na nodded, and positioned the cart for the starboard aisle, then started rolling the cart down the port aisle. Xiong would do the starboard side when he returned.

Xiong carefully navigated the narrow stairs down to the fragile cargo hold. It was pressurized and climate controlled, made for handling animals, fragile plants, and the occasional odd bit of delicate technology, in any weather. Usually a cargo handler from the airline would be stationed here to keep an eye on things, but not this time. This time the two built-in seats were occupied by a husband and wife, Lang Zhen and Lang Jiao, both employees of the Beijing Zoo. The cargo, a pair of pandas, one male, one female, were a gift from China to Chile at a time when the two countries found themselves in a rather delicate diplomatic state. Because of the pandas' presence, no other animals were permitted to fly in this hold on this flight, though Xiong knew full well there were at least two Search and Rescue dogs on the main passenger deck.

The flight attendant had wrinkled his nose at the musky animal smell as he descended, but made sure his face was schooled into a pleasant expression by the time he reached the hold's floor. He found Jiao, the veterinarian of the pair, inside the large, well-ventilated boxes, checking the vital signs of her charges. Zhen was reading the flight magazine and looked up with a smile at Xiong's approach.

"Ah, dinner... or luncheon perhaps?" he asked as Xiong set up the side tray and swung it around in front of the trainer.

"Luncheon, if you go by Beijing time," Xiong replied with a smile. "Very late supper according to Santiago."

"Ah!" Zhen said as he opened the pre-cooked, pre-wrapped meal. "No matter. I am hungry."

"So am I," said Jiao. "But I must wash my hands first. I will return in a moment."

Xiong nodded, and placed her meal on the tray. "I will leave this here. I must return to the passenger deck. If you need anything..."

"I know," Zhen said, pointing to an intercom over his shoulder. "Just call."

Xiong smiled, then followed in Jiao's wake as she climbed to the deck to find the lavatory. He himself washed his hands in the galley, then started pushing his cart down to begin feeding the other passengers.

While Xiong was in the hold, Na began to distribute the meals she had warmed. A few people had requested special plates, and one of these was Hua Chen-Ramirez. She and her son, ten-year-old Diego, were returning from China after having been to her brother's wedding. It had been a joyful time, and a stressful one, too, as Hua was diabetic, and the meals cooked by her mother were not exactly conducive to a diabetic diet. Diego had insisted on a seat where he could watch the engines, though now, five hours into their flight, he'd lost interest and was instead reading one of the comic books he'd purchased in Beijing. It was in English, which Diego was learning in school, and he was working hard to pick out the words in the dialog balloons.

"Here you are, madam," Na said as she laid the meal tray in front of Hua. Diego already had his, and was diligently eating, taking an occasional sip from his cup of soda.

"Thank you, miss," Hua replied with a smile. She tore off the protective cover. "This looks very tasty. I'm sure I will enjoy it."

"You are welcome," Na replied, still smiling as she moved on to the passengers on the other side.

The cabin was full of delicious smells, and people quieted as they were fed. Na emptied her cart and headed back to the galley for more trays and drinks. She glanced across the middle bank of seats. Xiong wasn't far behind her.

She had just gotten the cart into its locked position, ready for refilling, when the plane gave a mighty lurch, one that slammed Na into the galley's wall. People on the port side screamed, and one cried out, "The engine!"

to be continued...

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:38:22 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/30/2007 2:25 PM

Diego had just looked up and out the window when he saw it. The engine nearest the plane exploded, spewing bits of metal. He screamed out, "The engine!", his shout added to other screams as the plane bucked and shuddered. He glanced again, and added, "It's on fire!" as he backed instinctively away from the long trail of flame.

In the cockpit, Captain Xu and her crew felt it too. Warning lights blinked fiercely red and sirens whooped all around them.

"Number Two engine is on fire!" Cheng shouted above the clamor.

"Shut it down!" Cai cried, fitting action to words. The engine stopped running, and the warning lights went out abruptly. The sirens ceased, but an urgent beeping showed that all four attendant stations were calling, trying to discover what had happened.

Back in the passenger section, Diego's eyes widened and he shouted again, "The engine! The fire's out!" All around him people echoed his cry; some sighed with relief, while others called loudly, demanding to know what happened. The plane began to dip toward the left, banking through some clouds.

"Restart engine Two!" Cai said sharply. Cheng nodded curtly and did so. The red engine indicator blinked furiously, flickered green, blinked red again, then finally flashed green and stayed that way.

Cai checked her instruments. "Good. Two is back on line." She breathed a relieved sigh, then speared her co-pilot with a look, and swore. "What happened?"

Cheng shook his head. "I don't know. Engine Two is functioning on half power," he squinted at one of the controls, "and we are losing fuel from the port tanks."

Liang chose that moment to speak. "Santiago reports we are off course and asks the reason."

"Tell them that we had a mechanical problem with engine Two. It has been restarted, and we are correcting course. Then answer the cabin crew's calls." She glanced at Cheng. "Go back and see to our cargo personally. Report to me when you get there."

"Yes, Captain." Cheng unbuckled his restraints, and slipped between the seats. He paused at the door from the cockpit. "Should I visually check for damage to the wing?"

"Yes," Cai said, nodding. "It would be helpful to know how bad it is. I will set the computer to record and estimate fuel loss. We need to know if we can make it to Santiago or can turn back and land elsewhere." Her lips thinned. "Then I will make an announcement to the passengers."

"Yes, Captain." Cheng nodded once and left the cockpit.

"With your permission, Captain, I will set up the computer," Liang said firmly. "Your announcement cannot wait."

Cai sat still for a moment, then sighed. "You are right, Liang. I will make the announcement now. I

hope they will understand my; my Spanish is not good."

"At least your English is passable," Liang replied with a grin as his fingers flew over the computer's keys.

"For that I am thankful." Cai reached for the microphone, and in Mandarin, began, "This is your captain speaking. We are experiencing difficulties with one of our engines..."

to be continued...

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:52:00 GMT

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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/30/2007 2:34 PM

The walk back to the hold access was harder than Cheng thought it would be. The flight attendants were all busy with the passengers, helping to mop up meals, and tending to injuries. He spoke with each one on the starboard side as he made his way back. Disentangling himself from the passengers was difficult at first; he couldn't remember how many times he said, "Sir/Madam, please sit down and buckle your restraint", to someone pleading or demanding to know what was happening. Then Cai began her series of announcements, and he found the going easier as people began to listen to her. He was surprised to find Na working on the starboard side instead of the port, where she could usually be found.

"Xiong's gone down to the hold," she told him when he asked. "Mei's helping me out on port while he checks on the pandas."

"That's where I'm heading, then I'll be going back up through the port aisle to check on the damage." He frowned as he noticed her favoring her left arm. "Are you hurt?"

She smiled wearily. "Just bruised, I think. It hurts, but..." She gazed out over the passenger, and shrugged with her right shoulder. "They're more important now."

"True, but make sure Xiong or Mei take a look at it soon," he directed. "I'll be back up shortly."

Na nodded, and Cheng went on his way.

xxxx

Diego and his mother looked up as Mei stopped by their row, a young man in uniform at her elbow. She smiled, and sketched a small bow. "Could I trouble you to stand up for a moment?" she asked, using Mandarin first. "Our co-pilot needs to ascertain the damage to the wing."

"Of course," Hua said, replying in the same tongue. She switched to Spanish. "Diego, come with me. This gentleman needs to see the wing."

"Yes, Mother," Diego said dutifully. He slid out into the aisle with his mother, and watched Cheng slip into his seat. Cheng frowned, and shook his head.

Diego cleared this throat and asked, "What is that stuff coming from the wings?"

Hua tried to shush him, but Cheng looked at her with a questioning glance and asked, "What did he say?"

"He asked what that liquid was that's coming from the wing," Hua translated.

Cheng was caught between telling the boy the truth, which would likely spark a panic among the passengers, or a lie, which was uncomfortable for him personally, but might keep things calmer. "Hydraulic fluid," he said after a moment's hesitation. He ruffled Diego's hair. "Don't worry about it."

Hua translated again, then Diego, full of the things he had seen, said, "You should have seen the big ball of fire..."

Now, Hua shushed him more firmly. "Do not speak of it. This man is busy and must return to the cockpit."

Diego sighed heavily, and nodded. Cheng, though puzzled by the dialog, nonetheless realized that the mother was clamping down on the boy. He slid out of the seats and stood aside, letting the passengers return. "Thank you very much for your assistance," he said, giving them a little bow.

Mei moved in briefly. "Are you comfortable? Please fasten your restraints." When satisfied that the pair was settled, she ran interference for Cheng on his way back to the cockpit.

xxxx

Liang made a noise that caught Cai's ear, a sort of strangled sound born of frustration and something more. "Report, Liang."

"According to the computer, we're losing fuel at a rate which will make it impossible to make landfall."

Cai let that set in, blinking a bit. "Impossible? We cannot make it to an airstrip or land anywhere?"

Liang shook his head. "We will go down in the ocean."

The captain took a deep breath and began to swear, long and creatively. When she was finished, she asked, "Do you know what this will mean?"

"Yes, I do."

Their conversation was interrupted by Cheng's return. "Report," Cai instantly demanded.

"The pandas are well, and their keepers are shaken but unhurt. Xiong was already there when I arrived." Chang returned to his seat and fastened himself in.

"And the wing?"

Cheng made a face before turning his attention to the instrument panel. "Fuel is draining from a number of small holes in the bottom of the wing. Shrapnel must have hit the underside. It doesn't look bad from here."

Cai and Liang exchanged glances. "It is bad," Cai said bluntly. "We will not be able to make land."

Cheng looked up sharply. "No? Not at all?"

Liang shook his head, and Cheng turned to see him. "Not at all. We will have to take her down on the sea and pray we don't break up."

"We shouldn't do that, Liang," Cai said waving a hand. "This plane's built as solidly as the Fireflash. Two of them went down in one piece. And, as a result of the Fireflash's crash record, we have flotation devices."

"But night is falling," Cheng argued. "One misstep, and those flotation devices won't do any good."

"Plus we are far from the shipping lanes," Liang added. "It will take time for ships to find us, possibly too long."

"And there are the pandas," Cai said sourly. "If we take on water..."

The three crew members looked at each other, the Cai sighed. "Liang, to prevent an international incident, we need international help. Let Santiago and Beijing know, then call International Rescue."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:54:22 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 7/1/2007 4:31 PM

*****Wednesday, September 12, 2008; Thunderbird Five; 3:10 p.m. (Tracy Island time)*****

After eating a good lunch and watching SportsCenter in the lounge, Callie was busy flagging calls, checking if any would require International Rescue's services. In the back of her mind, though, was what her college alma mater would have to face the following Saturday. Alabama's won both their games, she thought, but the team's had its troubles with Florida's tough defense. The coaching staff really needs to concentrate on stopping them so the offense can penetrate and--

"Calling International Rescue. Calling International Rescue, this is China Airways Flight 7002. We have an emergency."

Oriental by the voice, she thought as she quickly ran to the controls and pressed a button, making communication with the plane. "This is International Rescue, receiving your call strength five. Please state your emergency."

"One of our port engines has exploded, and we are losing fuel from the tanks."

"Do you have any injuries on board?"

"From what our flight attendants have reported, no one is seriously injured at present. However, we will have to crash into the ocean. There are no available places to land at this time."

Callie knew this wasn't a good situation. They're over open ocean. "Flight 7002, please give me your present position, speed, and direction."

After receiving the information from the communication officer, she said, "Thank you. Please stand by for further information."

"Wait, please; there's something important you must be told. We have two pandas on board, along with their trainer and their veterinarian. They are on loan from the Beijing Zoo to Santiago, Chile. If we don't get them to the Santiago Zoo alive and well, this could create an international incident."

"I see. All right, we'll get help to you as soon as we possibly can." She pressed the button to stop communication with the plane and pressed another to contact Jeff. "Base from Thunderbird Five. Base from Thunderbird Five, come in please."

*****Tracy Island (in the Lounge)*****

Jeff was typing an order for supplies to the office in Chicago when he saw John's eyes light up in the portrait. He pressed a button to open communication. "Go ahead, Callie."

"Sir, we have an emergency call from China Airways Flight 7002, en route from Beijing, China, to Santiago, Chile. One of their port side engines exploded, and fuel's leaking from the wing." After she gave pertinent details, including the two pandas, she added, "There's nowhere for the plane to land...except the ocean."

"If that plane takes on water, those pandas won't survive." Hitting the emergency button, he added, "I'll get the team organized immediately. In the meantime, I want you to contact the plane and tell the pilot to change course so the plane can get closer to the shipping lanes. Afterward, lock on to the plane's GPS signal."

"Yes, sir. Anything else?"

As he noticed some of the others entering the lounge, he answered, "Yes. Get an estimation of the probable crash site and send those coordinates when you use the maritime emergency frequency to send out a general call to all ships within 50 miles of the area."

"F-A-B. I'll contact the plane immediately. Thunderbird Five out."

As soon as the portrait changed back to John, Jeff was concerned. "Now this is really a job for International Rescue."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:55:21 GMT

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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/4/2007 8:51 AM

Wednesday, September 12, 3:30 p.m., Tracy Island

"Where's Scott?"

Jeff's terse question made everyone in the room glance around for the pilot.

"He's gone to take Anna home and to do some shopping," Emily answered as she closed the door to the study behind her. "Dom, let me take Joshua for you."

Dom handed his son over. Standing next to him was Luke, who'd been gathered up by Virgil, their tour of Thunderbird Two cut short. The newcomer was taking in the atmosphere, which was getting increasingly tense.

Jeff's face went sour for a split second, then he sighed. "All right, folks, here's the run down. We have a commercial jet liner, flying from Beijing to Santiago, and it's going down. One of its engines exploded and they're losing fuel. They'll have to ditch in the Pacific. On board are two giant pandas, a gift from China to Chile, along with their trainers. We have to reach them before they hit water, help them get down safely, evacuate the passengers - including the pandas - and stick with them until transport arrives. Callie can give you up-to-the moment coordinates en route. Alan..."

Alan perked up and started for Thunderbird One's hangar, when Jeff called out again, "No. Not Alan. Elise."

Elise stood straighter in surprise. Jeff smiled grimly. "You should be right in your element with this one, Elise. You flew commercial jets, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir, I did!" Elise said crisply.

"Then on your way." Jeff indicated the entry to Thunderbird One's hangar, and Elise strode up to it. She put her back to the wall, pressed the tiny buttons on the wall sconces, and disappeared from sight.

Luke let out a tiny, "Whoa!"

"We'll need Four for this one, won't we, Dad?" Gordon asked, his expression eager.

"Yes. Virgil, off you go. Gordon, take Brandon with you." The two aquanauts made their way to the back of the room. Luke watched them, but turned around just in time to see the wall in the fully tilted position, then drop down smoothly. His eyes widened as he remembered what Virgil had told him about just how the pilot got into the Thunderbird Two's cockpit.

Jeff glanced up as Dianne quietly entered the room. "Nikki, Dom, you're our medical team on this one. Alan, John, there are well over 400 people on the plane; we'll need you two to help, especially John with translation. Tin-Tin?"

"Yes, sir?" She turned her green eyes in his direction as people began to disappear, leaving to catch the passenger elevator.

"I think you'll should go along. We may need an extra diver, and you're best at figuring out the logistics of getting those pandas out." He paused, then added. "Make sure you take some of that blue, waterproof goo of Brains's along. It may be of some help."

"F-A-B, sir," Tin-Tin said as she hurried off.

"Thunderbird One, requesting launch clearance." Elise's voice came over the radio.

Jeff put his earphone in, and took a quick glance at his computer screen, bringing up the scan of the surrounding area. It was clear of traffic. He motioned to Luke. "Look out towards the pool. You might want to see this." He tapped the earpiece once. "Launch clearance granted, Elise. Thunderbirds are go."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:58:09 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/5/2007 4:36 PM

Luke's eyes widened as he watched the pool retract and steam started billowing from the opening below it. The office gave a slight tremor and suddenly Thunderbird One shot out from her silo with a roar. He took an involuntary step backwards as the jet-wash briefly blocked his view. Almost instantly the giant rocket had disappeared from sight.

"Holy..."

A few moments later he heard another rumble and the green form of Thunderbird Two appeared, banking around in a tight circle as she made her way after her sister ship.

Luke turned to Jeff, his eyes still wide. "Sir, that was...I mean...Wow!"

Jeff chuckled. "Wow, indeed." He turned back to his desk. "Thunderbird One, what's your ETA?"

"About twenty minutes, Base," Elise replied.

"FAB." Jeff looked back down at his computer. "Now the hard part; we wait."

Elise kept Thunderbird One on an even course, following the co-ordinates Callie had sent down from Five. "Thunderbird One to Base, I'm almost in range....got them!" She circled around the jet, eyeballing the damage for herself as the onboard computers scanned the stricken vessel. "Ursa, can you patch me through to them?"

"FAB...Go ahead, Frankie."

"China Airways Flight 7002, this is International Rescue, can you hear me?" There was a brief pause.

"We are hearing you, International Rescue," a distinctly oriental voice replied. "One of our engines exploded and is at reduced power and the fuel is running low as well." There was a brief pause. "We do not have enough to make land."

"We'll take care of you, don't worry." She glanced down at her computer read-out. They have enough fuel for another hour or so, provided nothing else goes wrong. She quickly forwarded the information back to both Tracy Island and Thunderbird Five. She then opened communications with the plane again. "Ma'am, the rest of my team is on their way. Hold on a little longer."

"Thank you, International Rescue."

Elise matched her pace to that of the plane's and crossed her fingers. Virgil, hurry.

--first encounter by Lillehafrue

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:59:03 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/5/2007 4:39 PM

Wednesday, September 12, 2068. 4 p.m. Tracy Island time, en route to Danger Zone

The conversation amongst those in Thunderbird Two had been concentrated on one thing: pandas, pandas, pandas.

"I've never seen a panda before," Dom said. "Apart from in pictures, obviously."

"Me neither," Nikki replied.

"I saw a pair when I went to the National Zoo in D.C.," John said. "Xiu-Xiu and Bao. They were captivating to watch, even though they didn't really do anything."

"Are they as cute in real life as they seem on TV?" Nikki asked.

"Yeah, I guess they are."

"Well, I haven't seen any pandas, but I did see a rat as big as a Scottish terrier once," Dom said. "It was pretty cool, apart from the fact it was in my kitchen."

"Gross!" Nikki said. "What did you do?"

"I got one of those metal shopping baskets -- I think my mother 'acquired' it from a supermarket -- and fired it on top of it, and weighted it down with some phone books. It still managed to move the whole thing though! I sat on it until pest control arrived. Ick."

Dominic shuddered theatrically. Nikki still looked disgusted. Tin-Tin, slightly less affected, decided to change the subject back to pandas, as Alan looked like he was going to start quizzing the Irish nurse about the monster rat.

"The poor bears," she said. "I hope that they are all right."

"So do I, Tin-Tin, and not just because they're innocent animals," John said. "The diplomatic situation here is so delicate, they're not just a fancy present. If they don't get delivered, who knows what progress will be reversed?"

"Right," Gordon said. A small smile developed on his face. "Well, whatever happens, the politicians will just have to grin and bear it." There was a collective groan around the cockpit, and Gordon held up his hand for a high-five. "Anyone, anyone?"

John sat forward and reached out his hand...only to smack Gordon upside the head.

"Aw, man!"

--animal anecdotes by ArtisticRainey

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 03:59:42 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/7/2007 5:49 PM

"Look, Mama!" Diego's eyes were wide as saucers as he glanced out the window. "It's a Thunderbird!"

"A Thunderbird!" "Where?!" "I want to see it!" The word spread quickly, and people in the middle portion of the passenger's section began to get up, unbuckling their seat belts and moving toward the windows. Na and Xiong glanced at each other.

"I'll get Mei to help. You tell the captain." Xiong moved into his aisle, reminding people that they were to remain seated and to go back to their seats. He was stopped more than once by

passengers who wanted to argue with him about it. Mei began to make her way toward the back along the port aisle, saying much the same thing. Na, meanwhile, had grabbed the microphone, and pressed a button to put her in contact with the cockpit.

"Captain. The passengers know that there is a Thunderbird out there and those in the center section are trying to see it..."

Cai spat out an oath. "Acknowledged, Bai Na. I will... deal with it." She signed off, and heaved a heavy sigh. "Please put me on the intercom, Liang, then advise the Thunderbird pilot of our small problem."

"Yes, Captain." Jiang flipped a few switches, then nodded toward Cai.

She picked up the microphone, and began, in Mandarin, "Ladies and gentlemen, please take your seats and fasten your belts..."

Jiang picked up his own microphone. "Thunderbird One, this is China Airways flight 7002. We need your assistance..."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:07:53 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 7/9/2007 9:39 PM

September 11, 5:30 PM, aboard the world cruise ship Ocean Voyager, out of Brisbane, two time zones east of the IDL (3:30 the next day on Tracy Island)

"Bridge"

"Captain Rogers, this is Ensign Beck in the radio room. We've just gotten a call on the M.E.F. about a jet in trouble. One of its engines exploded, putting holes in the wing. They are losing fuel fast, and will be going down in the ocean. They have changed course, to get closer to the shipping lanes. International Rescue is helping, but has put out a call for assistance from any ships in the area."

"Did they give the approximate coordinates of where the jet would hit the water?"

"Yes, sir. I'm downloading them to the navigation computer on the bridge now."

"Hang on." The captain turned as the navigator on duty headed to him, with a piece of paper on which he had written the coordinates. "Ensign, did they say how soon the plane would crash?"

"Less than an hour, sir. International Rescue said they would advise of any changes in coordinates or time period."

"Advise them that we are heading to the current coordinates and monitor the M.E.F. for any

updates. Keep me posted."

"Aye aye, Captain."

Captain Rogers hung up the phone and turned to the bridge crew. "There's a jet going down, and since International Rescue is assisting, there will be survivors, probably a large number of them. Lieutenant, advise our doctor that we may be receiving injured. Helm, change course, seven degrees to port." He picked up the phone again, dialed two digits and after a moment, said, "Engine room. We've received a rescue call. All ahead, full."

He received confirmation, disconnected, then picked up the phone again and dialed into the ship wide intercom. "Attention all passengers and crew. This is the captain. We have received a distress call that a jet is going down into the ocean and are changing course to assist. This will cause a delay in arriving in Santiago, which will mean your stay there will necessarily be shortened. Also, we will be taking on survivors, and could receive more than we have empty cabins for. If anyone can handle more people in their cabin, please let your purser know, so we can make the appropriate arrangements. Thank you for your cooperation."

xxxx

"Oh, dose poor people, Samuel. We must share our cabin wit dem. Don't you agree?"

"Of course, Delilah. Let's find de purser."

Samuel and Delilah Kitayi - Lena's parents - were aboard, on another leg of their world cruise. They were on deck reading, when the announcement came. Sam gave his book to his wife, who put it and hers in her bag. He helped her up and they headed inside.

They hadn't gone far, when they saw their purser, Joseph, being accosted by a tall blonde woman, expensively dressed. She was in a temper, and was lashing out verbally at him.

"This is unacceptable! How can the captain just arbitrarily make a decision like that?"

"It's maritime law, miss. Any ships in the vicinity of another transport in distress are legally bound to render any assistance. This will mean only a day or so delay in our arriving in Santiago. You won't be required to pay extra."

"Hmph! I'd better not. And don't expect me to take in any of your so-called survivors. I won't have it!"

"Shame on you, miss! How would you like it if you were one of de passengers on de jet, and couldn't get saved because someone was too selfish to assist you?"

The purser and the woman turned and the woman looked down her nose at Delilah. "And just who are you to say such a thing to me?"

"This is Delilah Kitayi and her husband, Samuel, Miss Hightower. They have been on this cruise from the beginning. Mr. and Mrs. Kitayi, this is Desdemona Hightower, who joined us in Brisbane."

"Well, Mrs. Kitayi, I suggest you not butt in on a private conversation. This is between myself and the purser."

"Den I suggest, Miss Hightower, dat you not have such a loud conversation in a public area." Delilah turned to the purser. "My husband and I were coming to find you and let you know dat we are willing to share our cabin wit any of de survivors."

"Thank you, Mrs. Kitayi. If it becomes necessary to have you share, I'll see to it that cots are placed in your cabin." He touched the rim of his cap to them as they turned to head back to the deck.

Dez huffed and started to walk away. "Just don't bring any of those cots anywhere near my cabin, or there'll be hell to pay!"

As her husband held the door to the deck open for her to go through, Delilah said to him in Swahili, "What a bitch!"
He choked as he followed her back to their deck chairs.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:08:24 GMT
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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 7/14/2007 9:39 AM

Aboard Thunderbird Two, en route to the Danger Zone

Nikki rolled her eyes at Gordon's comment. "He would be the one to say that," she thought.

Nikki was glad for Tin-Tin's earlier subject change from the story of the rodent that lived in Dom's kitchen. After hearing about it, she felt as if little tiny feet were making their way down her back. She shivered slightly and thought about the pandas. A slight smile played on her lips which didn't go unnoticed by Brandon. He also noticed the faraway look she had.
He caught her eye. "Got something on your mind?"

Nikki blinked back to reality. "Oh, just thinking about the pandas. I hope they stay friendly."

"I'm sure they'll be sedated," Brandon replied.

"If my niece knew about how close I'm going to be to these pandas, she'd be jealous."

"Likes animals?"

"That would be an understatement. She loves them," she said. Nikki smiled again.

"It's a shame you can't take any pictures for her."

Nikki was about to reply when Virgil interrupted with the ETA. The nurse and aquanaut's conversation was soon abandoned when Gordon approached Brandon. He placed his hand on Brandon's shoulder. "We better get Thunderbird Four ready for action."

"FAB," Brandon answered before following Gordon to the yellow Thunderbird he shared with him.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:10:01 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/14/2007 12:59 PM

Wednesday, September 12, 4:45 p.m., Tracy Island (Tuesday, September 11, approx. 7:15 p.m., locally)

"Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird One, what is your ETA?"

Virgil couldn't help but notice the tension in Elise's voice as he tapped his earpiece. "Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Two. ETA three minutes. We have you on visual."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Two. I have you on visual as well." Elise still sounded tense though there was a dollop of humor in her voice when she added, "And you're a sight for sore eyes, too!"

Virgil grinned, but before he could respond, a blossom of flame shot out from the far side of the jet that Elise was pacing. "Holy...! What the hell was that!?"

"Looks like number four engine exploded," Elise said grimly, all trace of humor gone. "This plane is going down right now!"

The plane's angle increased sharply, and it banked toward Thunderbird One, the plume of flame trailing out like a tail beside it. Virgil upped his speed by a fraction, coming into line with the plane on the port side.

In the cockpit, Cai and Cheng were trying frantically to shut down number four engine. "Cut fuel to the engine!" she finally said. "See if that will allow the flame to burn out."

"Yes, captain," Cheng replied breathlessly. He flipped several switches, and suddenly, some of the strobing warning lights and piercing alarms cut off. A few lights still blinked balefully, and Cai took notice of which ones.

"Open up the fuel again. I will try to restart the engine."

"Yes, captain." Cheng flipped two switches, and Cai pushed a few buttons of her own.

"Captain, International Rescue asks for a status report," Liang called over his shoulder.

"Tell them we are trying to restart engine number four, and to stand by," Cai replied tersely.

"Yes, captain." Liang turned back to the communications panel.

In the cabin, the flight attendants were doing their best to calm the passengers. Diego, wide-eyed, tugged on his mother's sleeve. Remembering the reaction he got when he last shouted out what he saw, he lowered his voice. "Look, Mama, another Thunderbird!"

Hua smiled wanly. "I see, my son. But we are not safe yet. Listen to the attendants; they have instructions for us."

Mei gave her instructions to her section of the plane, then moved over to where Na had been working. Na herself was strapped in, holding an ice pack on her arm. The pain had grown over the past fifteen minutes, and she felt both nauseous and sleepy. What did I do to my arm? Could I have fractured it?

In the hold, a worried Jaio held her husband's hand. They had been asked to come up to the passenger cabin because of the emergency, but both had refused to go. The second, sickening jolt had rocked them both, but as Xiong had importuned them to stay in their seats and stay buckled in, they both were safe.

"Zhen, are you afraid?"

Zhen sighed. "Yes, I am, and as much for our charges as for ourselves. I know International Rescue is here to help us, but will they consider our pandas worthy of saving?"

Back in the cockpit, Cai swore. "I cannot get number four engine to restart." With a sigh, she turned to her crew. "Let the attendants know. Tell International Rescue. We are on our final approach."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:11:04 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 7/18/2007 7:27 PM

Continuing to observe the plane's GPS signal, Callie noticed the course changing. "Uh-oh, I'd better send out another signal on the M.E.F. The plane's altered course just slightly." She typed the information into the computer and sent out another message on the emergency frequency:

Attention, all ships in the vicinity of China Airways Flight 7002. The plane has shifted course. Please steer on a course of seven-three-eight magnetic.

She sat back in the chair and waited to see if any ships besides the cruise ship Ocean Voyager would still respond to the emergency situation.

*****15 minutes later*****

"Thank you very much, WNS Aumakua," she said. "We appreciate your assistance."

"Glad to help, International Rescue."

Pressing the button to contact the island, she said, "Base from Thunderbird Five. Come in, please."

*****Tracy Island*****

Jeff received the call in the lounge. "Go ahead, Ursa."

When her picture appeared, she said, "Sir, the plane changed course, but four ships are still responding to the situation. The Ocean Voyager cruise ship has a sick bay and can treat the injured. In addition, the World Navy is sending in the WNS Aumakua, the World Aquanaut Security Patrol will send in its Sand Devil hydrofoil, and a fishing vessel called the Lady Marmalade are all on the way to the new coordinates."

"That's excellent news. Those four ships will certainly help make things easier for us to get the pandas to Santiago. Getting the people and the pandas off the plane are the top priority at this time. Keep me up-to-date with constant reports."

"F-A-B, sir." Callie's image was replaced with John's photo.

Jeff rubbed his chin. The media knows about the two pandas. Let's just hope we don't get a nosy reporter in the middle of the rescue. I shouldn't worry about the team, though. They have a better understanding since Mr. Jordan's critical error in judgment. I guess we'll be putting the "international" into International Rescue with all the help we'll get.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:15:08 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/18/2007 7:55 PM

"Roger that, Flight 7002," Elise said in response to Liang's terse message. She clicked on her earpiece. "Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird One. They're on their final approach. Any suggestions?"

Virgil's eyebrow went up. "I thought you were the commercial airliner expert."

"I am," Elise replied, her tone totally serious. "But I can't see much of any way for us to help them down that's not either going to break them up or put us in the drink."

"Then I've got nothing either, Frankie," Virgil replied with a sigh. "This isn't like the KLA satellite. That bugger fit on my wing, and I was able to bring it in. The tailplane ramjets make it impossible for me to get underneath and provide lift."

"I know," Elise admitted. "At least this plane was in development at the same time as Fireflash. It should withstand a landing on the sea." Her incoming message light blinked at her. "They're calling. Be right back."

"Thunderbird One from Flight 7002." Liang sounded even more tense than before. "Do you have a plan?"

Elise took a deep breath. "Cut number two engine, Flight 7002, and stabilize your flight path. Gradually reduce your speed; get your flaps down and your nose in the air. Your plane is just about to become a duck."

"Copy that, Thunderbird One," Liang replied.

Cai looked murderous. "Some help they turned out to be," she muttered in Mandarin. "Inform the passengers. We are going down."

Elise paced the stricken plane down, watching with satisfaction as the nose began to rise, just as if they were coming in to land on a regular air strip. Speed began to lessen, flaps were down as far as they could go. The tail end of the plane dipped once into the water and rose; it dipped again, the water trying to keep hold of it as it rose a third time, mere meters above the surface now. Finally it settled in, and the rest of the plane eased down into the swells like a duck landing on a pond. Elise grinned and pulled up as bright yellow flotation cushions burst from confinement, filling rapidly with air and surrounding the plane with a neon corona.

"Flight 7002, from Thunderbird One. Nice work, Captain. Very nice work," Elise said in a relieved tone. "Now it's our turn."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:16:11 GMT
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From: lynnbrody Sent: 7/21/2007 10:45 AM

Brandon and Gordon were going through the checklist, preparing Thunderbird Four for launch the moment the pod opened.

"Power systems?"

"Check."

"Hydraulics system?"

"Check."

"Flotation bags?"

"Check."

"Oxygen tanks?"

"Check."

"That's it then," Brandon said. "Now all we can do is stand by."
Thunderbird 2 cockpit

The group on Thunderbird 2 watched as the wounded plane headed for the waters below. As it neared the ocean, Tin-Tin found herself praying the craft would stay in one piece. If it didn't, there job was going to be a whole lot harder.

She let out a sigh of relief as the flotation device of the plane deployed, keeping the plane on the surface. Around her, her teammates cheered. At least one thing seemed to be going right. Now, we just have to get those people off she thought. We just need Elise's next orders.

As if on cue from Tin-Tin's thought, Elise's voice came over the radio. "Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird One."

"Thunderbird Two here. Go ahead, Frankie," Virgil replied.

"We need to get Sweet on board the plane to assess the situation so we can figure out a way to get those people off and onto the pod. The only way I can think of doing that is to have Thunderbird 4 take her over to the plane. If Sweet can get onto the starboard wing, she can board through the emergency exit located on the wing."

Virgil glanced over his shoulder to see if Tin-Tin had heard the message. She nodded to him as she stood and left the cockpit.

"F.A.B. Frankie. Sweet is joining Cousteau and Big Mac in Thunderbird 4," Tin-Tin heard Virgil reply, before the sounds of the cockpit faded away.

Thunderbird 4

"Cousteau from Van Gogh."

Gordon keyed the radio. "Go ahead, Van Gogh."

"Gordon, the plane is down. Flotation devices have deployed and so far the craft is staying on the surface. Sweet is on her way back. Frankie wants her on board the plane. You'll need to give her a lift over there."

"F.A.B. I'll let you know when we're ready for launch," Gordon replied

"Is everything ready?" Both men looked up to see Tin-Tin, now in scuba gear, standing there.

"We're good to go," Gordon replied. "Virgil just informed us of the situation."

"That's good," Tin-Tin replied. Turning to Brandon, she saw a strange look on his face. "Are you all right?"

"I'm fine, Tin-Tin, just anxious to get in the water."

"Well, you won't have long to wait," she told him as she took a seat in the cockpit with them.

"Everyone buckled in?" Gordon asked, as he glanced at both of his companions to see them buckling their safety belts. He radioed Virgil that they were ready to launch. Moments later Thunderbird 4 was in the water. Gordon maneuvered the mini-sub toward the plane.

"So just how are we getting you on the wing of that plane?" Gordon asked.

"I was thinking that if you maneuver Thunderbird 4 close enough, I can climb out the top airlock and then onto the wing," Tin-Tin replied even as she left her seat and headed to the airlock. "Sweet from Cousteau, I'm opening the outer airlock hatch now."

"F.A.B.," Tin-Tin replied. Above her, the airlock hatch opened. The wing of the plane loomed nearby.

Carefully, Tin-Tin boosted herself out of Thunderbird 4. Please keep this thing steady, Gordon, Tin-Tin thought as she stood up and stood next to the wing. Grabbing hold, she boosted herself up. Once there, she carefully made her way across the wing and toward the plane. As she neared the emergency exit, she saw a flight attendant opening the exit from the inside.

Elise must have told the plane's crew what we were planning Tin-Tin thought as she continued toward her destination. The waves and the slick surface were not making this an easy feat.

"We're very relieved to see you," Xiong said as he helped Tin-Tin inside.

"We're going to make sure everyone gets off the plane safely," Tin-Tin assured him. "Are there any injuries?"

"Only minor injuries from when we lost the engines. The other flight attendants are still checking the passengers to see if anyone suffered injuries during the landing. My colleague, Na, hurt her arm when we lost the first engine. That is the only injury amongst the crew though."

Tin-Tin nodded, relieved at the news. No major injuries would make the evacuation go smoother. Still, they would want to make sure to get the injured off first. To do that, they needed to figure out a way to get these people from the plane to the pod. She thought of the emergency slides. Would they suffice?

"We need to form a bridge from the plane to our pod for the evacuation. I was thinking that if we deployed the inflatable slide from one of the emergency exits across the water, then the passengers can move along it to our pod."

Xiong thought about the slides used for emergency exits and tried to figure out if they could be used in the way IR team member was suggesting. "I think it would work," he replied.

Tin-Tin nodded. "Thunderbird One from Sweet."

"Go ahead, Sweet," Elise replied.

"I have an idea on how we can get these people from the plane to the pod."

Written by lynnbrody and MagicMaster8[/color]

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:17:49 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/21/2007 7:36 PM

Virgil watched as Thunderbird Four launched from the dropped pod and eased over to the plane. He saw Tin-Tin hoist herself out of the top hatch and inch her way across the wing, then disappear inside. "Now what?" he muttered to himself.

"Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird One." Elise's voice called in the cockpit. "Sweet has a plan. We'll need to move the pod closer to the plane. She wants to use one of the emergency ramps as a bridge across to the pod."

"It sounds like that would work, but what about the pandas? Is there any word on them?"

Inside the hold, Jiao and Zhen looked on in growing concern as the lights dimmed and water began to seep slowly into the hold. "You had better tell the attendant," Jiao said, unbuckling her safety belt and going across the wet floor to the pandas' cages. "I will check on the pandas. They may need another dose of sedative."

"I will." Zhen unbuckled himself, then reached for the intercom, and clicked it twice as he'd been instructed. "Hello, hello?"

There was no answer, and Zhen glanced over at Jiao.

"Go up and find someone," she told him. "The plane's electrical systems are probably not operating since we are in the water."

"I'm sure you're right. I will go." He hurried to the steps leading upward, wishing he could take them two at a time, but they were far too narrow to do so.

Once there, he looked for Xiong, who was asking an elderly passenger if she was all right. It seemed that the lady was breathing hard, and Xiong was worried about a panic attack.

"Han Xiong," Zhen said quietly, beckoning the attendant close. "We have a problem." His voice dropped to a near whisper. "There is water seeping into the hold."

Xiong's eyes opened wide, and he nodded sharply. "Wait here." He turned and without another

word hustled off down the aisle.

When he returned, he was followed by a young woman in a scuba suit, an IR insignia emblazoned on her snug wetsuit. There was a cry of relief all along the aisle as she strode purposefully down it, her flippers and mask attached to her belt; a visor and cap obscuring most of her head, and a tank attached to her back.

"Miss Sweet, this is Lang Zhen, one of the pandas' keepers. He reports there is water in the hold." Xiong made the introduction in Mandarin.

"Please, show me, Lang Zhen," said the young woman in English. A moment later, a slightly mechanical voice repeated her words in Chinese.

Xiong nodded and smiled slightly, and Zhen, somewhat awestruck, led the IR operative down into the hold.

Jiao was inside one of the transport cages when the newcomer was brought down. Her eyes widened at the sight of the girl in the scuba gear. Zhen said, "This is my wife, Lang Jiao, the veterinarian. Jiao, do the pandas need more sedation?"

"Y-Yes," Jiao said. She turned back to her work, inserting a rather large needle into a panda's rear haunch. She looked up to find the girl walking slowly around the cages, noticing the metal skids that the cages rested on, the water that swirled around, covering the bottom slats of the skids, and the construction of the cages themselves.

Tin-Tin smiled at Jiao. She said, "We have just the thing. We will make the cages watertight, and once the plane is evacuated of people, we will open the hatch and remove the cages." Her speech, in English, was translated into Mandarin, then she tapped her earpiece. "Van Gogh? We need that blue goo. You might want to send Quasar along with it. We could use his help in translation."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:18:54 GMT

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From: lynnbrody Sent: 7/22/2007 12:39 PM

Shopping mall, Christchurch, New Zealand.

The new electronics completely forgotten, Scott walked around the mall, looking for a quiet place. Someplace he could make a call without the chance of anyone overhearing. Unfortunately, the mall was crowded. Every place he looked had people in it. Even the hallway where a set of bathrooms was located, which was normally fairly empty, was crowded.

Starting to get frustrated, Scott headed toward entrance of the mall. I'll just have to make the call from my car, he thought to himself. His mind made up, he strode purposefully toward the entrance, wanting to get there quickly but not wanting to attract too much attention. Reaching the front door, he exited the building and headed toward his car. Placing the bag in the passenger

seat, Scott got into the car and pulling out his phone, he dialed his father's number.

When the phone was finally answered, it wasn't his father's voice. "Hello."

It didn't take Scott long to recognize his mother's voice. Dad must be busy with the rescue and told her to answer it, he thought. "Mom, I heard about what happened," he said choosing his words carefully. "What's going on?"

"Things are under control," Dianne told him. "The group is just arriving and getting things underway."

"Who's on point?" he asked, wanting to know who was flying Thunderbird 1, doing the job that he should've been doing.

"Elise," Dianne told him.

Scott had been expecting his Mom to tell him Alan. Not that I really want him flying my "bird" but he does have more experience with her than Elise.

"Don't worry. You prepared her well," Dianne said reassuringly, guessing the reason for her eldest son's silence. "Besides, she flew commercial jets. She's the best qualified, given the situation."

Scott found himself nodding. What she said made sense but he still didn't like the idea of anyone else flying Thunderbird 1. "I'm heading to the airport now," Scott told her. "I'll be there as soon as I can."

"Scott, it isn't necessary. Things are under control. Enjoy your time off."

"I'm heading home," he told her, knowing he wouldn't be able to enjoy himself now that he knew what was going on. Granted, there wasn't much he would be able to do there except watch the rescue unfold, but at least he wouldn't be in the dark. Not to mention, what if something went wrong? He wanted to be on hand just in case.

"I'll let your father know," Dianne told him, knowing she wasn't going to be able to change Scott's mind. That boy can be so stubborn sometimes, she thought. "Have a safe trip."

"Thanks. See you when I get there. Bye, Mom."

"Bye," Dianne said.

Ending the call, Scott put his phone into his pocket. He quickly put his seatbelt on and started the car. Moments later, he was pulling the car into the Christchurch traffic on his way to the airport. The sooner he was back on the island, the better he would feel. I should be out there with them, he couldn't help but think.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

From: Hobbeth Sent: 7/22/2007 4:11 PM

Tin-Tin hadn't been aboard the jet more than twenty minutes when the port wing suddenly dipped into the water. All those who were standing were thrown to that side of the jet, including Tin-Tin and the panda caretakers. The pandas' containers began to slide in that direction. Then the wing came back up, but about six feet remained just below the surface.

"Thunderbird Four from Thunderbird Two. Cousteau, what happened?"

"Not sure, Van Gogh. We think the port jet wing must have dropped under the surface. We are on the way to investigate now."

"Thunderbirds Two and Four from Thunderbird One. From where I am, it looked like a flotation device under the port wing has ruptured. If so, do you have a replacement device, Cousteau?"

"We do, Frankie. If that's what happened, we'll use ours to replace it - after we discover the cause."

"F-A-B, Cousteau. Keep me and Van Gogh advised."

"F-A-B. Thunderbird Four out."

Brandon had closed the overhead hatch during the conversation and now buckled himself in. He glanced over at Gordon, who terminated communications, and said, "Ready to go."

Gordon backed away from the jet, then dove forty feet down. Traveling under the jet, he made sure they were well beyond the fuselage before he surfaced again. The two men looked at the wing, and saw the remnants of the device floating on the surface. Brandon immediately unbuckled himself and went to the locker where they kept extra flotation devices, then to the one with the diving equipment. Gordon opened communications once again. "Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Four."

"Thunderbird One here. What's the status, Cousteau?"

"You were right, Frankie. Big Mac is getting replacement devices and our diving gear out even as we speak. I'll have to put Four on station keeping. This'll be a two man job."

"F-A-B, Cousteau. But you had better find out what caused the original to blow. Don't want it happening again while we're evacuating the passengers, or the pandas, do we?"

"We sure don't, Frankie. Oh by the way, is Sweet okay?"

"Yes, she is. Van Gogh called her to check. Just a few bumps on her part. We may have a couple of extra injuries due to the break. But that seems to be it at this time."

"F-A-B. We're on our way. I'll contact you again when we're done."

"F-A-B. Thunderbird One out."

The aquanauts quickly got into their diving gear. Brandon then asked, "What are we gonna use to keep whatever caused the jet's flotation bag to break from breaking our replacement bags? Pieces of the original one?"

"Well, we could," Gordon answered slowly, his brow furrowing as he contemplated the problem. Then his face cleared. "We'll do that, but I have something that can help." He turned back to the pilot's seat and opened a small panel, behind which was a can of...

"You're kidding. Silly Putty?" Brandon exclaimed.

"After the time we ended up rescuing Ned Cook and his cameraman, I decided that if I had to do a lot of waiting again, I wanted something to do with that time. I'm not creative like Virgil, so I had to come up with something that I could stop using at a moment's notice."

"I'm surprised you could find it; I thought they'd stopped making it. But won't the water dissolve it? And even if it doesn't, you'll never see it again."

"Not a problem. We can wrap it in a section of the jet's popped float, giving us a lot more time. And as for not seeing it again, I've got more. I got a stash some time ago, on Ebay. So I can replace it." He took the putty out of its container and put it in a pouch on his belt. "C'mon. Let's get to work."

Soon they were out in the water and heading to the submerged part of the wing. Brandon put the floats they brought on top of the wing, then they both dove to look at the underside. Soon they found the cause of the break. The explosion had caused some of the metal to bend outward in an inch long jagged point. "Wow! I'm surprised the float held as long as it did!" Brandon exclaimed.

"Me too. And it looks like we'll need the Silly Putty after all. That sucker's a bit long. I'm gonna cut a section of this float to wrap around it. Then you start folding the rest to also cover that edge."

They got to work and within fifteen minutes, were ready to inflate the two floats they needed to replace the damaged one. "Thunderbird One from Cousteau."

"Thunderbird One, reading you five-by-five."

"Frankie, we're ready to inflate our floats. You might want to warn anyone inside the jet."

"F-A-B, Cousteau. Hang on." A minute later, Elise said, "The passengers and crew have been alerted. Go ahead."

"F-A-B. Okay, Big Mac. On three. One. Two. Three."

Both devices slowly inflated and the wing rose up out of the water. "Thunderbird One from Cousteau. Mission accomplished."

"F-A-B, Cousteau, Big Mac. Good job. Get back to Four and then head to the tail of the jet. We'll need your assistance in getting the pandas out."

F-A-B, Thunderbird One. Cousteau out."

The two aquanauts gave each other a thumbs-up and headed back to their vessel.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:26:22 GMT
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From: susanmartha Sent: 7/25/2007 8:20 PM

Wednesday, September 12, 6:25 p.m., Christchurch, New Zealand

"Hi, hon, what's for dinner?" Ryan Hanson tossed his jacket on the couch and went into the kitchen to kiss his wife. "How was your visit to Tracyland?"

"Chili. I only got home an hour ago, so I took some out of the freezer. I'm making corn bread to go with it. It will be ready in about fifteen minutes. And my visit went pretty well, actually. Two of my patients are making progress and a young man came and vented at me about the games his ex is playing. The normal soap opera."

Ryan grinned. His wife had been making comments about 'the normal soap opera' as long as he'd known her. He reached over to switch on the TV set. The TV wasn't allowed on during dinner but they usually watched the news together while dinner was being fixed.

"Our top story tonight, a plane has gone down in the Pacific. International Rescue has been called to the scene and we understand there are survivors. For more on this story, we go to Jane Arlington in Santiago, Chile. Jane?"

"Jake, according to the control tower, one of flight 7002's engines caught fire about halfway through the trip. The pilot managed to put the fire out and, normally, this type of plane should have been able to make its destination with only three engines. But authorities believe a main fuel line was punctured and the plane lost most of its fuel. Just 20 minutes ago we learned that a second engine was on fire. We have just been told that the plane has landed in the water and is still in one piece."

"It didn't break apart on impact?" The anchorman was trying to look grave but instead he only looked mildly interested.

"No, this is one of the newer designs, built to stay in one piece. And it has the new, automatically deploying, flotation devices now mandatory on all planes flying over the ocean for any distance. So there is a good chance for survivors if help can get there in time."

"Well, thank heavens for International Rescue, then. Do they expect to be able to pick up the survivors?"

The field reporter actually looked like she was worried about the plane. "We hope so. Several ships have been diverted to help with the survivors."

"Are there any theories as to why two engines caught fire?" The anchorman was now trying to look grave. Instead he looked bored.

"Passengers reported hearing explosions as the engines caught fire. And the fuel lines are designed to shut off when a leak is discovered, but apparently these didn't. Authorities are refusing to comment about the possibility of sabotage."

"Why would anyone want to sabotage this flight?"

"Along with over 200 passengers, flight 7002 carries two giant pandas, a gift from China to Chile. Relations between the two countries have been strained, since both are competing to win the lucrative Glenn space station contract. The station will assemble the vehicle for the next Mars mission. The pandas were meant as a peace offering to help seal a compromise worked out by the International Space Agency."

"Let's hope International Rescue can pull off another miracle then. Thank you, Jane. Be sure to keep us updated. In other news..."

Ryan reached over and turned off the TV set. "Why did the station hire that twerp anyway? He looks like the only thing he cares about is his hairstyle. Do you want me to grate the cheese, hon?" He looked over at his wife to find her staring distractedly at the salad mix in her hand. "Hon?"

Anna came back to earth with a thump. "Sorry dear. I was just thinking of a patient." A plane crash. And in the water. Elise, I hope you're not involved. If you are, I hope you can handle it.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:27:42 GMT
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 7/26/2007 2:35 PM

Luke stood and offered to help Kyrano, who was burdened down with a tray full of coffee and teacups. The servitor nodded, and he took the carafe of coffee from the laden tray. Kyrano set the tray down on a low table, and retrieved the carafe, pouring coffee for those who indicated they wanted it.

As he chose a cup for himself, Luke tuned in to the talkback again. He felt antsy; he realized he would have loved to be out there as the team worked.

"Lowering the rescue cage now." Virgil's voice sounded out from his picture.

"F-A-B," responded John. "You're right on target. Ten meters more..."

The tension in the room began to rise as the rescue cage, holding Alan, John, and a supply of Brains's blue goo, descended to the wing of the stricken plane.

"Five more meters," John said.

"F-A-B," Virgil replied.

Luke frowned, suddenly puzzled. He approached the desk. "Mr. Tracy?" He spoke quietly so he wouldn't be picked up by the microphone that Jeff wore.

Jeff, who had been handed a cup of coffee by his wife, took a sip, then put the cup back down in the saucer. He tapped his earpiece, and turned his attention to the newest recruit.

"Yes, Luke?"

"Uh... well, I keep hearing the team use the term, 'F-A-B'," Luke said. "I was wondering... what exactly does it mean?"

To Luke's surprise, a faint blush flooded Jeff's face. "Well, um....it...ah...."

Dianne grinned at her husband's discomfiture. "Yes, dear. Tell him what it means."

Jeff shot her a look. "You're not helping."

"I know."

Luke glanced from husband to wife and back again. "If there's something... embarrassing..." His words trailed off.

Jeff sighed and turned back to Luke. "In the early days of space exploration, one of the Mercury astronauts, Gus Grissom - for whom my son, Virgil, is named - used a particular phrase a lot when he was in agreement with something that someone else said." He blushed a little redder. "During the building of Thunderbird Five, I sort of... let loose with it a few times."

Dianne nudged him. "And.....?"

"And, the phrase was 'F--kin' A Bubba'." Jeff let out a big breath. "It sorta stuck, and we cleaned it up for our purposes."

"In other words," Dianne said, still grinning, "Our little acronym is more appropriate for an open mike and... uh... tender ears."

Luke chuckled. "I can understand that. We used 'Roger' until one of the other teams actually hired a Roger. We ended up with 'Gotcha.'" He shrugged. "Kind of lame, I know, but it worked for us."

Jeff heaved a deep breath, then smiled a little. "Y'know, Luke, you're the only one of our recruits who has asked that question."

Luke looked surprised. "Really? I would think it would be a logical question."

"I guess no one has really wondered." Dianne took a sip of her coffee. "Or they've asked one of the boys... I know neither of the nurses has asked me."

"Maybe it was something they thought they should already know?" Luke responded as Virgil's voice sounded across the speaker again.

"Could be," Jeff replied, then turned his attention back to the rescue.

--The Origins of FAB, by Tikatu and Lillehafrue--

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:30:31 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/29/2007 6:16 PM

"Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Four, what's next, Frankie?" Gordon asked. He and Brandon had been patrolling around the plane, checking the other flotation cushions, making sure they were stable.

"We've got Indy and Quasar on board the plane. Their job is to seal up the pandas' crates with that waterproof stuff of Einstein's." Elise said, reviewing her plans in her head. "Sweet suggests that we use the plane's emergency chutes to evacuate the passengers. That means moving the pod closer."

"How many chutes can we use?" Gordon asked. "How far apart are they?"

"In this model of jet, the emergency exits are roughly 30 to 35 feet apart. The door on the pod is 40 feet across, so we should be able to use two."

"I guess that means our next task is to move the pod, right?" Brandon said from the jump seat behind Gordon.

"You've got it, Big Mac." Elise grinned. "I'll have them deploy the chutes and help direct you. One of you might have to get out and pull the chutes into the pod. Neither Tynan nor Angel will be able to grab them without getting dunked."

"F-A-B," Gordon said. "Let's get this show on the road."

"F-A-B." Elise toggled a switch. "Flight 7002, this is Thunderbird One. Please deploy starboard emergency chutes 1 and 2 so we can begin evacuation."

Thunderbird Four surfaced close to the front of the pod, and Brandon stepped out of the side airlock onto the ramp. There was a muted thump, and in the glow provided by Thunderbird Two's

spotlights, two wide, yellow ramps opened up, inflating with a loud hissing sound. Gordon took Thunderbird Four down.

"What's going on?" Nikki asked of Brandon as he entered the pod, fully equipped for a dive.

"We're going to move the pod closer to the plane, and pull those emergency chutes into the pod," he explained. "You might want to sit down somewhere so you don't fall down." He suited his actions to his words, and sat on the edge of Thunderbird Four's platform.

Nikki glanced back at Dom. "Better put the ramp up or it'll make moving difficult." Dom, who was closest to the door's controls, reached over to raise the door. Water spilled inside as it rose from the water. The two nurses then found seats for themselves on Thunderbird Four's platform.

Behind the pod, Gordon deployed Four's two hydraulic rams, and with help from Elise in a hovering Thunderbird One, he pushed the empty pod slowly toward the plane. When they were a dozen meters from the bobbing ends of the chutes, Brandon opened the door again, and jumped in.

It was dangerous. The pod was still moving forward from momentum; the water was dark. Gordon moved Four from the rear to the side, nudging the pod carefully into position. Brandon got under the first chute, pushing it upwards, climbing the pod's wide door to bring the chute's end within. The pod was still moving sideways when he went for the second one.

Inside the pod, Dom and Nikki fastened the chute to the floor, pulling it to within two feet of the door's edge. Outside, Brandon pushed the second chute upwards, just as Gordon, under Elise's instruction, brought the pod to a halt.

"Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Four. I'm on stationkeeping, Frankie," Gordon informed Elise.

"F-A-B, Cousteau." She tapped her earpiece. "Tynan from Frankie. Are you ready?"

"Nik?" Dom asked. "Are we ready?"

She turned from helping Brandon secure the second chute. "As ready as we can be."

"F-A-B." Dom tapped his earpiece. "Frankie, we're ready."

"F-A-B." Elise toggled a switch. "Thunderbird One to Flight 7002. We're ready to begin the evacuation. Injured and women with children first."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:34:50 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/29/2007 8:44 PM

Elise circled Thunderbird One around the accident zone and tried not to think about the water

surrounding her. She closed her eyes and took a few deep, steady breaths.

In...out...in...out... A sudden beeping made her snap back to attention. Looking at the radar screen, she smiled. "Thunderbird One to Thunderbird Two, I have three ships bearing down on our position."

"Best news I've heard since this started," Virgil responded with a smile. "Sweet is in the hold, waiting for Quasar and Indy."

"Tynan and Angel report that they're ready. Cousteau has Four on stationkeeping so the pod will stay put. All you and I have to do is keep things lit up. It's gotten awfully dark."

She heard another beeping. "There. Our fourth ship has just hit my radar. We should be able to wrap this up within an hour or so."

xxxx

John and Alan made their way through the plane's cabin, following Xiong's lead. The other flight attendants were checking on the passengers, assigning them places in the pending evacuation. When accosted, John assured whoever asked that help was on the way, and that they were in no danger. Well, not much anyway.

They finally reached the back of the plane, and Xiong indicated the doorway leading to the cargo bay. Making their way down the narrow steps, they crept forward carefully. They heard voices up ahead and quickened their pace.

"Quasar! Indy!" Tin-Tin called out as she saw them. "Did you bring the goo?"

John hefted a container at his side. "Got it right here. What's going on?"

Tin-Tin quickly filled them in on the situation, introducing Zhen and Jiao. John fired out a few questions in Mandarin and after their initial surprise, the two keepers smiled as they replied.

John turned to Alan. "We'd better get....Hello! Earth to Indy!"

Alan started from where he had been staring into one of the crates holding the pandas. "They don't look real, do they? They remind me of overstuffed teddy bears."

"Yeah well, if we don't get these crates secured, they'll be soggy teddy bears. C'mon."

"I'll head topside and see what I can do to help speed the evacuation along," Tin-Tin said. She moved past them in the crowded hold and headed for the stairs.

"We'll be up when we're through." John stepped forward and aimed his nozzle at the base of the cage. He pressed the trigger and a bright blue substance began oozing out of it. He carefully sprayed the base of the cage, then moved up the sides, paying special attention to the seams. On the other side, Alan did the same to the second cage. It took time, but they managed to create a watertight seal two thirds of the way up the cage before stopping.

"There," John told Jiao and Zhen. "That should hold while we move them. You sedated them?"

Jiao nodded. "Yes. They should sleep for another six hours."

"Good. Plenty of time to get them out of here. Van Gogh? Our monochromatic friends are secure. How are things on your end?" John asked.

"We've started evacuating the passengers," Virgil replied. "Sweet could use your help."

"F-A-B, Indy and I will head back up there and give her a hand." John waved to Alan, who was back to peering at the bears. As they made their way back up the stairs leading to the main cabin, John nudged his younger brother. "So, you thinking of getting a panda?"

Alan looked startled. "What? No. I've just never seen one up close before."

"You know, you could build it a pen, right next to your alligator. Add a few of the kittens and you have your own little zoo. Call it 'Alan's Animal Adventures'."

Alan responded by thwacking his brother in the back of the head with a wet glove.

--heading for the finish line, by Lillehafrue and Tikatu

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:35:30 GMT

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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 7/31/2007 10:33 AM

Dominic had never been so grateful to see cuts and bruises, because that was about the limit of the passengers' injuries.

One small boy had received a fractured wrist, but he was too busy babbling about something to seem to care. Eventually, the child's mother, a fluent English speaker, explained.

"The pandas. He can't stop thinking about them. Since he found out they were onboard, it's been nothing but pandas, pandas, pandas."

Dominic grinned as he finished tying the sling around the boy's arm.

"How do you say 'panda' in your language?" He asked the mother.

""Xiongmao'," she said.

Dominic pointed out towards the downed plane and repeated the word. The child nodded his head enthusiastically, and continued to speak quickly, repeating "Xiongmao" over and over. Dominic chuckled, outwardly at the child's excitement and apparent lack of pain, and inwardly at the mother's outright annoyance and bafflement at the whole situation. He patted the child on the

shoulder, nodded at the mother, and moved on to the next patient.

XXXX

Nikki shucked off her gloves, and deposited them in the clinical waste bin she and Dominic had brought down to the pod. She clenched and unclenched her fingers; she had never liked the feeling gloves left on her hands. The floor of the pod had become a sea of faces, and the air was filled with a salty tang and a cacophony of voices. She raised her eyes briefly, thinking, Someone's looking out for us. No Doctor Tracy and no TB7, and yet in this terrible situation, Dom, myself and the med bags were enough.

"Angel from Frankie."

Nikki started out of her thoughts. "Angel here."

"The first of the ships is here to pick up the passengers. How are things on your end?"

"Tynan, Sweet, Indy, Quasar and I have pretty much dealt with the injuries. None serious, most superficial."

"FAB. Prepare for evacuation."

"FAB, Frankie. Thanks."

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:36:04 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/4/2007 9:59 AM

The lights in the distance illuminated the downed plane and the undersides of the two Thunderbirds that hovered above it. Dez pulled out her digital camera, trying to get a better look through its zoom lens. She surreptitiously shot a few pictures, hoping that they were outside the range of whatever device IR used to block photography. The cruise liner hadn't been able to get too close, not with three other ships crowding around. The fishing trawler, being smallest, had gotten closest, but the liner was given priority as far as taking on passengers was concerned since they had more room. The launches had already brought back two loads of passengers, four or five of whom were taken to the sickbay.

"Well, there you are, Dez." A booming voice was followed by a tall, rugged man with dark skin and equally dark hair pulled back smooth against his head. His name was Johannes Masekela, and he was the president in charge of development for the Hwange Technology Group. He shouldered aside a few of the gawkers who lined the railing, watching the rescue unfold, and came up behind Dez, putting his hands on the railing on either side of her. Dez stifled an irritated sigh, then turned to her mark with a charming smile.

"Yes, here I am, Johannes," she said. She motioned to the scene ahead of them. "Aren't they

wonderful? So selfless. Those ships of theirs... magnificent."

"Magnificent," Johannes echoed as he glanced toward the plane. He pulled back some strands of her blonde hair and leaned in to kiss her neck. "Not as magnificent as you, Desdemona."

Normally, Dez would take the opportunity to further seduce the man she was hoping to dupe, but this time his advances just irritated her. "Let me get one or two more shots, luv," she said, turning to murmur in his ear. "Then we can go back to my cabin..."

"That's something I wanted to discuss with you," Johannes said in her ear as he wrapped an arm possessively around her waist. "The purser is looking for empty cabins... why don't you move into mine for the duration of the journey?"

She was in the middle of a shot, and it blurred when he grabbed her. She took a calming breath and smiled sweetly at him. "Why Johannes. What will people say? More importantly, what will your wife say?"

"Hmm." While he was thinking over the ramifications, she got off two more shots. Then she turned in his grasp.

"It's a lovely idea, Johannes, but we've been far too indiscreet as it stands. We should maintain separate quarters; it'll look more... decorous." Besides, I've got a little redhead on a string, too, and I can't exactly bring her to your quarters. I don't particularly like having a threesome.

"All right, you win," said Johannes as he nibbled on her earlobe. "But come away now, my dear. As interesting as I find the Thunderbirds, I find you far more fascinating."

She stifled another sigh, and saved her pictures. She had work to do. "Of course, luv. I'll have far more fun with you than standing ass to elbow with the hoi polloi." So saying, she kissed him lightly, and slid an arm around his muscular waist, allowing him to lead her away.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:36:37 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 8/5/2007 4:48 PM

The last boatload of passengers had just departed from the pod, leaving the motley crew standing on Thunderbird Four's ramp. In the distance, they could hear a small boy's voice yelling "Xiongmao" over and over.

"Well, at least that's over and done with," John said, before opening the comms channel on his headset. "Thunderbird Two and Thunderbird one from Quasar."

"Thunderbird Two here, go ahead."

"Thunderbird One, receiving you strength five."

"Passengers are all evacuated. Now for the pandas."

"FAB," Elise said. "Thunderbird Two, pick up the crew using the rescue cage, then hover over the open cargo hatch and ready the grabs. Quasar and Indy, you'll be going down with them to secure the cages and make sure they stay that way. Thunderbird Four will be standing by at the tail to assist."

"FAB Frankie," John and Virgil chorused.

"The rescue cage will be down momentarily. Stand by," Virgil said, before signing off.

In less than a minute, Dominic, Nikki, Alan, and John had secured themselves inside the cage, and it began to ascend. As they rose, they got a better view of the downed plane, which was looking mournful surrounded by the blue depths. As the cage clipped into position and its passengers disembarked, the nurses bid good luck to John and Alan, and the former two headed for the cockpit, while the latter went to get ready for their next descent, this time without the rescue cage.

"It's just a case of delivering those black and white babies and getting out of here," Alan said as he donned his harness.

"Yeah. Delivering those very important black and white babies," John added. "It's pretty crucial."

"Yeah... Y'know, I was thinking about what you said about 'Alan's Animal Adventures'... Does Chile really need two pandas?"

John answered with a sharp thwack to his brother's head.

xxxx

Tin-Tin stood with Jiao and Zhen under the open cargo hatch, waiting for rescue to come.

"They're very beautiful animals," Tin-Tin said, and her words were translated into Mandarin.

"Yes," Jiao said. "I almost didn't want to give them up. But it's for a good cause."

"We hope," Zhen added.

Tin-Tin glanced over at the goo-covered cages for a few moments, before her communicator sounded.

"Sweet from Thunderbird Two."

"Sweet here."

"Lowering grabs now. Quasar and Indy are descending, and Cousteau should be coming aboard to help also."

"FAB."

The International Rescue personnel converged on the sleeping pandas with swiftness, and together with Zhen, they secured the first of the pandas into the grabs, and began the ascent. The bear didn't make a sound. Jiao looked concerned for its welfare, but Tin-Tin smiled gently and tried to reassure her.

"They're in the best of hands, apart from yours and Zhen. And they'll be back in your hands soon enough."

The process was repeated for the second panda, and then Virgil lowered the rescue cage to bring Tin-Tin and the panda keepers up into the safety of Thunderbird Two. The bears were snugly secured, and still under the sedation. Jiao finally looked relieved.

"Thank you so much," she said to Tin-Tin. "Our thanks go to all of your people for rescuing the bears, and us."

"Well, I hope we never meet again, and I mean that in the best way possible."

Jiao chuckled.

"I, also."

"Sweet from Van Gogh. Are you staying with the bears?"

"Yes, Van Gogh. I think I will."

"FAB. We're retrieving Thunderbird Four now, and then on to Chile to drop off our special passengers."

"FAB."

Tin-Tin went up to one of the cages, and peered over the blue goo to watch the panda some more. They really are beautiful... I think even I will miss them once they've been delivered...

Subject: Re: Winds of Change
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:37:06 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 8/5/2007 5:04 PM

Virgil was on final approach to Santiago Airport. He could see the long stretch of runway that had been cleared - not that he needed it, but the further away people were, the better - and could even make out the flashing of emergency service vehicles' lights. Thunderbird One was circling above, having went on ahead to make way for her sister ship.

Gordon unbuckled himself and stood.

"I'm going down to the panda enclosure help Tin-Tin with the unloading."

"Me too," Alan said, attempting to leap from his seat. Unfortunately he had forgotten his safety belt.

Gordon rolled his eyes playfully, and waited for Alan to disentangle himself before leaving the cockpit. Nikki, Dominic, and Brandon sat in relative silence.

"Sweet from Van Gogh, landing in one half minute."

"FAB Van Gogh."

The VTOL engines brought Thunderbird Two down with a grace that belied its cumbersome appearance, and the crew set about unloading their special passengers.

Tin-Tin watched as Jiao and Zhen fussed over the pandas, and folded her arms as they were transported onto a waiting truck. Jiao turned and waved just before she hopped in with them, and Tin-Tin reciprocated. Pandas...I never thought we'd rescue pandas... She watched as the truck moved off down the runway, and smiled, before heading back into Thunderbird Two, and home.

Subject: Re: Winds of Change

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 04:38:22 GMT

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And with this we end Chapter Ten: The Winds of Change.
