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Subject: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 15:50:42 GMT

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With the greater part of his physical recovery behind him, Jeff once again takes the helm of International Rescue. The organization has been strengthened by the additions of Lena and Elise, and almost all of the original rookies have undergone their trial by fire in the Ural Mountains. The island is feeling more and more like home to the newcomers. Training has begun in earnest and the gear that will mark them as IR operatives is beginning to arrive. But an adversary has risen who is targeting Tracy Industries, and unknowingly poses a threat to IR's security as well, even as new security measures are being implemented. The newly integrated team will have to step carefully in order to keep International Rescue both secret and safe.

Post by Tikatu on 08/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 15:52:31 GMT

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24th March Tracy Island 11am

Christopher looked around, and marvelled at the sight in front of him. He had just finished a long walk along the beach. Looking down, he saw that his trousers and t-shirt were soaked.

"What man would not like this?" He smiled to himself as he gazed out to sea. He would have to ask either Alan or Gordon about the fishing in the area.

Asterix had woken him up at his usual unearthly hour for his breakfast, then the little cat had trotted off to find a nice warm place to sleep it off.

"Chris!"

Christopher turned round and saw Dominic walking towards him with his little boy Joshua in his arms.

"Hello Dom!" Christopher grinned as he walked up the beach towards him.

"Kitty!" Joshua said, glancing at Christopher then up at his dad.

"Hello little man." Christopher smiled, winking at the boy then turning his gaze to Dominic. "I've not rewarded him for looking after Asterix for me."

"We'll have to think of something, won't we Josh?" Dominic smiled.

The two men were silent for a while, with only Joshua's words drifting across the air.

"I almost forgot." Dominic reached into the waistband of his trousers. "This letter came for you,

London postmark."

"Thanks mate." Christopher accepted the envelope and opened it.

Christopher began reading, and Dominic could see his colleague's expression darken.

"Anything wrong?" Dominic asked.

"A family problem," Christopher said. "Would you mind if I went somewhere private?"

"It's okay." Dominic shifted Josh in his arms.

"Asterix is currently lying in that warm spot near the lift," Christopher said. "I'll see you later." And with that he walked away.

"Wonder what that was all about?" Dominic murmured. He shook his head, and then looked at his son. "Shall we go and find that kitty?" And with that they went back to the Cliff House.

Post by The\_Wrong\_Trousers1 on 08/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 15:54:40 GMT

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Christopher walked further along the beach, his mind reeling...

"My Darling Christopher," he read.

I hope this gets to you. I did call your office but I was told that you had been promoted to a higher position within the company. They said that they would pass this on for me, so here I go.

First of all, I'm so sorry for what I did, and for what you saw that night. I got lost in the moment, and very selfishly thought nothing of your feelings.

I cared about you Christopher, but in the end I no longer loved you as much as I did when we first met. I did hope that we would get married and have children, but over the months we drifted apart, mainly due to the pressures of work.

George (the man you saw that evening) and I met while on a training course. You were on that extended trip to Japan, ferrying someone about, and that was the point when I re-evaluated our relationship. I was amazed that you didn't see the signs when you came back; something was on your mind. I found out what it was a week after you left: you were going to propose that night.

I'm sorry if I disappointed you. I could see that in your eyes when you looked at me.

Anyway, I've been promoted as well, and George has proposed, too. We are getting married at his

family home in Somerset next year. I'm also expecting our first child.

Once again, I am so sorry. Good luck with your future

Anna

P.S. Is Asterix ok? Say hi from me

Post by The\_Wrong\_Trousers1 on 08/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 16:00:48 GMT

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Saturday, March 24, 11:45 a.m. Tracy Island

Christopher leaned on the balcony of his apartment, gazing into the distance. He hadn't even bothered to change from his wet clothes. He read the letter again, still not believing its contents.

Anna, why did you do this to me? Whatever was wrong, we could have talked it over, worked things out. Christopher sighed, reading the letter a third time. Folding the letter up, he headed back into his flat and changed. Then he headed out. He needed to talk to someone, he didn't care who.

In his apartment, Brandon was writing a letter home. He had finished the letter, and was putting a stamp on it when a knock sounded at the door.

"Just a minute!" Brandon shouted. He opened the door and noticed the sad look on Christopher's face.

Christopher looked at Brandon. "Are you busy? I've had some distressing news and I need to talk to somebody about it."

"No, I'm not busy. Come on in." After entering the apartment, Chris stood awkwardly, not sure what to do or say. He took the letter out of his pocket and handed it to Brandon.

"Here, read this," Chris said, suddenly finding something of interest to gaze at. Brandon glanced at his friend then at the folded piece of paper. After reading the letter he walked over to his friend and offered his sympathy.

Christopher sat down. "I loved her so much, you know. I wanted to marry her. I don't know what I did wrong." He shot a look at Brandon. "She gave me no hints whatsoever."

Brandon listened to his friend. Never having had a girlfriend, he was unsure of what to say .

"What with this, and Belinda...." Christopher sighed. "I don't know what to do. I need to be busy. Asterix needs to be looked after more, too."

"That's a start, then. Asterix needs you as much as you need him right now," Brandon replied, hoping he made sense to his friend.

"He still gets a bit nervous around some people," Christopher smiled slightly. "I'm not sure what he thinks of Mr. Tracy."

Brandon smiled warmly. "I'm sure that once Asterix gets used to him, Mr. Tracy won't be able to keep the little guy away."

"Do you really think so?" Christopher's smile widened. "I've just had a wonderful image of Asterix sitting in Mr Tracy's chair at the desk, and Mr. Tracy trying to get him off." He began to laugh. "Mr. Tracy gives him the full works, and that sainted animal just looks at him then goes back to sleep."

"Oh man, that would be a sight to see," Brandon said with a chuckle. "But, I bet he'd be easier to get out of that chair than off my bed." The two men laughed a little more before Christopher turned serious again.

"What should I do?" Christopher sighed again, then turned to Brandon. "I'm too scared to go into another relationship. But there is someone on this island that I feel things for," He paused, his voice lowering. "I do not want to hurt her."

Brandon looked surprised. "Does she know yet?"

"No." Christopher blushed. "She doesn't, and I'm worried that she might not feel the same way." Christopher mumbled a name under his breath, and blushed again.

"I beg your pardon, Christopher. I didn't hear what you said." Brandon's tone was neutral but he was burning with curiosity. I wonder who the lucky lady is?

"Tin-Tin." Christopher looked up at him. "I like Tin-Tin. We get on so well and I really like her."

Brandon was taken aback. This was the last thing he expected. "Ah, come on, Christopher, you're kidding. Tin-Tin?"

"Is that so wrong?" Christopher asked. "She is fun to be with, charming, intelligent, beautiful and very sexy. I'm amazed that she is single."

Brandon gazed keenly at his friend and realized he was serious. "Listen, if you really care for her, you'll let her know."

Christopher shook his head, looking down at his feet. "I don't know...."

"You've got to at least try, Chris. If you don't, you'll never know how she feels."

"Okay." Christopher smiled. "I'll try and ask her if she would like me to cook her a meal." He paused, then continued, "I'd better ask her Dad what she likes though." He shook his head. "I'm more worried about talking to Kyrano about this, though. I don't know what he would think about

my intentions." Christopher smiled grimly.

"I think Kyrano would respect you for coming to him rather than going ahead on your own."

"True." Christopher smiled at the thought.

"You got to promise me one thing, though, Chris. I want you to let your old buddy Brandon know how things go. Deal?"

Christopher was about to protest when he noticed Brandon winking at him, a smile on his face.

"All right, you old rogue." Christopher smiled. "I'll let you know what happens."

Post by MagicMaster8 and The\_Wrong\_Trousers1 on 09/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 16:17:08 GMT

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Tracy Island, March 24th, noon

"Kat!" Brains called down the table to his young assistant.

She looked up from talking with Nikki about the latest films. "Yes, Bo...." She glanced at Scott. "Brains?" she replied.

"I intend to start doing a complete overhaul of all the auxiliary vehicles, which will help you to build up your knowledge of them. We will start when we have finished lunch."

Kat smiled. It's so good to be actually doing some work on the vehicles.

They left the dining room and headed for the monorail to take them to the hangars containing the auxiliaries.

"Kat, were you going to call me 'Boss'?"

Kat grinned. "Yes, it sort of felt right. Of course, Mr. Tracy is the big Boss. But it's better than being called 'guv' which was the name my first employer was known to his workforce. 'Oi, Guv, wotcha you want doing wiv this old car?'" She mimicked a cockney accent.

Brains laughed. "Hey, not bad."

Once down in the hangar, Kat asked, "Okay, what are we starting with?"

"Let's take a look at the Hover Jets." These were parked in the far end of the hangar. Brains led the way. He started one up, and sitting on it, gently moved around, on a cushion of air. "Looks like this one is okay. Let's check the others."

Kat gingerly sat on one, and copied Brains. "Oh er, this is not as easy as it looks. How do the Tracys manage?" She brought the Hover Jet down to a bumpy landing.

"I don't think that one is functioning as it should," Brains said, pushing his glasses back onto his nose. "No, look here. Some of the outlets where the air comes from are malfunctioning, causing the hover jet to move unevenly." He looked underneath, and made some adjustments. "There, Kat, try it again."

Kat again sat on the jet, but this time it lifted off the ground and went along smoothly.

"Kat," Brains, said, "I have a check sheet of everything that needs doing to all the auxiliary vehicles. In time I hope that you will take over and work on these vehicles as a matter of course, freeing me to do other things."

"Oh, Brains!" Kat flushed with pride. "You really mean that I shall be in control of the Thunderbirds and their auxiliary equipment?"

"Well, maybe not the Thunderbirds themselves, but likely the auxiliary vehicles. It will be a very important job."

Kat thought about what Brains was saying. True, I enjoyed being a part of the last rescue, even though it was very traumatic for me. But to be in charge of the TBs and the other pieces of equipment...to know that it would be me who ensured that, whatever and whenever equipment was needed, everything was ready and in order... how exciting!

Suddenly Brains voice brought her back to the present. "Some responsibility, isn't it?" he said, smiling at her faraway expression.

"Yes, Brains," Kat almost whispered back. "And I won't let Mr. Tracy or his sons down."

Brains nodded and smiled wider. "I know you won't."

"Hey, Brains, is that part of IR equipment?" she asked as she pointed to a very colourful Hover Jet, set aside from the rest.

Brains laughed, "That belongs to young Alex; he was given it as a birthday present. He painted it himself, so that it would not used along with the other Hover Jets."

"There's little chance of that." Kat laughed. "I can't see Scott or Virgil using it."

Brains chuckled. "Neither can I. In any case, you'd better check it over, too. It would fall under your purview as being a household vehicle."

However, the Hover Jet appeared in good order.

"Now, let's have a look at the Jet Air Transporter," Brains said. "This enables people being rescued from a height to fall onto jets of air, and so enable them to be safely brought down."

Kat looked on as Brains went over the equipment, tightening bolts and greasing some parts.

Brains then started it, and there was an upward thrust of air, it looked to be working okay. "Would you like to try it?"

Kat looked at Brains and laughed, "Is this part of the training to test drive the equipment?"

"Well, you need to know how it works, so you'll know if your repairs were successful or not."

"Okay, Brains," Kat said, climbing up a ladder to a walkway halfway up the hangar wall.

Brains manoeuvred the vehicle until it was underneath where Kat was standing. "Okay?"

"Ready when you are, Boss," came Kat's voice from above him.

"Okay, jump!"

Well, here I go! Kat thought as she gingerly jumped off the walkway and, to her surprise, was caught in an upward rush of air then gently brought down to the ground. "Wow, Brains, that is some equipment!"

"Yes, it is! I have a manual here for you to study. Go ahead and look this one over, then work on the Booster Mortar as well. They both probably need a going over so they'll be in tip-top shape for the next rescue." He handed her a thick book. "Easier to study from a hard paper copy than an electronic one, I always think."

Kat glanced down at the thick, grease-stained book in her hands. "If you insist..."

Brains raised an eyebrow and a faint smile played about his lips. "I certainly do."

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 09/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 16:22:52 GMT

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Saturday 24 March. 4pm. Mendoza, Argentina.

Elí Arroyo Ruiz watched with wide eyes and a hopeful heart as the skaters glided gracefully across the smooth ice. Through his television set, he could almost feel like he was right there, under the dimmed lights, sitting amongst the enraptured spectators in Sarajevo, present at the Argentina-USA ice dancing final at the world championships. The young skaters performed their routine with a perfection that deserved to win, and Elí had been cheering the Argentinians on from the start. Nothing would stop him from seeing their inevitable victory.

Watching the skating drew him away from his own boring existence to a far more exciting world.

He lived on his own in a shoddy, run-down apartment block in one of the oldest suburbs of the rapidly growing city of Mendoza, in western Argentina. Watching the skating was a magical experience. Elí had marvelled at the professionalism of the skaters as they glided across the ice all his life, and he had never missed the world championships for as long as he could remember. He had even taken the precaution of watching it on a portable televiewer set, rather than a mains-powered one, so not even a power cut -- something that happened all-too-often in his substandard apartment building -- would prevent him from watching his beloved finals. Sometimes he wondered why he continued to live in such a dump, but he knew it would be tough to get somewhere better for the little amount he could afford to pay in rent.

The lights flickered a little, and Eli glanced up, smirking in a petty kind of victory. Nothing was going to stop him. These finals were the highlight of his year; no matter what, he would see them. Juan, his neighbour from across the hall, an excitable sort of young man, but still a good friend, had jested at his love of the sport. But it made no difference to his enthusiasm and pride. He loved ice-skating, and he would see the finals. He would gladly proclaim his love for it no matter what anyone said.

The lights flickered a few more times, but Elí steadfastly ignored the annoyance, and continued to watch his set, taking no notice. He looked away in momentary confusion as a rumbling noise, like a speeding freight train, filled the air and did not abate. But there were no train lines near his apartment...

Realization hit as suddenly he was pitched from his seat as an intense shaking rocked the apartment building. He hit the floor, and the televiewer set fell sideways onto the ground. All around him, things were being shaken off the walls. The lights flickered rapidly, before they burst into a blinding shower of sparks, and then died. Ornaments crashed as they hit the floor; the pots and pans in his kitchen cupboards clanked and banged against the doors as the whole building shook. It was happening again, when the government said it wouldn't. Elí cursed; it was an earthquake!

There was a violent shudder, and the floor fell away from beneath him. He screamed and tried to grab onto something as the contents of his apartment slid and collided into each other beneath his feet, and he slammed sideways into the floor when the building stopped shaking.

There was silence.

He sat totally still for what seemed like an age, waiting for the furor to begin again. But nothing happened. Timidly, Elí sat up, gazing at the absolute destruction all around him.

"Not again," he said quietly. "No way, man, not again."

There had been a terrible earthquake a handful of years before, but the government, as they waded through the devastation left behind in the disaster's wake, had said that they would know before it happened again, and that everyone would be told in time so they could get to safety. Elí cursed again. So much for that!

Anger and frustration boiled up inside him. He wasn't afraid. Not really, anyway. It had happened before, and they would deal with it. Although last time, he had been working in a newly built office block, and little damage had been done. There certainly hadn't been all the commotion that had

just occurred mere moments before. But, what happened had happened, and eventually, people would come, and it would all be cool. How bad could it have been, really? Surely the building hadn't been that unsafe.

With a shrug, Elí stood up -- noting that the floor was somewhat more angled than it had been before -- and righted his televiewer set. He banged it a few times before the picture returned. Thank God! The finals weren't over! At least now, he would have something to entertain him before the rescuers arrived.

There was a banging at the apartment's front door -- 'Are they here already? Talk about fast action!' -- and it was unceremoniously flung open. The harried form of his young friend, Juan, rushed in, and the worry turned to an expression incredulous anger as he saw Elí.

"Why aren't you out here?" He asked heatedly. "Don't you even know what's happened?"

Elí rolled his eyes and went back to watching the set. "Of course I do, Juan. There was an earthquake. Big deal. It's happened before. I'll leave after the finals. There's no rush."

Juan's young face scrunched into disbelief, and he flung his arms up in frustration.

"There's been an earthquake. An earthquake, Elí."

Elí merely shrugged again. "So? Cool your jets, man. It's really not that big of a deal."

Juan shook his head and stormed out of the apartment; Elí shook his head. Honestly, 'overreaction' was Juan's middle name, as far as he was concerned. He turned back to the televiewer screen, and settled down to watch once more.

More rumbling and shaking occurred on occasion, but being an earthquake veteran, he knew it was merely the expected aftershocks. He idly wondered where the epicentre had been; obviously it was nowhere near, or their suburb would have been utterly decimated. One aftershock was particularly intense; although it didn't really faze him, what happened afterwards did.

The apartment building lurched sideways as if it had been shoved, and Elí gripped the seat he was sitting on tightly. The televiewer set slid a little, but didn't fall. The movement stopped, and he shrugged. It must have just been an intense one: nothing really to worry about. With a sigh mixed of frustration and annoyance -- why today, of all days? -- Elí went back to watching the finals, knowing that rescue would, eventually, arrive.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 09/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 16:28:59 GMT  
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Saturday, March 24th; Mendoza, Argentina

When the roaring and shaking stopped, the people outside lay on the ground where they'd fallen, knocked down by the earthquake. There was silence all around; not even a bird was singing. Then the screaming and crying started. There were calls for "help", and "Mommy". One by one the men, women, boys and girls picked themselves up and looked around.

There was destruction - major and minor - everywhere they looked. Those who lived in the area ran toward their homes, calling out for whomever might be inside. A few, who had cell phones, called emergency services. Still others, ran toward the cries for help, to see if they could pull anyone out of the rubble.

Then the sirens began. Fire trucks, police vehicles, ambulances, paramedics, all raced to the most devastated areas to start the rescue of the injured - or the recovery of the bodies.

Post by Hobbeth on 09/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 16:33:27 GMT  
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Saturday, March 24, 2068, Thunderbird Five, about 2 p.m.

Callie sat in the lounge below the control room. She watched television, particularly highlights of the late-evening basketball games, including seeing her Crimson Tide team lose to Syracuse. "The Orange have always been a strong team," she said, "but the Tide shouldn't be ashamed. Most polls had written them off early in the season. Joe was so upset about the preseason polls..." She let out a sigh. "I hope my family's okay."

John walked in from the galley with glass of milk in hand and noticed her sad face looking at the screen. "What's wrong, Callie?"

"I miss my family, John. Don't get me wrong; I like being up here in space, but I feel I need to let them know how I'm doing."

He nodded. "You want to write a message to your family without giving away our secrets. You can send e-mail from up here, you know."

"Uh, without giving away anything about what I'm really doing? And what about the source of the e-mail?"

"Relax, Callie. All TI employees get their own e-mail address in the system. In your case it's clspencer at ti dot com."

"Do I get a password for that e-mail address?"

"Yeah. However, since you've never accessed it before, the password was sent to my e-mail address. When I give you the password, I suggest you change it so only you know it."

A few minutes later, she had her own password to access her TI e-mail address. "Now comes the

hard part, finding the right words to say."

"It's going to be tough the first few times, Callie. Once you get the hang of it, though, it gets a lot easier."

"Thanks, John." She grabbed a nearby pen and notepad and started writing down words which would hopefully become the right e-mail to send to her family.

\*\*\*\*\*45 minutes later\*\*\*\*\*

Callie threw away another sheet of paper. "Oh, brother! I said it was gonna be hard, but I sure didn't expect it to be this hard!"

John had finished his duties in the astrodome when he heard her outburst. "I guess you're still trying?"

"I can't get the words right. No matter what I try to say, it all leads to a lie, and I can't stand lying."

"Callie, you're not really lying. Just tell your family how you're doing at your job in Tracy Industries. Don't let it get to you. Just write from your heart." He left her alone so she could try again.

After another 30 minutes, she was satisfied with what she had written. "He was right," she said. "This should do it." She went to the computer, accessed her e-mail address, and soon started typing what she wrote on the paper.

Dear Mom, Dad, Joe, and Bri,

I'm sorry I haven't written to you since I started at Tracy Industries last month, but I've been a busy little girl. My supervisor has been wonderful, helping me get through the "intensive training" I've had to do in this first month on the job. I've also made use of my Russian language skills in translating information for my colleagues.

Speaking of co-workers, they've done nothing less than make me feel welcome in this new stop in my life. I'm not sure how long it'll take before I can see you all at home in Opp. You're all still the foundation of my life, and that will never change.

Well, I hope you're all doing all right, and I'm sorry Bama didn't get far in the tournament again. Oh, well, there's always football season to look forward to in the fall. I've gotta go for now, but I just want to let you all know I'm okay.

With all my love,  
Callie

She moved the mouse to the "Send" button and clicked on it. "Brian should get it on his computer when he wakes up in the morning."

Callie felt satisfied with her e-mail and started to relax--until she heard John's voice over the intercom. "Callie, we've got an emergency situation."

Her mood went from relaxed to very serious. "F-A-B, John. I'm on my way up." The games can wait. The rescue's got to go first.

She took the lift up to the control room. She joined John at the controls. "What's going on?"

"We've got an emergency call from Argentina. Severe earthquake and dangerous aftershocks. The mayor of Mendoza has called us for help."

"I'll get the details. You contact base and tell them to get ready."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 10/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 16:36:21 GMT

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Nikki laid down on her front on the bed looking through her only photo album. It was filled with happy memories from the past with friends and family. It was only when she was by herself that she really missed everyone she knew back in England, even if she thought the Island and her new friends were great. Especially Alan. He reminded her of a few of the crazy people she used to work and hang out with.

Picking up her album, Nikki walked out to the balcony and sat out in the sun. As she looked at the photos, she tried to remember what happened in each one. Turning the page, she came across one of the rare pictures of just her and her father. She ran her hands over the photo. For years after the divorce, she wished that her family would just get along. Her father's decisions for his children didn't seem good enough for her mother and vice-versa.

Nikki felt a tear fall down her cheek and drop onto the plastic covered page. She slowly wiped it off and looked across to the beach. When Alan and Virgil caught her eye, she gave them a little wave, wiped the tears from her face and retreated back to her room.

Post by Nikki-Browneyes1 on 10/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 16:37:22 GMT

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Sunday, March 25, 8:45 a.m. Tracy Island.

"Ma! Did you see that!" Dianne cried into her portable satellite phone as she paced back and forth before the plasma screen TV in her sitting room. "She fell flat on her butt and he nearly tripped over her and they still got a 5.7! The fix is in somewhere, Ma! I just know it."

"Dianne, you know that judging ice dancing has always been a dicey proposition at best," Lisa responded from her home in Greenville, where she was watching the same ice dance finals. "There's entirely too much nationalism involved."

"Yeah, I know. Oh, here are the Argentinians. So far so good for them," Dianne noted as she paced some more.

Cherry, who was sitting on the love seat, trying to watch the screen, waved irritably at her mother. "Mom! Will you please sit down? I can't see the show!"

"Oh, sorry honey," Dianne said distractedly as she moved over to the sofa and plunked herself down. "These two are good! I think they'll probably medal. Hopefully a silver and not a gold, though. I don't think that they can beat the Americans this year."

"Well, we'll see what happens, won't we?" Lisa said calmly. "But I see what you mean. They've got a good rhythm going and they're skating clean."

"I like them!" Cherry piped up. "I hope they win."

Dianne shot a glance at her daughter. "You speak heresy, girl. You're an American and should want the Americans to win!"

They could both hear Lisa laughing over the phone. "Didn't I just say something about nationalism?"

Dianne frowned and rolled her eyes. Cherry laughed and pointed at her mother. "Gramma's got you pegged!"

Just as the Argentinean couple were about to get their marks, the emergency alarm rang through the house.

"Why now?" Dianne shouted, spreading her arms and looking at the ceiling as she jumped up from the couch. She handed the phone to Cherry. "Here. Talk to your grandma." She headed for the door and then turned and pointed a finger at her daughter. "Record this for me!"

"I will, Mom!" Cherry said, getting up and putting a disk in the vid recorder.

"What happened, Cherry?" Lisa asked, realizing that her daughter had just run out of the room.

"Emergency signal, Gramma," Cherry answered calmly. "There's a rescue called in." She paused for a moment. "Three 6.0s! Mom won't be happy about that!"

Post by Tikatu on 10/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Sunday, March 25, 2068, 9 a.m., Tracy Island

Jeff maneuvered himself behind the desk and sat down heavily, leaning his crutches at the end of the desk. Nearly everyone was there, and the lounge was more crowded than it had ever been.

"Who's missing?" he asked. Scott stood on his tiptoes and looked over the crowd.

"Dom, I think," he told his father just as the nurse came running in, his wailing son in his arms.

"Sorry, Mr. Tracy," Dom said, trying to quiet Joshua. "He had a poor night." He handed Joshua off to Emily, which made the child wail even louder and reach out for his father as he was removed from the room. As soon as things were quiet, Jeff opened communication with the space station.

"What do you have for us, John?"

"Earthquake in western Argentina, Father," John replied, looking at his electronic clipboard. "Mendoza was badly hit and the mayor has requested our assistance."

"What does it look like?"

"Lots of buildings pancaked and fallen. People trapped under the rubble and in buildings still standing. Mendoza's a fairly good sized city and they have a good emergency response team. But right now, they're swamped," Callie commented, coming to the screen.

"What should we take, Dad?" Scott asked. "The Mole? The DOMO? Thunderbird Seven?"

"If you want the Mole, you can't have Seven. They both can't fit into a pod together," Dianne warned.

"Hmm. A tough decision," Jeff said, tapping a pencil on his desk. He turned to John's picture. "John, Callie, tell the mayor of Mendoza that we are on our way."

"F-A-B," the satellite crew said in near unison.

"Virgil, take the DOMO, the Mobile Crane, and the Mole. Leave Seven behind," Jeff ordered. "Scott, you take Christopher with you in Thunderbird One. Start getting him familiar with procedures and controls there."

"Me?!" Christopher squeaked. "In Thunderbird One?"

"Yes, you!" Scott replied. "Come on! We're wasting time. Do you have your new uniform?"

"Uh, yes. I do," Christopher said, going over to the chair where he had laid his uniform down.

"Good! Let's go!" Scott called as he went to the light sconces and quickly disappeared. Christopher grabbed his uniform and followed.

"Elise, welcome to the team," Jeff said with a smile. "You ride shotgun with Virgil and get acquainted with Thunderbird Two. I think that's where your skills will best be used."

"Y-Yes, sir," Elise said, surprised. She watched at Virgil stood at the rocket portrait and the bit of wall flipped up for him. "Uh... how do I get there?"

"You take the passenger elevator," Gordon said.

"And you can show her where that is, Gordon. That is, if your doctor clears you for duty," Jeff said with a significant look at Dianne.

She nodded. "He's cleared. And since we'll be using Thunderbird Two's sickbay, I'll only need one nurse." She looked at both of them, then nodded at Nikki. "Nikki, how about you this time? That way Dom can take care of Joshua."

Nikki nodded and said, "That's fine with me."

Dianne turned to Dom. "Dom, don't think I'm taking her just because of Joshua. You've got a lot more experience than she does at in-the-field medicine and I want her to get some more hands-on so she's more comfortable with it. I hope you understand."

Dom was silent for a moment, and then he nodded. "I'll tend to my son now," he said as he left the lounge.

Meanwhile, Jeff was parceling out other duties. "Alan, Brandon, I want you here. You went on the last rescue, and I need someone fresh here in case we get another call on top of this one. Use the time to acquaint Brandon with some of the other auxiliary vehicles, Alan." Jeff looked up to find the lounge already half-empty as Gordon, Dianne, Elise, and Nikki had left.

Post by Tikatu on 15/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:07:21 GMT  
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Silver Springs, Maryland; Saturday, March 25th; 3:15 PM

Lena relaxed in her favorite chair - a rocker/recliner - and watched the World Championship ice skating finals on television. She enjoyed the grace and athleticism of the skaters and marveled at the way some of them interpreted the music they skated to.

Suddenly she noticed words scrolling across the bottom of the screen: An earthquake has struck western Argentina. Many buildings are down, especially in the town of Mendoza. Rescue workers are stretched to the limit, so they have called on International Rescue for help. Stay tuned for more information.

She immediately got up and went into her home office, turning on her computer. She pulled up some of the news service websites and checked on the story. She read about the earthquake and noted that International Rescue was responding. Sounds like everything's well in hand. I hope they don't get caught in a bad aftershock.

Smiling at herself for her proprietary interest - Well, I am a part of the team, even if I don't go out on rescues - she went back to the living room to watch the rest of the competition. She knew that she would later check on the progress of the rescue, both on the television and her computer, until it was over and everyone was safely on their way back to base.

Post by Hobbeth on 21/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:09:28 GMT  
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

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Saturday, March 24, 2068, 6:25 p.m. local time, Mendoza, Argentina

Scott frowned as he saw the colorful streaks of the setting sun. He flew over the city, looking for a cleared place to land. A rather speed-shocked Christopher sat in a seat below him.

"Bloody hell!" he exclaimed, shaking his head. "That was fast!"

"Yes, it is," Scott replied, distractedly. "I'm sorry I haven't had time to show you much more than how fast this baby is."

"And I'm supposed to learn to fly this bird?" Christopher said, still shocked. "I... I'm speechless."

"There's more than just flying fast to taking the lead in a rescue," Scott reminded him. "Hopefully I can give you a taste of that today." He hailed Thunderbird Five. "Jay, have the officials in Mendoza given you any coordinates where we can land?"

"Yes, Ess," John replied. "I'm downloading them to your computer and Vee's."

"Hmm. I just thought of a possible problem. What are we going to call our newest recruit? Eee?" Scott pondered.

"How about just EI?" Callie's voice came over the air. "It would sound better."

"True." Scott switched channels. "Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird One, what's your ETA?"

Virgil, following his older brother's trail as fast as he could push his the cargo carrier, replied, "Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Two, our ETA is currently 7:15 p.m. local time. We're 50 minutes behind you."

"F-A-B, Vee, and thanks," Scott acknowledged. "How's our new recruit doing?"

"She's still shell-shocked," Virgil told him. "I heard Cee's suggestion on her designation. She approves."

"Good. That's one less thing to worry about." Scott looked out of his viewport. "I'm going to land this bird. See you when you get here." He turned to Christopher. "See, there is the site they want us to use."

Christopher whistled. "That's a nasty situation. Do you think we'll be able to make a difference?"

"I hope so," Scott said grimly. "I truly hope so."

Aboard Thunderbird Two, Dianne showed Nikki around the small sickbay.

"I remember some of this from our rescue in the North Sea," Nikki said. "But it's always good to have a refresher."

"Yes, and it looks like everything is well stocked, too," Dianne said. She leaned up against one of the bunks and looked at her telecomm watch with longing.

Nikki couldn't help but notice. "Is there something wrong, Dr. Tracy?"

Dianne laughed wryly. "Yes and no. I'm just dying to find out what's going on with the ice skating finals, but I don't dare ask. You'd think that something like that wouldn't matter, but I'm such a big fan of the sport and this rescue couldn't have come at a worse time." She shook her head. "Listen to me. Rescues never come at opportune times. I just have hope that Cherry recorded it all, and put it out of my head so I'm not distracted."

Nikki smiled. "I can see you're a big fan. I hope that your favorites win."

Dianne smiled. "Thanks." She stood up. "C'mon. Let's get back to the flight deck and see how much longer until we get to the Danger Zone."

"Right," Nikki said as she followed Dianne out to the cockpit.

Post by Tikatu on 22/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:12:58 GMT  
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Sunday, March 25, 2068, Tracy Island, 11 a.m. in the Villa

Cherie finished the recording of the ice-skating competition in her parents' suite. "There, that should do it." She heard someone knocking at the door. "Who is it?"

"It's us," said Tyler. "Can we come in?"

"Sure, the competition's over."

The boys walked into the room. "Did you get it all, sis?" Alex asked.

"Yeah."

Tyler said, "So, who won, who won?"

"Sorry, boys. I'm not going to reveal anything until Mom returns from that rescue in South America."

"Aw, no fair," scolded Alex.

She looked at them and said, "Since when did you two find ice dancing so interesting?"

They looked at each other. "We're not," Alex answered. "We're...just curious, that's all."

"Curious, nothing. I think it's more like nosy."

Alex and Tyler both ran off, both feeling embarrassed by their sister's way of thinking.

She laughed. "Boys will be boys."

She took the disk and was on her way to the lounge when Emily stopped her. "Honey, could you help me finish up lunch for your father?"

"Sure, Grandma." Cherie put the disk down on the hallway table and went to the kitchen.

Alex and Tyler hid around the corner and saw the disk on the table. "Now!" whispered Alex excitedly.

Tyler ran up to the table and grabbed the disk without Cherie noticing. He got back to his older brother. "Got it!"

"All right, let's take a look!"

The boys ran to their room and put the disk into the player. Watching carefully, they both saw the performances. "Whoa, how cool!"

Suddenly, the door burst open and Cherie was there, her arms crossed and her face filled with slight anger. "You two thought you were clever." She walked to the player and ejected the video disk. "I told you that nobody will see this until Mom comes back!"

"Aww, come on," said Tyler, "can't you tell us who won?"

"Sorry, my lips are sealed. I'm gonna take the disk to my room, where it will be locked up. When Mom comes back from the rescue, I'll let her see it."

When she left the room, both boys crossed their arms. "Girls," said Tyler as he gave her a raspberry.

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 26/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:16:02 GMT  
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Saturday, March 24, 7:15 p.m. local time, Mendoza, Argentina.

Virgil frowned as he entered the airspace over the city. Parts of the city were literally ablaze and the darkness that had fallen showed that very clearly.

I hate rescues in the dark, he grouched to himself. It doubles the danger and makes it easier to lose someone, either teammate or victim. I hope we've got the heavy duty lights with us. We are going to need them.

He looked to the sky, and took a quick look at the weather forecast that came up on a computer screen to his left. Damn! I don't know whether to be happy or sad. The night will be clear and with a half moon to illuminate it. Doesn't help with the fires, but we'll stay dry, which is more than I can say for the last two rescues. Yes, we'll definitely need the lights.

Elise gazed at him as he checked the instruments, a frown on his face.

"You okay, Virgil?" she asked hesitantly.

Virgil turned his head toward her and realized that he was scowling. He cleared his face, put on a small smile, and told her, "Yes, I guess so. I'm just worried about the rescue. Rescues that we handle after dark are far more dangerous than those during the day. We could miss a victim, or lose a teammate, very easily."

"I can see it would be a worry," she said, shuddering. "I feel so lost, not knowing what to do."

"All you have to do today is observe," Virgil reminded her. "Like Kat over there. She's done her bit with Brains and now she's to observe. If you're needed, we'll call you, but we won't ask you to do anything more than you're capable of doing. Not yet, anyway. There'll be a time when you'll be stretched to the limit of your skills and endurance. But not today." He turned to look out of his windshield again. "Scott's calling. Thunderbird One, this is Thunderbird Two. Go ahead."

Elise sat back in her seat; a troubled look on her face. I hope I can add to the team effort today and not be a liability, she thought as she turned her attention to the place where they were coming in to land.

Post by Tikatu on 27/12/2004

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"Vee?" Scott's voice crackled over the radio.

"I'm here, what's the situation, Ess?" Virgil replied.

"From what I've observed, landing in the city is going to be impossible. The buildings left standing are too close together and unstable, and there's too much debris around them."

"What do you suggest, Ess? We need to get the equipment down there ASAP!"

The Field Commander paused and then replied simply "I know. Let me call Jay, Vee, and I'll get back to you. Thunderbird One out."

"F-A-B," Virgil replied, sighing.

Gordon looked at his brother as a small smile played around his mouth.

"Aw, relax will ya! Jay will find us a place to land this big green bug and we'll be on our way before you know it!"

Virgil shot a warning look at his sibling. Gordon chuckled. Virgil was about to say something when Scott's voice interrupted him.

"Vee, Jay says the safest LZ is on the outskirts of the city to the west. There's not much left of the buildings there, but they were spaced enough so that we can land safely."

"F-A-B, what are the co-ordinates?"

Elise listened intently as Scott relayed the information to Virgil and watched as Virgil then programmed the computer on the control panel. Thunderbird Two started banking to left and Virgil advised his passengers to remain seated.

"We're approaching the Landing Zone, ETA 1.5 minutes." He turned to Gordon, "Gords, you take the Mobile Crane." Gordon nodded and left to head to the pod.

"Brains, you'll need to man the DOMO, okay?"

"Yes, Virgil," replied the scientist.

"Dianne and Nikki, you all set?" Virgil asked.

"F-A-B," Dianne answered.

She and Nikki had prepared the necessary duffels with the emergency equipment they would need. Dianne turned to Nikki. "This is going to be a tough one, it's dark and hectic out there. We need to stay close and stay in touch at all times. We can't afford to lose anyone tonight."

Nikki nodded in understanding. Raging fires were bad enough, raging fires in the dark was a whole other ball game.

Elise grabbed her seat as the VTOL jets fired and Thunderbird Two descended.

Virgil looked at her. "Elise I want you to come with me in the Mole, okay?"

"Sure," she replied, not exactly knowing what she'd be doing, if anything.

As the giant craft settled she wondered for the umpteenth time since they'd taken off from the island What have I gotten myself into? She was still suffering the lingering effects of shell shock, which she'd gone into the second the passenger elevator started its downward journey into Thunderbird Two's bay. Gordon was on the elevator with her. Funny how he always seemed to be right there next to her in her 'off' moments! she'd thought.

Leaning over and looking down towards the ground, she had gasped at the sight of the top of the huge green monster below her. "Tell me that thing doesn't fly!" she'd stated.

"Yep! It flies, AND does a whole lot more. That's our equipment transporter!" Gordon proudly informed Elise.

The descent into the craft had been one shock, but seeing the cockpit had been quite another! Elise was used to cramped quarters on small aircraft and choppers, but this baby was unlike anything she'd seen in her life. Virgil had actually laughed at the look on her face!

She remembered watching in complete fascination as Virgil powered up, the cliff face opened, and the palm trees flopped down to reveal the runway. More panic! The pilot in her took over as she blurted out, "She'll never make it! There's no way there's enough runway for this thing!"

Gordon had smiled and tried not to laugh while Virgil had assured Elise there was nothing to worry about and politely added that his aircraft was not a 'thing'!

"Sorry, no offense meant, Virgil," Elise meekly apologized.

The take-off completely surprised her and it wasn't until they were leveled off did she breathe normally again. She snapped back to the present as the machine started to rise on its legs.

"Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Two, preparing to leave the pod with auxillary vehicles."

"FAB Thunderbird Two, and be careful out there. Stay in touch at all times," Scott's calm voice replied.

"Will do," Virgil said.

"F-A-B, Ess," Brains chimed in.

"F-A-B, Mobile Control," came Gordon's reply from the crane as they headed down the ramp

towards the blazing city.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 27/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:28:50 GMT

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Saturday, March 24, 2068, 7:40 p.m. local time, Mendoza, Argentina

Scott sat at Mobile Control, coordinating the movements of the others in the field. He shook his head.

"I'm beginning to wish we'd brought along some of the fire equipment. The fires seem to be the biggest trouble right now."

"Do you always sit here and twiddle your thumbs?" Christopher asked.

Scott shot him a glare. "No. I sit here and coordinate the efforts of all our team members, including those in Thunderbird Five. I also liaison with the local rescue crews so that we don't get in each other's way. It's a heavy job. Sometimes, when necessary, I have to leave Mobile Control and operate one or the other of the auxiliaries or use Thunderbird One as part of the rescue, like I did in the Urals. And sometimes, I sit and stew because the only place for Thunderbird One and Mobile Control to sit is far away from the action. You have no idea how nerve-wracking that can be."

"Oh. Okay," Christopher said. Can't say that I'm looking forward to this part of the job! Flying that Bird will be great but sitting and being a crew boss? Not for me!

Virgil's voice came over the speaker. "Mole to Mobile Control."

"Mobile Control here," Scott said as he picked up his microphone. "Go ahead, Vee."

"The Mole is useless out here, Ess. There's nothing deep enough for it to tunnel to," Virgil said in disgust. "And I'm afraid it will cut power and water lines that need to be kept live."

"Not quite, Vee. There's an underground parking garage in sector 23/R that I'm told has trapped motorists in it. The Mole is needed there."

"F-A-B," Virgil replied, relieved. "I was afraid that we'd have to put this baby to bed without getting her dirty. Oh, and just to let you know, EI is here with me, observing. Once we have the garage cleared, I'm taking her back to Two."

"F-A-B, Vee. You do that. Mobile Control out." Scott turned to Christopher. "See? Vee wouldn't have known where he was needed unless I was coordinating things."

"Uh-huh. I see," Christopher responded.

"Mobile Crane to Mobile Control," Gordon's voice now issued from the speakers.

"Mobile Control here. Go ahead."

"We've got someone in an apartment building over here that's refusing to leave. He's on an upper floor. The DOMO is holding the structure steady but can't hold it forever. I need a medic with a hypospray so we can sedate him and pull him out."

"F-A-B, Gee. I'll send Doc...." Scott began.

"Uh negative, Ess. Not Doc. Send En." Gordon's voice was firm.

"For what reason, Gee?" Scott asked, frowning.

"This guy won't leave... because he's got a portable television and he's watching the ice dance finals."

Post by Tikatu on 29/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:30:53 GMT

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"No way man, it's not like this building's coming down right now," said Elí. "Chill, Juan, I'll leave when I'm ready. It'll be fine, you'll see."

Inside Elí's run-down, now almost destroyed apartment, Juan stood boggle-eyed as his friend calmly continued to watch the ice dancing finals on his televiewer. That the screen was streaked with dust from a piece of ceiling that had collapsed, and that the room around his was in absolute disarray, and that the floor was actually slanting downwards from the earthquake, didn't seem to matter to his friend, and Juan was going positively crazy trying to get Elí to recognise the gravity of the situation.

"Man, everyone else is gone. The building is collapsing all around us! This is serious, and very, very dangerous, Elí. You're going to get yourself and me killed because of your stupid ice-skating."

Elí made no move, and merely commented, "It's ice dancing. It's not exactly the same thing," and didn't remove his eyes from the dirty screen before him. Juan almost screamed in frustration, and in a fit of rage, kicked over the portable televiewer and swung around to Elí.

"In the name of Mother Mary, would you get a grip!" He grabbed his friend's shoulders and shook him violently, trying to knock some sense into him. "We need to get out of here! We could die."

"Get the hell off me, Juan," Elí said, shrugging out of the other man's grip and turning to right the

televIEWer. "Re-lax. You're just overreacting, as usual."

He sat back down to watch once more, and Juan stood, shocked, in disbelief. A wave of anger came across him, and he started to walk towards the door of Elí's apartment.

"Fine. Kill yourself for all I care. I won't have your death on my conscience; at least I tried."

He received a slight 'hmm', and that tore it. He strode out of the apartment in disgust, going to await rescue.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 29/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:31:54 GMT  
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After receiving instructions from Scott about the obstinate person who wouldn't leave their apartment, Nikki made her way over to the mobile crane and met up with Gordon. It didn't take them long to ascend onto the upper floor of the building.

"So where is he?"

Gordon signaled with his head to an apartment and led the way. "Follow me. He's in here."

Nikki followed Gordon's quick pace into the person's home. She couldn't believe someone was refusing to leave their television. She walked towards the man, who was still glued to his TV.

"Sir, please, we have to evacuate this building now."

Eli didn't answer. His eyes were still transfixed to the screen. Nikki looked towards Gordon who was also looking at the man in disbelief.

Gordon moved forward towards Eli. "Sir, we have to go. This building could collapse at any moment."

"Then you go," Eli answered.

Nikki took out her hypospray and was just about to put it to Eli's neck when he suddenly shouted no, lifted his arm and knocked it out of her hand. It fell to the ground and rolled away across the now uneven floor. Nikki swore in her mind. She didn't have another hypospray with her and it was too dangerous to go retrieve the one that got away.

Nikki sighed. There was only so much she could take from Eli. "This is ridiculous. Unless you want to die here, sir, we have to go. NOW!" She shouted the last word, figuring that the others didn't register in his brain.

Gordon huffed. He had enough of this guy. He gripped Eli's arm, ready to pull him out of his

seat, only to feel himself fall to the ground as Eli retaliated.

"Hey!" Nikki grabbed Eli's shirt and pulled him up with a strength she didn't know she had. When he tried to fight back and get away and back to his seat, Nikki formed a fist, swung her arm back and punched him across the face.

Eli fell back as Gordon looked on in astonishment. "En. You just..."

"Well he started it. I was just ending it. Come on, let's get him and ourselves out of here." Nikki shook her hand from the throbbing in her knuckles. "Remind me to never do that again unless it's absolutely necessary."

Post by Nikki-browneyes1 on 29/12/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:34:17 GMT  
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Saturday, March 24, 8 p.m., local time, Mendoza, Argentina

Dianne looked up from where she was working to see Nikki coming toward her, cradling one hand in the other. Gordon came with her, grabbed an antigravity stretcher and hurried back to the mobile crane with it.

"What did you do to yourself, En?" Dianne asked, pulling Nikki's hand out and examining the bruised knuckles.

"I... uh... had a little trouble with someone who would not evacuate," Nikki stammered. "He got... uh... stubborn and a bit violent. I had to deck him."

Dianne's eyes widened behind her visor. "Deck him?"

"Yeah, Doc! You should have seen it! She's got a terrific right cross!" Gordon teased as he brought Eli over to the aid station. Dianne took a look at the man's face and saw the bruising on his left jaw from Nikki's punch. She shook her head.

"Remind me never to make you angry at me," she quipped as she directed Gordon where to take the unconscious patient. "Let's get some ice on those knuckles."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Mole to Mobile Control," Virgil said into his communicator.

"Go ahead, Mole," Scott replied.

"We've got about half the people out of the garage, taking the worst medical cases first," he

explained. He glanced back at Elise, who was using the first aid skills she'd learned in the Air Force to help the patients. "We're coming out with them and would appreciate some medical assistance."

"F-A-B, Vee. I'll have Doc meet you at your exit coordinates."

"F-A-B, Ess. Oh, I'll be sending EI back to Two. I think she's had enough observation for one day."

"Right, Vee. I'm afraid there's no one to keep her company though."

"F-A-B," Virgil replied, "I'll have to go back down for the others. But most of them are mobile and have only light injuries."

"Noted, Vee, and thanks."

\*\*\*\*\*

"This is NTBS reporter, Ned Cook, on the scene in Mendoza, Argentina, where a magnitude 6.8 earthquake has left a good part of the city in flaming ruins." Ned stood on a hill near the hardest hit area so that the viewers could see the flames and fallen buildings behind him. Joe was filming, being very, very careful not to take pictures of any of the Thunderbird craft that were moving around down there. "International Rescue is on the scene, pulling people from the collapsed buildings. Of course, we can't show you these brave men and women at work, as per their request but I assure you they are here."

He turned to look down on the shattered neighborhood again. "One thing I have noticed is that the International Rescue operatives seem to be wearing a different uniform than before. In the wake of the imposter scare of two years ago, I feel I dare not give you a complete description, but I can say that the uniform seems to consist of a jacket or vest over a shirt, military style pants, and boots. They have exchanged their distinctive fore-and-aft caps for baseball style ones and are now wearing visors that obscure the upper part of the face. They are also wearing gloves. All in all, it seems a more functional style than their old one. Of course, the uniform carries the distinctive International Rescue logo."

He turned back to the camera. "Let's hope that their efforts, working alongside the hard working men and women of the Mendoza emergency service, will bring relief to this shattered town. Back to you, Sam, in New York."

Joe stopped filming, the red light on his camera going out. He joined Ned as they gazed down on the scene.

"That's the uniform the operative in New York was wearing, isn't it?" Joe asked.

Ned nodded. "Looks like they're trying to develop better security, obscure their operatives' identities more."

"Just hope that they can avoid that imposter problem of a couple of years back," Joe murmured.

"I think they can, Joe. It's a step in the right direction," Ned said. "Got any coffee in that van? We're going to need it for our next broadcast."

Post by Tikatu on 04/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:46:15 GMT  
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Saturday, March 24, 8:20 p.m., local time, Mendoza

Worn out and sweaty, Elise sat down with a heavy sigh. Man! I never realized how hard it was drilling underground!

She stretched, rolling her head and reaching up to rub her neck where it was cricked. I thought you were just going to observe, but Virgil got a little carried away and had me doing first aid and carrying stretchers from the garage to the Mole. I can't figure out how I didn't screw up!

She rolled her eyes and shook her head a little. Deep down she'd been a little too scared for her liking and was more than happy when Virgil told her to go back to TB2 and wait.

She let the coolness and quiet of the cabin roll over her for a little while. Here, the sounds of sirens and hungry flame and falling masonry were muted. Only the murmur of communication between the operatives and the occasional clicking over of relays could be heard.

Can I do this? Can I live this life? She took in a deep breath and let it out through her nose. I keep going back to that rescue in Russia. It resonated with me so much. Particularly the orphans. I know how desperately they needed someone to love them and tell them it was going to be all right.

Elise got up, her arms wrapped around her as if cold. She gazed out of TB 2's windows at the rescue operation, watching as the equipment was put to work. I only hope the people here have someone to tell them it's going to be okay, too.

Lifting her gaze, she let her eyes sweep over the panorama, over the still raging inferno that was once Mendoza. "God, I hope we can save as many as possible," she muttered softly.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 06/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:49:07 GMT  
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24th March Mendoza, Argentina

Christopher sat and watched as Scott coordinated the rescue. His mind was reeling from all the information he was taking in, and frankly he didn't think that he could cope with it all yet.

Above all he wanted to be out there, in the field. Doing something useful, instead of just sitting there on his backside.

"Ess", Christopher started to speak, but Scott held up his hand to silence him as another call came in from the team.

Christopher watched and listened as Scott relayed instructions. Taking a deep breath, he released it slowly.

Looks like I'll have to watch and learn, Christopher thought as he turned back to the bank of screens on the Mobile Control Unit.

Post by The\_Wrong\_Trousers1 on 07/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:51:35 GMT

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Christopher twiddled his fingers as he watched Scott at Mobile Control.

"Ess?" Christopher asked nervously. "Could I ask you some questions?"

"In a moment CJ." Scott didn't look in Christopher's direction as he moved a trackball with his right hand. Christopher saw crosshairs move across the monitor. Looking at the edge of the monitor he saw a number of coloured boxes, which corresponded with the designated colours for the IR members currently on the scene.

Christopher waited for a moment before Scott turned and looked at him.

"What would you like to ask me?" Scott asked.

Christopher thought for a moment.

"What range does Mobile Control have?" he asked as his eyes followed the crosshairs.

"Depends really," Scott said. "For secure transmissions, we use a randomly modulated laser array for transmissions to Thunderbird 5."

Christopher nodded, he had a basic understanding of communication systems, but this was going to take a bit of getting used to.

"For personal transmissions from our commlinks," Scott continued, "we can piggyback the signals to and from Thunderbird 1 and Thunderbird 2."

Christopher fell silent for a moment. "I keep hearing about camera detectors," he said after a while.

"Another security measure." Scott smiled. "Some of our craft and vehicles have a camera detector which can sense electronic impulses from cameras and other devices capable of capturing images."

Christopher nodded. "What happens if the detectors detect?"

"Then we can transmit a specialised field that disrupts the device and erases the image."

"Sounds simple," Christopher said as he watched Scott. He needed to keep a closer eye on this.

Post by The\_Wrong\_Trousers1 on 11/10/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:16:57 GMT

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Since leaving Mendoza, the tired and weary occupants of Thunderbird Two hadn't said much. Scott and Virgil had kept radio contact to a minimum, saving their energy for the de-briefing once they reached base. Elise, Gordon, and Brains had exchanged a few words, but were quiet for the most part. Dianne and Nikki were in the crew quarters cleaning themselves and the medical equipment they'd used.

Gordon sighed and looked around at his tired brother and new team members. He noticed Brains had his nose in his notes, softly mumbling to himself and Elise was watching Virgil. As Gordon looked closer he saw that Elise was actually watching Virgil's hands as he flew the transporter.

"He's not THAT fascinating to watch!" He grinned at the look she gave him.

"FYI... I was watching him use the flight controls!"

"Yeah, right," Gordon teased.

Virgil, who had been listening, turned to his brother. "You're just jealous, 'cause you're not as interesting!"

He smiled and winked at Elise humorously as Gordon groaned, "Oh Please!"

"Do you want to come up and take a closer look?"

Virgil was serious again, as Elise took him up on his offer and moved forward. He began showing her the flight controls and answering any questions she had. She had to admit to herself that this was one special aircraft and the instrumentation panel intrigued her.

Gordon, not being one able to keep himself occupied for long, casually brought up the subject of pilot training. "So, Elise? You think you are going be ready to fly 'Virgil's' Baby' in the next week or two?"

Her head shot round from where she was sitting. "What! ...wait a second, what are talking about?"

"You're a pilot right? And Dad did mention you were coming on this rescue to observe, and, well... train to fly when ol' Virge here can't!"

Elise recalled the conversation in the lounge right before they were all given orders. She sort of remembered Mr. Tracy saying something about her expertise and flying but honestly hadn't given it much thought; she had been in shock about actually coming along on the rescue.

"Hey! Watch who you're calling old!" Virgil retorted.

Elise turned to Virgil "Is he right? Am I going to train to fly this...THING?"

Virgil breathed out slowly as he looked at her. Thing? She actually has the nerve to call my baby 'THING' to my face?! He now knew why Scott became easily frustrated with her! He chose his words carefully before replying.

"Well, that's the idea. Scott and Dad know you are an excellent pilot and have the capabilities to handle TB2 given the right training."

Elise could only stare at him with a look akin to horror on her face.

"But I'm a trained chopper pilot! I fly SMALL AIRCRAFT!" She put great emphasis on the word 'small'. "This is a transporter! It'll take months for me to learn how to handle something this big!"

"No it won't, Scott's told me you're a quick learner, and besides, I'll be training you!" Virgil smiled reassuringly.

"Oh you will, will you?" Elise replied with a little sarcasm.

She looked back and forth between Virgil and Gordon, noting the now serious looks they had. Neither one said a word, just kept their eyes on Elise, until it sunk in... which it did, shortly thereafter!

She shook her head slightly and managed to say "You guys are NUTS! Totally nuts." To which they both started laughing.

Making her way back to her seat she mumbled, "I need a stiff drink!" as she sat down, rubbing her temple.

"Sorry, no alcohol allowed on board!" Gordon informed her.

Elise shot him a look before she spoke. "How is it that every time impending doom seems to head

my way, you are always right there, Gordon Tracy?"

"I can't help it, it's my natural Tracy charm!" came the rapid reply.

It was now Virgil's turn to snort in disgust.

"Virgil? What's the ETA for base?" Dianne asked via her comm-link.

"28 minutes from now," he replied, using his own comm-link.

"Okay, thanks. We're just about done here and will be coming up to the flight deck for final approach. How's everything been going? Is everyone doing okay?"

Virgil smiled softly. Dianne was always putting others ahead of herself and worrying about them before giving herself a second thought.

"Oh, it's been... er... well... interesting you might say!"

"Oh?"

He laughed as he told her he would explain later, in person.

"You'd better tell me or else, Virgil Tracy!" she mockingly chided him.

Oh, I'll be glad to, Virgil thought as he banked TB2 onto her final approach flight path.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 11/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:18:52 GMT  
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The 'popping' sound of the ball echoed around the games room. "Yesss!" came Alan's voice as he pocketed another one. He and Brandon had been playing pool to pass the time while the team was on the rescue.

The intercom buzzed. "Yes Father?"

"Alan, Brandon, just wanted to let you both know the team are on their way home."

"Thanks Dad. Brandon and I will be up shortly."

"Okay, Alan."

The intercom clicked off and the room became silent again. Brandon walked around the pool table, carefully weighing his options and then leaned across to take his shot. Alan stood on the

otherside, chin resting on top of his cue stick.

"Brandon? Looks like I'm gonna to whip your butt!"

Brandon looked up at him as he prepared to take another shot. "Says who?"

Alan laughed and they continued the game.

"Is it always like this? The waiting I mean," Brandon suddenly asked.

"Depends. If it's a bad rescue, the waiting can be torture. If it's a routine run, then it's not so bad," Alan replied.

Brandon looked at Alan, raising an eyebrow. "A routine run?"

"You know, a straight run through rescue, no lives lost, everyone safe."

Brandon nodded his understanding. "So how often do you get left behind?"

"Not too often, except when I'm on rotation in TB5. Gordon and I take turns, but if it's a water rescue then he definately goes, and sometimes we double crew on Two with Virgil."

"I suppose we'll all have to take turns at being 'home alone' then!" Brandon said with a chuckle and a smile.

They finished the game and were putting the cues and balls away when Brandon caught Alan off guard with a personal question.

"I guess this rescue business doesn't leave much time for a personal life. Kinda cramps things a bit doesn't it?"

"Well, I er... I guess it does." Alan looked sheepishly at Brandon.

"Didn't you and Tin-Tin have a relationship at one time?" Brandon didn't beat about the bush, asking Alan outright.

Alan's hackles went up and he became a little defensive. "What's that got to do with anything? I've known Tin-Tin since we were kids, and besides, it just wouldn't have worked."

Alan wasn't sure how Brandon knew about him and Tin-Tin, but he didn't like it. Their relationship had cooled, but Alan was still quite protective of Tin-Tin.

"I guess personal relationships are best kept off the island then? I'll have to remember that!"

Alan merely looked at him. "We'd better get up to the lounge, they'll be home soon and you'll want to sit in on the debriefing."

"Lead the way," replied Brandon, indicating with his hand for Alan to lead and making a mental note to mention 'island relationships' to Christopher.

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:22:47 GMT

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Sunday, March 25, 6:45 p.m., Tracy Island

The rescue crew had arrived back and were preparing to depart. Dianne and Nikki gathered up all their medical instruments and carried them off to the autoclave in the sick room. The rest of the crew were looking forward to showers and a good hot meal, but before they could head upstairs, Virgil reminded them that the job wasn't quite done yet.

"Come on, everyone," Virgil called as the pod door opened. "Let's get the pod vehicles out of here while we're still filthy. Then we can go upstairs, get cleaned, and debrief over dinner!"

His suggestion was met with groans, but everyone realized that he was right, and began making their way over to the pod vehicles. Virgil himself took the Mole and revved it up, easing it out of the pod and steering it to its berth among the other equipment.

Kat chose to put in an appearance just then. "Anything I can do to help?"

"Kat?" Brains called. "Can you start up the DOMO? I'll be there in just a moment."

"Sure, Bo... I mean, Brains," Kat said eagerly. She was happy to have something constructive to do in the aftermath of the rescue.

Hurrying over to the DOMO, she opened the driver's side door... and let out a blood-curdling scream, slamming the door shut with a bang!

"Kat?!" Gordon cried, coming at a run. "What's the matter?"

Brains hurried over too, adjusting his glasses as he came.

"Ugly, ugly, ugly!" Kat kept repeating, shaking her head. Gordon gave her a little shake, and she looked up at him. "There... there's something in there! Something black and ugly and... it tried to attack!"

Gordon frowned. He moved Kat away from the DOMO, handing her off to Brains, then slowly opened the door.

"Yikes!" he shouted, slamming the door shut just as Kat had.

"What is it?" Brains asked. He pushed his way around Kat.

"I don't know, Brains, but whatever it is, it's really ugly!" Gordon said, shaking his head. He

jumped down from the machine.

"Let me take a look," Brains said. He climbed up to the ledge above the caterpillar tractors, and peered in through the windshield. "I don't see... aagh!"

"What did you see?" Kat asked, recovering from her original fright.

"I don't really know," Brains said. "I got the impression of lots of legs...." He shook his head. "Whatever it is, I don't think I want to get any closer."

"So, what do we do?" Kat asked. "If you big strong men won't even open the door, we'll never get the thing out."

Brains and Gordon exchanged glances. "There's only one person on this island equipped to handle such a situation," Brains said.

"Who is that?" Kat asked.

"Alex," Gordon answered. "I'd better get him down here."

Fifteen minutes later, Alex Tracy arrived, butterfly net and bug collection box in hand. He had his science PDA sticking out of one pocket, and his jeans tucked into a pair of hiking boots. On his head, he wore a beekeeper's hat and veil, and on his hands he wore a pair of rubber gauntlets.

"So, where is it?" he asked, as he climbed up into the pod. By this time, there was a little crowd clustered around the DOMO. Virgil had taken the Mobile Crane out and parked it in its spot, then he had returned. He had looked inside the DOMO's cab but hadn't seen anything. Elise looked at the little group and snickered, but when she was offered the opportunity to look for herself, declined.

"No way are you going to get me to look in there," she said, shaking her head. "I don't need giant spiders or snakes in my dreams, thank you very much."

"It's in the DOMO's cab," Gordon said, hooking his thumb over his shoulder. He gave his little brother a boost up to the side of the DOMO. Alex peered through the windshield, using one hand as a blinder.

"I don't see... wait! There is something. I'd better go in on the other side." He climbed over the front of the machine, using the DOMO's arms as supports.

The little group's attention was captured by the arrival of Scott and Christopher. Scott make his way over to Virgil.

"What's the problem?" he asked.

"There's a critter in the DOMO," Virgil replied.

"Ah, that explains Alex. What is it?"

"Don't know yet," Virgil replied. "He hasn't caught it yet. But he says there's something in there."

"I don't know what the world's coming to," Scott said, loud enough so brothers could hear.

"Sending a boy in to do a man's job...." The sally hit its mark; Gordon in particular went red to the tips of his ears.

"You go in and get it then," Gordon grouched.

By this time, Alex had climbed into the cab, and was carefully searching for the critter. "Does anybody have a flashlight?" he asked.

"There should be one in the box under the seat," Brains said. He made his way over to the other side of the DOMO and was peering into the cab.

"Got it." The boy waved the flashlight around, then was heard to exclaim, "Oh, cool!"

"What is it, Bud?" Scott asked.

Oblivious to his brother's question, Alex pulled out his PDA. "Hmm. Yes... no... not that... this is closer..."

Brains shook his head and smiled as he listened to his star student do his research.

"Okay. That's it. Scott?" Alex called.

"What, Bud?"

"I'm going to need a bigger box if I'm going to keep this."

"Uh, Bud? I think you'd be better off getting rid of it," Scott said, backing away. "Mom and Dad probably wouldn't appreciate a new pet."

Alex consulted his PDA again. "You're probably right. It is venomous, though it probably couldn't kill a human...."

"Venomous?!" Kat squeaked, her eyes big.

"Yeah. Here, let me show you," Alex said. He swiped his net once. "Drat! It got away. Wait. I've got it cornered." The net swiped down again. "Got 'im!"

Everyone backed away as Alex climbed out of the DOMO, his fingers pinching something under the net. Something that looked long, black, and leggy. He pulled back the net over his arm, keeping a good grip on the creature.

"Ewww! How disgusting!" Kat cried. "What is it?"

"A giant centipede... Scolopendra gigantea," Alex said proudly. The creature was about a foot

long, with a body made up of many black, armored segments, each segment having a pair of jointed legs. Two long, curved antennae protruded from what seemed to be its head, and three long protruding finger-like appendages decorated the "tail" of the thing. "Native to northern and western South America, Jamaica, and Trinidad."

"Ugh!" Gordon said. "That's one ugly bug."

"How are you going to kill it, Bud?" Scott asked, backing away as Alex sat on the edge of the DOMO.

"Probably have to use some kind of gas," Alex said, his voice sad. "Can someone help me down? I don't want to jump and possibly drop 'im...."

"Here, Bud," Virgil came up with a hinged box from which he had removed a portable laser cutter. "Put... him... in this." Virgil put the box near where the boy sat and backed off.

"Bunch of chickens," Alex muttered as he carefully placed his find inside the box, and slammed the lid shut. The combined sigh of relief was audible once the latch was fastened.

Scott reached up and helped Alex jump down. Brains took down the box and handed it to the intrepid bug hunter. "Take this to the lab now. Then wash up and join the rest of us at dinner," he instructed his pupil.

"Okay." Alex took the box, slung his butterfly net over his shoulder, pulled back the beekeeper's veil, and strolled off, whistling.

"That's one smart, brave little bloke," Christopher said. He looked around. "Makes the rest of you look like...."

"Don't say it," Gordon put a hand up. "Let's get this machine back where it belongs. Brains, would you do the honors?"

"I just hope that the centipede didn't bring along a friend," Brains muttered as he climbed up into the DOMO.

Post by Tikatu on 11/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:52:05 GMT  
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Sunday, March 25, 2068, 10:15 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff hobbled into the master bedroom. He had spent some time after dinner and debriefing going over some of the training assignments with Scott, Virgil, and Gordon, making up a schedule for the new recruits. Dianne had gone off to their room, disk in hand, telling him that she was finally going to see who won in the ice dancing finals.

He could hear the televid going, see the light flickering across the darkened sitting room. What he couldn't see was his wife, sitting on the sofa, yelling or clapping or doing any of the other demonstrative things she did when the final results were announced. He got far enough into the room to see that the winners were standing on the platform, waving to the audience. For the life of him, he couldn't tell which couple came from which country, and truthfully, he could care less. He was more concerned with the fact that his wife wasn't jumping up and down in excitement or cursing the TV and shouting, to no one in particular, how unfair things were.

Instead, he found Dianne sitting slumped on the sofa, one arm draped over the edge, the remote held loosely in that hand, fast asleep. He chuckled; even the excitement of figure skating couldn't win over the exhaustion brought on by the rescue.

Sitting on the large square ottoman, he reached out and gently removed the remote from her fingers, turning off the televid. The resultant darkness took him by surprise, and he waited for his eyes to adjust to the lack of light. Then he moved over to the sofa, sitting down next to his wife. Leaning in, he kissed her on her cheek, smelling the lavender vanilla scent she had used in the bath.

"C'mon, sleepy head," he murmured in her ear. "You'll get a crick in your neck sleeping out here."

Dianne stirred, blinking bleary eyes at him. "What...?"

"It's late and you're tired, love. Time for bed," Jeff said, rising from the sofa with the aid of his crutches. He offered her a hand, but she waved it away as she staggered to her feet, rubbing her eyes. She followed him automatically into the bedroom, kicking off her slippers and lying down on the bed, fully dressed. He shook his head as he pulled the covers up over her then hobbled around to his side of the bed to join her in slumberland.

Post by Tikatu on 12/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:53:42 GMT  
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Monday, March 26, 2068, noon, Tracy Island.

"FAB Four requesting permission to land," came the cockney tones of Parker.

Jeff grinned and turned to the radio behind him. "Permission granted, Fab Four. And welcome." Then he lifted his arm and activated his telecomm. "Dianne, Lady Penelope is here."

"Penelope? Wonderful! Thank you for telling me!" Dianne said. "I'll meet you at the hover cart! Dianne out."

Jeff smiled, then retrieved his crutches and headed out to the balcony. He looked down at the pool, where Gordon and Brandon were teaching Dominic the finer points of scuba diving. He knew

that later there would be many more people there, splashing and relaxing, but right now, the pool was a classroom.

He hopped down the stairs, holding onto the rail with one hand and his crutches with another. Settling himself in the passenger seat, he waited for his wife. In less than a minute, she was pelting down the steps, and had flung herself into the driver's seat.

"I've got the kids finishing up their work before lunch. Kyrano's going to meet Parker in the hangar with the luggage float and I've told your mother to expect two more for lunch," she said breathlessly as she sped down the path to the airstrip. Jeff held onto his seat for dear life; his wife could fly Thunderbird Seven safely and with care, but the smaller hovercraft was a different story.

They made it to the bottom of the cliff in record time, just as Parker was unfastening the hatch to the dark pink jet and swinging open the steps to reveal Lady Penelope. Dianne came around to help Jeff with his crutches, then she hurried over to embrace the aristocrat, giving her a kiss on both cheeks.

"Penny! It's so good to see you!" she gushed.

"And to see you, too, Dianne," Penelope replied with a smile. Then their attention shifted as Jeff approached.

"Oh, my! Jeff, you look so very much better than you did last time I saw you," Penelope said as she embraced Jeff. "Just the cast on the foot now? How wonderful!"

Jeff gave Penelope a kiss on the cheek. "Yes, I'm finally healing. Another week or so and I should even have this off. Then some physical therapy and I should be good as new."

"Oh, I cannot tell you how relieved I am, Jeff!" Penelope said as Jeff and Dianne led her over to the hovercraft. The three boarded the small craft, and Dianne began to pilot them back up to the villa.

"I'm afraid you'll have to stay in the Round House for a few days," Dianne said apologetically. "One of our new recruits is in the guest room at the villa, waiting for her things to arrive from the mainland before moving into one of the apartments."

"I'm sure I shall be comfortable," Penelope said. "You will have to show me those new apartments. I am so intrigued by the thought that the Cliff House has been completely renovated."

"I'd be glad to show you around, Penny," Dianne said. "You'll have to meet some of our new folks. They're settling in really well."

"And Kat? How is my Kat doing?" Penelope asked.

"Brains is very pleased with her work," Jeff answered from where he sat in the back. "She's been making friends and was a big help in one of our more intensive rescues recently."

"Yes, I remember hearing about that," Penelope said. "I shall have to spend some time catching up on her news."

By this time, they were at the villa, and Emily was at the bottom of the steps, waiting.

"Lady Penelope! It's so nice to see you again!" she said, and she guided the aristocrat up the steps and into the coolness of the main house.

Post by Tikatu on 12/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:24:41 GMT  
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Monday, March 26, 1:30 p.m. Tracy Island

Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward walked through the lounge, then wandered onto the balcony and looked down at the pool. The young people there seemed to be having fun; there was a great deal of splashing and laughter. Kat was among the swimmers. Penelope watched for a moment, and then decided to join them at the poolside. As she approached the pool, several people greeted her and Kat looked up and noticed her.

"Lady Penelope!" she called. "How nice to see you!" The young girl climbed out of the pool and, wrapping a towel around her, approached Lady Penelope.

Lady Penelope took a good look at her former employee. Kat now had a slight tan, and her hair was lighter in colour, probably from the effects of the tropical sun.

"It is so nice to see you again, Kat," Penelope said with a smile, "You are looking very well."

Kat grinned. "Thanks. It must be the work and change of air down here."

"Let's go for a walk on the beach," Penelope suggested. "I want to hear all that's happened."

The two young women headed for the beach.

"I hear you had a tough rescue?" Penelope ventured.

Kat swallowed hard. Even though she had talked to Dr. Tracy, she still couldn't erase the memories of that rescue in the Ural Mountains, and the children from her mind. She still had occasional nightmares about it, but instead of the children being rescued, none of them could be saved. She would wake in the night, drenched in perspiration.

"Oh, Lady Penelope, that rescue really did make me question my being a full member of International Rescue. Thank goodness that I talked to Dr. Tracy. She reminded me that I wasn't the only one affected, and to be honest, we have all agreed that it was a traumatic event and everyone felt affected one way or the other. Actually," Kat added, "I am rather glad I did not

go on the latest rescue in the Argentine. Brains is bringing me au courant with the auxiliary vehicles, so that in future, I can lift that burden from him entirely."

Lady Penelope looked concerned. "I am sorry that you had such a bad experience. But Dianne is a good listener."

"She is so kind," Kat said. She giggled. "I am so looking forward to John's return from Thunderbird Five. When he comes back he is going to show me the stars through his telescope."

Is he? Lady Penelope thought and her thoughts wandered back to when John had taken Kat to the Island, and, at Kat's request, had brought her home again. Yes, I can see just how easy to beome attracted to John. I am not sure, however, how suited Kat would be for him. "Anyhow let's change the subject. How are you enjoying being here?"

"I am enjoying it enormously," Kat replied with enthusiasm. "I have made a good friend in Elise. She is going to be second pilot on Thunderbird 2. Nikki and I went out with everyone on Alan's birthday treat to Christchurch. That was some evening! Christopher and Brandon sang and," here she blushed, "I fear Scott and I got slightly worse for wear. Nikki met a very nice young man called Jake, who danced with her and nearly caused a fight with Alan. I danced two dances with Virgil and one with Brandon, who seriously needs lessons."

Lady Penelope smiled. "Seems like you are fitting in very well."

Kat looked at her ex-employer. "I am. Although, I do still miss you, you know. I miss the tea breaks we had, and the shopping we did together." She paused and sighed, then brightened. "How's Lil and Lofty?"

Lady Penelope smiled. "Lil is very well. Lofty is turning out to be an absolute treasure. I can't find any fault with his work, and he is as loyal as Parker."

They walked along on the edge of the sea, and the wavelets rippled round Kat's ankles. Lady Penelope remained on the dryer sand, not wanting to spoil her sandals. Kat picked up some smooth flattish pebbles, and started skimming them over the water. Lady Penelope smiled at Kat's game.

Without turning round Kat remarked, "I rang my mother recently, to wish her a Happy Birthday." She suddenly went quiet, a sign that Lady Penelope picked up on.

"And?" Lady P

"Oh, it just brought things back to me. My brother has had a promotion and has moved to Washington state. My other brother and his fiancée are working on an old building, prior to their wedding and living there. Dad is helping them with the renovations."

"A touch of homesickness?" Lady Penelope asked, looking at Kat.

Kat nodded. "I feel I am so ungrateful. I have a wonderful job here, and yet..."

Lady Penelope faced Kat. "My dear, what you are experiencing is perfectly natural. You have left your safe environment to work thousands of miles away, with a family you hardly know. Of course you would suffer bouts of homesickness."

Kat looked at Lady Penelope, and with a slight smile, said, "I think that the hardest part is lying to my parents. My mother was very nice when I phoned her, but I had to say that I was in Kansas. I am afraid that she will contact my brother to check on things."

"Your mother still keeps in touch with me, which I will encourage, that way I can minimise her concerns. In fact, I told her that the vehicles needed so much work doing on them, that you were kept really busy."

"Oh! Lady Penelope, don't let Mr Tracy hear you."

"My dear," Lady Penelope replied, "that is strictly between you, me, and your parents."

The two young women walked further along the beach. Kat swinging her arms and gazing up at the cloudless, blue sky.

"It is so peaceful here," Lady Penelope remarked.

"Yes, no one would ever guess what this island hid, would they?" Kat replied. The two turned and began retracing their steps.

"So," Lady Penelope said, "What do you think of International Rescue as an organization?"

"Mm." Kat paused to gather her thoughts. "It is, of course, so well run and organized, but..."

"Yes?"

"I used to think that being a member of International Rescue was all about being able to save everyone." She blushed and shook her head. "Oh my, how naïve I must have sounded."

"Nonsense," Lady Penelope said. "I used to think that being an agent would be a glamorous vocation. I soon learnt the truth: that it could be far from glamorous and sometimes downright dangerous. Especially when things didn't turn out as you would expect them to."

Kat bent down and, picking up a small piece of driftwood, hurled it into the sea.

"There is just one small problem...." Kat trailed off. "I shall be required to learn to fly."

"Oh?" Lady Penelope raised her eyebrows.

"You know what a complete mess I made of learning to fly. I am so afraid that I will fail miserably and they won't want me. I mentioned the fact to John, who said that they use a simulator here on Tracy Island, but even so, I am so nervous. What shall I do?"

Lady Penelope glanced at Kat and seeing that she was upset, remarked, "Kat, my dear, I am sure

that Scott will take things slowly, and a simulator is much better than starting lessons in an aeroplane. Have you told him of your fears?"

Kat looked startled. "Oh, Lady Penelope, I haven't said a word. I didn't like to in case they told me they didn't need me."

"Kat," Lady Penelope smiled at the young woman. "I know that your experience as a mechanic will ensure that you are a valued employee, even if you never learn to fly."

"Oh, Lady Penelope, do you really think so?"

"I know so. In fact, I mentioned that you had a problem learning to fly to Mr Tracy, when he asked for references."

"You did? How did he take it? Surely he wouldn't want anyone who can't fly; to be able to fly is an absolute must on an island."

"He was perfectly reasonable about it; after all, you are a very experienced mechanic. I am sure you will find your niche here and to be honest, I think there are probably enough pilots here already. Now let's head back to the villa, so I can meet all your new friends." And the two young women began retracing their steps, back to the villa.

"Have you two caught up with each other?" Dianne asked as she came down to meet them.

"Yes, Dianne," Lady Penelope answered. "Kat and I have really caught up with all the news."

Post by Tawnyangel22 (with copious recent edits by Tikatu) on 12/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:10:25 GMT  
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Tuesday, March 27, 2068, 1:00 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff looked around at the table full of people. Everyone was mingling and chatting and eating, though the latter activity was winding down. He decided that it was time to start the meeting he had called, and tapped his glass for attention. The crowd quieted and turned their faces toward him.

"John, Callie? Are you with us?"

John's voice came from the small speaker on the table at Jeff's right. "FAB, Dad. We are reading you strength five. Both Callie and I are here."

"Ahem. Thank you, everyone, for coming and eating lunch together at the house today. As you know, I wanted to have a meeting after lunch, or at lunch, as the case may be, so that the training, maintenance, and fun of the afternoon could go on without a hitch." Jeff paused to take a breath.

"First of all, I want to tell you new recruits how pleased I am with your performance so far. I can see that you are all eager to do your part in our organization and are tackling the training head on. Good work!"

The older members began to applaud as Jeff did, joined in by the newbies as they applauded each other. Jeff stopped clapping, and the applause faded out.

"There are three small, but vital, issues that I want to address today. The first concerns our uniforms. Am I correct when I say that all of you, with the exception of Elise, John, and Callie, have received your new outfits?"

The operatives at the table looked around at each other and nodded. Callie answered in the affirmative over the speaker for herself and John. Jeff took stock of the situation and after a moment, said, "Good. If there are any issues with the fit of the uniforms or rips or tears, please tell Tin-Tin or my mother. The visors you have been issued still need to be fitted for the Heads Up Displays. Brains is in charge of that and will let you know when he is ready to install the technology." Jeff smiled. "Of course, these are only interim uniforms until the new Penelon/Kevlar synthetic that Tin-Tin has developed is ready for cutting and sewing. Then your uniforms will be much more durable and virtually bulletproof. Please remember to wear your caps and gloves when on a rescue. They are both for your safety and our security."

Jeff took a sip of water. "Speaking of security and safety, Dianne has a word to say about the new locator implants. Dianne?"

Dianne pushed back her chair and stood up. "I expect our new locator chips to arrive any day now. They are very small, and should not present any discomfort, no matter where they are implanted. Once they are, there will be some calibration to be done, and the calibration will be uploaded to Thunderbird Five for tracking from space, and to Mobile Control for tracking on the ground. Alan will have his implanted before he relieves John and Callie, then the rest of you will have them implanted when the space crew returns."

She turned to her children. "Everyone in the household will have a locator chip, including the children, Kyrano, and both Emily and my mother, Lisa." She turned now to Lady Penelope. "Jeff would also like for you and Parker to wear locators, as well as some of our other, more active agents. We'll make arrangements for implantation a bit later." She looked out over the room again. "You may choose where to place the chip on your body. It's unobtrusive and hypoallergenic, so put it where you feel most comfortable. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask."

Christopher raised his hand. "Why do we need these? Aren't the wrist communicators enough?"

Dianne looked at Jeff, who said, "The wrist communicators are easily removed and left behind, or removed and smashed. This is something that isn't easily detectable from the outside, nor is it easy to remove. It's a nearly foolproof way for us to keep track, not only of our operatives on the field, but our household members in case of emergency. It's a good replacement for the edible transmitters that we've used in the past."

Dianne rolled her eyes. "Believe me, anything is an improvement to those things. They give me such indigestion!"

A smattering of laughter met her comment, and she looked around. "Any more questions?"

Callie's voice came over the speaker. "What if these things cause an allergic reaction? I've got very sensitive skin...."

"The chips are hypoallergenic and are implanted subcutaneously. In the trials of the device, there were no reports of allergic reactions," Nikki said. "Believe me, Callie, I went through the literature and study reports very thoroughly."

"Oh okay, Nikki," Callie said, still sounding doubtful.

"If it will make anyone feel better, I'll be the first victim," Dianne said with a grin. There was some chuckling at that. "Any other questions?" she asked. When no one replied, she sat back down.

Jeff took up the thread of the meeting again. "The last thing I want to discuss with you is the matter of code names. The use of initials as code names is no longer a viable option. I had thought of assigning code names to each of you, but Kyrano," here he nodded at the retainer, "felt it would be better if you picked your own. So, I want you all to give it some thought over the next couple of days and bring me your decisions by Friday. This includes you, too, Penelope, and Parker. We are often in communication with you and your security is just as important as ours."

"Thank you, Jeff. I shall give it some thought," Penelope said graciously.

"Well, that concludes this meeting," Jeff said. "Those of you who have training should report to your instructors. Dismissed."

People began to rise from the table. Scott called out, "Kat, Nikki, Brandon? Meet me down in the aircraft hangar. We're going to take a look at Ladybird today."

Post by Tikatu on 13/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:22:11 GMT

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Tracy Island, Tuesday, March 27th 1.30 p.m.

They were standing alongside the Ladybird, Tin-Tin's aeroplane, listening to Scott. Kat looked at Nikki and Brandon, who were both paying close attention.

Her thoughts began to wander. She thought back to when she was working for Lady Penelope. Lady Penelope had paid for Kat to have higher education in automotive, marine, and aviation mechanics. She had also paid for Kat to have flying lessons. Now there was a problem. Kat could still remember the instructor patiently explaining how to fly, but every time that he had handed the controls over to Kat, she had frozen. Time and again the young girl had tried, but on every occasion she would just freeze up. The written test had gone well, but Kat

could remember crying to her parents. "I'll never be able to fly, and Lady Penelope won't need me," she had sobbed. In the end, both Lady Penelope and Kat had agreed that for the time being, she would not have any more flying lessons.

"Kat!" Scott's voice brought her back the present. "Perhaps you could tell your colleagues about the mechanics of the engine."

"Oh, er, yes, Scott."

Kat wandered round the small plane, her friends following her. "Well, maximum speed is 3,000 kph, endurance 15 hours."

"How is it powered?" Brandon asked.

"It's powered by 2 Tracy Aerospace turbojets and 2 ram booster jets."

"Here is the main jet engine turbofan, here is the port ramjet booster unit." Kat added, leading then round the other side, where she pointed out the Tracy Aerospace turbojet engine and the engine air intake. Heading back towards the front, she pointed out the radar scanner and the radar pack.

"Okay, I think that's enough about the plane, now let's head for the simulator," Scott said. The small group followed him along to the simulator.

Kat watched as her friends took their turns trying to fly a virtual plane.

"Come on, Kat. Your turn next." Scott called.

Kat scrambled into the simulator. In front of her was a mock version of an aeroplane's cockpit. There was a very complex mixture of dials, handles, knobs and buttons. Suddenly Kat felt the age-old panic. You're in a simulator, she tried to reassure herself. You can't physically crash.

"Now, when I say so, start the engine," Scott called from outside.

Kat looked hard at the cockpit and the conglomeration of dials, buttons and levers. Suddenly she didn't feel very confident at all.

"Okay, start the engines and taxi down the runway for takeoff," Scott said. Kat started the engines and started slowly to move forward.

"A bit more speed, please," Scott ordered. "Or you will never leave the ground."

Kat gritted her teeth. Slowly she pushed the handle forward and saw that she was indeed rising up from the ground. The ascent was very unsteady; the plane appeared to be unbalanced.

"Good, good, keep it smooth." Scott said, as he watched on his monitor.

To Kat the plane seemed to be rolling alarmingly, the horizon came first up one side and then up

the other. She pushed hard on some levers, suddenly the plane formed a barrel roll. Kat totally panicked. She started pushing and pulling levers.

"Okay, steady, Kat, try and relax. Just do one more circuit and then see if you can land the plane," Scott calmly called, watching from his monitor

Kat realised that it was one thing to get it in the air and keep it there, but it was an entirely different matter to land the thing. Starting her descent, she began to wobble and to over-compensate, then tried to gain altitude again.

"No, no, Kat. Lever back and hold it steady," Scott said in a calm and steady voice

This made Kat nervous again. "I can't find the runway," she almost sobbed, "What can I do?" Kat began to completely lose it, and headed in a sharp descent to the ground below. With a sickening crunch the plane crashed.

"Well, Kat," Scott remarked kindly, as he looked in at the young girl trembling in the pilot's seat. "Let's try this again later. That's all for today."

Kat smiled weakly. "Sorry Scott, guess maybe I should keep my feet on the ground, or if in the air, I should not be the one flying."

"Don't worry about it," Scott said kindly. "We'll try again tomorrow."

As Kat walked away from the simulator, she didn't feel too sure about trying again.

"Well, how did you do?" Nikki and Brandon both wanted to know.

"I crashed," Kat replied with a slight sob. "I simply crashed the thing. Guess I panicked. Just like when I tried to learn to fly for real."

Nikki put a hand on Kat's shoulder and squeezed it. "I'm sorry you're having trouble. Even if you can't learn to fly, you are a really great mechanic."

Kat smiled at her friend. "Thanks."

Brandon looked at the two girls. "Well, we'd better move along; there's a lot more work to do."

Scott walked behind the three. Hm, Kat has a real fear of flying a plane. I'm not sure flying is going to be for her.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 13/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:01:11 GMT

Tuesday, March 27, 2068, 1:30 p.m., Tracy Island.

As Jeff rose to leave, Gordon came up to him.

"Dad? I'll be down at the pool, working with Dom on scuba, but I wanted to let you know that I already know what I want my code name to be."

"What's that, son?" Jeff asked, pulling out his PDA to make note of the choice.

"Cousteau. I can't think of a better name than that of the world's most famous aquanaut and oceanographer."

Jeff smiled. "That's a great name, Gordon. I'll put it down as your code name."

"Thanks, Dad!" Gordon called as he headed out through the dining room door to the hallway and the pool.

"Well, that's one down," Jeff said as he put Gordon's choice in his PDA.

"Two," replied Dianne. "As far as I'm concerned, 'Doc' is my code name and always will be."

"Okay, Dr. Tracy," Jeff said with a grin. She gave him a gentle swat on the arm with the back of her hand, then closed in for a kiss.

"I'm off to the schoolroom," she told him. "See you later, love."

"Later, dear heart," Jeff murmured as he watched her go. Then he took his crutches and made his way to the elevator and his office.

Post by Tikatu on 13/12/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:15:04 GMT

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Tuesday 27th March, 2068 2pm

Christopher composed himself as he walked along the corridor coming from the lift to the Monorail. Asterix was curled up in his arms, purring contentedly.

"Nearly there." Christopher looked down at his pet and smiled. The smile quickly vanished as he turned the corner towards the kitchen. Almost immediately, Asterix mewed as he sniffed the air. Christopher saw Kyrano working there. The old man looked up and smiled when he saw his little friend there.

"Mr Asterix." Kyrano walked over, drying his wet hands. "How nice to see you again." He stroked Asterix, who purred. "And welcome to you, Mr. Jordan; it is rare to see you here in my kitchen."

"Thank you, Kyrano." Christopher smiled, then he paused. "I wonder if I could talk to you about something."

"Certainly," Kyrano said. "Would you like some tea?"

"Thanks." Christopher grinned. He sat down at the table in front of him. Asterix leapt down from his arms and started winding himself around Kyrano's ankles.

Kyrano brought their tea and sat down in front of a nervous Christopher. Asterix leapt onto Kyrano's lap and started kneading gently before settling down.

Christopher sipped at his tea before looking at the old man. "I wanted to ask your advice about something."

Kyrano smiled, before sipping from his cup. "Is it to do with my daughter?"

"I can't get anything past you, can I?" Christopher said.

Kyrano smiled again. "I have noticed your looks in her direction, and I have noticed that she enjoys your company."

Christopher nodded in agreement. "I feel happier when I'm with her, and I'd like to think that we could get to know each other a lot more..

He got up from the table. "I'd like to cook a nice romantic meal for her, something that she would like and appreciate."

Kyrano thought for a moment. "I will prepare a menu of her favourite foods for you, then you can cook the meal for her."

"You are the consummate professional Kyrano." Christopher smiled. "Thank you. I really care about her, you know."

"I can tell," Kyrano said. Asterix could sense that his master was about to go, so he leapt off Kyrano's lap.

"Farewell, Mr Asterix," Kyrano said, and the little cat miaowed back as Christopher picked him up.

"Thank you again, Kyrano," Christopher said as he left the kitchen. He thought that he saw Alan looking at him as he entered the dining room, but he dismissed the anger in the younger Tracy's eyes.

"Alan, mate." Christopher stopped at the table. "Do you know where your Dad is?"

"He's in his office," Alan said curtly, before going back to the book he was reading.

Christopher shrugged the animosity off as he walked towards Jeff's office. "Don't know why he's angry at me," he said as he tickled Asterix's ears. "He finished with Tin-Tin ages ago."

Reaching the office, he knocked on the door.

"Come in," Jeff Tracy's deep velvety voice issued from within. Christopher opened the door and entered.

"Christopher." Jeff smiled. "To what do I owe this visit? Sit down."

Christopher sat in front of his employer; he was still a little nervous around him and was loath to be informal with him.

"I just came by to see how you were, Mr. Tracy." Christopher relaxed a little. "And to tell you that I have got a code name for myself: Asterix."

"Named after your cat?" Jeff raised his eyebrows. "Interesting."

Asterix leapt onto Jeff's desk and mewed. He padded across the leather top and started to purr and rub himself against this new human, who smelt friendly.

"He certainly likes you." Christopher smiled. "You must smell right to him."

Jeff just laughed.

Post by The\_Wrong\_Trousers on 14/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:17:39 GMT  
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Tuesday 27 March. 1.35pm. Tracy Island.

Dominic glanced up as his copper-haired companion descended the stairs and headed over to the pool.

"Yo," he said, and Gordon waved back.

"Ready?" he asked as he headed over to the neat pile of equipment that he had left in preparation for the class.

Dominic followed him over. He regarded the pile of unfamiliar scuba gear before him, and his face scrunched in confusion. What on earth was it all for? Gordon must have noticed his consternation, and he turned, giving him an encouraging grin.

"Ah, relax, it's really not that difficult."

Dom smiled back, somewhat crookedly, and nodded.

"I trust you," he said.

Gordon nodded, and turned to hide a different type of grin - one of pride. It was nice to be trusted.

Soon enough, they were going through the basics. Gordon showed his pupil how to use the regulator, the mask, the fins, the vest, and showed him the hand signals. Dom was attentive throughout, and Gordon was encouraged. Perhaps Dom would prove a natural at the sport. It wasn't long before they had gone through everything, and they were strapped in, ready for their first dive.

"Sweet Mother of the Word Incarnate," Dominic said as the tanks were strapped on.

Gordon chuckled at the exclamation. They were very heavy, but he knew the other man would get used to the weight. They practised what to do if water got in the mask in the shallow end of the pool.

"Ready to go under?" Gordon asked.

Dominic nodded, his previous hesitance gone, now only ready for the dive.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 14/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:24:23 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Tuesday, 27th March, 3.30 p.m.

Kat entered the laboratory where Brains and Tin-Tin were working.

"So, how did your flying lesson go?" Brains asked.

"Don't ask," Kat replied, sitting herself on the edge of the workbench. "I panicked and crashed the plane."

"Oh, I am sorry," Tin-Tin said. "Better luck next time."

"If there is a next time. Honestly, I just don't think I'm cut out to be a pilot."

"While we are all here together, let's decide on our code names." Brains looked at Tin-Tin and Kat

"What have you decided to call yourself, Brains?" Kat asked her boss.

"Well, I have decided to be called Einstein."

"Einstein!" Kat laughed.

"There's nothing wrong with Einstein," Brains said huffily

"No, there isn't anything wrong, except that when I hear the name Albert Einstein, all I can picture is an elderly, white haired man." And she giggled, causing Tin-Tin to laugh with her.

"Okay, then what do you want to be called?" Brains said, when the laughter had died down.

Kat thought for a moment. "Mm, when I was working with Virgil on the winch, we discussed code names, and I suggested I could be called mini grease monkey, or MGM for short. Virgil thought that was a good name."

Tin-Tin giggled and Brains snorted. "I'd say that fits you to a T, Kat." He turned to Tin-Tin. "Do you have one yet, Tin-Tin?"

"Yes, I believe I do. My name in Malaysian means Sweet, so I'll suggest that I use that as my code name," Tin-Tin replied

Brains called Mr Tracy on his communicator. "Mr Tracy, Kat, Tin-Tin and myself have decided on our code names. I would like to be known as Einstein, Kat has decided on MGM which stands for mini grease monkey, and Tin-Tin will be known as Sweet."

"Thanks, Brains," Jeff replied. "I will add those to the code names of the others."

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 15/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:33:32 GMT

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Tuesday 27 March. 1.50pm. Tracy Island.

The dive went well -- for the first while. Gordon was wary, despite the apparent ability of the other. While floating under the clear waters of the pool, guiding Dominic's attempts to get the correct amount of air in the jacket went easily, the whole lesson was not fated to be so.

They floated down to the deepest part of the large pool, Gordon watching his pupil with quick eyes. Dominic seemed unaware of the intensity of the scrutiny as he carefully manoeuvred under the water, and Gordon was glad. He didn't know whether the dark haired man would be nervous or not. He seemed to be taking to it well, although Gordon was aware that this was the safe, warm pool down from the villa, not the dangerous, wind-swept expanse that the ocean could be. But they would get to it in time. For now, the basics needed to be mastered.

When it happened, Gordon immediately knew what was wrong.

Suddenly the whole lesson went awry, and Dominic darted to the surface, clutching at the mask. Gordon ascended as fast as he was able, and when he broke the surface he took off his mask as the other man swam to the side. Gordon followed.

Dominic was panting, his arms flung out onto the pool tiles, keeping him from slipping back under. He glanced over at Gordon and shook his head. Gordon could see a slight tremble in him.

"Mask...with water -" he panted, and Gordon nodded.

That was one thing he had hoped wouldn't happen; he had known people, that when their masks filled with water, even on the forth and fifth dives, they refused to go back under again. He hoped that it would not happen here.

"It's cool, Dom. Don't worry," he said, and the other man gave him a tight grin, his chin resting on the sun-warmed tiles.

They were silent for a moment as Dominic got his breath back, and Gordon began to prepare his 'you can do it - don't give up' speech. But before he could start, Dominic brought his arms back into the water and kicked off, beginning to tread.

"Can we go back down now?" he asked.

Gordon laughed with slight shock and pleasure, and nodded his head. This had never happened before. Surprises, sometimes, really were fun.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 16/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:50:09 GMT

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Tuesday 27 March, 4:00pm, Tracy Island.

After training was completed for the day, Nikki settled down to watch some TV. She was flicking through the channels to find something interesting when a show caught her eye. It was a news report on their last rescue. Nikki listened to what Ned Cook had to say. He always had nothing but praises for the organisation ever since the boys rescued him and his colleague in New York. Nikki turned up the volume slightly.

"This is Ned Cook reporting on location from Mendoza, Argentina to give you the latest update of this troubled city. Not long ago, this city suffered from a terrible earthquake. Earlier, we were able to visit one of the hospitals to gain interviews from various patients who were rescued by the valiant International Rescue team. All the stories were extremely fascinating, but one struck me as very intriguing."

"One of the patients, who by request shall remain anonymous, told me, and I quote, 'Everything was falling around me. I tried to escape, but I wasn't moving fast enough for International Rescue.

So they decided to things into their own hands. The next thing I saw was a fist flying toward my face'."

"Oh no." Nikki put her hand over her mouth. She didn't think her actions would get this far. She listened as Ned Cook continued.

"Now, as you may know, I was once rescued by that brave team and I know they would not attack someone for being slow. I had my suspicions about this particular patient. There was something about his story that wasn't right. So, using my brilliant reporter skills, I did some digging and found someone who could give us the truth as to what really happened. This is what I found out."

Nikki leaned forward as the picture on the screen switched from Ned Cook to someone else. The name on the screen said, "Juan".

"I tried to persuade my friend to leave his apartment, knowing full well that it wasn't safe anymore. He was only interested in the ice-skating finals." Juan rolled his eyes. "No amount of persuading would move him from his seat in front of the TV. I don't think International Rescue attacked him. Something must have hit him and his imagination ran wild. It wouldn't surprise me. That place was falling apart anyway."

Nikki turned off the TV and thought about what she just saw. She had to tell Jeff. Even if Ned Cook didn't believe the patient he interviewed, and Juan told his version of the story which would back up hers, he still had a right to know.

xxxx

Jeff looked up from the newspaper he was reading when Nikki entered the lounge.

"Mr Tracy, there's something I need to tell you."

Jeff put down his newspaper and signaled for Nikki to sit down on the couch, "So, what do you need to tell me?"

"I just saw a news report by Ned Cook on our last rescue. He interviewed that guy I punched." Nikki looked down briefly. "I know, it was wrong to hit that man, but he got violent and because of him, I dropped the hypospray. I couldn't think of any other way to get him out of that building. Now we could get into trouble because of me."

"We won't get into trouble because of it. We have agents who could make sure of that. What did Ned Cook have to say on the matter?"

"He didn't believe the story. Plus he interviewed someone named Juan, who claimed to be that guy's friend. He said that he tried to get Juan to leave, but he was glued to his TV. So Juan's story made his friend's sound like a lie, I guess," Nikki explained.

"To me, it sounds like, thanks to Ned Cook and Juan, this man's story won't get out of hand. But in future, try not to make it a habit of punching our rescue victims."

Nikki smiled. "I won't. Thanks for listening." She could have sworn she saw a bit of amusement in Jeff's eyes. Nikki stood up to leave. She stopped when she remembered something. "Oh. Mr Tracy? I thought of a code name for myself. But then, thinking it over, after punching out that guy, I don't know if it's appropriate now. It was always a nickname used by my elder brother and it's also a nickname for a nurse."

"What's the name?"

"Angel."

Jeff smiled. "I think it's a good name. I'll place it into the PDA." Nikki nodded and turned to leave, but turned back when

Jeff called her. "By the way, where did you learn to punch like that?"

"From the same person who gave me the nickname. My brother."

Post by Nikki-browneyes1 on 16/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:57:53 GMT

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Tracy Industries D.C. offices; Tuesday, March 27, 4 PM (9 AM March 28 on T. I.)

Lena returned from a meeting and, as she always did, checked for messages first. She was surprised and a little worried to see she had an email from Jeff. She thought it might have to do with an incident from a few days ago.

Leonard Peterson had emailed Tracy Industries I&M supervisors in other states, complaining about her and calling her presumptuous. He intimated that she was trying to grab assignments that should rightfully go to those with more experience and seniority. Two of the people who received the email informed her of it. They had communicated with her off and on during the years she had been with Tracy Industries, and knew her well enough not to believe what he had said. She'd replied, telling them the basic facts about what had happened and left it at that.

Considering the incident closed, she had forgotten about it. Now she realized that it wasn't. She opened the message and read:

Lena,

Word reached me that Leonard Peterson tried to make trouble for you. I had someone investigate the rumor, and found out what occurred. I have come to the conclusion, based on this and other reports about him, that he does not belong with Tracy Industries in any capacity, and he has been fired.

Now the problem is to find someone to replace him. You told me that some of his staff would be more than qualified, and I agree, having looked over their records. But I need someone to check

them out personally, with an eye to how the staff would handle one of their own being promoted to their supervisor, and how that person would act toward his or her former peers. I believe you would have the insight and objectivity to do this. None of my employees there have that, so I'm asking you to go there for a few days and work with them, then give me your recommendations.

You would, of course, stay in the penthouse. If you wish to take some of your family with you and make it a working vacation, feel free to do so. The records of each of the employees are attached to this email. Look them over and, if you decide to accept, please let me know. I'll have the company jet fly you and your guests up and back.

Jeff Tracy

She opened the attachment and read the records. It seemed to her that there were two or three who had the qualifications and the seniority for the job, but she knew - as Jeff did - that more was needed for it. She smiled, as she realized it would be a new challenge, and one she began to feel eager to accept. She chuckled, thinking about Jeff's offer to let her bring some of her family with her. I'd love to take dem all, but I doubt even de Tracy penthouse could hold dem. And de place would never be de same. But, maybe . . . She began to make some calls.

Post by Hobbeth on 16/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:10:13 GMT

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\*\*\*\*\*Wednesday, March 28, 2068, 9 a.m.; aboard Thunderbird Five\*\*\*\*\*

Callie was unable to sleep most of the night after what Jeff had discussed in the debriefing the night before. I've got to come up with a code name for myself, but I don't know what I can use.

After a good breakfast, she went into the lounge area and started writing down possible ideas. "CL? Seal? No way, that's definitely not going to work. I could try 'Crimson Tide'--or even better, 'Bear' for one of the most famous coaches of all time, Paul 'Bear' Bryant!"

She was excited about the idea and was about to contact Jeff when she suddenly stopped herself. "Wait a minute, I can't use that. I don't think everybody knows who Bear Bryant was, since he was the coach over a century ago. Guess that's out, too."

For the next couple of hours, she struggled to come up with a good codename. She wrote down at least 50 different names, including "Astro," "Comet," and "Sporty." Unfortunately, none of them worked, seeing as the majority of them sounded more like dog names. "Ugh, this is hopeless! How am I going to come up with an effective code name by Friday?"

Upstairs, John heard the commotion and took the elevator down to the lounge. "Callie, is everything okay?"

"No, John, it isn't, right now," she answered in what she felt was defeat. "I'm trying to come up

with a code name for myself, but nothing's coming to me."

John frowned. He looked at the crumpled list she had thrown away. "Milky Way? Galaxian? Nebula?"

"It's all useless so far. I don't know how many more crazy ideas I can come up with. I even tried 'Telescope.'"

He shook his head. "Callie, you're trying too hard. This isn't if you'll pardon the expression rocket science. Nor is it something to get all anxious about." He took a good look at her, noticing the reddened, shadowed eyes. "You lost sleep over this, didn't you?"

She had the good grace to look sheepish. "Yeah. I did. I thought it was really important."

"It is important, yeah, but not that important." He gave a moment's thought about her problem and simply asked, "Callie, let me ask you something. Do you have a favorite constellation?"

"Yeah, Ursa Major, the Big Dipper. Why?" She gasped. "Of course, Dipper--no, Ursa. That's it! I could be Ursa! Why didn't that come to me beforehand?"

John smiled. "Like I said, you were trying too hard. Sometimes you have to go easy on yourself."

"Thanks, John. Now I can contact Mr. Tracy with my decision. Say, want me to give him yours, too?"

"Oh, um..." He started fiddling his fingers in nervousness. "I, uh...I haven't come up with one for myself."

"I don't know if the list is gonna be of any help, but feel free to look at it."

John looked at all the names and shook his head. "Sorry, but none of these names will work for me."

She looked at him and smiled. "John, you discovered the Tracy Quasar, right?"

"Yes, but--" He realized she had just helped him. "Callie, you're a genius! I could go by the code name Quasar."

"Then it's finally settled. We'll be Quasar and Ursa. I'll let your father know."

\*\*\*\*\*11:15 a.m. in the Tracy Villa Lounge on Tracy Island\*\*\*\*\*

Jeff sat quietly in the lounge. He was drinking a cup of coffee when he noticed the eyes in John's portrait flashing. "Go ahead, John." He saw Callie's face instead. "Oh, Callie. My apologies. What can I do for you?"

"Good news, sir. John and I finally came up with code names for ourselves. His will be Quasar, and mine will be Ursa."

"How fitting for the two up in space," Jeff said with a smile. "Very well. I'll place your code names into the PDA so I won't forget. Is there anything else?"

"No, sir, that's all. I'll be looking forward to coming back to the island next week."

"That's great because you'll be just in time for Scott's birthday on the 4th."

"We'll be looking forward to it, sir. Thunderbird Five out."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 16/10/2004

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:19:55 GMT

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Wednesday, March 28, 2068, 1:30pm

Brandon sat on a rock, looking out over the ocean, the sun to his back. He had come to his quiet spot to contemplate and decide on a code name for himself. The first time he had found the place, it had been after a particularly hard rescue (that of Jeff and Elise). The area was untouched, the pristine sand undisturbed. He had stood looking out over the crystal blue ocean, letting the gentle sound of the waves relax him and taking in the scent of the tropical flowers. Afterwards, when he needed a place to think, he would always come to this, his special thinking spot.

Man I didn't realize it would be so hard to come with a code name. He mulled over several nicknames. Hotshot... No. Big shot... No way. Makes me sound conceited. After mentally going through the list, he closed his eyes shaking his head.

There's got to be something I can come up with. As he sat there thinking, a smile formed on his face. That's it!

Flashback

In the hangar, Aaron and Brandon stood side by side, folding their parachutes, neither one saying much. Finally Aaron broke the silence.

"Hey, Brandon thanks for saving my butt. I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't been there."

"No problem, friend. We both made it down safely and that's all that matters." Brandon continued folding his parachute, making sure it was done properly.

"So, Big Mac, when do we go up again?"

Brandon turned, looking at Aaron, a look of surprise on his face. Only then did he see the cheeky grin on his young friend's face and his expression changed to one of pride.

Laughing and ruffling Aaron's hair he replied, "How about same time next week? It's late and I think we've both had enough excitement for one day."

End Flashback

Jeff had finished putting the latest code name entry into his PDA and was ready to leave the lounge when he heard a voice saying, "Excuse me, sir."

"Hello, Brandon, what can I do for you?" he asked, motioning him to enter.

"Well Mr. Tracy, I've given my code name a lot of serious thought and finally came up with one."

"And it is...? Jeff queried, reaching for his PDA.

"I've decided on Big Mac, sir."

"Interesting code name," Jeff remarked softly as he entered the name. After doing so he asked Brandon if he needed anything else.

"No sir, there isn't."

"In that case, if you'll excuse me, I have some things I need to discuss with my wife and she does not like to be kept waiting."

"Sure thing, Mr. Tracy; let me give you a hand." Brandon handed Jeff his crutches and together they left the lounge.

Post by MagicMaster8 on 17/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:23:33 GMT

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Wednesday 28 March. 3.30pm. Tracy Island.

Jeff Tracy, back at his desk, heard an unusual sound floating up through the hallway leading to the villa's lounge. Soft, somewhat out-of-tune singing, light claps, and the sound of cutesy laughter all came together into a sound that brought back memories, happy memories of when his sons were all young.

"If you're happy and you know it clap your hands," clap-clap. "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands," clap-clap. "If you're happy and you know it and you really want to show it, if you're happy and you know it clap your hands," clap-clap. "Yay! Well done Josh."

Jeff chuckled a little at the sound, and looked up to see Dominic walking in with Joshua in his arm, giving his son a light kiss on the forehead. As soon as they entered, the child began to wriggle, wanting to be set down.

"Alright then," Dominic said, and settled the child onto his small feet, before giving a small wave across the room to Jeff. "Good afternoon," he said, walking after his son, keeping one eye on the exuberant toddler.

"Good afternoon, Dominic," Jeff said. He grinned as he watched the father and son explore the room. "They're a handful at that age, aren't they?" He asked.

Dominic glanced up and gave him a wry grin.

"Don't I know it! He's been a handful since the moment he was born, but I would never give him up." He caught the child in his arms from behind and began to tickle him. "Aren't you? Aren't you?"

Jeff joined in the laughter, and Dominic scooped Joshua up and carried him across to the desk.

"May I?" Jeff asked, holding his hands out for the child.

"Who could I trust more than a father of five?" Dominic said, and handed Joshua over.

He wasn't a fussy toddler, used to being handled by many different people. It seemed to Dominic that as long as he felt at ease, he was happy to be held by just about anyone.

"My, you're a big boy, aren't you?" Jeff said, as the child scrutinised this only-just-familiar man. "What age is he?" Jeff asked Dominic.

"Two years and three months," Dom said, shaking his head. "I can't believe it. He's almost been alive as long as I've been living in America." By the look on Jeff's face, he sensed the oncoming question. "I moved to Kansas in January 2065, so I've been living here, what, three years and two months?" He nodded. "Yeah, that's right."

Joshua began to wriggle once more, and attempted to slip off Jeff's knee. He managed it, and Dominic shook his head -- internally sighing with relief that Joshua hadn't aggravated Jeff's injury.

"Oh, by the way," he said as he watched his son glance with wide eyes at the panels behind Jeff's desk, "I've decided on a codename."

"Excellent," Jeff said, reaching for the all-familiar PDA, "what is it?"

"Dak," Dom said. "It's a nickname my half-brother used for me. It's an abbreviation of all my names: Dominic Aidan Kelly."

Jeff added the codename to the list, and smiled.

"Thanks, Dominic," he said.

"No problem."

Post by ArtisticRainey on 17/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:25:29 GMT  
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Wednesday, March 28th 10:00 p.m. The Villa, Tracy Island.

Elise stood in the shower and let the hot water cascade over her. Every muscle in her ached from hours of training. First in the simulator, then in the gym, where Virgil and Scott were not kind to the poor pitiful pilot trainees, namely herself and Christopher.

Since leaving the service, she had realized she had not been as physically fit as she had thought. Once or twice she'd thought about opening her mouth to tell the Tracy brothers what she thought of their training methods, but one look from Scott, and she decided against it.

Damn him! He knows me too well!

She rolled her neck and let the hot water work the stiffness out of her. As she rinsed the conditioner out of her hair, she started to think about where she would have her implant put and what code name she would use.

After a few minutes of coming up with silly ones, and laughing to herself, she thought back to what her high school friends had called her. One or two of them had discovered her middle name, back when having middle names discovered was not a cool thing, and had teased her about it. Her full name was Elise Francesca Collins, and they had shortened it to "Frankie" which annoyed Elise beyond description. Thinking back now, she laughed and thanked the girls for their teasing.

Drying herself off and climbing into her P.J. bottoms and old Air Force t-shirt, she sat on the bed, grabbed a notepad and wrote down, "Elise - code name: Frankie." Folding the paper in half, she laid it on the nightstand, ready to give to Mr. Tracy in the morning. It was getting late and she decided not to watch T.V. Instead she switched off the light, and lay down, thinking about her own apartment and wondering when her stuff would arrive. It had been a long day and she hoped she would fall into a deep, peaceful slumber.

Post by FrankieCTB22 on 18/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:32:07 GMT  
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Thursday, March 29th 1:05 a.m. Tracy Island.

Virgil had been tinkering with the same two keys for over an hour and no matter how 'in tune' they sounded to an outside ear, Virgil just knew they weren't right and he would not stop until they

were. It was a little after 1:00 a.m. and the villa was quiet. Virgil was taking his turn on night watch and so far it had been a long restful evening.

After his family had retired to their beds, he'd checked in with John in the space station, and they'd chatted about nothing in particular. It looked like no one was going to be needing IR's help this night. So Virgil had got up from the command center, also known as his father's desk, and gone to his piano. While softly playing a melody he'd written, he had noticed that two keys hadn't quite sounded right, and so he'd started to tinker with them.

Not too far down the hall from the lounge, a restless Elise tossed and turned. A peaceful slumber was eluding her, and she'd been drifting in and out of sleep for what seemed like hours.

Each time she relaxed into sleep, haunting images and emotions of fear and pain and panic would seep into her being and rob her of any peace. The images ebbed and flowed into her memory. It all seemed so real, yet it wasn't, was it? It couldn't be. The water wasn't real, so why did she feel cold?

"Elise! Elise sweetie, hold on! Mommy's here baby, I'm coming!"

Her mother's voice calling to her, softly at first, became clearer and Elise could see her trying to clamber towards her. The waves were rougher, washing over them as the boat heaved and tossed under them.

"Mom! Help me, Mom I'm scared!" Elise was screaming as she clung tightly to the side of the upturned boat.

She desperately tried to keep her head above water and kept spitting out mouthfuls of the salty sea. She could hear her father somewhere on the other side of the boat shouting to her and her mother.

"Daddy! Daddy, please get me, I can't hold on. I can't reach mommy!"

"Elise, hold on! Hold on for daddy, I'm coming to get you and mom!"

Sudden surges of water tossed her up and then dragged her down beneath the surface. Gulping and gasping, she spluttered her way back to the surface, immediately screaming for her parents. Her father was just mere feet away, holding out his hand.

"Elise, grab my hand baby, grab my hand!"

Why was he getting farther away? Why didn't come back?

Elise struggled to reach him, all the while thinking, I don't want to die! I don't want to die I can't hold on, I'm falling.....

The water had turned to snow and she was still alive, barely. "Daddy?" she called, hearing no one.

She turned and saw, not her father, but another familiar face. The face of Jeff Tracy. He was still,

ashen, and covered in blood.

"NO! No, you can't be dead, you can't be!" Elise found herself screaming out loud.

First her parents, now Mr. Tracy. Why? Why are they all dying?

Virgil's fingers immediately stilled when he heard the scream. He cocked his head, not sure if in fact it had been a scream that he'd heard. He was trying to think who it could be, when he heard another one. Whoever it was, they were terrified and then he realized that Elise was still in the villa. Her living quarters weren't ready yet, and she was in the guest room closest to the lounge.

He ran to her room and opened her door. She was obviously in the throes of a nightmare; the covers were all strewn every which way, and Elise was clutching them for dear life.

Virgil knew he had to approach her gently and wake her so as not to scare her more. He sat on the edge of her bed and reached out to hold her hand.

"Elise? Elise can you hear me?" he said softly, but she didn't respond.

He leaned over slightly so that he could hold both her hands with his. "Elise, wake up honey, wake up," he called a little louder.

Suddenly both of her eyes flew open and she sat bolt upright, breathing heavily. Her hair clung to her damp skin, and she grabbed a hold of his shirt with both hands in a vise-like grip.

"You have to help him! You can't let him die! He can't be dead! I tried to fly... the chopper... I couldn't hold on... the boat... I couldn't hold on! Please... the boat... oh God, help him!" Virgil looked into her eyes and knew she wasn't looking at him, she was looking through him.

"Elise, sshhh...its okay. It's me, it's Virgil. You're okay. Elise...calm down...shhh."

He repeated the words a few times, and each time she seemed to calm until she started to breathe slower and come around.

Elise heard the soothing voice through the dark void she'd been in. Ever so slowly she began to wake up. Her bed, the room, it was here. She was safe now. No more water, no more snow and no more death. She looked around gingerly and then realized someone had gently taken hold of her upper arms. She gazed up into soft, caring brown eyes.

"Virgil?"

"Yep. In the flesh." He smiled, hoping to relieve some of her anxiety.

Suddenly Elise knew what had just happened. She lessened her grip on his shirt and started mumbling apologies. He laughed softly.

"You don't have to say sorry, its okay. I understand. I've had bad dreams too."

Although calmer, Elise was still very emotionally upset and started to cry as she stuttered "It was so... so... all so real."

He drew her close and gently rubbed her back, as if to sooth away all her demons.

It was a while later that she felt calm enough to try and go back to sleep. She hadn't wanted to talk about the nightmare, and Virgil hadn't pushed her to. He figured it was too personal and that she'd tell him if she wanted to. He just wanted to make sure she was okay.

"I can stay until you fall asleep if you like?" offered Virgil.

"Thanks, I'd like that," she replied softly.

"Can I get you anything?" he asked.

"I am kind of thirsty. Would you mind?"

"Not at all! I know just thing to help you sleep."

Before she could ask what it was, Virgil was gone. He came back a short while later with a mug of hot chocolate.

"Kyrano's secret recipe," he told her as he handed her the mug.

"Hmmm... it's good. Thanks."

She sipped carefully, relaxing more with each sip. It didn't take long for Elise to feel the effects of the drink and she started to drift off to sleep. Virgil positioned himself in the chair opposite her bed, telling her he'd stay until she was asleep. She sleepily smiled her thanks and closed her eyes.

Virgil slouched down til he was comfy, stretched out his legs, crossed his ankles, folded his arms and relaxed. He only planned on staying a few minutes and then he needed to get back to the desk. He tilted his head slightly and closed his eyes, and that's exactly how his brother Scott found them the next morning.

Scott had always been a light sleeper and was usually the first up. This morning he'd walked into the lounge and saw that Virgil was MIA. Knowing that their father might possibly blow his stack once he found out that the desk was not manned, Scott went searching for his brother, silently fuming to himself.

"Hey Virgil! Wake up!" Scott shook Virgil's shoulder and his sleepy brother opened his eyes.

"Scott? What are you doing here?"

"I should be asking YOU that! Why aren't you at the desk?"

Virgil suddenly became fully awake. "Damn! What time is it?"

"Early, Dad's not up yet." Scott glanced over at a sleeping Elise and then back at his brother. "What's going on Virgil?" Virgil explained the whole situation to Scott. "So, I gave her some of Kyrano's famous hot chocolate and she was out like a light."

"You mean you put whiskey in the chocolate?"

Virgil smiled "Yep!"

They left Elise sleeping and headed towards the lounge, talking softly. Virgil told Scott about the nightmare.

"Do you think it's related to the accident with Dad?" Virgil asked.

Scott looked thoughtful for a moment. "Could be I suppose. She might have Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. We're going to need to keep an eye on her during training. If anything seems to bother her, I think we need to tell Dianne about it."

"Don't worry Scott, I'll watch for any signs that something maybe wrong."

"Wrong? This early in the morning?" They both turned their heads as Tin-Tin walked in.

"Oh, it's nothing Tin-Tin, just trying to figure out why these two piano keys just keep sounding wrong."

"I'm sure you'll figure out the problem, Virgil," she sweetly replied as she rolled her eyes and grabbed a magazine before heading for the kitchen.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 18/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:47:02 GMT  
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Tracy Industries NYC; Wednesday, March 28; 11 AM (4 AM March 29 on Tracy Island)

Lena walked into the building, followed by a younger woman and two teenagers, who were obviously her relatives, all carrying smallish bags. They were followed by the chauffeur, who had the larger bags on a cart. The teenagers were chatting enthusiastically about being in a limo and flying in a private jet.

She went up to the desk and showed her badge to the guard, who welcomed her back, then signed in her daughter and grandchildren. They were given temporary badges and she said to them, "Now, don't lose dem. Security is very tight here, so you'll need dese to come and go." She looked hard at the kids. "I'm counting on you to make sure you always have dese on you. Okay?"

They said simultaneously, "Okay, Nyanya." Kevin stood at attention and gave her a snappy

salute. She grinned at him, then turned to her daughter.

"We'll go up and, while you and de kids are settling in, I'll go and meet de I&M staff members here." She turned back to the guard. "De housekeeper is expecting us, right?"

"Yes, ma'am. Aline is her name, and she was notified last evening. I'll call and alert her that you're on the way up."

They took the rest of their luggage from the chauffeur, who promised to return the next morning at 10 AM to take Lena's family wherever they wanted to go. The guard escorted them to the elevator that would take them up to the penthouse, then went back to the desk and placed the call.

Aline was waiting for them when the elevator doors opened. With a smile, she said, "Welcome, Mrs. Matumbo and family. I am Aline, ze housekeeper. Your rooms are ready for you, and I weel have lunch ready once you are settled in."

"Tank you, Aline. Dis is my daughter, Joy, and her twins, Naomi and Kevin. " She winked at the housekeeper. "I tink you can tell which is which." (Both she and Aline chuckled when they heard the teens protest, "Nyanya!") "I am just stopping in to see which room I'll be in, den I'm going to meet de I&M people. I'll unpack when I return."

"Zat ees fine, madame. I weel take good care of your daughter and grandchildren and weel have some refreshments for you when you return." Aline showed them which rooms they would be using, and Lena put her suitcase and bag in hers, then left.

She took the elevator back down to the lobby, then went to the one that would take her to the floor of the I&M department. Upon arrival, she first checked the supervisor's office. It was unlocked and not in use. She left her briefcase on the desk, then decided to check on the employees. When she walked into the area assigned to them, it was quiet. She toured the area, and found everyone at their desks, working. No one was on the phone, so she asked half of them to join her in the supervisor's office for a brief meeting.

When they were all inside, she closed the door and said, "I am Mrs. Lena Matumbo, head of de I&M department at de Washington D.C. branch." She hesitated and looked a bit sheepish. "I guess you could say dat I am indirectly and partly responsible for Mr. Peterson being let go." She paused, shock registering on her face, when everyone broke into applause.

One of the men, noticing the look, said, "Mrs. Matumbo, you did us a great favor. We are able to do more, more quickly and efficiently, now that he's gone. He was constantly poking his nose in, trying to tell us what he presumed to be a better way to do things. Even though he had no idea of how to do our job, he acted like he did."

"He'd interrupt us in the middle of tasks, breaking our concentration and throwing our rhythm completely off," added a pretty blonde with short curly hair, whose badge said her name was Gail. "It's been a nightmare, working for him."

The others nodded. The first man, whose badge identified him as Tony, continued, "I think you'll find all of us are in agreement - including the others you didn't bring in - that he was a pompous

ass who knew less than half of what he tried to have us believe he knew. We and Tracy Industries are far better off without him."

"I'm sorry to hear dat," Lena replied. "He must have had some ability once, to get to de position he had. I can't imagine someone totally unqualified being hired, especially by Tracy Industries. Well, no matter. He's gone. However," she continued, noticing the expectant look on all their faces, "I'm not here to replace him. I'm here to evaluate you all and see if a replacement should come from de ranks. And I want to hear your opinions on dat."

There was a stunned silence. "You mean you're not just going to bring someone in from who-knows-where to head up the department?" said Gail.

Lena grinned. "Some not-know-it-all to tell you what to do, simply because dey have supervisory experience? No. Tracy Industries learns from de mistakes of otters, as well as deir own. Dey want de next supervisor in dis office to know de job. Now, a question. When Mr. Peterson was away on vacation, which one of you subbed for him?

"None of us did. It was as if he didn't trust any of us, and always had another supervisor on this floor watch out for us. He would only come over once, to tell us that he'd been assigned to hold down the fort and we knew where his office was if we needed him. That would be the last we'd see of him," Tony replied.

"So you wouldn't have any idea who you've worked wit, dat you could accept as your supervisor?"

There was a negative to that question from all of those present. "We take care of each other." "I can think of two or three people who could easily be our supervisor." "I'd work under Steve or Marcie anytime." "There'd be no problem choosing Peterson's successor from among us." "I'd love it if our next supervisor was one of us."

Lena was impressed. "I'm pleased to hear you all say dat." She moved around the desk and opened her briefcase, taking out the files. She went through them and pulled two. "I heard one of you mention Steve and Marcie. Dat would be Steven McNally and Marcy Jacobs, right?"

The group assented. "They are the most helpful, and knowledgeable among us. They both get along with the rest of us just fine. And, if I remember correctly," Gail said, "they have seniority, too."

Lena noticed that a woman, standing quietly off to one side, looked stunned. She judged the woman, who was somewhat short and had shoulder length auburn hair, to be in her mid to late thirties. Their eyes met and she said, "I presume you are Marcy Jacobs."

The younger woman nodded, and replied, "I am, but I never expected that anything like this could happen to me."

Lena smiled at her. "Well, you certainly are in de running, but

I have more investigating to do before I make my recommendations. Now, I will be here for de rest of de week, watching how you do tings and how you work togeter. Who knows, maybe I'll learn

something I can take back to my group in D.C.; you never know." Everyone laughed, and she continued, "So I'll try to be as unobtrusive as possible, but don't expect me to tell you anything about whom I will recommend. I will say this: you should find out who your new supervisor is some time next week. Now I want you to get back to work, and let me give the others the same news."

They all left, chatting with each other, followed by Lena, who went to the rest of the staff and brought them into the office.

She was pleased to find they reacted to her statements the same way as the first group, and that Steve seemed to be as stunned as Marcie was. She realized that the difficulty would not be in finding a qualified person, but in choosing one over the other.

She let them go back to their desks, then walked around the area, listening to them handle the calls that came in for assistance. She asked one of them for the name of the supervisor who backed up Mr. Peterson, and went to see him. Her interview with him was cordial, but gave her no information to help her make her decision.

She had one more thing she wanted to do before she left. She went to the office and turned on the computer. She sent an email to Steve and Marcie, asking them one question: if the other was selected for the position, would he or she still be able to continue to work in the department?

Finally she decided she'd learn no more that day and after telling the I&M staff she'd see them the next day, left and headed up to the penthouse to hear, she was sure, more enthusiastic comments from her grandchildren, this time about their living quarters.

Post by Hobbeth on 18/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:51:44 GMT

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Thursday, March 29, 2068, 9:30 a.m., Tracy Island

"Hey, Scott," Virgil said as he entered the control room of the simulator. "Preparing for your flight instruction students?"

"Yeah," Scott said, not looking up as he tapped out the simulator program. Checking the monitor, he saw the holographic cockpit of Thunderbird Two fade from view, to be replaced with the cockpit of Tin-Tin's Ladybird. "I hope they do better today. Especially Kat."

Virgil leaned on the doorway and watched him work for a moment, then asked, "Have you picked out your codename yet?"

Scott let out a long huff. He turned to look at Virgil. "No, I haven't. Have you?"

Virgil shook his head. "Nope. I can't think of one that fits.

I've even looked at musicians and painters and none seem to strike me as... me."

"I know what you mean," Scott said. "Most of the ones I think of sound conceited." His eyebrow rose and the edges of his mouth quirked upward as a thought occurred to him. "Hey, why don't we each choose one for the other?"

Virgil's face took on a look of disbelief and consternation. "Pardon me?" he asked.

"Yeah! You let me choose yours and I'll let you choose mine." Scott glanced at Virgil's face and rolled his eyes. "C'mon. You and I trust each other with our lives every day. Surely we can trust each other with code names."

"Ooookay. I'll bite. Who goes first?" Virgil asked.

"Both of us. I'll write my choice for you down, and you write your choice for me and then we'll call Dad and tell him what we're doing," Scott explained. "The catch is, we have to stick to whatever the other chooses for at least a month."

Virgil sighed. "Okay, I'm game. Let's do it." He took out his PDA, and stylus.

The two brothers regarded each other for several long minutes, then Scott entered a name in his PDA. Virgil did the same a moment later.

"Okay," Scott said. He took a deep breath. "Let's call Dad." He lifted his telecomm watch. "Scott to Dad."

Jeff's image, with his office as background, came up immediately. "This is Jeff. What do you need, Scott?"

"Uh, Dad. Virgil and I have chosen our code names... well, actually, we've chosen each other's. We reserve the right to change them after a month if we really despise them."

Jeff frowned. "Where did you come up with this scheme?"

Virgil came and looked at the screen over Scott's shoulder. "It was Scott's idea, not mine! But I'm going along with it."

"Okay, son," Jeff sighed. "I'm ready."

"All right, Dad," Scott said, taking another deep breath. "Virgil's code name is... Van Gogh."

"Van Gogh?" Virgil protested, slapping Scott's shoulder with the back of his hand. "Where'd you get that one?"

"Van Gogh... Virgil Grissom... both painters, both VG," Scott said with a grin.

Virgil rolled his eyes and shook his head. "I reserve the right to change that, Dad."

"I heard Scott the first time, Virgil," Jeff said, wearily. "Now, what have you chosen for Scott?"

"For Scott? Uh... Maverick."

"Maverick? Where the hell did that come from?" Scott asked, turning to his brother in disbelief.

"From that old movie, Top Gun. The lead pilot was called Maverick," Virgil explained.

"Dad, I have the right...." Scott began.

Jeff cut him off. "Yes, yes, you can change it later. But for now, Virgil is Van Gogh and Scott is Maverick. Who knows? Maybe in a month you'll be so used to them that you'll keep them. Is that all?"

"Yes, Dad," Scott said. "That's all."

"Then, Jeff out." The screen went dark.

"Maverick?" Scott asked, looking askance at Virgil.

"Not as bad as Van Gogh!" Virgil replied sarcastically. He turned and left the room, Scott shaking his head as he left, and both of them thinking, Last time I let you choose a code name for me!

Post by Tikatu on 19/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 03:44:51 GMT  
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Thursday, March 29, 2068, 5:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Lady Penelope stretched out on her favorite chaise lounge by the pool, a wide sun hat on her head and the latest style of swimwear on her trim form. She had the latest fashion magazine to read through her designer sunglasses. Dianne was stretched out next to her, lying down so that her back was exposed, head pillowed on her arms as she let the sun continue its work in bronzing her bare shoulders. Tin-Tin came down the steps, wearing an aqua tankini that emphasized her lovely tan. She took the lounge on the other side of Penelope, and as she smoothed a combination of sunscreen and tanning lotion over her arms, read from a paper that she propped up on a folded leg. She chuckled, drawing the attention of both older women.

"Hello, Tin-Tin," Penelope said, glancing over at the engineer. "How has your day been?"

"Oh, hello, Lady Penelope. My day was a bit frustrating. One of the plants that is putting together the uniform jackets using my new material has been complaining about not being able to cut through the stuff. I've told them more than once that they need to use lasers, which they are equipped for," Tin-Tin explained. "But this email just brightened up my day considerably."

"Email?" Dianne asked sleepily. "Some hot missive from a secret admirer?"

Tin-Tin laughed. "Hardly hot, and definitely not secret. It's a note from that man I met in Kabul, Giles Tallman. He's quite the comedian when he wants to be. Very witty and charming."

"Hmm. I've not heard about this mysterious Mr. Tallman," Penelope said.

"We have," Dianne commented. "From Tin-Tin and from Em, both of whom have decidedly different opinions of the fella."

"I don't know why Grandma Tracy took such a dislike to him, I really don't," Tin-Tin said frowning. "He was very charming and polite whenever we met."

"May I?" Penelope asked, holding out her hand for the email.

Tin-Tin thought for a moment, then handed it over. "Certainly. There's nothing in there to embarrass me."

Penelope scanned the email, then went back to read it more thoroughly. "I see. You are correct; he is quite the wit." She handed it back. "Do you mind if I investigate this Mr. Tallman? For security purposes?"

Tin-Tin sighed. "I suppose not. We've started to get so much more security conscious that an investigation into each new person who comes in contact with us should be done." She looked across at Dianne. "I'm sure that whoever wants to date Cherie will be given the third degree!"

"Yep," Dianne replied. "The third degree, truth serum, lie-detector tests and they don't go on a date without either Jeff, Mother, Em, or me going along, carrying a shotgun."

The three women laughed. Dianne spoke again. "Speaking of security, have each of you chosen a code name?"

"I have. Mine is Sweet, since that's what my name means in Malay," Tin-Tin answered.

Penelope hesitated for a moment. "You know, I don't know if it is fitting for me to have a code name. After all, the other agents all have numbers. Jeff has never given me a number; I'm not quite sure why not."

"I think it's because you're more than just an agent, Penny. You're a friend. You should choose a code name and give it to Jeff. Let him decide whether or not he wants you to have a number or a name," Dianne suggested.

"An excellent idea," Penelope said. She thought briefly, then said, "I think that I would like to be called Pink Lady."

Both Tin-Tin and Dianne chuckled, and Dianne said, "Why am I not surprised?"

Post by Tikatu on 21/01/2005

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Saturday March 31st, 10:15am, Tracy Island.

"Elise!" called Christopher from the balcony of the lounge.  
She was down by the pool area talking to Nikki and turned looking upwards to seek the source of the yell.

"What?" she answered, shading her eyes and looking at Christopher.

"Mail Cargo plane just landed. I think your stuff is here!"  
From his vantage point Christopher had watched the plane approach and taxi up to the end of the runway. Immediately the crew was out and unloading boxes of varying sizes. Elise grinned.

"Thanks!" she shouted and headed off towards the direction of the plane.

As she approached the busy crew and rapidly growing piles of boxes, she noticed Christopher had come down to help.

"Yep! These are yours, girl! Straight from the States!" He smiled as he lifted a box.

"Great! I've been waiting for these! I never thought I'd be saying that I actually missed all of my 'stuff'."

Christopher chuckled as he continued unloading some of the boxes. Besides Elise's things, there were also some medical supply boxes, boxes addressed to Brains and various other boxes of household supplies and replacement parts for various machines. Elise watched as the crew finished and headed back to the plane.

The pilot walked over to them "Who gets to sign today?" he asked, holding out an electronic scanner and digital pen.

"I will," offered Christopher taking the scanner and signing.

"Thanks, mate!" replied the pilot in a clear Australian accent.

"No problem, see you around."

As the plane departed, Christopher noticed Brains coming towards them from the hangar with the antigravity float.

"Perfect timing!" said Christopher.

"I thought you could use this for the boxes."

"Thanks Brains," Elise answered.

"When you are finished, may I have it back for the other boxes?"

"Sure Brains, I'll make sure it gets back to you," Christopher assured the young scientist.

With that sorted out, Christopher offered to help Elise transport her boxes to her new apartment. She had been assigned a remaining one bedroom next to Callie, and after being told yesterday that it was finally ready, Elise had been impatient to get in and get settled. Now that her stuff had arrived, she could really make herself at home. She'd moved around a lot in the Air Force, but still liked to have her own personal things around her to make her feel more 'homey'.

It took the better part of an hour to get the boxes up to the Cliff House apartment and they were both exhausted by the time the last box was brought up.

"Thanks for all your help, Chris. You don't mind if I call you that, do you?" asked Elise, handing him a cool drink.

"Not at all, luv," he answered.

She smiled at his loose use of the word 'luv'. Must be a British thing, she thought.

"So how's that little kitten of yours doing?"

"Asterix? Oh he's fine. Finally found his comfort zone and the kitchen!"

They both chuckled as they sat down on her sofa and talked about the flight training they'd be doing and about flying in general until Christopher announced he had to get going.

"Brains is probably wondering where I got to!" he told her.

After he'd gone, Elise started opening her boxes and pulling out her things, stopping occasionally to reflect on a past memory that some item had triggered. As she carefully put things away she realized how 'grounded' her stuff made her feel. All these things were 'her'; who she was, who she is now, and maybe who she could be. She walked into the bedroom and placed the framed photograph of herself and her parents on her bedside table. It was the last family photo that had been taken. Running her fingers gently around the frame she whispered to her mother and father, "I love you both." And then she continued going through her boxes.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 23/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 04:12:31 GMT

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Tracy Industries New York City; Friday, March 30th; 4 PM (9 AM March 31st on T.I.)

Lena was in the penthouse, working on her laptop (another perk, courtesy of Jeff Tracy). She was trying to figure out whom she should recommend. She muttered to herself, "Dis is a tough one."

Bote are equally qualified, dey have de same amount of seniority, dey are bote well liked by deir peers. I suppose I could recommend bote and let Mr. Tracy make de decision, but I don't tink dat's what he expects me to do." She'd been at it for over an hour, when Aline walked into the study.

"Excuse me, madame. Zere is a call for you. Someone named Marcie Jacobs."

"Tank you, Aline." Lena reached over and picked up the phone. "Dis is Lena. Marcie?"

"Lena, I need to talk to you, privately. But not over the phone. Could we meet somewhere?"

"Hold on, please, Marcie." Lena put a hand over the mouthpiece and called to the housekeeper, who was about to shut the door. "Aline, does Mr. Tracy ever have employees up here?"

The door reopened and she moved back into the room. "He has done so on occasion. You want to have one come here?"

"She says she needs to talk to me privately. So it's eiter here or at de cafe down de street."

"Here ees fine, madame. But sometimes zee employees are intimidated by zis place."

Lena smiled. "I know how dey must feel. Well, I'll suggest it to her, and see what she says." She turned back to the phone. "Marcy, would you like to come up here, or go down de street to de cafe?"

"Up to the penthouse? Oh, I couldn't. Let's go to the cafe. I'll meet you in the lobby. Fifteen minutes?"

Lena grinned at Aline, mouthing the words 'the cafe' to her.

Aline grinned back, and left the room. "Fifteen minutes is fine. I'll see you downstairs."

"Oh, and Lena, please don't send your recommendation until we've talked. That's what I need to talk to you about."

Lena was surprised, but said, "I'm not ready to send it yet. So don't worry about it. I'll see you soon."

Fifteen minutes later, the two women walked out of the building and down the street. They arrived at the cafe, found a booth and ordered tea. After they were served, Lena said, "Okay, Marcie, what is it you wanted to tell me?"

"Lena, I don't know, obviously, who you decided to choose, but I want to ask you to recommend Steve."

Lena was shocked. "Why? Don't you want de job?"

Marcie looked down at her cup. "Not really." She looked up at the older woman. "I like being out there with the rest of the group, not isolated in an office. I like being right there to help when I'm

needed. Steve is more of a take charge kind of guy and I think he'd do better than I would in the job.

"And then, there's the meetings I'd have to go to. Mr. Peterson seemed to have to go to at least three every week. I'm really not a 'go to meetings' person. I've been to a few, and am very uncomfortable in them. Steve shines in that area. He'd listen to our ideas and take them to the meetings, or whomever he needs to, if he believes they're good ones. And he'd get those ideas approved."

Lena sat back, regarding Marcie. "Well, you certainly have surprised me, but I appreciate your candor. I have an idea. You know dat new upgrades mean everyone who would use dem would have to be trained. Would you be interested in doing dat kind of ting whenever necessary?"

"Interested? You bet I would! I love learning new things about computers and passing what I find out on to others."

Lena smiled at her enthusiasm. "Well, Mr. Tracy didn't say anything about dat, but I'm going to put dat in my report, too. I must say you have made my decision much easier. You bote are qualified for de position. And den I found out dat you bote started working for Tracy Industries on de same day. So who could I objectively choose?"

"I'm happy to have been of help," Marcie replied, grinning. "Well, I guess I'd better get back to the office. It's almost quitting time, and I have a few things to take care of before I go. Thanks, Lena for hearing me out."

"Tank you for helping me decide. And don't be surprised if you hear from someone in de future about training. And de tea is on me." Lena paid the bill, and the two women left the cafe and headed back to the Tracy Industries building, well satisfied with the result of their meeting.

Post by Hobbeth on 23/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 04:25:04 GMT  
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\*\*\*Saturday, March 31, 2068; around 11 a.m. aboard Thunderbird Five\*\*\*

Callie had marked her calendar for each day she had worked in the International Rescue space station. When she checked off this date, she realized she and John would return to Earth very soon. She started to consider what she wanted to do when she was back on solid ground but mentally shook herself and turned back to her task at hand. She was so busy checking files she failed to notice John walking up behind her.

"Hi, Callie," he said with a smile.

The sudden noise made her jump. "Oh...John, you startled me."

"Sorry, Callie, but I just wanted to remind you to start packing your things. Remember, we're going home in two days."

"I know. I've gotten so used to the instruments and panels around here it won't be easy to make the transition to the noise back on Earth."

"Once you get the hang of it, it'll be a lot easier. Besides, you'll have to deal with the noise of the Thunderbird Three simulator when we do get home."

"That's right. I have to get the controls down if I want to fly Thunderbird Three safely. I'll start putting my things together after lunch, unless you need me for something."

"No, that'll be fine, Cal--I mean, Ursa. Need any help here?"

She shook her head. "Things are going fine right now. I've flagged five transmissions, but none of them have required IR being called in as of yet."

"Good. Keep track of those transmissions, and hope things stay quiet between now and Monday."

Callie became curious. "John, has there ever been an emergency situation during the changeover?"

John rubbed his chin trying to recollect. "Actually, no. We've been awfully lucky there. I guess if something like that were to happen, it would really depend on how long the situation's occurring. If it's just started while we're changing over, the relief will take the call. If it's deep into the rescue, the person on duty will get a little overtime work."

She nodded. "That makes sense. Well, I'm gonna get back to tracking these messages and then pack after lunch."

"Okay, I'll leave you to it. And Callie, you're doing a great job up here. You've been a tremendous help to the team."

She blushed. "Thanks, John. That really means a lot to me, coming from someone who's been up here on-and-off for over three years."

He replied, "What's really great is that with you being part of the rotation to Thunderbird Five, I can start joining in on rescues on Earth more often."

"Yes, you can." Her voice sounded distant.

"Callie, are you all right?"

She snapped herself back to reality. "Oh. Oh, yeah. I'm fine."

"Okay. I'll see you later." John left the control room to attend to various other duties around the station.

\*\*\*\*\*Around 12:45 p.m., after eating lunch\*\*\*\*\*

Callie placed her clothing into her suitcase. Her mind, though, was far from thinking about the clothes. I need to make sure I know all the procedures. I'm doing well for myself, but perhaps I can ask John if I can download the procedures to my computer back on the island. I'll feel better remembering the procedures exactly when it is my turn up here.

She could hardly believe she would go home in less than two days. "It's been a ride up here," she said to herself, smiling. "And in a couple of months, I'll have to take care of everything on Thunderbird Five by myself. I just hope I can live up to the expectations."

She looked at the photo of herself and her family outside their home. "I wish I could tell them what I was really doing. I love you, guys. Hopefully I'll get to see you sometime before I take on the individual duties up here."

After placing the photo in the suitcase, she closed it and was done packing her personal belongings. She next went to the closet and made sure of the clothes she wanted to leave behind.

She opted on three pairs of old jeans and four t-shirts. "That'll be fine. I can use these when I'm not in my uniform. I can't wait to wear it when I get home!"

Completing that task, she left her quarters to find John. "John, I need to make a request."

"Sure, Callie, what is it?"

"Would there be a problem if I downloaded the procedures? I want to review what I've learned here on my computer back home."

John said, "From the island, you should be able to access Thunderbird Five's computers from yours. But, if you want to have it on your laptop when you're away from the island, a download shouldn't be a problem."

It took only a short amount of time to download the information from the hard drive into a data cube. She returned to her quarters to place the cube in a smaller part of the suitcase. "That's it. Now I've got everything I need that's going planetside. It'll be great to be back on Earth, soaking up some sunshine." She suddenly gasped. "Oh, man, the national championship game's on Monday night, and it'll be Tuesday afternoon on the island when I see it. I can relax and watch the game."

Callie left her quarters in a happy mood, as she looked forward to being back on Tracy Island.

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 24/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:12:22 GMT

Tracy Island; Saturday, March 31st; 11 AM

Jeff opened his Tracy Industries mailbox and spotted one from Lena. Eager to get that task over and done with, he opened it first. He opened it, smiling at some points, raising an eyebrow occasionally, and thoughtful near the end. That part said:

I also attended a few of the meetings Mr. Peterson was required to be present at during his employment in this department. I felt it would help me determine who had the personality to do well in these meetings. They were informative, but I found that a couple of the supervisors there had an attitude of superiority that I later found out was only due to their seniority.

I later spoke to their boss about this, since one of the women present seemed to be adversely affected by it, and he told me that their attitude was slowly being changed by a program he and a few other second level management employees had initiated six months ago. He also said he would talk to the woman and assure her that their attitude isn't directed at her specifically. He also told me that you knew about it and approved of it. I wanted to let you know that, after hearing about it, it is a good program, one of the best I've ever seen. Have you thought about having someone try it out in your other locations? From what I hear, it might be needed in a few places.

Please don't think me presumptuous, but I had an idea when chatting with Marcie Jacobs, whom I was also considering. She would make a good trainer for future upgrades and new computer programs that would be incorporated into your company's systems.

I took the liberty of asking her if she would be interested in doing such a thing, and she enthusiastically agreed. I know that at present, you have two or three people traveling from state to state doing the training, but I'd like to suggest that you have someone from each office learn it, then train the relevant employees at their own locations. I believe it would save time and money, and the training would take effect better, when shown by someone the people know.

Lena

Jeff sat back and considered her suggestions. I never considered that Jerry's program could be used at other locations. I'll have to check with management in the other locations. And her suggestion about future training is a good one. He chuckled to himself. Save money? I wonder if she realized what she was writing there. Well, I'd better let her know she can tell Steve McNally he has the job. He started to type a reply to her email, then another thought occurred to him. He sat back to contemplate it for a few minutes, then smiled, nodded, and continued his reply.

[i]Post by Hobbeth on 24/01/2005[

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:14:59 GMT  
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"Saturday, March 31, 2068, 2 p.m., Tracy Island

Now, you get up there and lie still," Dianne commanded.

Jeff grinned as he sat on the edge of the bed, then turned his body to lie down on his back.

Dianne took one look at his grinning face and shook her head. She came closer and stood by the bed. Jeff took advantage of the situation and reached out to squeeze part of her behind.

She smacked his hand and went back to looking at his medical chart. "This is serious, mister!" she chided. "I've got to get a good scan of your foot for the doctors back in New York. If they like what they see, then I can take that cast off and you can start physical therapy."

"I've got a different kind of therapy in mind," Jeff said, raising an eyebrow and letting his eyes rove over her.

"So I understand," Dianne retorted. "Jeff, just let me get this done. Then we can talk about what you've got on your mind."

"Only talk?" Jeff asked.

"Well... maybe do something about it, too," Dianne replied. "Now, please lie still. I'm going to use the scanner wrap to do this. It will give me a better picture."

She took out a wide black band of flexible, woven vinyl with Velcro patches here and there. Wrapping it around his foot right over the cast, she then plugged the ends of the band into ports in the side of the scanner bed. Then she stepped back to a computer station in the room. A few keystrokes and the deep scanning began.

The whole process took around 30 minutes. Dianne manipulated the image several times, trying to get the right angle to see the affected parts of Jeff's foot. She sighed.

"I know that sigh," Jeff said from the bed. "What's wrong, love?"

"I don't know if they'll consider you healed enough or not,"

Dianne replied. "There are a couple of spots that look iffy to me, but then, I'm not an orthopod. They might think that those places are just fine." She sighed again. "I'll get this uploaded and sent out to Mt. Sinai right away."

She saved the scan and sent the file to her hard drive, from which she would email the file to the hospital half a world away. Then she shut down the scanner and extricated Jeff's foot from it, helping him sit up.

"So, lady, what are we going to do about what's on my mind?" Jeff asked, putting his arms around her as he sat on the edge of the tall diagnostic and surgical bed.

Dianne took in a deep breath and let it out. "I really need to send this off, Jeff. And after what I saw on the scan, I'm not in the mood. Can we do something later?"

Jeff nodded. "Sure. Whenever you're ready, love. I can see that the scan results have you concerned. You get this taken care of." He slid off the table, landing on one foot, his arms still around her. She laid her head on his shoulder briefly, then turned her face up to him. He wove the fingers of one hand through her brown and silver waves as he planted a passionate kiss on her lips. One, two more, and he reluctantly let her go. She handed him his crutches.

"I'll see you later, dear heart," he said as he left the surgical room and headed out of the infirmary altogether.

"Later, love," Dianne echoed. She sighed once more, then put away her equipment and went into her office to send the scan to the appropriate people.

Post by Tikatu on 24/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:16:52 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Saturday, March 31

Cherie wandered into the kitchen to see what her grandmother was doing.

"Hello, Cherie, love. Do you want to help?" Emily asked.

"As a matter of fact, Grandma, I ... well .... we, that is Tyler and Alex and me, we were thinking that we would like to help prepare a special meal for when Callie and John return."

"That's a very good idea! What did you have in mind?"

"Well, John will be easy; he likes steak, corn on the cob, and of course your apple pie. Callie likes okra." Here Cherie hesitated. "I know what it is, but it may be kind of difficult to get it here, and I haven't a clue how you use it."

"Mm, okra," Emily thought for a moment. "I wonder? Well, honey, you leave that to me. Tell Tyler and Alex that they can both help, but I don't want any fooling around."

"Thanks, Grandma!" Cherie left to find her brothers.

"Okay," Cherie told her siblings with a serious face. "Grandma says you can help, but this is serious. No fooling around."

"Aw, Cherie!" Tyler looked at his sister. "We won't fool around, honest! We really want to make this a special homecoming."

"Okay, then. This will be the menu." Cherie outlined what she and Emily had talked about.

"Okra! Yuck, I hate it," Alex said, making a face.

"Well, Callie likes it," Cherie retorted, "and we are cooking for her homecoming."

Meanwhile Emily had been talking to Kyrano.

"Okra is not a problem, Mrs. Tracy, I have some okra in the freezer and I know one or two recipes to make with it."

That afternoon, Cherie and her brothers were standing in the kitchen with Emily and Kyrano.

"Now you three, for dinner when Callie and John return, there will be steak, baked potato, corn on the cob, chicken gumbo and a special vegetarian dish for Dominic and Kat, followed by apple pie a la mode," Emily explained. "So on the day that they return, I want you three here nice and early, so that everything can be prepared on time."

All three nodded their heads.

"I can't wait to see John and Callie's faces when we tell them that we have prepared their meal," Tyler said.

Later that evening, Cherie approached Virgil. "Virgil?" Cherie asked her older brother. "Could you help me? I want to do something special for when Callie returns."

"Sure, Cherie, what have you in mind?"

Cherie whispered, and Virgil nodded. "But keep it a secret.," she added.

Virgil followed her and her brothers into her bedroom. For the next half an hour all four were painting, until Cherie held it up.

Welcome home John and Callie

The banner was safely hidden away, and the three giggling children headed back into the lounge.

"What are you three up to?" Gordon asked.

"It's a surprise," was all that Cherie would tell him.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 24/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:18:11 GMT  
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Sunday, April 1, 2068, 8:00 a.m., Tracy Island

Dianne stirred; her body, accustomed to the rhythm of the weekday routine, waking her enough to look at the clock and groan. She rolled over, spooning herself to a still sleeping Jeff, pressing herself to his back and throwing an arm over his waist. Her movement and touch roused her husband, and he turned back toward her with a sleepy, "Huh?"

"Do you know what day this is?" she asked quietly.

"N-No," he answered groggily. "What?"

"It's April first."

Now it was Jeff's turn to groan. "Ugh. Can we just skip this day and go on to the second?"

"Wish we could, love," Dianne murmured. "I wonder what Gordon's got in store for us today?"

Jeff finished rolling over, the casted ankle still unwieldy. "Whatever it is, he'd better wait until we all wake up."

Dianne sighed as Jeff's hand began to smooth over her side. "He's got a greater scope and a bigger audience to work with this year," she said. "We'd best warn the new recruits."

"Mm hmm," he responded as he drew her close, planting a hot kiss on her lips.

She smiled. "I guess the warning can wait a little while," she said breathily as Jeff took his kisses elsewhere on her body.

"Right," he said, a word that turned into a small moan as Dianne began to reply with kisses and touches of her own.

\*\*\*\*\*

Down the hall, Gordon lay on his bed, hands pillowed behind his head, thinking.

I'm not prepared for playing pranks today, he admitted. So, what do I do? Can't play jokes on people without the proper preparation. And people are expecting me to... hey! Wait a minute! That's perfect! People are expecting me to play pranks on them. What if I went around looking like I was up to something? It would make people nervous and they'd be looking over their shoulders all day long! Yeah! That's it! My April Fool's day prank will be... not to prank!

Smiling, he got up and changed from his bedtime gear of shorts and a t-shirt and pulled out his swim trunks. He whistled jauntily as he left for his morning swim and run.

Post by Tikatu on 25/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

After waking up early for a morning jog, Nikki decided to sit by the pool to get her breath back. She didn't notice Gordon in the swimming pool until she sat down. She waited until he surfaced before she spoke.

"Good morning."

"Morning," Gordon replied. "Enjoying the view?"

"Ah, I've seen better," Nikki joked. "How's the water?"

"Perfect as always. You gonna join?" Gordon swam to the edge of the pool and rested his arms on the concrete.

"I might later. I just want to relax for now." Nikki rubbed her bare arm. A while back, a slight bruise used to live there, from the time they all went out for Alan's birthday and he held onto her arm, while trying to get her to leave Jake to go back home. A slight smile played on Nikki's lips as she thought about Jake. She seemed to go off into her own little dream land before closing her eyes.

xxxx

Alan stretched and walked out onto the balcony. He saw his brother doing his morning laps and noticed Nikki soon join him.

Uh oh, he thought. I should warn her about Gordon's April 1st traditions.

xxxx

Gordon grinned at the fact that Nikki seemed to forget she was talking to him. He looked across when he saw his brother approaching. "Morning bro."

"Hey Gordo. So what have you got planned for today? I know you have something up your sleeve."

"Hello, sleeveless."

"You know what I mean."

"I have no idea." Gordon smirked. He lowered his hand into the pool and threw a handful of water towards Nikki. "Time to wake up."

Nikki jumped. "Hey!" For the first time, she noticed the presence of the fifth Tracy brother. "Morning, Alan. When did you get here?"

Gordon laughed. "What were you day dreaming about?"

"Nothing major. Just thinking about the time we went out for Alan's birthday. I wish we could do

something like that again. It was fun."

"You spent most of the night with some guy." Alan folded his arms. "What was his name? James? Josh?"

"It was Jake. And I didn't spend most of the night with him." Nikki narrowed her eyes slightly. "I wish I did," she mumbled afterwards. She raised her voice again. "Anyway, it's not like you didn't have a good time with some of the women there. I heard you got quite a few phone numbers."

"Yes I did," Alan gloated. "Those girls were like putty in my hands once they realised I was the famous Alan Tracy."

Don't go there, Alan, Gordon thought inwardly as he winced slightly.

Nikki rolled her eyes at his comment. "Putty in your hands?"

"Yeah. Because of who I am, they'll do anything to get my attention."

"I can't believe you just said that." Nikki stood up to go to her room.

"What's up? Jealous?" Alan asked.

"Oh please. Like I'd be jealous, especially when that's your attitude towards women. Thinking they would bow down to your every need because you have a famous name." Nikki walked away.

Alan turned back to his brother. "What just happened there?"

"Now you remember I'm still here?" Gordon shook his head. "You've still got a lot to learn about women."

Post by Nikki-browneyes1 on 25/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:22:31 GMT  
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Sunday 01 April. 9.00am. Tracy Island.

The quiet clank of the washer-dryer, working its magic on some dirty clothes, and the light tapping of a well-worn high-top sneaker on the hard floor were the only sounds in the cliff house laundry room. Dominic leant back against another of the machines, his arms folded and head down, hair falling across his face. The relative quiet and the rhythmic sounds of the tapping and the machine were helping to lull him into a daze, and he didn't fight it. Perhaps it was what he needed.

So it was the first of April once again. He remembered the excitement of practical jokes in his youth, hanging out with his friends and trying to catch each other out in the most unique way possible. Now, however, that enthusiasm had gone, for a particularly poignant reason. It had

become a sombre day, on which the twenty-seven year old felt like he was seventy-seven. Sometimes he wished it would just go away.

Quiet was something he now always sought on this day, and he had been particularly glad when Kyrano, on seeing his dampened spirits in sharp contrast to the exuberance of the child he was trailing after, had kindly taken Joshua off his hands, promising the little blond a lesson in cookery. Of course, the two-year-old had no idea what Kyrano had said, but he was happy enough to go off with the wizened, intriguing man, and Dominic had taken the time to get some of his mound of washing done, and to think for a little while.

He was caught off-guard, however, by a soft 'hello', and he jumped sharply, letting out an embarrassingly un-manly squeak. He felt a flush creep into his face as Nikki placed a basket of her own washing on one of the counters, and he gave her a wan smile and a quiet 'hello' back.

The young woman began to sort out her laundry, and she glanced over him, concerned. He seemed to have visibly deflated, with his shoulders slumped and his arms tucked in. Something was up.

"Are you okay, Dom?" She asked.

"Hmm? Oh, yeah, I'm all right."

"You look very down-in-the-dumps for a guy who's 'all right'," Nikki said with a slight grin. Men. If they weren't saying too much -- Alan sprang to mind -- they weren't saying enough.

"It's nothin'. I'm fine, honest." He tried to smile, but it didn't quite come out right. It felt wrong, bent out of shape, as if he had been out of practice for a while, even though he hadn't.

"Come on, Dom. We're friends, right? Friends help each other, right? Tell me."

They had indeed become fast friends, and Dominic sighed, letting his arms fall to his sides, fingers drumming lightly on the machine behind him. He took in the compassion evident in the woman, his friend, before him, and he caved. He always seemed to, when it came to anyone who showed even a little bit of concern.

"It's the sixth anniversary of my mother's death, today," he said quietly.

Nikki had perhaps not been expecting such a revelation, but she took it in her stride if she hadn't, and her face softened into compassion.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Dom."

He waved it off, and shook his head. It really wasn't that big of a deal; at least, not as big as it had been before.

"It's okay. I'm just a bit down right now. I'll bounce back in a few hours, I expect. It's just hard sometimes when I think about it." He sighed as memories floated back in of her last few years of illness. "She was only forty-nine. She died of lung cancer."

"I'm sorry," Nikki said again.

She didn't seem to know what else to say, and there wasn't much. He had been in her position many times before, so he knew how tough it was.

His washer-dryer stopped clanking, sounding the end of the cycle, and he gave her a small smile before beginning to cross the room to unload the clothing. He stopped as Nikki called him, and he found himself enveloped in a swift, comforting hug. Nikki grinned as she went back to her own washing, and he smiled back.

"Thanks, Nik," he said, "I think I needed that."

He transferred the clothing into his laundry basket and nodded his goodbye, heading up to his apartment to do some ironing. It seemed, now, that some of the gloom had lifted, and he felt considerably lighter as he ascended in the lift. The smile playing on his lips felt natural, now, and the memories that came back were much, much happier.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 26/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:40:02 GMT  
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Tracy Island and Christchurch, New Zealand, Sunday April 1st 2068

Christopher joined Mrs Tracy, Cherie, Alex and Tyler in the lounge.

"Thank you for offering to fly us to Christchurch," Emily said, smiling at Christopher.

"That's quite okay, Mrs. Tracy. To be honest, I have an ulterior motive. I'm doing some shopping for Kyrano."

Emily raised her eyebrows, "You are?"

Christopher was just about to explain, when he noticed Cherie and her brothers watching them. "I'll explain later," was all that he would say.

Taxiing along the runway at Christchurch, Christopher smoothly brought the plane to a halt. The small group went through arrivals. Once outside, Christopher hailed a taxi and they were soon heading for the centre of Christchurch and the shops.

"Grandma?" Alex looked at Emily. "Please may we have an ice cream before we start shopping?"

Emily hesitated, then said, "I guess it won't hurt or spoil your dinner. There's an ice cream parlour across the road. Let's do this now and get it over with."

As the children hurried on ahead of them, Grandma hung back to pace Christopher. "Now, Christopher, what's this secret shopping trip all about?"

Christopher shuffled his feet. "Well, Mrs Tracy, I want to prepare a special meal for Tin-Tin. I asked Kyrano what were her favourite foods, and he has given me a list, and will show me how to prepare the meal."

Emily gave him a thoughtful look. Christopher, thinking he sensed disapproval, said hastily, "Do you think she would like that?"

Emily smiled and nodded. "Oh, I'm sure she will, but I wasn't thinking of Tin-Tin. I was thinking of Alan."

"Alan!" Christopher looked startled. "But they finished a long time ago."

"True, but I think he is still protective of her. He wouldn't want to see her hurt." She paused. "In fact, all my grandsons are rather protective of her. They see her as a little sister sometimes."

"Mrs. Tracy, I like Tin-Tin. I want to get to know her better. I would never hurt her."

"Hm. Yes. See to it that you don't, Christopher." She smiled at him, and the trepidation he felt melted away. "I hope your meal is a success. Now, I have to appease these wild Apaches with some ice cream. See you back here in, say, two hours?"

"Okay, will meet you then." Christopher hurried away.

Emily watched him go. Well, he is a nice young man, and Tin-Tin needs a nice young man in her life. He certainly would be better for her than that Mr. Tallman we met in Afghanistan.

As she entered the ice cream parlour, Emily glimpsed a tall young man sitting in the far corner, accompanied by a tall blonde woman. She gasped.

"What's the matter, Grandma?" Tyler asked.

"Nothing... nothing, dear. I just saw someone who reminded me of someone else." The gentleman in question had looked so much like Mr Tallman that he had given Emily quite a start. He was one person that she never wanted to meet again.

Having finished their ice cream, they left the shop and headed towards the store to start buying their groceries. Soon their shopping cart was loaded with what they needed for John and Callie's homecoming dinner.

Christopher went round a cornucopia of shops, buying ingredients for the meal. He bought fish, vegetables, and a number of spices and sauces. Kyrano had given him permission to use his kitchen equipment, as long as he washed up afterwards of course.

Finally, he purchased supplies for Asterix as well. Paying for the goods, he headed back to the meeting place, but not before buying a huge bunch of flowers.

"Perfect," he chuckled to himself as he saw the others waiting for him.

"Who're the flowers for?" Tyler wanted to know.

"I bet they're for Callie, to welcome her home," Alex grinned. Christopher coloured slightly.

"Now, you two," Emily said, frowning at Alex and Tyler. "That's none of your business." She winked at Christopher, who smiled at her in return.

Post by Tawnyangel22 (with copious recent edits by Tikatu) on 26/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:41:40 GMT

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Saturday, March 31; Tracy Penthouse, NYC; 9 PM (2 PM April 1 on Tracy Island)

Lena tiredly turned on her laptop to check on her email. Her daughter and grandchildren hadn't let her touch a computer from the time she got back to the penthouse the previous afternoon until now. They'd said that work time was over and she had to spend the weekend doing things with them. Laughing, she'd thrown her hands up and agreed, saying, "Okay, okay. When de tree of you gang up on me like dis, I know better dan to argue. What did you all want to do?"

She found out very quickly. That night they'd gone to a show and a late dinner, then the next day, they went sightseeing. They took in two museums, a boat trip around Manhattan Island, plus a visit to Rockefeller Center and the Statue of Liberty. By the time they returned to the penthouse, she was exhausted. The next day, they told her, they would all slow down and just go to one more museum, Lincoln Center, then lunch and a matinée. She chuckled, shook her head and headed to her room for a much-needed nap before dinner.

After they ate, the twins went to the computer to write reports of what they'd seen and done (part of the homework assigned to them by their mother). The two women sat and chatted for an hour. Then Lena went to her room to bathe and sleep. But first, she wanted to check her computer mailboxes.

There were several emails, both in her personal and her Tracy Industries boxes. She immediately noticed the one from Jeff but - certain that whatever it said, she would forget about the others if she opened it right away - checked the rest of the messages first. They were easily dealt with, and it wasn't long before there was only one message left. She opened it and read it.

Lena,

I reread the file on Steven McNally after receiving your recommendation, and completely agree that he should get the job. Would you please tell him Monday morning? He can move into his new office immediately afterward.

Your recommendation about the "attitude adjustment" program is a good one. I have asked Jerry, the creator, to see where the need for it is the greatest and formulate a plan for implementing it in those locations. I appreciate your heads up on this.

About your "presumptuousness"; you acted properly and it was a timely suggestion. I did have three people traveling and training, but one has left, due to being diagnosed with an inoperable malignant tumor (you'd think that, by now, they'd have found a way to deal with that sort of thing), and another is on maternity leave. I like the idea of having someone (or two) from each I&M department meet in one location to be trained on a new program or an upgrade, then returning to train the others in their location. Well done, Lena.

This brings me to an offer I'd like to make you. I've had it in the back of my mind for a while now to create the position of I&M coordinator. I would like to offer it to you, in addition to your job as I&M supervisor in DC. It would mean traveling at least once a month, to visit one of the other offices, but you would be gone for only a few days at a time. Would you be interested? Take your time and think about it, then let me know your decision.

Jeff Tracy

Lena sat back, stunned. What have you gotten yourself into, woman? More challenges, plus a chance to travel, which you always said you wanted to do. But I don't know . . .

A knock on the door interrupted her thoughts, and Joy peeked in. "Mom, I just wanted to see if you were all right. I know we exhausted you; I'm pretty tired out myself . . . What's the matter?"

"I got an email from Mr. Tracy. He not only agrees with my recommendation, he wants me to be the coordinator of all the I&M offices in the states. This would involve traveling to a different city each month for face-to-face meetings with the people there."

"Really? That's wonderful, Mom. How many cities does he have branches in, anyway?"

"I don't know, Joy. Let me see; there's this one and the one in DC, then Los Angeles, Honolulu . . ."

"Hawaii?" Both women turned to see Naomi at the door. "Wow, Nyanya, that would be great! Are you going to take the job?"

"It would mean a lot more responsibility, Naomi, and I would have less time to be with my family. I wonder if I would be up to it."

"Of course you would, Mom," Joy exclaimed. "You're in excellent health and more energetic than most people twenty years younger. Plus, you know how much you like challenges. I think you should take it."

"Me too, Nyanya. Especially if you could take family members along on some of those trips."

Lena laughed. "Now, I'm not so sure about that, young lady. I don't intend to abuse the privileges given me. But I need to think about this offer some more, and consult with your uncle. I want him to have a say, too." She sighed and saved Jeff's message, then shut down her computer. "And right

now, I'm going to bade and have a good night's sleep. So you two shoo. I'll see you tomorrow." She grinned at them.

"Okay, Nyanya. Oh, wait until Kevin hears about this!" Naomi immediately disappeared.

Joy laughed. "Anytime you want something broadcast, just tell Naomi." She gave her mother a hug and a kiss on the cheek. "I agree you should think about it when you're not so tired, and talk to the rest of the family, but I really believe you should take the job. It isn't like you'd be gone for weeks at a time, and I suspect you'll be able to schedule the trips so they won't conflict with anything going on in your family's life. But I'm keeping you from your bath and bed. Sleep well, Mom."

"Tank you, Joy. You, too." Joy left the room, closing the door behind her, and Lena turned and headed into the bathroom, wondering what was next in store for her.

Post by Hobbeth on 27/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:44:44 GMT  
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1st April 6pm

Christopher walked into the kitchen, looking around and trying not to look suspicious. Kyrano was there preparing food for the evening meal.

"Mission accomplished, Kyrano!" Christopher smiled as he held up the bag of produce. "And I'm keeping Asterix happy for the next few weeks."

(Flashback)

BEEP BEEP BEEP

"Shurrrup!" Christopher mumbled as he pressed the button on top of his alarm clock. He opened his eyes slowly to see Asterix looking at him reproachfully, before the little cat started to clean himself.

"Off you get," Christopher said as he turfed Asterix off the bed. "Your Dad has got a lot to do today."

Yawning and scratching himself, Christopher trudged to the bathroom and took a shower. The hot water massaged his joints as he went through the tasks for the day. After drying himself off, he trudged to the kitchen and chuckled to himself as Asterix began winding himself around his master's feet, purring and meowing.

"I love you too." Christopher smiled as he opened the cupboard to get the cat food. He couldn't find anything.

"Asterix," he said as he looked down at the expectant face of his pet. "I've run out of cat food"

Asterix looked up at him and tilted his head. "Rrrroow!" he expressed impatiently.

"I know!" Christopher kept looking in the cupboard. "You are eating it too quickly."

Christopher walked over to the fridge and opened it, taking out a dish of chopped up chicken. The 'emergency supplies' he called it. After unwrapping the dish, he placed it on the floor, but not before shaking some of the dried food on the top. Asterix started eating straight away.

"Take it easy, lad," Christopher said. "This has to last you until I go shopping later today." Thankfully, Mr Tracy had said that he could fly the elder Mrs Tracy and the children to Christchurch. It would give him an opportunity to get the ingredients he wanted.

Shaking his head, Christopher wandered out of the apartment, and after a short walk he found himself in the spot where Kyrano had told him where the flowers he wanted were situated.

He selected some lovely flowers. "She'll love these," Christopher muttered to himself, then he went back to his flat where he put the flowers in a preservation gel and wrapped them in some nice paper before writing a cryptic message card without his signature.

Going back to the lift, he went down to the monorail terminal. Getting inside the car, he pressed the button that took him to the Villa.

The monorail doors slid open and Christopher walked out along the corridor to the main Villa complex.

As he counted on, nobody was awake yet, so he headed to the dining room. Pausing for a moment, he placed the bouquet on the table there, in Tin-Tin's normal place. Then with a small smile to himself, he walked away.

(End of Flashback)

"So did Tin-Tin like the flowers?" Christopher asked eagerly.

"My daughter was surprised and tried to discover who had sent them," Kyrano's eyes sparkled. He looked around his kitchen.

"All is prepared Mr Jordan," he said. "Good luck with your endeavours."

"Thank you, Kyrano." Christopher smiled.

The old man left the kitchen. Christopher saw Cherie setting the table. Walking nonchalantly into the dining room he said to the girl, "Don't worry, Cherie. I haven't forgotten my promise." Christopher had asked Cherie the evening before to help him keep people out of the kitchen as he worked on the special meal, promising her a chocolate mousse all her own as a reward for her diligence.

Cherie just smiled as Christopher headed back into the kitchen to begin his work.

Post by The\_Wrong\_Trousers1 on 28/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:46:24 GMT

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Sunday, April 1, 2068, 6:58, The boat pen, Tracy Island.

Tin-Tin looked around nervously. The cryptic note she had gotten with the beautiful tropical bouquet at breakfast said she was invited to dinner and she should wait for her escort in the boat pen at seven.

"Gordon, if this is one of your practical jokes, I'm going to wring your neck," she muttered as she waited in the natural cavern, the only sound that of the water lapping up against the concrete slips where the boats were anchored. She didn't know quite what to wear, so she chose a light sundress, not too fancy and not too casual, and had put her dark hair back in a matching headband. She hugged herself, checked her watch, and waited.

Christopher walked carefully up to the boat pen, and peered inside. He stifled a gasp when he saw Tin-tin standing there. "You look gorgeous," he whispered to himself as he walked in and coughed a little, then said aloud, "Hello, Tin-Tin."

"Christopher!" Tin-Tin cried. "You startled me!" She smiled shyly. "Were you the one who left those lovely flowers for me this morning?"

"Yes." Christopher blushed. "That was me. I hope you liked them." He moved closer, smelling her scent. "You look lovely tonight."

"Oh, thank you. You're so sweet. And the flowers are lovely," she told him, regarding him carefully. "I put them in a vase in my room." She smiled again, a bit more warmly. "You said something about dinner?"

"It's waiting for us at my place." Christopher smiled. "All cooked with my own fair hands. I hope you are hungry."

"I am!" she said. "I didn't know you could cook."

"I had to learn in RAF." Christopher held out the crook of his arm. "And I will say that I'm not too bad at it." He smiled again. "Shall we go?"

"Lead on, sir." Tin-Tin's smile was now almost coquettish as she took Christopher's arm and he led her to the monorail car.

As he sat in the monorail car with Tin-Tin, Christopher felt a mixture of elation and pure

unadulterated nerves. He talked to her about various things, anything to keep the flow going. The monorail car stopped and the doors opened. "After you," Christopher said as he held out his hand.

"Thank you," she said, slipping one foot out gracefully. The other foot, however, didn't follow quite as smoothly. Her sandal's heel got caught in the small gap between the monorail and the terminal's platform. Not only did her heel break off, but she pitched forward. Christopher tried to catch her, but she fell to her hands and knees, scraping one knee on the concrete.

Christopher helped her to her feet. "I'm sorry!" he said, a look of terror on his face. "Are you okay? Can I look at that knee for you?"

Tin-Tin sighed. "It's okay. I'm just a bit clumsy today. If I can wash it off when we get to your apartment, and maybe put some ice on it, it will be all right."

Christopher picked up the heel, and helped Tin-Tin to his apartment. He bade her to sit then he went to the kitchen to get a clean cloth, some warm water, and some ice. He cleaned the scrape then placed an ice pack on the knee. "Would you like a glass of wine?"

"That sounds lovely," she replied, smiling, then wincing as she put the ice on her knee.

Pouring two glasses, he sat next to her and passed a glass over. "I've cooked something very Oriental in feel," he said. "Then for pudding I've made chocolate mousse."

"Oooh, chocolate mousse! My favorite!" Tin-Tin gushed. Then she gave Christopher a sideways look and a knowing smile. "Have you been talking to Father?"

"Well," Christopher said, giving her a deadpan stare. "I did ask him a few questions about what you liked, and he was right about one thing."

"And what was that?" she asked, taking a sip of her wine.

"Not much gets past you." Christopher smiled then sipped from his glass. His nervousness was subsiding. "Are you ready to eat?"

"Yes. I'm famished," Tin-Tin declared.

Christopher offered her his hand, and helped her off his sofa, giving her support as she limped out to the balcony. Pulling the chair out, he helped Tin-Tin sit down. He poured another glass of wine before heading to the kitchen, where he was keeping the food warm. He brought out the plates and dishes and placed them on the table. "Voila!" he said as he removed the covers to reveal a sumptuous meal.

"Oh, Christopher! Everything looks so delicious!" Tin-Tin cried. "All my favorites!"

He picked up the chopsticks and looked at them with a degree of trepidation. "There is only one thing I'm not good at, and that is using chopsticks." Unwrapping them, he tried with little success to pick up some fish from the main dish.

"Oh, let me show you how," Tin-Tin said, taking the chopstick in her left hand. "See, you hold this one like you would a pencil, and you slide the other inside the fold of your thumb and forefinger." She demonstrated. "Then you use the upper stick for actually gripping, and the lower for support." She picked up a small chunk of fish, and brought it up easily, slipping it between her lips and chewing. "See? It's not hard. It just takes a bit of practice."

"You make it look so easy," Christopher said as he manipulated his chopsticks again. Finally he managed to pick up a piece a fish, his tongue sticking out of one side of his mouth with concentration.

Tin-Tin watched him surreptitiously, thinking how cute he looked with that tongue sticking out, just like a little boy who was trying to do something hard. She ate another bite, carefully lifting it with her chopsticks.

"I like living here," Christopher said, after finishing his food. "It's very calm and very nice and I have something to keep me going. And I'm happy to have met you."

Tin-Tin looked down at her plate. "I'm happy to have met you, too, Christopher. I remember when we first met and how interested you were in the Ladybird and how we sang those strange songs...."

Christopher was about to say something when a familiar 'Miaow' came from the kitchen. Asterix ran out onto the balcony, then leapt onto the table. "I wondered where you had got to," Christopher said as he stroked his pet's head. "Sorry, old boy, but I'm rather busy right now."

"Oh, he's so cute," Tin-Tin said, reaching out to pet the kitten. Asterix growled deep in his throat, and with a snarl, swiped a paw out, raking four parallel scratches down Tin-Tin's hand. "Ow!" she shrieked, pulling her hand away and pressing her napkin to it.

"Asterix!" Christopher shouted as he rushed around to where Tin-Tin was sitting "You bad cat! Go to bed, go on!" Asterix leapt at Tin-Tin, hissing loudly. His hackles were raised. He knocked the glass of wine over, the red liquid splashing over her dress. Asterix hissed again before he started to make choking noises.

Tin-Tin pulled back in terror as Asterix hacked and hacked and suddenly produced... a hairball. Right in the middle of the table.

"Oh, disgusting!" Tin-Tin cried, pulling back even further. The back legs of her chair caught on the balcony tiles, and despite Christopher's efforts to catch her, she and the chair fell over backwards.

Christopher helped Tin-Tin up. "I'm so so sorry! He isn't like this normally." Giving Asterix a look of venom, he decided to serve the pudding indoors. "I'll get some cleaning solution for your dress." Helping her indoors, Christopher cleared the table while Asterix sat there cleaning himself. "I'll speak to you in the morning you bad cat!"

Christopher took out the pudding, all swirled and chocolaty in a clear crystal bowl. Tin-Tin took one look at it and shook her head. It reminded her vividly of the hairball.

"I'm sorry, Christopher, but I... I don't feel well. I think I should go back to the Villa."

"Okay," Christopher sighed. "Would you like me to escort you back?"

"N-No, that's not necessary. I can make it back myself," she said, limping toward the front door and the lift. He sighed again, and called the elevator for her.

After Tin-Tin left, Christopher turned back into his flat, feeling very miserable. His evening ruined by a jealous cat!

Asterix was sitting on the sofa, looking very pleased with himself. "You ruined my carefully planned evening, you did!" the frustrated man said angrily before picking up the bowl of mousse from the tray. Shaking his head, he plunged the spoon in and began to eat.

Post by The\_Wrong\_Trousers1 and Tikatu on 29/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:49:48 GMT  
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Sunday, April 1, 2068, 7:35 p.m., Tracy Island

Tin-Tin sat in the monorail car on the way back to the Villa, wiping away tears. The evening had started out so promising, but had turned from bad to worse when Asterix had put in an appearance. "I don't think that cat likes me," Tin-Tin murmured, stifling a sob. Her back ached from falling onto the balcony floor and her knee throbbed from her earlier fall. I think I might need some help getting to my quarters. And maybe Dianne should have a look at the knee. It is rather swollen.

With a sigh, she activated her wrist communicator. "Tin-Tin to Dianne."

Dianne, who was out by the pool watching her children swim, was surprised to hear from Tin-Tin. She was more surprised to see how downcast the usually bubbly young woman was. "Dianne here. What can I do for you, Tin-Tin?"

"I've, uh, had a couple of falls, and I think I'd like you to look at my knee. It's rather swollen."

"Where are you?" Dianne asked, getting up and crossing over to Jeff, who sat closer to the water, his cast wrapped in plastic, throwing a beach ball to his children and catching it.

"I'm in the monorail and just coming into the main terminal," Tin-Tin replied. "Can you meet me here?"

"Sure thing, hun. Be there in a tick. Dianne out." She leaned over and told Jeff where she was going. He nodded, and then turned back to his game.

Tin-Tin waited in the monorail car for Dianne to arrive. She colored when she saw that Dianne had brought along a wheelchair. The doctor left the chair out in the terminal and entered the car,

bringing along her mobile scanner.

"Where did you hurt yourself?" Dianne asked as she scanned Tin-Tin's knee.

"My knee, mostly. And my back," Tin-Tin answered.

"How did it happen?"

Tin-Tin sighed heavily, and told Dianne all about the ruined meal.

"Let me see your hand," Dianne said. "Hmm. Looks like he got you but good. We'll have to put some antiseptic on that and a bit of skin glue. Keep the scarring to a minimum." Dianne gave Tin-Tin a sympathetic smile. "One day, you'll look back and laugh at this," she told her disconsolate patient.

"Maybe," Tin-Tin replied doubtfully. Dianne helped her to her feet and into the wheelchair for transport.

An hour later, Tin-Tin was back in her quarters, sitting on her sofa, pillows behind her back as she sat against the arm and propped her leg on the length of the couch. She was in her most comfortable pair of drawstring pants and a t-shirt, a combination she would never let anyone see outside of her suite.

Her back was only bruised; she would have to wait for it to heal. The knee had been sprained, and Tin-Tin had been given an anti-inflammatory injection, some pain medication, and a pair of crutches, and was told to stay off of it and alternate ice and heat for the next few hours. The scratches had been cleaned and a light coating of skin adhesive was sprayed on, then Dianne used the laser at a low setting to set the glue. Already the scratches could barely be seen.

She had her laptop on her lap and was sipping from a glass of ice water when she noticed she had some email. Clicking on her inbox, she smiled, and proceeded to open up and chuckle at the latest missive from Giles Tallman.

Post by Tikatu on 29/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:52:33 GMT  
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Sunday, April 1, 2068, 10:45 p.m. Tracy Island.

"Y'know something, Dianne?" Jeff asked as he pulled a pair of pajama pants, cut open on one side to accommodate his cast.

"What, dear?" Dianne answered as she slid a silky chemise over her head.

"I do believe that Gordon did not play a prank all day," Jeff said.

Dianne turned around, her face thoughtful. Then her eyebrows went up in surprise. "I think you're right. He made everyone nervous by staring at them, or approaching them with a hand behind the back or something. And I know that the boys were all checking their shampoo bottles and other things very diligently today. But there hasn't been one report of a prank. Not one."

Jeff chuckled. "The joke's on us, I guess."

"What do you mean?"

"I think that Gordon's prank this year was not to play a joke at all, but make us think all day that he was going to."

Dianne chuckled, too. "Very subtle. And I don't think anyone else will figure it out. No one but the man who knows Gordon better than anyone." She crawled across the bed on her knees and put her arms around Jeff's neck from the back, letting her arms hang down on his chest. He turned back to look at her, and, with some effort, they managed a sweet kiss.

Post by Tikatu on 30/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:54:38 GMT  
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Thunderbird Five: 1:45pm Monday April 2nd, 2068

"Hey Callie, are you packed yet?" John called to his teammate. They had both finished their shift on Thunderbird Five and were waiting for their ride home.

"Just one more thing, John." She had placed her last shirt into her suitcase and closed it. I can't wait to wear that new uniform.

"That's good, because Scott will be here soon and he doesn't like to be kept waiting."

Callie poked her head around the corner, looking at John. "Hey, I'm ready to go. All we have to do is wait for our ride to arrive."

"Did you get a response to that e-mail?" John asked.

"Yeah, I did. Joe said he and the family had to brace themselves a week ago because of a tornado outbreak. Fortunately, Opp was pretty much spared from damage."

"That's good to hear," John replied. Callie watched as John checked over the monitors, making sure they were working properly. He was about to say more to her when the radio crackled to life.

"Thunderbird Three to Thunderbird Five. Do you copy?"

Callie looked at John. After he nodded, she went to the microphone and spoke. "Thunderbird Three, this is Thunderbird Five, reading you strength five."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Five. Initiating docking sequence." Scott completed the docking sequence in about two minutes, and soon he and Alan were on board Thunderbird Five.

"Hi, guys," said Alan. "Callie, how did things go up here?"

"I'm getting the hang of it. I just hope when it's time for me to go solo up here, I can live up to the expectations."

"Don't worry about it, Callie. You can do it. You've already shown us you're capable," Scott said.

"Scott's right," Alan replied. "You've proven yourself several times over."

Callie smiled at the guys. "Thanks, you guys. That means a lot."

"So," Scott said, a smile on his face. "Who's ready to go home?"

"Hey, you don't have to ask me twice," John answered. "I've been ready for quite a while."

Callie looked around the station one last time. "I'm gonna miss this place."

Alan looked at her in surprise. "Callie, you'll be back up here next month, all by yourself."

"I know. But that doesn't mean I still can't miss the place," Callie said jokingly.

"After you've been up here a month, the island will be a welcome sight," John replied, looking at her.

Scott cleared his throat to get their attention. "I hate to interrupt, but we need to be off. Father doesn't like it when we take too long dropping off the relief."

"Wait a minute, Scott!" Alan shouted. "What about the supplies, the food?" Alan was so wound up he didn't see his brother laughing behind his hand.

Callie, however, knew it was a lot more serious. "He's right. We need to get the supplies unloaded first. Shall we, gentlemen?"

With an extra pair of hands to help, it didn't take long for the supplies to be offloaded. After a little more small talk, Thunderbird Three departed for home. The ride in Thunderbird Three was surprisingly smooth. Of course, the only disadvantage was no windows, meaning no one could see outside. Scott and John were at the pilot seats while Callie sat behind them.

She looked at the plasma screen and saw the bright stars. It's nice, but it doesn't feel the same as seeing them from a window.

In the co-pilot's seat, Scott watched John as he piloted Thunderbird Three home. "Does it feel

good to be back in a Thunderbird that actually moves?"

Callie was a little transfixed to the screen and had to snap back to reality. "Huh? Oh, yeah. It's nice to be going home." Scott grinned, nudging John in the arm.

John chuckled, "Yes, it does. Believe it or not, I actually like feeling the vibrations of the ship and hearing the engines. It's a welcome change from the beeps and electronic hum of the consoles aboard Five."

Callie looked up from the plasma screen. "You know what sounds I'm looking forward to?" When Scott and John didn't answer, she continued, "I'm looking forward to the sounds of the birds."

Post by MagicMaster8 and TracyFan4Ever on 30/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:57:06 GMT  
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Monday, April 2, 2068, 4:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Gordon sauntered up to the kitchen, hoping to snag a cold beer from the fridge. He entered the room and stopped in his tracks. The normally neat, clean, and empty kitchen was full of activity, and frankly, looked like a tornado had hit it.

Grandma was supervising (or trying to supervise) three determined young people, all covered with flour and grease splatters from the wide variety of foods that they had been trying to prepare.

"Gordon!" Cherie rushed towards her brother and practically manhandled him out of the kitchen. "Go away! We are working on surprise. It's a secret."

Gordon looked surprised. "Gee, Cherie, I only wanted a beer."

"Well, you'll just have to wait a little longer. Maybe Brandon or somebody could offer you one." And with that she firmly shut the kitchen door.

"Come back here and roll out this pie dough," Grandma called. "We've got a lot of pies to make to feed all the crew."

"Grandma, can't I roll out the dough?" Tyler asked plaintively. "I'm tired of peeling apples."

"You're not quite heavy enough, Tyler love," Emily said as she watched her youngest grandson push another Rome Beauty onto the prongs of the mechanical peeler. He sighed, and began to crank the old fashioned machine, watching as the blade scraped along the twirling apple, neatly removing the skin. When the apple was peeled, he handed it to Alex, who was busy trying to slice the apples up to a bakeable thickness.

"Try not to get those slices of apple too big," Grandma said. "And be careful with that knife!"

"Aw, Grandma, it's so hard to get thin slices," Alex groaned.

"Alex, Tyler, please try. We don't have much time to make this meal." Cherie called from where she was busy rolling out the dough. She had flour on her nose, and in her hair where she had unconsciously touched it. Emily went over to the cupboards and began to bring out several pie dishes, of all sizes.

"Do we have to fill all those?" Tyler looked amazed.

"Of course we have to," Cherie replied. "We are a much bigger family now."

"At least we've shucked all the corn," Alex said. He shook his head. "I never thought we'd finish that job!"

"The potatoes are all ready for baking, too. They'll go in after the pies, right, Grandma?" Cherie asked.

"Right, Cherry dear," Emily replied as she put a layer of pie crust in the first of the plates. Using a large spoon, she scooped seasoned and sugared apple slices from a big bowl into the lower crust, then added some dots of butter and fitted the upper crust to the fruit, molding the edges to seal in the apples. "How is the chicken gumbo coming along, Kyrano?" she asked.

Kyrano turned from what he was doing. "I have just diced the vegetables, including the okra, and am about to dice the chicken. Tyler, could you pass me the tomato puree, the garlic, and the chopped tomatoes?" Tyler did as he was bidden, and watched as Kyrano added these ingredients to the pot. "I will add the chicken stock and begin to simmer it. It should be ready about the same time. It needs to be simmered very gently for a long time."

Cherie looked at her Grandma. "Are we going to grill the steak?"

"Yes." Grandma hesitated. "But I really think that one of your older brothers or Dad should cook that."

"But Grandma." Tyler looked across from where he was trying to clear up. "We want to do everything ourselves."

Emily looked at the three young children. "Well, maybe Tyler can supervise the adults cooking the steak."

"Man," Alex complained. "I never thought it would take so long to cook this meal! This is worse than one of Uncle Brains' experiments!"

Emily smiled. "Why, Alex! Didn't you know that cooking is a science? It's all about chemical reactions."

Kyrano turned with a smile. "Mrs. Tracy, I am of the opinion that cooking is an art."

"Science or art, it sure takes a lot of effort!" Cherie complained. "I don't know that I want to do this again anytime soon!"

"Cherry, you know we will," Alex said with a sigh.

"When?" Tyler wanted to know.

"Mom's birthday."

Post by Tawnyangel22 and Tikatu on 30/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 16:00:05 GMT  
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Tracy Island Monday April 2nd, 2068 5:30pm

Callie watched as John piloted the craft with skill and expertise and it wasn't long before they were on approach to the island. Scott activated the radio, contacting the villa.

"Thunderbird Three to base. We are on final approach; requesting permission to land."

At his desk, Jeff heard John's voice. "F-A-B, Thunderbird Three. You are clear to land. Welcome home, everyone."

John turned to Callie. "C'mon over here. You'll need to learn this, too. Putting Thunderbird Three to bed can be a tricky business," John called.

"Yeah. Not only do you have to descend through the Round House and the silo opening, you've got to put the nacelles down on the blast ducts just so," Scott added. "You watch while John does it for now, and later you'll get some simulator training on handling Three."

"Good. If I want to do this right, I've got to start somewhere." She watched very closely what they were doing, asking questions and making mental notes. Man, this is more complex than I imagined. I'm going to have to train hard if I want to fly Thunderbird Three.

After securing Thunderbird Three in her silo, John announced, "We better get going. We have to report to Father before we do anything else." The three sat on the sofa in the lower part of the ship, which descended from the space vehicle. It fit securely in the open railway car and moved swiftly towards the lift to the lounge.

As the sofa ascended to its final destination, John asked Callie, "So, how did you like your assignment on Thunderbird Five?"

"It was interesting, to say the least. Being able to hear transmissions from around the world was probably the most stimulating aspect."

"That's good," John replied. "Given time you'll be able to distinguish the emergency calls from the general chatter in your sleep."

In the lounge, Jeff and the others waited with anticipation for the couch to complete its journey.

"All right, everybody, they're on their way up," Jeff said with a grin. "When they arrive, they'll be facing me. I want you to come up from behind and surprise them, especially Callie."

"No problem, Dad. Wait till Callie gets a load of this!" Gordon signaled everyone else to join him in the study next door.

They had just made it into the study when the couch appeared in the lounge. The three occupants stood up, facing Jeff. "Hello, John. Welcome back, Callie. How was your first tour of duty aboard Thunderbird Five?"

Callie cleared her throat. "Well, sir, I have to admit this was more exciting than any stay at the ISS. My biggest challenge was being the translator in two major rescues." She continued talking to Jeff, telling him about her experiences and the impressions she had during her shift. She was so caught up in her conversation that she didn't hear the others enter the room.

Gordon peeked into the lounge and gave the thumbs up. He ducked down low, scooting quickly behind the sofa, followed closely by Nikki and Kat. John noticed the motion out of the corner of his eye and glanced over at Scott. His older brother gave an almost imperceptible nod, and together, they closed in on Callie, using their bodies to block her peripheral vision. Brandon and Cherry then scurried in, hiding behind two of the lounge's chairs. The rest of the welcoming committee waited within the door to the study for the right moment to jump out. Jeff saw it all and found it hard to keep a straight face.

Callie looked at Jeff with a puzzled air. "Sir, is everything all right?"

Jeff replied, "Everything's just fine, Callie. I'm proud of you on your first trip to the space station." He couldn't hold the chuckle much longer.

Suddenly, there was a shout of "WELCOME HOME!"

Callie jumped up in surprise, nearly falling backwards on the sofa. She turned around and noticed everyone before finally catching her breath. "Oh, man..." Getting over her embarrassment, she looked at her teammates. "What is going on here?" Turning to Scott and her teacher, she asked with a hint of accusation in her voice, "You two knew about this, didn't you?"

Scott smiled. "Yes, Callie, we did. We normally don't make a big deal about coming to and from the space station, but since it was your first time there, we wanted to give you a party when we came back. It's all about you today, Callie."

Tyler came flying into the room. Running over to John, he jumped on his back and hugged him around the neck.

"Hi, John! I missed you!" he shouted.

"I missed you, too, Spud!" John replied with a laugh. His attention to Tyler was diverted by Kat, who sidled up to him with a smile.

"Hello, John. Welcome back."

"Thanks, Kat. It's good to be back." John turned his head as far as he could to see the face of Tyler, who clung to his back, arms still around his neck. "Even if I end up with monkeys on my back!"

"Hey! I'm not a monkey!" Tyler exclaimed.

"Could have fooled me!" John riposted.

"Uh... John? I was wondering...." Kat said, her eyes bright and her cheeks pink. "I was wondering if we could go stargazing this evening."

"That sounds good, Kat. I haven't forgotten my promise."

"Hey!" Tyler said, looking crossly at Kat. "I want to play pinball with you! You always play pinball when you come home!"

"I know, Ty, but...." John tried to explain.

"Those dumb stars will be there all night," Tyler reminded his brother, pouting. "But I've got a bedtime!"

John shook his head. He turned to Kat. "Do you mind waiting for a little later this evening? I really should spend some time with my family. And pinball with Tyler is a bit of a homecoming tradition."

"Oh, no, I don't mind waiting," Kat said.

"Thanks for understanding," John said with a smile. He turned to Tyler. "Okay, you ornery pirate, you've got me until bedtime."

John excused himself and left with Tyler. Callie mingled with her teammates, telling them what it was like on Thunderbird Five. When the noise got to her, she went out to the balcony. Nikki followed, worrying that something was wrong.[/font]

Post by MagicMaster8 and TracyFan4Ever on 31/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 16:07:57 GMT  
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7:00pm Monday April 2nd, 2068

Callie stood on the balcony, watching the sunset. She was so transfixed she didn't notice Nikki approaching.

"Callie? Callie? Earth to Callie."

Callie gasped and finally saw her. "Oh, Nikki, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were there."

"Are you okay, Callie? You looked a little distant when I saw you."

Callie smiled slightly. "I'm okay. I just have a lot on my mind, that's all."

"I think there's something more to it. Can you tell me please?"

Callie looked at Nikki briefly before turning back to gaze at the stars. "To be honest, Nikki, I'm scared."

"Why? What's there to be afraid of?"

Callie answered, "What if I goof up when I'm on my own? What if I give the wrong info that could cost someone his or her life?"

Nikki was taken aback. This was a side of Callie she hadn't seen. "Callie, you shan't fail. We all believe in you. Mr. Tracy believes in you. All you have to do is believe in yourself." She continued, "Think about this: when you worked at the International Space Station, did you not have to give vital information to people back on Earth?"

"Yes, of course."

"And were you frightened when you had to give that information?"

"No, I wasn't. I was completely focused."

"If you were able to do it there, then you should have no trouble in Thunderbird Five. All you need is faith in yourself."

Callie thought about what Nikki had told her and knew she was right. Relaying information from Thunderbird Five would be no different from what she had done before. "Thanks, Nikki. I guess I needed... I don't know."

"Reassurances?"

"I guess that's what I wanted." Callie pointed in the direction of the door. "We'd better go back before we're missed." As the two women headed back to the party, Callie noticed the bruises on Nikki's right hand.

"Good grief! What happened to you? Did you get injured when picking up the earthquake debris?"

"Not exactly." Nikki shrugged. "Someone didn't want to leave a collapsing building because he

wanted to see the ice dancing finals so badly. Gordon and I tried sedating him, but he didn't want to cooperate. When the man and I got into a struggle, I had no choice but to punch the bloke."

Callie's eyes grew wide. "You're kidding."

"No, I'm not. I just hope I never have to do anything like that again. That bloody hurt."

"I hope it won't affect the way you do your job," Callie joked.

"I don't think it will. Come along, let's enjoy dinner with the rest of the group, shall we?" The two women went back into the lounge to continue their good times with the others.

Post by MagicMaster8 and TracyFan4Ever on 31/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 16:08:48 GMT  
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Monday, April 2, 2068, 7:15 p.m., Tracy Island

"C'mon everybody!" Cherie called to the mingling mass of people still in the lounge. "The food is getting cold!"

"Yeah!" Alex added. "This is going to be the best meal ever! All in honor of Callie!"

"In honor of me? Wow!" Callie said with a smile, ruffling his hair. "What makes this meal so special, besides the occasion."

"We cooked it!" Cherie and Alex said in unison.

There was a sudden hush in the lounge as everyone glanced at each other.

"You cooked it?" Scott asked in disbelief.

"Yeah. We did. Me and Cherie and Tyler. We wanted to do something special for Callie," Alex said stoutly.

"All by yourselves?" Virgil asked.

"Well, we had some help from Grandma and Mr. Kyrano, but we did all the hard work," Alex replied.

"Like what kind of hard work?" Elise asked with a grin.

"Shucking corn, rolling out pie dough...." Cherie began.

"Wrapping up potatoes, peeling and slicing apples..." Alex added.

"An' washing up afterwards!" cried Tyler from where he and John were coming back into the lounge. His sudden appearance made everyone laugh.

"Well, we'd best go down and eat then," Christopher said with a grin.

"C'mon, John! C'mon, Callie!" Tyler said, grasping one hand of each adult and pulling. "Come have dinner!"

Callie and John looked at each other and laughed, then John scooped Tyler up under one arm and carried him, protesting, out of the lounge and down to the dining room.

Post by Tikatu on 01/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 16:19:28 GMT  
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Tracy Island 2nd April, night time, 2068

Kat went into the small kitchen of her apartment and made herself a snack. She had finished her meal and had returned to the balcony with a fresh glass of orange juice, for a last glimpse of the sea, now under a darkening sky when suddenly the door chimed. Kat rose from her seat, hoping it would be John. On opening the door, she was delighted to see John standing there.

"Hi, nice to see you," she said. "Won't you come in, and have a drink? I can offer you fruit juice or I do have some lemonade."

"Orange juice, please," said John, as he stepped inside the apartment.

Kat filled a glass and handed it to John. Taking their glasses, they went onto the balcony.

"How did your game of pinball go?" she asked, smiling at him.

"Oh, I lost. Guess he has been practicing hard, and I'm kind of out of practice."

"You'll have to have a pinball table set up in Thunderbird Five." Kat laughed. "Though I imagine it would be hard playing without opponents."

They both laughed at this. "Yes, I guess. I mean, playing pinball alone means you have to play against yourself. I'd rather have someone else as an opponent. More fun that way."

"If you like, I will play a few games with you, just to give you the practice. I can't play to save my life."

"I might just take you up on that," John answered. "Now, haven't we something planned for tonight?"

Kat smiled and nodded "I was just relaxing, enjoying the sunset. It made the sea look like molten gold. And now look at all those stars."

"Right, then it's time to show you the stars through my telescope."

"But shouldn't you be resting? You have had a busy day, so far. We can look at the stars tomorrow night," Kat asked

"No; on the way back, Scott shared piloting Thunderbird 3, so I was able to rest a bit on the way home. The only exhausting time was trying to beat Tyler." They both laughed and continued chatting for a while, enjoying their drinks.

When they had finished their drinks John said "Come on, let's head for the roof."

They left the apartment and returned to the villa and the lounge. Virgil was in the lounge, playing the piano. He grinned as they wandered through and out towards John's bedroom.

"Where are you two going?" he asked.

"I'm showing Kat the stars," John replied, as he and Kat headed for the roof.

Once on the roof, John proudly showed Kat his telescope. It was a 5 in-aperture reflective telescope on an equatorial mount. The eyepiece was mounted on the side of the telescope.

"Look to the south. Can you see that cluster of four bright stars?"

"Oh, yes," said Kat standing on tiptoe trying to reach the eyepiece.

John laughed. "Come on, Tiny, let's find you a box to stand on. There, is that better?"

"Much better, thanks," Kat replied, now looking comfortably into the eyepiece.

"Those are known as the Southern Cross."

John continued to point out the constellations of Sagittarius, Scorpius, and others that Kat had never heard of. Turning to face the North, he pointed out Ursa Major, Virgo, Leo and Drago

"Which one is Gemini?" Kat asked. "That's my star sign."

"See those two bright stars, which appear to be one above the other? They are Pollux and Castor, the heavenly twins."

"When is your birthday, John?" Kat asked.

"October 8th," he replied.

"Then you are Libra. When is that visible?"

"Libra is not very clear until spring," John replied. "Do you know all the star signs?"

"Oh, yes, I like to study what the stars have to tell me about my life. It is probably utter nonsense, but also quite harmless," she replied enthusiastically. "There was an old Gypsy living in my village where I was brought up. She claimed she could tell a person's fortune in the tea leaves. She was always telling me that I could probably do the same, born under Gemini." She chuckled. "My mother was very sceptical; she forbade me to see the old fortuneteller. I often wondered what happened to her. I think she was probably harmless, just an old country woman, although some of her predictions did come true," Kat added. "She told me that I would work with vehicles for a well known firm and that I would marry...." Here she stopped and blushed. She looked at her watch in horror. "Look at the time! I shall have to go; I am supposed to be starting early tomorrow. Brains wants to continue showing me how to maintain the auxiliary vehicles."

John smiled. "It was really very nice having this chat with you and showing you the stars. We must do it again sometime."

"Yes," Kat agreed. "It's almost spring, so I won't have to wait long to see Libra."

John laughed and said, "Kat, this is our autumn. But I'm sure that we will be on the roof again long before spring."

Kat felt mortified. She was thankful that it was a dark night and he couldn't see her face. She glanced at him and smiled shyly. "Whatever must you think of me? I was trying to sound so knowledgeable. I must seem so foolish."

"No you're not foolish. It's a common mistake. You're not the first to think like that, and you certainly won't be the last," John continued. They returned to the monorail and John bade her goodnight before Kat made her way back to her apartment. Once inside, Kat realised that she wanted to be more than a good friend to John. She hoped he felt the same.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 02/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 16:22:39 GMT

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Tracy Industries NYC offices; Monday, April 2nd, 8 AM (1 AM April 3rd on Tracy Island)

When the I&M employees arrived, Lena was waiting for them. Those who arrived first, clamored to know who had been chosen, but she just grinned and told them they would have to wait, for she was only going to say it one time. Finally they were all there, and they stood around her.

She told them, "I will be leaving in a few hours, and wanted to say goodbye. I told you last week that you would know who your new supervisor would be early this week. Well, I think this is about as early as we can make it." She grinned as she turned to Steven. "Don't bother to start your computer, young man. Just clean out your desk and move your things to the supervisor's office."

Congratulations, you have been promoted."

The group broke into applause and there were whistles and exclamations of "Congratulations", "Way to go, Steven", and "All right!" Lena joined in the applause and when it died down, told the stunned man that an email had been prepared and would be sent to all the departments in the complex as soon as he accepted.

"As soon as . . . Of course! I accept! Thank you, Lena!"

"Don't tank me. You earned de position. Now I suggest you start moving your tings and I'll be back in an hour to bring you up to date on what you need to know concerning meetings, schedules and such." She shook his hand and winking, added, "I'm sure you'll be capable of keeping dese rascals in line and productive."

Amid the laughter and protests, she left the area and returned to the penthouse to send the email and finish packing. When she returned, Steven was already set up and ready to assume his duties. She went over his weekly and monthly meeting schedule, then answered the few questions he had. When she finally said goodbye and left, she felt certain that the department was in capable hands, and there would be nothing to worry about on that score.

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BWI Airport in Maryland; 1:30 PM (6:30 AM April 3 on T.I.)

When Lena, Joy and the twins arrived at the terminal, Matthew was there to meet them. He hugged his sister and the kids, then his mother. "How was the trip? Were you able to accomplish all you wanted to?"

"Oh yes. De kids did a lot of sightseeing while I took care of tings at Tracy Industries. Den we all went sightseeing and to de teater over de weekend."

"Guess what, Uncle Matt," Naomi interrupted excitedly. "Mr. Tracy has asked Nyanya to be I&M Coordinator for all the US offices. She'll get to travel to Hawaii!"

By this time, they were at the baggage collection area. Joy looked at her mother and smiled. "Like I said, anytime you want something broadcast . . ."

Lena chuckled as Matthew turned to her. "Mother, is that true?"

"Yes. Apparently he had been tinkering about creating de post for a while. I'd still supervise de DC office, but would go to one of de otter branches each mont for a few days. It wouldn't be a set schedule, so I could plan my trips around de family events. But I haven't accepted, yet. I wanted to get your input."

"Do you think you could handle the job?"

"Of course she could, Matthew. What kind of question is that?" Joy exclaimed indignantly.

"I know you think she could handle anything, Joy," he replied. "I want to hear it from her, though."

Lena looked at him lovingly. "I may not be what dey used to call a 'spring chicken', but I can still get around quite well. Tank you for your concern, but I'm up to de job. De question is do I want to do it. It'll take me away from my family each mont. I won't be available to you all as much as I have been."

"Mom, you've raised us to handle our own lives, and although we'll always need you, we can get along without you for a few days, from time to time," he replied. The others agreed with him. "If that's the only thing that has been keeping you from accepting, don't let it. You go for it, with our blessing."

"Nyanya, you'll make sure you're around for our birthdays, won't you," Kevin asked.

"Of course I will. Like I said, I'll be able to schedule my trips when I want to go, so I can make sure I'm here when you do need me to be."

"Well then, take the job. Hey, Naomi! Here come our bags!" The twins hurried to the carousel and each grabbed one piece of luggage. Soon the other bags were collected and they made their way to Matthew's van.

An hour later, Lena was home again. She went inside to unpack, relax and inform Jeff of her decision - in that order.

Post by Hobbeth on 03/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 16:23:47 GMT

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Tuesday 03 April. 10.55am. Tracy Island.

Uh huh, uh huh. Check, check, check-check... I see there was an over-shipment of tongue depressors at some stage, heh-heh. Hou! on a sec: that's funny...oh, wait, never mind. Eejit. Right, w' need more of these sterile dressings. Ugh, they're Pharmacore. I hate them. Oh well, it's not my prerogative, and they do the job... Dum-dum-da-dee-dum -- oh great. There's that bloody song in my head again. Just get on with it, man. Yuck, more Pharmacore. Bloody selfish -- oh, leave it, Kelly! Boy, you really can...ugh, forget it. Hum-hum. Well, that's me. Now for the final tally... Ugh, curse my lack of mathematical skill. Where's that calculator... Ah! Here we go... C'est fini.

The small calculator was snapped closed and placed in the breast pocket of the crisp white, blue-trimmed tunic -- Dominic still chose to wear it while working, even if he did not need to. It was a comfort, in a way. He tapped the door of the storage compartment he had been taking inventory of lightly, and the hydraulic levers wheezed as it slowly shut -- a handy design that meant less closing and more attending -- and he glanced about the cleaned and prepped sickroom. It was becoming ever more familiar to him; he definitely did not regret taking up this job. Of course, 'it' did

not just refer to the clean room around him. 'It' was, well, everything.

He ran a hand through his lengthening hair -- he knew he should probably get it cut, but in all honesty could not be bothered -- and straightened his glasses, before glancing around the room one more time. Satisfied that his work was completed for the afternoon, he saved his inventory into the electronic logbook, ready for inspection by Doctor Tracy, and wandered out of the sickroom, tapping his lip with one long, squat-nailed finger.

The plan for the afternoon was one that had been brewing in his mind for some time: the apartment. It was big, he would give it that; much more spacious than anything he would ever have been able to afford on his own. But it had to be said: the place was bland. It would be fair to say that it was as bland as his old physics teacher's bobbled, dreary cardigans, and that was something Dominic Kelly could not abide. Where was the 'oomph', the vivacity, the life? The walls were a strange not-quite-white colour, and the furniture was all very pleasant and functional.

But who cared about pleasant and functional? Who gave a flying monkey's banjo? What Dominic Kelly wanted was colour and texture; he wanted a happy environment for his young son. And that was exactly what he planned to create.

Truthfully, he loved the Tracys for leaving the apartment bland. What could be better than to be handed a blank canvas to decorate as you so pleased? He had two bedrooms, a huge living room/kitchen, and a bath and a half to play with: he was one happy man. He was one very happy man. Plans had begun to form as he had scrutinized the rooms; a smile flitted across his face as he thought about them. He had spent many hours decorating in his youth, in the various houses he had lived in over the years.

There had been a lot of houses; it came from being the son of a woman whose only wish was to keep moving, to keep changing. His mother's good eye for colour had passed on to him, and although Dominic couldn't even draw a straight line with a ruler, he was good at decorating, and he enjoyed it.

His introspective reverie was broken as a familiar, "Hey, Dom!" reached him as he walked through the lounge. Gordon was glancing over from his perch in one of the comfy soft chairs, a magazine clutched in his hands.

"Gordon," Dominic said amiably, changing his trajectory to walk towards the redhead.

"I know the look of a man planning something, and it's plain on your face. What's up?" Gordon asked.

Dominic smiled and tapped the side of his nose.

"Ooh, the plans indeed, Mister Gordon." He stopped for a moment. "Want in on it? It's nothing very interesting, but it had the potential to be fun."

At the word 'fun', Gordon was up in a shot, the magazine falling to the ground.

"I'm there!" he said with a grin.

\*\*\*

"Decorating? Decorating? I thought you said 'fun!'"

"It will be fun," said Dominic, whose voice was emanating from the larger of the two bedrooms of the apartment.

Gordon was waiting in the main lounge area of the frankly boring apartment, his arms crossed, as Dominic changed out of his work tunic. He shook his head and sighed. Hooray, work. What was the man on about, 'fun'? He was obviously insane. Said madman walked in from the bedroom rubbing his hands together and grinning.

"So, will you help me?"

If it weren't for the fact that he had a reputation as a really nice guy, Gordon would have said no. But he found he couldn't, and reluctantly agreed. Dominic clapped him on the back; it was a surprisingly strong thump, Gordon thought, considering how skinny the other man was.

"Now," said Dominic, "want to come and be Uncle Gordon for a while with me?"

That was something Gordon didn't need to think twice about.

"I'm there," he said, smiling.

Post by ArtisticRainey on 03/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 16:25:47 GMT  
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Tuesday 3rd April 11am Tracy Island.

Christopher shook his head. After the happiness of the meal to celebrate John and Callie's homecoming, the high had gone. Mainly due to the close proximity of Tin-Tin.

He paced the room.. The sight and the smell of her drove him mad. It was bad enough that he had to sit so close to her, even worse that he got the impression that their evening together did not happen.

She sat there, laughing and joking in the way that he found so attractive.

"Face it mate", he muttered to himself as he spooned the contents of a cat food tin into Asterix's dish, "she is out of your league"

Asterix looked up at his Master, then he looked in his dish. Christopher shook the crunchy food into the dish as well. "Sorry, matey; I'm not with it today".

"Rrrowww!", Asterix looked up at his Master again, then started eating.

Looking around, Christopher decided that he couldn't stay in his flat for a moment longer. So after a change of clothes, making some sandwiches and putting some bottles of beer in a cooling box, he called the lift.

"I need to get out of here", he said to no-one in particular as he stepped into the lift.

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Asterix awoke from a nice dream to find his tummy rumbling. He trotted over to his dish, only to find that it was empty.

"Miaowww?", he looked around the flat, sniffing at all the places where his Master usually went to.

He couldn't find him. Asterix started to feel frightened and scared. He looked around again, but his Master still didn't appear with soothing words and a dish of food.

Mrrroooowwww!", Asterix began howling very loudly at the top of his voice, his "Master please come home!" voice.

Post by The\_Wrong\_Trousers1 on 04/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 17:26:47 GMT

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Tracy Island, April 3rd, midday

Brandon walked in to the gym. Working on the treadmill was a rather breathless, red-in-the-face Kat. He grinned to himself, as he headed for the rowing machine.

Kat slowed the machine to a walk to cool down. One more minute and that will have been five minutes, she thought, gasping. Heavens! I must be unfit. She stopped the machine and got off, heading to where her towel and bottle of water were. Taking a large gulp of water, she suddenly saw Brandon working on the rowing machine. She continued to do some cooling down exercises, then slinging the towel across her shoulders, she headed towards Brandon.

"Have you been working hard?" Brandon spoke between strokes.

"No, not really. I just did some cycling and then some running. Gosh, am I unfit," she admitted.

"Brandon, can I ask you a favour?"

"Sure, ask away," Brandon replied, slowing down his rowing so that he could talk to her more comfortably.

"I was thinking that I would like to learn to scuba dive, and wondered if there was any chance that you could give me lessons?"

"That wouldn't be a problem," Brandon answered. "I'm giving Dominic another lesson tomorrow morning, and then I'll be giving Nikki her first lesson. Why don't you come along and watch Dom's lesson, then you can join in with Nikki."

Kat grinned. "Wow, thanks Brandon! That would be great." She was just about to leave when she turned back. "Brandon?" she called. "Christopher flew Mrs. Tracy and her grandchildren to Christchurch to get some groceries. Do you think that they would allow any of us to go shopping?"

"Don't know, but I don't see why not," Brandon answered. "Is there something special that you want?"

"Well, I would like some more shampoo and toothpaste and some other personal things," Kat replied.

"Well, maybe we could approach Mr. Tracy or Dr. Tracy. They must have to go and buy produce and other commodities."

"Yes, I definitely would like to go shopping some time," Kat answered. "Right now, however, I am going for a long shower. Bye, Brandon."

"Bye, Kat," Brandon called back as he started rowing fast.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 04/01/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 17:28:54 GMT  
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Wednesday, April 3, 2068, 3:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff hobbled into the infirmary, where Nikki was preparing a laser cutter. His eyes widened in surprise and pleasure.

"Am I getting this thing off today?" he asked her.

"I'm not at liberty to say, Mr. Tracy," she replied with a grin. "You'd better ask the doctor."

He grinned back at her and made his way to Dianne's office, situated between the infirmary section, where the beds were, and the treatment/surgery area, where the main scanner and surgical bed resided. He poked his head in through the open door.

"Hey, what's up, Doc?" he quipped.

Dianne glared at him good-humoredly. "That's Gordon's line," she remarked. She sighed and

turned her computer screen so he could see it as he entered.

"I have the new instructions from Mt. Sinai," Dianne said. "They tell me to remove the cast and put you on an air splint. Physical therapy is to begin and you can have some limited walking without the splint, and with weight on the foot, building up in ten minute increments daily. You're to use the crutches for another week, then a cane. Then they want to see you in two weeks. I've set up a date for Monday, April 16."

"Well, that's good news!" Jeff said happily. "Can I swim or do other activities?"

"Oh, swimming is a given, in fact, they want you to do laps daily, increasing in number every other day," Dianne explained, looking at the screen. "And some light weight training can begin as well." She looked at him pointedly. "Supervised weight training to make sure it's light."

"You know me too well, love," Jeff said with a grin.

"Yes, well...", Dianne answered. "Let's get this over with." She got up from her desk and let him precede her into the treatment area. Nikki was already there, cutter prepared.

"Trousers and shirt off," Dianne said, indicating the screen in the corner. Jeff sighed, but hobbled behind the screen, where Dianne joined him to help him with the pants and to give him a hospital gown. When he was finished changing, he came out on the crutches. Nikki helped Jeff up onto the scanner bed, where he sat, propping himself up on his hands. Both women put on laser welding goggles and caps to protect their hair.

"Lie back, Jeff," Dianne said with authority. "Lie back and close your eyes."

Jeff did as she bid him. The laser's glow lit the room even more than the overhead lights did and Jeff knew it even through his closed eyes. There was soft conversation between the two women as they worked, and a sudden heat on his ankle as the cast was carefully cut away. At last, the cutting was done, and his foot felt a chill as it was exposed to the air after so long in the cast. The laser was turned off, and Dianne said, "All done."

Jeff propped himself up on his elbows and looked down at his wrinkled, rather skinny, right leg. Nikki brought out an emesis bowl filled with warm, soapy water and gave it a sponge bath, while Dianne dictated notes. Once the ankle was washed and patted dry, Nikki brought an air splint out. Without comment, she and Dianne fastened it around his ankle with wide Velcro straps.

"I'm going to give you a cane next week," Dianne said. "In between times you can use the crutches and put weight on the ankle gradually." She pointed a finger at him. "You know I'll be watching. You're to wear shoes or sandals at all times."

Jeff gave her a sly look. "At all times?"

Dianne blushed and rolled her eyes. Nikki grinned at the two of them.

"Ah'm not gonna comment on that, suh," Dianne replied. "Let's just git yoah pants back on so you don't scare Nikki."

Jeff colored this time, and Dianne chuckled. Nikki shook her head and said, "Nothing I haven't seen before, I'm sure."

Jeff ducked behind the screen and began the process of putting his pants and shirt back on. It felt good to be able to do it completely by himself. He stood, and taking the crutches, came out from behind the screen.

"I'm going upstairs to find my other shoe, love. I'll see you in a bit."

"Right," Dianne said distractedly as she and Nikki began to clean and disinfect the equipment they had used. Jeff smiled at them, and sighed with contentment. He watched her for a moment, then went off to complete his mission, thinking all the while of what he might do that evening with his new-found freedom.

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 17:30:55 GMT  
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Tracy Island, Tuesday, April 3rd 5:30 p.m.

Sitting in the cockpit of Thunderbird Two, Elise thumbed through the flight manual for at least the twentieth time, taking notes and fiddling with this and that. The simulator had been overwhelming enough, but this machine was something else completely!

She sighed, shutting the manual and looking out of the window despondently. She was a good pilot; she knew that, but to fly this gigantic contraption? Who was she kidding?

"I'm never going to get this right," she said to herself as she slumped back in the pilot's seat.

"Get what?" came a voice from the doorway of the cabin.

Elise turned abruptly to see Virgil casually leaning against the door frame, arms folded.

"This!" Elise replied, waving her arms to indicate her surroundings.

Virgil smiled and walked over to her, positioning himself with his back against the control panel and leaning on it.

"You will," he stated, and then asked, "Just how long have you been up here?"

She smiled slightly. "I dunno. A while, I guess. I got curious, wanted to see the whole enchilada, and get the feel of it, you know?"

"Yeah, I know." He returned her smile with one of his own.

Elise stared out of the window once more. "I'm a chopper pilot, Virgil, small aircraft. What on Earth

gave your father the idea I could fly something this big?"

She turned towards him again, only this time she didn't smile.

Virgil thought for a moment before answering her. He could see she was struggling with the idea of being in control of 'Two and lacked the confidence he knew she had buried down inside her somewhere.

"Well, for one, Dad trusts you with his life. He knows your skill and devotion to flying. Scott knows it, too. They've both seen what you can do and what more you can be capable of."

She wasn't impressed. "Yeah, right. Your dad has seen my capable skills fly him straight into the side of a mountain!"

Virgil had to chuckle at her blunt way of describing the chopper accident.

"It's not funny!" she said, noticing his laugh.

"I know. It's just the way you put it, that's all. Look, Elise, you'll do fine. Once you get a feel for her in the air, she's a baby! All she takes is soft hands and some gentle coaxing now and again, and she'll give you everything she has."

Elise listened to Virgil talk about the craft, fascinated by the way he talked about it. Now it was her turn to chuckle.

"What?" He looked at her, not sure why she was chuckling when a moment ago she was quite annoyed.

"Oh, nothing, I'm just not sure if you were talking about some girlfriend, or your Thunderbird! Or are they one and the same?"

"Funny!" came the droll reply.

Elise gave in. "Joking aside, I understood what you were talking about. I only hope you're right."

"I am, you'll see."

Elise noted the same cocky self-assured attitude in Virgil that she'd seen in Gordon. Must be genetic, she mused. They stayed in the cockpit for a while, Virgil answering questions Elise had and demonstrating various controls and procedures.

"It's getting late." Virgil said, glancing at his watch.

"Yeah, and I'm getting hungry." Elise closed the manual and got ready to leave.

Virgil walked ahead of her towards the door. Elise suddenly remembered she had yet to thank him for his help the other night when she'd had the nightmare. She was a little embarrassed and not sure where to start, so blurted out his name almost urgently.

"Virgil! Wait...um..." He turned back to her, but didn't say anything.

"I ... um... well, this is kinda embarrassing... but I wanted to thank you for being there the other night when I had a nightmare."

There! I've done it!

Virgil walked back to her and spoke softly. "It's okay. There's no need to feel embarrassed. I'm glad you're all right."

She looked up at him. "Guess I'd had a lot on my mind and didn't sleep as well as I'd hoped I would. Anyway, thanks, Virgil." She smiled sheepishly.

He squeezed her arm gently and replied "Anytime. Now let's go eat." Smiling, he turned to lead the way and she dutifully followed.

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 07/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 17:31:57 GMT  
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3rd April 5.37pm. A secluded cove. Tracy Island

Christopher lay back on his towel and sighed. The feelings of earlier had vanished from his mind.

He had enjoyed a lovely afternoon. In fact he hadn't worried about anything in particular. The sandwiches and beer had seen to that.

After his lunch, he had had a nice sleep in which he dreamt about a girl he used to fancy at school. Strange really, but he wanted to forget the meal as quickly as possible.

So as he pushed his sunglasses back over his eyes, he smiled as he went back to his dream.

Post by The\_Wrong\_Trousers1 on 07/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 17:33:22 GMT  
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Tuesday, April 3, 2068, 7:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Brandon unlocked the balcony doors to his apartment. He had taken the stairs up from the first floor as he liked the exercise it gave him. Often he would get off the monorail on the patio level,

walk through the common area on his side of the apartment building, then take the stairs from the patio to the third floor, where he resided.

As he unlocked the door, he saw a movement out of the corner of his eye and turned his attention to it. It was Asterix, pacing back and forth inside Christopher's living room before the balcony door. When the cat saw that he had Brandon's attention, he stretched his form up toward the door knob as high and as long as he could. Brandon could see the cat's mouth open in a silent "Meow".

Brandon frowned. I didn't see Christopher at the Villa for dinner. Wonder where he got to?

Voices below him caused Brandon to look over the rail to the balcony below. Kat and Nikki were sitting on Nikki's portion of the balcony, talking and giggling.

"Hey, Nikki, Kat?" Brandon called. "Have you seen Christopher lately? Asterix is going crazy up here."

Both women shook their heads. "No, we haven't seen him this evening," Nikki said. "Which is odd considering how crazy he is for Tin-Tin."

"Yes, he's almost always at every meal in at the Villa," Kat added. "And it's not like him to leave poor Asterix to his own devices."

The doors to Dominic's apartment opened, releasing the smell of fresh paint. He sauntered out and greeted the two young women.

"Hey, Dom?" Brandon called. "Have you seen Chris today?"

Dom shook his head. "No, I haven't. Why? Is he missing?"

"It appears so. Asterix is going crazy up here. I'd go in and see what the matter was, but the doors are locked."

"Try his wrist communicator," Dom suggested.

Brandon smacked his forehead, much to the amusement of the second floor denizens. "Why didn't I think of that before? Thanks, Dom."

As Brandon tried to call Christopher, Nikki asked Dom, "Are you going to Scott's party tomorrow?"

"Actually, I am," Dom answered with a grin. "I could not pass up the opportunity to be covered with paint. Mrs. Tracy said she'd watch Joshua while the festivities were going on."

"I've never played paintball before," Kat said, smiling. "Have either of you?"

"My brother played a couple of times," Nikki said. "He told me it was great fun. Though it was difficult to get the paint out of his clothes."

"I've played it once, a long time ago. Let me give you this advice, Kat. Wear your very grubbiest

clothes and make sure everything is covered," Dom said.

"I shall," Kat promised. She looked up at the balcony above their heads. "I wonder if Brandon has had any luck contacting Christopher?"

Post by Tikatu on 08/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 17:54:14 GMT

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3rd April 9pm Tracy Island

Kyrano padded up to the front door of Christopher's flat, holding his passkey. Brandon was waiting outside the door. The yowling had stopped; maybe Asterix was very tired now.

"I hope he's all right," Brandon said.

"I am sure that Mister Asterix will be fine," Kyrano said as he opened the door and went inside. Switching on the lights, he walked into the kitchen where he saw that Asterix was sleeping in his furry bed.

"Yes, I see that the bowl is nearly empty. Only a few pieces of kibble remain. I shall give Asterix some canned food and leave him to sleep." Kyrano wrinkled his nose. "I will also remind Mr. Jordan to keep the litter box clean."

Brandon stroked Asterix's head. The cat opened one eye, yawned, and began to purr. He stood to stretch, then turned around twice and settled down again to nap.

"Good to see you're okay, little buddy," Brandon murmured.

xxxx

Christopher yawned and blinked as he opened his eyes. The darkness was nearly upon him, his stomach was rumbling, so he decided to head back home.

Picking up his bag, he noticed that all the beer had been drunk. So, that is the cause of my light-headedness. Pulling himself to his feet, he walked unsteadily back to his flat. Going inside he switched on the lights, which hurt his eyes.

"Asterix!" he called out. "Come on, mate!"

Nothing. Not even a mew.

He looked around his flat. He found his cat curled up in his cat bed. The bowl was half-full of cat food, both canned and kibble. "Hm. I didn't do that. I wonder..."

A folded piece of paper, carefully tented on the kitchen table, caught his eye. He opened it, finding it hard to focus on the neat lettering.

It read, "Mr. Jordan,

Your neighbors expressed concern over your cat's well being because he was meowing incessantly and you could not be found. I entered your apartment to find your cat was unharmed and asleep. I have given him some canned food, and left him, but in the future, please see to it that he is amply supplied with food and water before you leave for an extended period of time. Perhaps a feeding station would be a wise precaution seeing as you will often be gone for hours with rescue duties.

I also must remind you to keep the litter box clean. The odor in your apartment is unpleasant.

Thank you,  
Tuan Kyrano"

Christopher groaned. "Looks like I owe Kyrano my apologies." He glanced over at the litter box. "Now that he mentioned it... I'd best set about clearing that lot out. I just hope my stomach is up to it!"

Post by The\_Wrong\_Trousers1 (with copious recent edits by Tikatu) on 10/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 17:54:40 GMT  
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Wednesday, April 4, 2068, 8:30 a.m., one of Jeff Tracy's minor atolls.

Thunderbird Two set down in a clearing not far from the beach. It was Scott's birthday, and he had invited everyone on the island to come celebrate with a massive game of paintball. Everyone who was invited said they'd come, with the exceptions of Kyrano, who was preparing a barbecue feast for their return, Parker, who was setting up tables and such for the meal, and Emily, who was helping Kyrano and watching over Joshua. The large number of people going made it necessary to bring the largest transport they had, and that was Thunderbird Two.

Christopher shielded his eyes as he left the darker confines of the pod. His antics of the previous day had left him with a hangover, and had earned him a thorough dressing down about responsible pet care from the sharpest tongue west of Kansas, Emily Tracy, in addition to Kyrano's more gentle, written remonstrances. His humble apologies that morning did a lot to assuage Emily's anger and mollify Kyrano's expectations. He rubbed his head and hoped that the game wouldn't take too long; he really wanted to have a nice lie down in his air conditioned apartment and a dozen or so aspirin to heal the pounding between his ears.

"Daaaad?" Tyler whined as he tried to keep pace with Jeff, who was taking advantage of his freedom and going without the crutches for a bit. Dianne had insisted he bring them, but at that point he was putting weight on his foot and actually walking.

"Tyler, I'll say it again. You are not old enough to play paintball yet," Jeff said sternly. "So stop whining about it, please!" His voice softened. "Think about it, Ty. Today, you and I can have some time together, just the two of us. That doesn't happen very often, you know."

Tyler thought this over. "Just you and me?"

"Just us, Ty. No big brothers, no big sister," Jeff told him, warming to the subject. "We can swim together or build a sand castle...."

"Sand castle? A really, really big sand castle?" Tyler asked.

Jeff laughed. "As big as you like."

Tyler looked thoughtful again, then he brightened. "Okay, Dad. You've got a deal. But... can I play paintball next year?"

"We'll see," Jeff said.

Dianne and Penelope carried folding chaise lounges and went to find a shady place near the beach where they could sit and wait for the warriors to come down. Cherie followed with a first aid kit, and Nikki brought up an antigravity stretcher. Dianne was the designated medic for the event, and the players who were "killed" during the battle were to meet down at the beach. Gordon and Virgil brought down a cooler of drinks for everyone to enjoy as they were dropped from the game.

"Remember, everyone, if you're seriously hurt, you are to call me on your telecomms," Dianne instructed. "I will come to you, and play will be suspended until we can get you down here and into Thunderbird Two's sickbay. Does everyone understand?"

The group murmured their understanding, and then a grinning Scott stepped forward.

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 10/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 17:55:39 GMT

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Wednesday, April 4. 2068, 9 a.m., one of Jeff Tracy's minor atolls.

"Okay, folks!" Scott said with a grin. "Since I'm the honored guest for this shindig, I get to pick the captains of the teams!" He, like everyone else, was dressed in the grubbiest of his grubby clothes, and was holding his weapon of choice: a paintball gun.

"Just get on with it, Scott," Tin-Tin remarked. "I'd like to get this over with before the mosquitoes get too bad and the day gets too hot."

"Just for that, Tin-Tin, we'll make sure you're a special target," Scott replied with a grin.

Tin-Tin groaned. Christopher stepped in. "Who are the team captains, Scott?"

Scott surveyed the group of people standing around him. He made his choices carefully. "Gordon, you're up!"

The red-head grinned. "All Right!" he said as he stepped forward and high-fived his brother.

Scott glanced around once more and chose his last team captain. "Alex, You da man!" Scott grinned.

The chosen one whooped and jumped for joy much to the surprise of the others. Alex ran up to stand next to Gordon and then high-fived his older brothers. Alex had a grin on his face to rival the Cheshire Cat! Oh yes! Here was one happy young man who was going to enjoy every minute of this!

"Okay guys, now we get to pick our team members," Scott announced. The three captains looked at the small gathering like lions looking for their lunch!

"Okay, I guess I pick first," Scott said, a cocky grin on his face. He circled the group of would-be warriors, looking them up and down. "Elise! You're with me!"

"Who goes next?" Alex asked.

"I do," Gordon said. "I'm bigger!"

"Well, whoop-de-doo!" Alex taunted. "You maybe bigger, but I'm smarter!" The crowd went "Oooh!" at the boy's cockiness.

Gordon glared at his younger brother. "Okay, grasshopper. Let's settle this mano a mano."

"Rock, paper, scissors!" Alex cried.

"Guys! We'll be here all day! Just pick a person!" groaned Cherie. rolling her eyes upward and sighing.

Alex glared back at Gordon and retorted, "Fine! I pick Virgil!"

The smile on Alex's face rubbed salt into Gordon's now wounded ego. "Your turn!" Alex gleefully announced as chuckles from the warriors could be heard.

"Christopher! You're with me," Gordon said, not once taking his eyes off Alex.

Scott looked at his two feuding captains and shook his head. "There's going to be war between those two out here today!" he whispered to Elise.

"Ain't that what this is all about, sir?" She grinned.

He smacked the top of her baseball cap. "Oh, shut-up Collins!" He grinned.

"Okay, guys. My turn again," Scott said to the group. "I pick John."

"And I piiiick," Alex said, hesitating for a moment, "Kat! I pick Kat!"

John went to stand with Scott, high-fiving both his brother and Elise. Kat moved over to stand with Alex, looking very bewildered.

Gordon looked over the remaining troops and decided he had to pick a girl. "Nikki, come on over here." Nikki grinned and high-fived her teammates.

"All right, back to me," Scott said. He sighed, looking over the remaining people, Dom, Cherie, Brandon, and Callie. "Okay, I'll sister. You're with me." Cherie jogged over to her teammates, giggling and high-fiving them all.

Gordon picked next. "Tin-Tin, come on over girl!"

She rolled her eyes mockingly and went over to his team. "You'll pay for this later if we don't win, Gordon Tracy!"

"You wound me! How can you doubt me?" Gordon asked, dramatically holding one hand over his 'wounded' heart.

"I pick Brandon next!" Alex shouted, the excitement getting to him.

"C'mon Big Bro, you're up next to choose," Virgil chimed in, reminding his brother to 'get on with it'.

"I choose Brains," Scott simply stated. The scientist stepped forward, smiling and John clapped him on the back.

"Okay, let's see... I'll take Dom," Gordon said. That left Callie who happily made her way over to Alex's team.

Down by the beach, Dianne and Lady Penelope sat in the shade, their chaise loungers sitting side by side for ease of conversation. A third chaise lounge sat beside Dianne, but it was empty. Its occupant, Jeff, was down by the shore, helping his youngest son build a monster sand castle.

"I am afraid that paintball is not what comes to my mind when I think of a festive time," Lady Penelope said, sipping her lemonade.

"Me either," Dianne agreed. "Though I am on duty for injuries and first aid. This will be an especially interesting year with all of the new folks and Alex added to the team. It was over much too quickly last year when Alan chose to do it for his birthday."

"The game will take longer then?" Penelope asked.

"It should." Dianne looked at her watch. "I'd say four hours maximum."

"Oh my," Penelope said, surprised. "I had no idea." She sat back and sipped her drink again. "Perhaps I should have brought a book."

Dianne rummaged around in the bag of necessities she had brought along and pulled out two fat romance novels. She offered them to Penelope with a grin. "I came prepared. Take your pick."

"This one looks lovely! Thank you, Dianne, for being so generous." Dianne smiled at the British aristocrat before returning to her drink.

"Just how dangerous is this paintball?" Penelope asked a little while later.

"Enough to cause bumps and bruises, and damage a few egos, but nothing life threatening." Dianne chuckled, remembering how battered the grown Tracy men always complained they were when they returned from these adventures.

Penelope smiled, not quite assured that Dianne was being truthful or playing it down. She supposed she would just have to wait and see for herself.

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 10/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 17:56:31 GMT  
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Scott and Gordon set out the rules. "Okay. Each team has a flag, and will go out and set up a 'fort' or 'base' and that's where your flag will be kept. The object of the game is to capture the other teams' flags without getting shot," Scott explained. "Last man standing gets all the flags, unless someone has collected them all before everyone else is out. Then person who collected the flags wins."

"If you're shot, you're out for the round," Gordon added. "Anywhere above the neck is off limits, but the rest of the body is fair game. These paintballs do sting, and if you're really hurt, Mom is down on the beach as first aid. And that's where you should go if you get hit anyway."

"Does everyone understand the rules?" Scott asked, handing Alex a stick with a red bandanna on it. He took the blue bandanna and Gordon got a yellow one.

The players murmured their understanding, and then Scott said, "Okay. Let's go! And may my... oh, may the best team win!"

"We intend to!" replied Nikki to Scott's 'almost' slip up.

\*\*\*\*\*

The three teams headed off in different directions to find a fort. Gordon found a suitable spot, and

he and his team sat down to strategize.

"We'll hit Scott's fort first, Christopher, since you're not... feeling well, you're the fort defender. "

Christopher wearily agreed. "Right, Guv."

"The rest of us will cover you and each other to and from the fort. If you get hit, use your wrist-comms. Try to stay close, cover your rear ends, and get Scott!" They all laughed and, checking that their weapons were loaded, headed off towards their targets.

\*\*\*\*\*

"How about over here Brandon?" called out Alex.

"Looks good to me. Make sure we can secure the fort if we get backed into it. We want to be able to shoot from all sides," added Brandon. Alex had been grateful for Brandon's help navigating through the brush and dense overgrown areas.

Kat walked along with Callie. "So, have you ever played this before Callie?"

"Years ago, but I don't really remember all the rules, I only remembered feeling like I'd been stung and I was covered in paint!" They both laughed.

"Well, I hope I can manage to shoot this thing!" replied Kat, indicating her weapon.

Virgil gathered his teammates around and discussed a plan.

Although Alex voiced his opinion about being 'gung-ho' for Gordon, it was agreed they should all go for Scott, and take out as many enemy warriors as they could along the way!

"After all, he's my only big brother and it's his birthday!" Virgil grinned. "Then once we've got Scott's flag... we get Gordon!"

"YESSSSS!!" Alex gleamed.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Okay, people, here's the plan. Cherry, you're on defense. Make sure no one gets near our flag."

"Aww, Scott," the teen huffed. "I hate being defense!"

"Like or lump it, sis," Scott said. "You're a better shot if you're stationary and a smaller target, too. From this position, you can pick our enemies off no problem."

Cherie still frowned, but she said, "Oh, all right."

"Brains, you and John make a feint at Alex's fort. Get a sense of who, what, and where, then double back to help Elise and me take on Gordon."

"Right, Scott," the engineer said. He tapped John on the arm and the two of them went off in the direction that Alex and his team had taken.

"You ready, Collins?" Scott asked.

"Ready, willing, and able, sir!" she answered with a mock salute. They checked their weapons, and headed off together. Elise closely shadowed Scott who walked carefully through the wild shrubbery.

"I see you haven't forgotten the rule," he whispered over his shoulder.

"You're right. I haven't. You taught me it and that's why I'm stuck to you like glue! Never, ever leave your wingman! Works in the air, and it'll work on the ground!"

He grinned. "You got it, Lieutenant! I'm proud of you. Now let's go kick some serious butt. It's my birthday and I want some flags!"

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 10/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:02:11 GMT

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Alex turned suddenly. "Ssshhh! I think I hear someone coming!"

Virgil and Kat were closest to him and motioned him to move back towards their flag. Brandon came from around the backside of their fort, silently indicating to Virgil his intentions to move around the back of where the noises were coming from.

John held up a hand to stop Brains and they both stood silent in the undergrowth. From here, John could see Kat, the fort and the flag. He knew Virgil would be hidden, but close nonetheless.

Brandon crept along in the undergrowth, taking care not to make any noise. Some of his best friends outside of WASP had been Navy Seals and they had taught him a thing or two. Now he listened carefully as two people whispered and discussed strategy. Brains... and John. Not easy targets, but....

He watched as the two split up to scout out Alex's fort. Brains was closer, so Brandon followed him.

Even though Brains's eyesight wasn't the best, his other senses compensated for it and he was aware of the slight rustling in the underbrush behind him. Whoever it is, they're very good. Maybe I can lure them into a false sense of security. So, Brains crept along, trying to make noise, but not too much, attempting to sound and look like he didn't know what he was doing.

Brandon chuckled internally. Okay, Brains, if that's the way you want to play it.... He waited no

longer, but raised his paintgun and fired!

Brains rolled out of the way, but not quickly enough. A large stain of red paint decorated his sleeve. He looked at the stain. "Ow! I can't believe I'm out already!" He lifted up his wrist and called John. "John, this is Brains, I'm hit. You're on your own, I'm afraid."

Damn! John sighed. "Thanks, Brains. Take care, buddy." He moved towards Alex's fort with the stealth of a panther and saw his victim in plain view. Kat! She'll never know what hit her!

She moved about restlessly, wanting to call out to Brandon, but not doing so. Her eyes darted back and forth but didn't see anything. John aimed his gun, carefully lined up his victim in his sights, and pulled the trigger. By the time Kat realized what the 'whooshing' sound was that she heard, the paintball had found its mark.

"OUCH!" Kat grabbed at her thigh where bright blue paint was now all over her leg and dripping downwards. She dropped her weapon and fell to the ground.

"Gotcha!" John said more to himself than Kat. Raising his communicator to his lips, he called Scott. "Scott, Brains is down, but I just knocked out Kat!"

"FAB, John, good shooting."

\*\*\*\*\*

In the meantime, Alex and Virgil were making their way to Scott's fort, Virgil pointing out the way and Alex moving quietly along with him. Suddenly, Alex stopped and pointed, grinning.

"Well, well," Virgil whispered in his brother's ear. "What do we have here?"

What they had was the duo of Tin-Tin and Dom slowly moving along the path as quietly as possible. Alex and Virgil ducked, and Virgil took aim at Dom.

The paintball whizzed by Dom's ear, missing him by a hair or two. He instinctively ducked, pulling down Tin-Tin automatically. "Saints alive! What the hell was that?"

"We're being fired on!" replied Tin-Tin. They both scrambled under the nearest bush and waited.

Across the pathway, a disgruntled Virgil and Alex also remained hidden. "Aw man! I thought for sure we'd get him!" moaned Alex.

"Calm down, little bro, we'll get 'em." Virgil, it seemed to Alex, had never-ending patience. Alex would have rather stormed the clearing, all barrels blazing. Instead, he waited with Virgil.

"Can you see who it is?" whispered Dom.

"Not yet, but the color of the paint over there indicates it's from Alex's team," answered Tin-Tin.

"Hmm," Dom said softly. "Perhaps we can get behind them and do a little damage of our own. Tell

you what. I'll provide a distraction and you slip around behind them and take them out."

Tin-Tin grinned. "Sounds like a plan." She began to slither through the underbrush as quietly as possible, going around the position where she thought their assailants were. Dom, on the other hand, stuck his head up enough to look around. He knew that his head was safe enough. Then he took a deep breath, and standing up full length, began to lope up the pathway.

Surprisingly, there was no action on the part of his opponents.

It was only when he heard Tin-Tin's cry of, "Aagh!" that he realized the problem. Whoever had been shooting at them had anticipated their movements and taken out Tin-Tin.

Dom sped up from a lope into a full run, hoping to find one of the assailants still close enough to retaliate for Tin-Tin. As he neared the spot where he heard Tin-Tin's cry, he saw Virgil stand up. Without a second thought, Dom raised his gun and fired. He missed! Virgil heard it coming and spun round, getting off a paintball of his own. His shot missed, too!

The standoff continued and at least 3 more paintballs were launched across the clearing, the third one finding its victim. Yellow paint splattered all down the front of Virgil as he went down. Dom laughed triumphantly, and called Gordon on his wrist comm. Virgil swore later he heard Gordon rolling with laughter when Dom told him that his brother was out!

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 10/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:05:24 GMT

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A short while later, Dom walked over to the area where Tin-Tin and Virgil had been hit. They were both gone already, headed toward the beach where the 'victims' were to meet once they were out. Dom knew it was probably Alex that had hit Tin-Tin, so he started slowly searching for the boy. Knowing Alex was a good shot didn't make Dom feel any better as he rummaged around in the bushes.

Alex was well hidden and quite some distance from Dom. After he'd shot Tin-Tin and Virgil had faced down Dom, Alex scrambled away as fast as he could, but not where he wouldn't be able to track his next victim... Dom! Alex smiled to himself as he carefully shifted his weight to a more comfortable position.

Dom, however, had other ideas. Instead of looking for the lad, I'll just have a gander at Scott's fort and give Gordon and Nikki the heads up on it."

Alex looked puzzled as he watched Dom stop hunting for him and go off in another direction. Hmm. Where's he going? Should I follow him? He thought for another moment. Nah. Better go back and get some backup for myself. Quietly, he got up from his hiding place and slinked back to his fort.

\*\*\*\*\*

Meanwhile, back at Alex's fort, John found himself stalked by a stealthy Brandon. Callie, who hadn't gone far following Brandon, now returned to the fort to take Kat's place, and John couldn't get a clear shot at her.

John knew he was on his own and outnumbered. Still, he would give them a run for their money. This Tracy wasn't going down without a fight! With Callie already back in the safety of the fort, John knew he had to concentrate on Brandon. At least Alex isn't here, he thought to himself.

Brandon had the vantage point, being able to see both John and the fort from his position. He crouched down and belly-crawled through the undergrowth. "C'mon, buddy, just a little closer," Brandon said to himself in a whisper. He lined up his sights and waited for a clear shot.

John stood motionless, he knew Brandon was out there, but didn't know where. He backed slowly toward the fort, seeking the protection of it and secretly hoping that Brandon would shoot, miss, and accidentally hit his own team member... Callie!

Wishful thinking, Tracy! I sure could use some back-up right now. Scott? Where the hell are you?

John's question would go unanswered. The first shot whizzed by him hitting the fort, paint splattering everywhere. John hit the deck, but not before the 2nd shot hit him on the shoulder as he went down! A triumphant Brandon jumped from the bushes yelling like a crazed Apache Warrior!

John rolled over onto his back. "Nice, Brandon. Reeaaallll nice."

Brandon winked at John. "It was a pleasure Tracy!"

Callie had heard the exchange of paintballs and humans, but had ducked out of sight until Brandon came over. She walked over to him smiling. "Woo-Hoo! Way to go Brandon!" she cried and high fived him.

"Yee hah!" cried another voice. John shook his head, groaning, as Alex stepped out of the bushes. Brandon grinned as Alex high-fived him, and then Callie. "Guess what!" Alex said excitedly. "I got Tin-Tin!" He looked over at the fort. "Hey, where's Kat?"

John looked up from his position on the ground. "I nailed her myself." Then he realized that someone else was missing. "What happened to Virgil?"

"Uh, oh, um," Alex hemmed. "Dom got him."

John whooped. "Way to go, Dom!"

"But Dom's not even on your team," Callie protested.

"Doesn't matter. Anybody who can take out Virge gets a pat on the back from me!" John exclaimed.

"Well, Alex. What do you want us to do now?" Brandon asked.

Alex looked pointedly at John. "I'll tell you as soon as the body is buried."

John chuckled. "I know when I'm not wanted. Do me a favor, bud? Nail Gordon for me?"

"I'll try my best," Alex said. John got up, waved to the small group and went off down to the beach.

"Okay" said Alex, "I say we head over to Gordon's fort and I'll take him, while you two grab his flag!"

"Slow down there, bud!" replied Brandon. "There's only three of us left, and we need to plan this out."

"I agree," Callie added.

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 10/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:11:47 GMT

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Cherie paced back and forth wishing for some action, even if it was just a little. Scott, Elise, and John had be gone for what seemed like ages. She was aware of Brains's demise early on in the game, but as of yet had had no word from any of the others. She looked out into her surroundings. "Great. Not even a bird around!" Sighing, she resigned herself to the fact she may have been forgotten. Wait! If I am forgotten, I'll be the last one left and I'll win! She grinned to herself, pleased with the way her thoughts had taken her.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Scott! We have been walking through these damn bushes for hours! We need to take Gordon or Alex's flags and get back to our own camp!"

"I know, Elise! But I don't like the idea of getting shot and losing!"

Behind him Elise huffed. He ignored it and continued heading towards Alex's fort, or at least where he thought it was. A little further down the pathway, Scott's wrist-comm buzzed. "Scott here."

"Hey, it's John, I got slammed! Brandon got me, looks like you three are on your own."

"Three?" Scott and Elise simultaneously realized that Cherie was still guarding their fort! "Thanks, John. Sorry you got it!"

"Yeah, right, Scott!" John replied as he buzzed out, laughing.

"Do you think she's okay back there?" Elise asked Scott.

"I hope so. The quicker we get the others picked off, the quicker we'll be able to get back to her." The two continued on their trek onwards.

\*\*\*\*\*

Dom had finally made his way back to Gordon and Nikki, giving them the heads up on what he knew about the other teams.

"Anyone know anything about Scott, Elise, or Cherie?" asked Gordon.

Dom shook his head. "Sorry, I only got to deal with Virgil and I think Alex was nearby."

Gordon looked thoughtful for a second. "Right! We're heading over to Scott's. We'll get there faster than Alex's team, and I want to nail Scott!"

Nikki smiled and rolled her eyes. "Men and their games!" she remarked, as laughing, she followed along after Dom and Gordon, hoping they weren't going into a paintball trap.

\*\*\*\*\*

Christopher waited at the fort, glad to be standing still. The sun was giving him a headache, and to tell the truth, the hangover he had was threatening to make him erupt at any time. He was glad to have the nice quiet job of defending the fort. No one's come by here yet, and no one is going to either. From what I could see this is a brotherly grudge match.

He came on the alert, however, when he heard a slight rustle in the bushes to his left. Cautiously, he crept over to that side, peering out into the undergrowth. He could see, some fifteen paces from him, the blond hair of someone's head. That looks like Alex! he realized. Too bad that heads are off limits! I'd have a clear shot. He set his gun on the edge of the fort, waiting for the boy to show some other part of his body. So it was that he was completely surprised when a paintball slammed into his back from behind.

"Arggh!" he cried, turning to see who had shot him. Behind him was a grinning Callie, who had stepped into the fort and taken the flag.

Alex came out of hiding, whooping. Christopher shook his head. "Y'know. If I had been feeling better...."

"You'd have fallen for the same tactic," Callie said amiably. "Now, onto Scott's fort."

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 10/02/2005

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Scott and Elise approached Alex's fort with great care and caution. They hunkered down and used their hands and arms to communicate. Having both been in the Air Force, they were actually still quite good at maneuvers like this, and so Brandon didn't hear or see anyone approach the fort.

As far as Elise could see, Brandon was the only occupant. She didn't care where the others were at this moment, just that she or Scott could take Brandon and get that flag! She slowly edged along the farthest side of the fort area. Scott indicated he would take out Brandon and she would grab the flag. Silently they closed in on their 'kill'. Brandon, although keen with his senses, never saw it coming! The blue paintball landed right in front of his feet. Momentarily stunned, Brandon looked down and then immediately raised his weapon to fire. Too late! Scott nailed him with a barrage of blue paintballs.

Brandon swore as he went down. The next thing he saw coming his way was wearing green baggy cargo pants, a smudged t-shirt, a dirty hat, and a grin!

"Thanks, Brandon! Nice doing business with you!" Elise grinned as she reached over him, grabbed the flag and took off.

Brandon was more annoyed at himself than the other two. What am I going to tell Alex and Callie? he moaned as he got to his feet and headed for the beach, defeated.

\*\*\*\*\*

Christopher rubbed his back as he headed to the beach. He stopped for a moment to tell Gordon the situation. "Gordon, mate. I'm out and Alex has the flag."

"Damn!" Gordon swore. "That little...."

Nikki put a hand on his arm. "Don't worry about it. Let's get to Scott's fort and take his flag."

"Okay," Gordon said. "Dom, what's your position?"

"I'm watching Scott's fort," Dom came back. "I don't see anyone here...." Too late, he heard the rustle behind him and felt the sting of the paint ball on his arm.

"Ha! I got you!" Cherie said in triumph.

She scurried back to the fort, while Dom cleared his throat. "Correction. I didn't see anyone there because she was sneaking up behind me. I'm out, Gordon. Good luck with Cherie."

Brandon called to Alex on the way down to the beach. "I'm sorry, little guy. I tried, but Scott got me. And he got our flag." He met up with Dom, who was rubbing his arm. "You're out, too?"

"Yes," Dom said, chuckling. "Cherie's got better aim than you'd think."

\*\*\*\*\*

The group on the beach had grown in size. Covered in primary colors, each of them had a sob story to tell as to why they were down there.

"You too, huh?" Virgil said, looking at the sorry pair of Dom and Brandon.

"Yep." They explained who got them and how, and when John heard that Cherie had 'killed' Dom, he was rolling with laughter.

Even Virgil had to give Cherie credit for that one! "That's my li'l sister!"

Dom and Brandon made themselves comfortable and began the wait for the remaining warriors.

\*\*\*\*\*

Scott and Elise were almost back to their fort when they heard Cherie's shout of delight at having hit Dom. They stopped and crouched down. Scott noticed shadows off to the left. He tugged Elise's arm, pointing left as she turned her attention to Scott. She nodded, indicating she'd seen them.

Gordon and Nikki edged forward, frustrated their comrade was now a 'fallen comrade'. Gordon was already irked because Alex had got his flag, and now Cherie had picked off Dom! Nikki was amused by the whole incident and couldn't help but laugh.

"Stop it! This is serious stuff, ya know!" Gordon whispered.

"Relax, you'll be fine. Just go get her and the flag before Scott gets back!"

As they moved closer, Scott and Elise got an eyeful of who the shadows were. Smiling to each other, they split up, Scott going left towards Gordon, and Elise crawling off to the right, towards Nikki.

While all this was going on, Alex and Callie had approached from another side of the fort. Callie stopped in her tracks, quickly pushing Alex to the ground.

"What? What is it!" Alex fairly bounced around while lying down.

"Oh, this should be good! I can see Cherie, and Nikki and Gordon are trying to sneak up on her."

"I want Gordon!" hissed Alex.

Callie chuckled. "I know you do, Alex, and he's all yours!"

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 10/02/2005

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Cherie kept an eagle eye out for any more enemy fighters. She kept low and moved from side to side of the fort, watching and listening for the slightest noise. Gordon signaled for Nikki to go around the fort on one side while approached the fort from another.

Scott watched this maneuver as he crept through the jungle himself, keeping an eye on Gordon, who was slithering up as close to the fort as he could. In doing so, Scott almost missed Callie, crouching next to a tree, hidden from one point of view, but not from another. He grinned, raised his gun, and fired!

"Ow!" Callie cried as the paintball hit her in the butt. Her outcry drew Cherie's attention and she hurried over to that part of the fort, her gun raised and ready.

\*\*\*\*\*

Nearby, Nikki was having some trouble getting close to Scott's fort. The path she thought she'd found wound its way away from the encampment. She stopped suddenly when she heard the lightest whisper of a rustle behind her. Quickly, she ducked behind a tree.

Elise had seen Nikki duck and changed her direction to backtrack and approach the tree from the other side. Weapon poised and ready, she crept very slowly around the trunk.

CRACK! A twig snapped under Elise's foot and Nikki heard it.

Spinning around, Nikki came almost head to head with Elise. Both girls immediately started firing, and blue and yellow dots soon plastered the tree. They both finally backed away from the tree, each hoping to get a clear shot at the other one, and as both stood their ground, they fired!

"OW!, Man that hurts!"

"Bloody hell! That stung!"

Both hit, and both smarting from their wounds, they both collapsed onto the ground and looked over each other.

"What a mess!" stated Nikki.

"Yeah, yellow just ain't my color!" Elise replied, smiling.

\*\*\*\*\*

Gordon watched as Cherie raised up from behind the fort, at first looking for the source of Callie's cry, then turning as she heard Nikki and Elise shout. Gordon smiled grimly and sighted his sister's upper arm. His finger squeezed on the trigger, but as it did, she turned back toward him and his shot caught her high in the chest, knocking her over.

"Oh, damn," he muttered under his breath as he climbed over the side of the fort. "Are you okay, Cherry?" he asked, putting down his gun and helping her to sit up. The teen had tears in her eyes from the sting of the paintball. "I didn't mean to hit you there, hon. I was aiming for your arm." He took off the bandanna he had tied around his head and tried to wipe off the paint that had splattered on her face.

"I'll be okay," Cherie sniffed.

"Sure you will. Just get down to Mom and she'll fix you up good as new," he said, giving her a little hug. "Look. Elise and Nikki are going down. Looks like Callie is, too. You just go down with them."

Cherie nodded and picked up her gun. The older women saw her come out of the fort and Nikki put out an arm to gather her in.

\*\*\*\*\*

Gordon watched them go, then reached out and grabbed the flag. He was about to leave the fort when he heard, "Hey, Gordy!" It was followed immediately by a red paintball in the side.

Gordon clutched at his side like a mortally wounded ham. "Ohhhh, ya got me!" he said melodramatically as he turned to see Alex, gun in hand and a big grin plastered all over his face, standing a few yards off.

"That's for Cherry!" the boy said as Gordon stumbled around the fort, moaning and clutching his side, then finally falling on the ground, flag still in hand. From behind the fort wall, he grinned, because he had seen something that Alex hadn't: the form of Scott sneaking up behind the boy.

Alex stood triumphantly with his gun raised and a huge smile on his face. "Oh, Alex?" a soft voice called from behind.

Still gleaming from his victory, Alex didn't give it a second thought, just turned when he heard Scott's voice. "Hey, Scott, what's up?"

Scott grinned, and raised up his gun and pointing it straight at Alex, he said, "This!" and fired.

Alex ducked and turned, the paintball hitting him on the left side of his back. "AWWW!!! Ain't fair!" he wailed.

Scott sauntered over and, first removing the flag from a 'dead' Gordon, Scott stood next to Alex and patted him on the back. "Sorry, bud, better luck next time!"

Alex promptly stuck his tongue out at the eldest Tracy offspring. "Aaagghh!" he moaned, staggering around the small clearing, putting on just as much as an over-the-top performance as Gordon had before him. He clutched his side, he clutched his throat, until finally he fell lengthwise on his back in the soft ground cover.

Scott just shook his head as he hefted all three flags. "You two are peas in a pod sometimes. Now, if you're done with your 'Oscar winning' performances, let's get down to the beach. I'd like to

enjoy my triumph and then get back for the barbecue."

Alex stuck his tongue out again and gave Scott a raspberry.

Gordon chuckled, and offered his hand to the boy, surprising him by bending over and turning the simple hand up into a fireman's carry. Alex protested at first, then decided that playing dead was more fun.

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 10/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:16:31 GMT

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Kat noticed them first. "Well, well, well, here comes the winner...I think."

Scott, carrying flags, and Gordon, carrying Alex, approached the now very dry, paint stained group.

THUMP! Alex landed on the soft sand after Gordon tossed him over his shoulder and dropped him to the ground. "Thanks," he said sarcastically. Gordon laughed and ruffled the young boys' hair.

"So, I take it Scott won?" inquired Callie.

"Yes Ma'am!" Scott answered, proudly holding his 3 flags up.

Groans and moans and laughing followed, as the last 'survivors' told their story and Alex did an encore performance of his dying, along with an outstanding impression of Gordon's final exit.

"I don't know about you, but I'm hungry, tired, and need a shower!" Elise said. Replies of "Me, too," and "Ain't that the truth," followed as the weary group got ready to head back to the villa for the beach BBQ.

Tyler ran up to Scott and pulled on his hand. "You've got to come see the sand castle that Dad and I made! It's humongous!"

"Okay, Spud," Scott said, still carrying the flags in his hand. Jeff and Dianne watched as Scott admired the structure. "Boy, this is huge! Are you sure just you and Dad did this?"

"Yup. Just us," Tyler said proudly. Scott ruffled his hair, then planted the flags, one by one, in the center of the huge sand castle. "I think that's a fitting decoration, don't you?" he asked.

"Looks good to me!" Tyler said. "Hey, guess what?"

"What, Spud?"

"Mom and Dad said that maybe next year I can do the paintball war, too!"

"Oh, is that so?" Scott asked. "Well, I guess I'd better watch out then, huh?"

"Yep, you'd better watch out!" Tyler said as he and Scott followed the rest of the crew back to Thunderbird Two for the trip home.

Post by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu on 10/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:18:03 GMT  
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Thursday, April 5, 2068, 9 a.m., Tracy Island

"Are we ready for this?" Dianne asked Brains.

"I believe so. The procedure should not take long. It should be possible to handle everyone today, excepting Alan, of course."

"And my mother, should we decide that she needs one." Dianne sat up on the examining table. "You put mine in and I'll implant yours. Then we can do the rest in groups."

"Yes, with the medical and scientific team first," Brains said. "Tin-Tin and Kat are waiting in the hall."

"The family will be last, unfortunately," Dianne said, grimacing as Brains shot a numbing compound into the outside of her left ankle. "That will give Tyler plenty of time to hide. Hopefully Jeff can come up with something to keep him close to home."

A quick injection, and Dianne's homing implant was done. The tiny chips, implanted subcutaneously, would enable whoever was in Thunderbird Five to keep track of each team and family member in case of emergency.

"That wasn't bad," Dianne said. "Your turn."

Brains took her place on the examination couch, and the round of injections began in earnest.

Post by Tikatu on 15/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:19:20 GMT  
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Thursday, April 5th, Tracy Island. 9:45 a.m.

Scott leaned casually against the wall outside the sick bay, arms folded, looking at his companions patiently as he waited his turn. Dianne had begun the implant procedures, and she, along with Brains, had decided that to make sure they got everyone, they would call the team members by their respective groups. John had already had his, and Callie was now receiving hers. That would take care of the 'space crew', with the exception of Alan who, being in TB5, would have to wait until he came back dirtside.

The group outside were the 'Pilots': Scott, Elise, Virgil and Christopher. They all stood quietly, waiting to be poked and prodded. Virgil stood opposite Scott, one leg resting on the wall behind him.

"So, Christopher? You decided where you want your implant to be?" he asked.

Christopher looked around, almost nervously. "Well, er, I hadn't really given it much thought, you know. I don't suppose it'll make too much difference as long as it's quick and painless."

Scott chuckled. "Are you afraid of needles, Chris?"

"Well, no, not exactly. I've had my fair share of 'em, being in the R.A.F, but it's not on my top ten list of things I like to do!" He smiled in reply.

All of them chuckled, then Scott asked Elise where she was going to have hers implanted. She immediately replied to all three of them with a wink "That's for me to know, and you to find out!"

This brought more laughter and various joking comments which were suddenly interrupted when Brains burst through the door yelling for Nikki, who had momentarily stepped out of the infirmary. The shocked occupants in the hall were momentarily stunned into silence until Virgil got Brains's attention and suggested he calm down, stop shouting, and maybe try to call Nikki on his communicator.

"Oh... oh, yeah. I'm sorry, Virgil. You're right, that would be a better idea."

"What's wrong Brains?" asked Scott.

Brains turned to Scott, absently adjusted his glasses and mumbled something about Callie 'keeling over'.

"She WHAT?" said Elise, alarmed.

"She fainted," Brains stated.

"Is she going to be all right?" Christopher asked.

"Yes, we think so. Dr. Tracy didn't expect anyone to have this kind of reaction."

During all of this discussion, Elise had the sense to call Nikki on her communicator and as Brains continued with his flustering, Nikki came down the hall.

"Brains, goodness what's happened?"

Brains quickly told her and ushered her into the sick bay.

"Ah, Nikki there you are! Poor Callie just lost it on me!" Dianne chuckled softly.

"I think the needle size scared her, although only a small part of it actually goes into the skin."

"I see, Dr. Tracy. Here let me take care of Callie while you and Brains prepare for your next patients. They are all anxiously awaiting out in the hall!"

"Thanks, Nikki." Dianne replied warmly, grateful for her nurse's help.

Nikki gently wheeled the bed Callie had fainted on into the adjoining room and made her comfortable. It wasn't long before Callie came around, realized what had happened, and began spluttering her apologies and embarrassment at having passed out. Nikki assured Callie that it was okay and nothing to worry about and that it happened all the time. Callie didn't quite believe her, but Nikki was being caring and helpful and Callie liked her a lot.

Dianne opened the door and four heads simultaneously turned her way.

"How's Callie?"

"Is she ok?"

"What happened?"

Everyone's questions came at once, and Dianne held up her hand to hush them.

"Calm down everyone. Callie is fine. She's come to now and Nikki assures us there are no lingering side-effects. Callie apparently has an aversion to needles that she didn't know she had!" Dianne smiled sweetly. "So... who's my next victim... I mean, patient?" she quickly corrected herself.

"I'll do it." Christopher sighed as he stepped forward, looking at each of his fellow pilots as he followed Dianne. They all smiled at him.

"Good luck, old chap!" said Elise as the door closed behind him.

Virgil and Scott were still chuckling about Callie. Elise didn't find it amusing.

"C'mon guys. It's not her fault she passed out! I'm sure none of you were the perfect patients while you were growing up."

That prompted both boys to start in on each other, talking about various accidents and trips to the hospital.

Finally, Elise raised her voice above them saying, "Okay! I'm sorry I mentioned it! Jeez, I didn't

mean for war to break out!"

Scott couldn't help but have the last word.

"Well I don't know what all the fuss is about. It's only a small implant, it's not like it's going to be major surgery. I've had more stuff done in the Air Force than this requires, so I can guarantee this Tracy won't be causing a fuss or passing out."

Elise looked at him, remembering all the shots they got in the service.

"Yeah, you're right about that Scott. Every time you turned to look in another direction, those damn medics were poking you with something or another."

The two exchanged knowing smiles, just as Christopher came out.

"Well?" asked Virgil.

"No sweat, mate! Piece of cake!" He grinned at Elise. "You're next, luv!"

"Gee, thanks," she replied and walked into the sick bay.

Minutes later she emerged. Two pairs of very different Tracy eyes looked at her. She looked at each pair in turn and simply said, "No problem!" and walked over to stand next to Christopher.

Dianne appeared once more in the doorway. "Okay, Scott, your turn please." Scott gave a know-it-all look and a smile to the other three and went in.

Virgil turned to the other two as soon as the door closed. "Are you sure there's nothing to this?"

They both laughed. "Virgil, you'll be okay. You'll live to fly another day!" Elise smiled merrily at him. He gave her a 'not impressed' look but his eyes were twinkling!

Scott sat down on the edge of the bed. Dianne was prepping his implant.

"Tell me where you want me to implant this Scott," she said.

Scott told her and she smiled. "Well, I've not put one there today so far!"

"I like to be original!" He grinned.

She rolled her eyes and with Brains watching, she started the procedure.

"OWW!" Scott winced as the small needle pricked his skin.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to get you. I must have nicked a vein, I don't usually, but I might have."

"No, I'm fine. Just didn't expect it that's all." Scott was a little worried. I've never reacted to needles, so what the hell is wrong with me this time?

Dianne turned back towards him with the implant and the rather large needle casing that held it. Suddenly Scott looked at it and felt his throat closing around him. He shook his head quickly.

"Scott? You okay?" Dianne became concerned.

"W-What?"

"Scott? I asked if you were okay?"

Scott swallowed and as he looked up at her, and the instrument, the walls became black and enclosed around him. The last thing he saw was Brains rushing towards him. Dianne stood there, totally bewildered.

"What the hell just happened, Brains? TWO in one morning?"

"I don't know, Dr. Tracy. Scott usually is fine with needles," the scientist replied as he fussed around Scott, who was out like a light!

"This is not neurosurgery I'm doing here! Oh dear... what am I going to tell his father?"

She looked at Brains with a silly smile on her face. She sighed and asked Brains to move Scott into the room where Callie had been earlier, until Nikki had walked her back to her apartment.

Dianne opened the door... again... and motioned for Virgil.

"Where's Scott?" he asked as he entered the room.

"Over there, with Brains." Dianne pointed but didn't look in the direction of the eldest Tracy son.

"Oh My God! What the hell happened!? Is he okay? What... Why...?" Virgil was becoming clearly upset and went over to Scott.

"Scott can you hear me, it's Virgil. Scott wake up!" The body on the bed groaned as it returned back to the living world.

"Quit shouting, Virg!"

"Scott! You passed out!" Virgil was almost stunned at the words that came out of his mouth. His big brother, his rock, his best friend, his fearless field commander had fainted at the sight of a needle! Scott sat up slowly and looked at Virgil.

"DON'T you even THINK about telling Gordon about this!"

The look on Scott's face was priceless and his brother couldn't help but start to laugh as Dianne approached him with a needle!

Post by FrankieCTB2 on 17/02/2005

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Wednesday, April 4, 12 PM; a space station above the IDL (11 AM on Tracy Island)

Five hundred miles above Earth, orbiting the planet directly over the International Date Line, due west of San Francisco, was an unusual space station. It was a privately owned medical facility, still under construction. Two medical research companies, a pharmaceutical company, two universities and several physicians combined their resources to create this, the first of its kind.

The purpose would be to treat cancer patients. Years ago, it had been determined that the disease spread much more slowly in low gravity. It was reasoned that zero gravity might halt it, or at least slow it enough for treatments to be developed or improved. It would house fifty patients, plus half again that many medical personnel and staff to care for them.

But the opening of the facility was still in the future. The exterior had been finished two months ago, and the interior was slowly taking shape. The six members of the construction crew were just about finished putting in the partitions between the patients' chambers. On another level, some engineers were working on the control panels for the gravity controls of the various levels (they had their level successfully put on 1G), and the oxygen controls. On a third level, more people were working on the facilities for food storage and preparation, and laundry. On yet another level, in a chamber specifically designed and built to hold them, two of the large oxygen tanks - those that had been supplying the personnel aboard with a breathable atmosphere - were being replaced.

Three men were doing this last task. They'd just removed the second empty tank and were allowing it to float away in the null gravity. But it didn't quite go in the direction they wanted it to, and it knocked against one of the full ones, causing it to slam into a bulkhead.

"Whoa! Careful, you guys. We don't need any accidents, especially not in this area," said one of the workers.

"Easy, Paul. We got it. And it looks okay," replied another, giving the tank a quick once-over, then pushing it gently in the direction of the empty niches. "Here it comes, Nick."

"Nice touch, Ken," said the third man, as the tank slipped easily into place. He strapped it in. "Now for the other one."

The second tank was quickly moved to its niche and fastened down. Then they started to hook the tanks up to the coils that fed the oxygen to the various levels on the station. None of them noticed that the tank that had hit the bulkhead had its connectors loosened by the shock. And just as the connection was made, the engineers tested the controls for the oxygen tanks. It only took a small electrical current to initiate any changes in the flow. This time the current caused a shock as it met two pieces of metal rubbing against each other. The resulting spark caused a small explosion that knocked the three men across the room and into the far wall. Then another, larger explosion occurred, and ripped a hole in the bulkhead. The entire station shuddered, and everyone aboard stopped what they were doing.

Communications within the station were immediately abuzz with questions and shouts. The control panels in the engineering section showed the oxygen level dropping far more rapidly than it should. Two of the engineers suited up and headed to the level where the tanks were kept. Twenty minutes later, they reported the situation to the chief.

"Mr. Bailey, it doesn't look too good. One of the tanks is destroyed, three more have holes in them and there's a large hole in the bulkhead. Two of the damaged tanks were blasted from their moorings and have partially blocked it. We were able to go in and pull the three men out, but two of them are dead. The third one is still alive, but in bad shape. We need help."

"All right, Mr. Chang. You and Ms. Sanchez do what you can for him. I'll radio Earth and see how soon they can get help up here."

"It had better be soon. I don't know if there's any other damage. The radiation shields are close to this area. I hope the explosions didn't do any damage to them."

Startled, Don Bailey checked the digital gauges. He shook his head as he saw the radiation levels had risen slightly, and were continuing to do so. He made some rapid calculations, then placed the call to their base on the planet.

Another twenty minutes later, he was ready to panic. Their Earth base told him that they had no transport ready to go, and wouldn't for another week. They contacted the WSA, who showed little interest in helping, and said their vehicles were not available. Other spacegoing organizations were similarly disinterested. He heard a noise and looked up to see Ms. Sanchez entering. "Corazon, no one is available, or willing to help. We're stuck here for at least a week, and the radiation levels are rising. The rise is slow, but it is steady, and will reach the danger level long before anyone can come."

"No one on Earth can help, Don?"

"No one."

"What about International Rescue?"

Don slapped himself on the side of his head. "Of course! Why didn't I think of that??" He opened communications once again. "International Rescue. Calling International Rescue. This is Space Station M.C.R.C. calling. We need your help. Come in, International Rescue!"

Post by Hobbeth on 18/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:21:00 GMT  
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Thursday, April 5th, 12 PM; Thunderbird 5

Alan was heading to the kitchen area to make himself some lunch when he heard the call come

in. He hurried back to the communications console and opened the channel. "This is International Rescue, reading you five-by-five. Please repeat the name."

"This is Chief Engineer Don Bailey, in the space station M.C.R.C., which is the Multinational Cancer Research Center, currently under construction."

"Ah. Go ahead Mr. Bailey. What is your emergency?"

"Explosions have occurred in the area where the oxygen tanks that supply the station are kept. It blasted a hole through a bulkhead and damaged not only some of the tanks, but one of the radiation shields around our atomic generator as well. Two men are dead and a third is seriously injured and in need of immediate medical attention. Also, the radiation levels are rising and will reach the danger zone in," there was a pause, then, "twelve hours. Our support staff on Earth tell us they cannot have a shuttle come for a week, and no one else can - or will - come. Can you help us?"

"Send me your coordinates, then stand by."

"Thank you. Sending now."

Alan took one look at the coordinates, then opened communications to Tracy Island. "Thunderbird 5, calling Base. Come in, Base."

Post by Hobbeth on 18/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:21:33 GMT  
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Jeff was at his desk in the lounge when Alan's call came in. As the others hurried in, he got the information and made his decision quickly. He informed them of the situation and his choices for who would be going.

"Scott, I want you, John, Brains and Callie on this one. Brains will handle the casualty. I also want you to take extra oxygen tanks, in case they're needed. I've downloaded the coordinates to Thunderbird 3, so get going. The rest of you can stand down."

"Are you sure you don't want me to go, too, Jeff?" Dianne asked.

"Yes, Dianne. I'm certain Brains will be able to handle it."

She turned and said to the scientist, "If there's any chance you can stop by Thunderbird 5, you should take the implant for Alan. But remember, the injured man has top priority."

"Of course. It's a good idea," he replied. "I'll stop by the sick room and get it, then meet the others in Thunderbird 3."

"All right, get it quickly. But do it only if it is feasible," Jeff said.

As the other three crowded together on the couch, Brains said, "Kat and I have already loaded full oxygen tanks on Thunderbird 3 for its next run to 5, so we won't need to take more time to get them."

"Good work. Now, off you go." Jeff pressed the button that sent the couch on its way to the vehicle, and seconds later the other one replaced it. Brains headed down to the sick room.

Less than ten minutes later, the group staying behind watched from the balcony as Thunderbird 3 lifted off and headed towards its rendezvous with the medical space station.

Post by Hobbeth on 21/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:23:12 GMT  
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\*\*\*Thursday, April 5; 12:30 p.m. (Tracy Island time); Thunderbird Three en route to the MCRC\*\*\*

Callie could not believe she was heading back into space in Thunderbird Three after being home so short a time from the space station. It's a good thing I was able to see the basketball championship game after getting myself cleaned up from the paintball game, she thought to herself. OW! Sitting down still hurts, though. I'd better not let Scott see it. Aw, heck, I can't think about that now. It's my first rescue where I'm directly involved. I have to be ready to help as best I can.

Scott looked back at Callie. "You ready for this, Ursa?"

"I'm as ready as I'll ever be, Maverick."

The field commander liked her attitude, despite what happened to her in the paintball game. She's so focused when she's on duty. That must've come from working on the International Space Station. No wonder Dad wanted her on the team.

John said, "We're approaching the station now."

When the station came into view, Scott opened communications. "M.C.R.C, this is International Rescue. We're approaching your station and are going to circle it once, to assess the damage from outside."

Don Bailey heard Scott's voice over the radio. "Okay, International Rescue. Let us know when you're ready to dock."

Scott navigated the craft around the station, then put it into stationkeeping mode, so they could have the cameras show them the damaged areas. "Look," Brains said, as he pointed to the screen. "There's the hole in the bulkhead. And there to the left, the damaged shield. Looks like

they need at least three replacement panels. I wonder if they have any on hand."

"We'll have to ask Mr. Bailey when we get there," said Callie. "Our first priority is to get to the injured man."

"Why don't we find out now?" Scott said as he opened communications with the station once more. "M.C.R.C., this is International Rescue. We have assessed the damage and find that you need at least three panels to repair the radiation shield. Do you have any panels on board?"

"Hold on, International Rescue. I'll have to check." Don turned to the computer, pulling up the inventory. "We only have two panels in stock here."

Brains said, "That might be enough to slow down the radiation leak until more can be brought up from their planet based station."

"We'll use them to temporarily repair the damage until more panels can be sent up for more permanent repairs," Scott replied. Have them brought up to where they can be taken out and welded on. And please tell me where we should dock. It should be close to where the injured man is, if possible."

Don said, "We'll make it easier for you. We'll light up the docking area closest to him."

Scott pulled Thunderbird 3 back to see a nearby docking area light up on what appeared to be the center level of the station. He traded places with John, who smoothly eased the craft into place. They heard the sound of a successful link, and prepared to get the rescue underway.

He said, "Okay, team. We've got work to do, so let's get to it."

"F-A-B, Maverick," said John.

Post by Hobbeth and TracyFan4Ever on 21/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:24:13 GMT  
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Tracy Island, April 5th. 2.30 p.m.

Kat joined Nikki at the side of the pool, where Brandon was just finishing giving Dom a lesson in scuba diving. They had both been given an examination by Dr. Tracy, who had pronounced them both fit to start scuba diving lessons. Kat had been concerned that the lessons may not have taken place because of the rescue. She had spoken to Brandon, who assured her that Mr Tracy had said that things carried on as normal, even during a rescue.

Nikki looked excited. "I have always wanted to swim under the sea. There are so many interesting fish and coral to see."

Kat nodded. Just at that moment Dominic's lesson ended and having gone over the lesson with him, Brandon came across to the two young women. "Okay, then, let's start, shall we?"

Both young women stood up and followed Brandon to the far end of the pool where laid out were masks, fins and other equipment needed for snorkeling.

"First, I am going to show you both how to snorkel. It will teach you to breathe under the water."

"Oh, can't we scuba dive today, Brandon?" Kat asked.

"First things first, Kat." Brandon replied. "You need to learn how to breathe under the water, to clear your mask and also to learn certain signals." He handed both Nikki and Kat a mask with a snorkel attached. He showed them how to place the mask on their faces.

"Now," he said, "press the mask against your face, without fitting the strap. Breathe in through your nose, and look down. A well fitting mask will stick to your face. The snorkel attaches to the side."

There was a shout as Gordon approached the trio. "Hey, Nikki, How's your lesson going?"

"Not bad, thanks. Gordon," Nikki called back at him.

"Hey, Brandon," Gordon called. "May we watch the lesson?"

"Brandon?" Kat appealed to him. "I don't think that I want an audience, at least not just yet."

"Come on, guys," Brandon turned to Virgil and Gordon. "Give them some space."

Virgil smiled at Kat, "We'll leave you in peace for your lesson. Come on, Gordon," he said as he grabbed his brother's arm.

"Aww, Virge," Gordon said as, grumbling, he was led away.

"Right, now where were we?" Brandon started again. "Okay, now pull the strap over your head with the snorkel in place. Bite on the two lugs of the mouthpiece; the guard fits between your lips and gums.

Once Nikki and Kat had everything in place, Brandon went on to the next part. "Right. Now get into the pool in the shallow end and just stand. Lean forward from the waist and lower your face into the water, looking down." Both did as they were bid. "Now just get used to breathing through the tube in this position."

Both Nikki and Kat found that it was not as easy as they had first imagined. Kat came up for air, gasping slightly.

"Okay, Kat, try again and just relax." Brandon said calmly.

Eventually both young women were able to have their faces under the water and were breathing fairly relaxed.

"Okay, that's great. Now get out of the water, and I will go through the process of clearing the snorkel. If water splashes into the snorkel, try to blow it out again with sharp puffs of air from your mouth. This may take some practice, but it is an essential part of breathing procedure."

Kat and Nikki got back into the pool, and deliberately allowed water into the snorkel to practice clearing the tube. This was quite hard, and it took quite a time before the two were completely confident about clearing their snorkels. Brandon asked them both once more to leave the pool and showed them the fins. Nikki and Kat put on the fins, and walked, or rather flapped, down to the pool side.

"Now I know how a penguin feels," Nikki laughed. Giggling they both slid into the water.

"Okay, all I want you to do today is to slowly start to fin yourselves across the surface of the water, watching the bottom."

Kat and Nikki slowly began to swim up and down the pool, watching the bottom all the time. After fifteen minutes Brandon told them to get out of the water, as that was all that they were going to do today. Just as they were taking off the fins and masks, Tyler and Alex arrived at the pool, accompanied by Gordon.

"Aww, gee, Gordon, have we missed the fun?" Alex asked.

"You have certainly missed our lesson if that is what you are hinting at as being fun," Nikki replied.

Thank goodness, Kat said to herself.

Both Tyler and Alex ran and jumped into the pool, well and truly splashing Kat and Nikki.

"Right, we can play at that game," Kat remarked as both she and Nikki turned and jumped back in, dunking both brothers.

"Gordon, help!" Alex cried. But Gordon just stood there, "Serves you right, bud" he said laughing. "You did kind of ask for that."

Nikki and Kat got out and grabbing their towels left, but not before Kat shouted back "Come on, Nikki. Let's leave the pool for the juveniles."

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 21/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:24:54 GMT  
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They entered the airlock and Scott tapped on the hatch to the station. When it opened, a man and

a woman were there to greet them. The man said, "I'm Don Bailey and this is Corazon Sanchez. Thank God you're here."

"Where is the injured man?"

"This way." As Don took them down the passageway, Scott contacted Alan and had him patch him through to base.

"Base, this is Maverick. We are aboard the medical space station and on our way to where the injured man is."

"F-A-B, Maverick." Scott grimaced slightly as he thought he could hear amusement in his father's voice when he said the code name. "Remember, he is our priority. Get the number of personnel aboard, so we can determine how best to evacuate them."

"F-A-B, Base. Stand by."

Don led them into the control room and indicated where the man was. "His name is Paul Conners. We have the two dead men in the next room. They are Ken Jackson and Nick O'Reilly. The gentleman keeping an eye on Paul is Michael Chang."

"Einstein, check him out."

"F-A-B. Ursa, come with me, please."

As they went over to the other side of the control room, Scott turned back to Don. "I need to know how many people are currently aboard this station."

"Corazon?"

She brought up the roster on the computer. "Including Ken and Nick, there are twenty eight right now."

John and Scott looked at each other. "There's no way we could get everyone off and planetside in time," said John. He immediately contacted base himself. "Base, this is Quasar. We have a negative on evacuation. There are over two dozen personnel aboard. Einstein calculates it will take longer than the estimated time given to dangerous radiation levels for us to evacuate all personnel to Earth or the moon. Replacing some of the shielding will give us more time."

"Our priority is lives, not repairs."

Scott waved to John, indicating he wanted to speak. He had anticipated this reaction from Jeff. "Base from Maverick," he said. "Shield replacement is our best option for optimum survival of all personnel and preservation of the technology." He paused. "Besides, Base, it's not the first time we've prevented a meltdown. I seem to remember a certain nuclear reactor...."

Jeff harrumphed. "Acknowledged, Maverick. But the injured come first. If... uh... Einstein says he's stable enough to wait until you've put up the shielding, then you have the go-ahead. If not, you

head back with the patient. As in that other rescue you referenced."

Brains joined the other two, so all could hear what he had to say at once. "Base, this is Einstein. The man is stable, but in critical condition. We need to get him planetside stat. But I have a suggestion. I've been informed that a few of the construction people here have had experience working on the outside of the station. Why don't Quasar and I take the casualty and the fatalities to the station's support base, leaving Ursa and Maverick behind to assist with this phase? We can then return to finish up."

Dianne, who had returned to the lounge to hear this, leaned over and, glancing at Jeff for permission, asked, "Einstein, this is Doc. What is the condition of the casualty?" Brains told her. "Then, I agree; he needs to be transported planetside as quickly as possible."

"All right. Go ahead with that plan. But have the engineers aboard contact their base and tell them to have the panels and oxygen tanks ready to load aboard Thunderbird 3 when it gets there. Might as well do the job right."

"F-A-B, base." Scott turned to the others. "Okay, you heard him. Let's get these men into our sickbay and get going. Mr. Bailey, will you give us the coordinates for your base station and contact them to tell them we're on our way? They'll need to have panels for the radiation shield and the bulkhead ready to load, as well as full oxygen tanks."

"I've already contacted them," Corazon said. "They'll have everything ready and waiting. They want to know your ETA."

Scott told her and she turned back to the console. Brains had returned to help Callie put Paul on the anti-grav stretcher, and they now headed back to the airlock with it. Scott and John, along with a couple of men from the station, went to get the bodies of the other two men. Soon they were in the sickbay and Scott and Callie were ready to return to the station.

"Okay, get the men down there, load up the panels and get back here as soon as possible," Scott said. "I'll help with the repair, and Callie will coordinate, keeping the lines of communication going between here and base."

"F-A-B, Maverick. We'll see you two very soon."

Scott and Callie returned to the station and Thunderbird Three headed back to Earth.

Posted by Hobbeth on 23/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:25:26 GMT  
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Scott turned to Don and asked, "Who is your construction boss?"

"Mick Haggerty. I'll get him up here immediately."

Within a couple of minutes, Mick was in the control room. Scott asked, "Mr. Haggerty, do you have any construction personnel with spacewalking experience?"

"Yes, I do. Including myself, there are five of us who have done work in space."

"I want you to contact the others and have them meet the three of us to suit up for the repair work. Also, notify some of the other workers to bring tools and supplies to the airlock area."

Twenty minutes later, Scott, Callie, Mick, and four other men were all dressed in radiation suits.

Callie said, "What do you want me to do?"

"Your job will be to coordinate the procedure from the airlock. You'll also have to keep an eye on us in case of accidents and keep the communications open between us, Thunderbird Three, Thunderbird Five, and base."

"F-A-B, Maverick."

Back on Earth, Jeff heard the communications between Scott and Callie. This is going to be a big test for Callie. It's one thing to help out from Thunderbird Five, but it's different when it's time to be in on the actual rescue. I'm sure she can do it.

Scott, Mick, and the four others checked each other's oxygen tanks and jet packs to ensure the safety of the operation. They went to the airlock next and headed over to the damaged areas.

As they worked on replacing each panel slowly, Callie kept contact with the control room about the radiation levels.

"Thunderbird Three to Ursa," said Brains. "Injured man safe on Earth. We've got the other supplies. How are things going there?"

"So far, so good, Einstein. Maverick's got some help from some of the construction personnel. The first panel has been installed successfully, and they've started on the other."

"Good. Quasar and I are ready to bring the additional panels for the shields, panels to repair the bulkhead, and replacement oxygen tanks."

"F-A-B, Einstein. We'll be ready and waiting for you."

Thunderbird Three arrived as the second panel had been installed. Station crew members met John and Brains at the docking area to offload the much-needed equipment. They took one of the panels to the airlock, where Scott and the others got to work replacing the third panel.

A little over an hour later, they had finished the necessary repairs and returned to the station. Mick took off his helmet and said, "Thank you for your help. We can handle the rest of the repairs from this point."

Callie then spoke into her wristcom. "Ursa to Base and Thunderbird Five. Mission accomplished. Injured man has made it to Earth, and necessary repairs here are complete. Stand down will be at 1700 hours local time, and we'll return to base as soon as Maverick and I have gotten out of the radiation suits."

Jeff spoke from base. "F-A-B, Ursa. Congratulations on a job well done."

Scott and Callie soon joined John and Brains in Thunderbird Three, and they left the medical center a few minutes later.

As they headed back to base, Brains said, "I want the two of you in sickbay, so I can check you for radiation."

Post by TracyFan4Ever on 24/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:31:51 GMT  
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Tracy Island, 4:30 p.m on April 5th

Elise and Nikki were sitting on the patio outside Elise's apartment, enjoying a drink of fruit punch that Elise had made and discussing Scott's birthday.

"That was some birthday," Nikki declared.

"Yeah, I have to say I thoroughly enjoyed it, even though we took each other out," Elise added.

"You know," Nikki said thoughtfully. "All these Tracys are so dedicated to rescuing, but they certainly know how to have a good time as well."

Elise nodded. "I still can't get used to the idea that I am going to fly Thunderbird Two at some point in a rescue. It's still kind of scary."

"Oh, I'm sure you will be okay. Virgil's a great teacher; both he and Scott seem to have endless patience. You have only to ask Kat about learning to fly. I think that she is finally getting better."

The opening and shutting of the door to Kat's apartment, made both women look up towards her balcony. Kat came out and seeing them smiled. "Man, I have just been trying to get that paint out of my overalls. Heaven knows what paint they used! It certainly seems indelible."

"Come and join us," Nikki called. "We are just discussing the paintball war and training." Kat joined them and took a glass of punch offered by Elise.

"Who took you out, Kat?" Nikki asked.

"John did. Honestly, I never saw or heard anything until I felt something hit my thigh," Kat

answered, sitting in a chair.

The sound of girlish laughter brought Brandon on to his balcony. "Hi, there," he called out, looking down at them.

"Oh, hi, Brandon. Come and join us," Nikki called back.

"Dom's here with Josh," Brandon explained.

"The more the merrier," Elise called back. Soon the two young men and Josh were seated on the patio with Nikki, Kat and Elise. Josh was clutching a small soft toy.

"Hi, little guy," Kat said, kneeling in front of him. "What a lovely teddy." Josh offered Kat the toy and as she reached for it, withdrew his hand with a giggle.

"That's his favourite one," Dom explained.

Brandon stretched his long legs out in front of him. "This is nice. It seems that we never have had the time to just meet and talk. Everything has gone from one thing to another: a rescue, Alan's birthday, another rescue, Scott's birthday, and back to another rescue."

Dominic nodded. "Yes, it has been kind of busy. But I guess that is what we were to expect."

"Not to mention the training in between," Elise added.

"Oh, yes, the training," Kat said.

"I wonder how Callie is getting on in her first rescue?" Brandon asked

"It must feel strange, only just returned from a month in space, and then whoosh! Back into space for a rescue," Elise said. "I think when she comes back, we will have to glue her to her apartment."

"Talking about the rescue," Brandon said smiling. "How about those implants?"

"Oh yes," Nikki laughed. "And Scott fainting." Laughter met this remark.

"Who would imagine that Scott, of all people would faint at such a little thing," Kat added. "Where did you have your implant, Brandon?"

Brandon coloured slightly. "I'd rather not say right now." He looked at Kat. "Where did you have yours?"

"Oh, I just had it in the top of my left arm. No big deal, really." She giggled again at the thought of Scott

"You know, I don't think his brothers will ever let him live that down," Dominic stated, and they all nodded in agreement.

"Somehow, I don't think that we will let him live it down either," Elise added.

"Do any of you have much contact with your families?" Kat asked, then suddenly bit her lip.

"Sorry, Elise that was clumsy of me to mention families."

"Oh, it's okay, Kat." Elise smiled.

"Well, I miss mine," Nikki admitted.

"Me too," Brandon agreed with her.

"Well actually," Dom added, with a slight smile. "I have nothing to worry about. My family is here with me." He ruffled Josh's hair.

Kat smiled at him. "Yes, and he is gorgeous. If ever Mrs Tracy is unable to care for him, I would be happy to do so myself."

Dom acknowledged that. "Thanks, Kat."

"Well, all my parents know is that I am working on motor vehicles for a family firm in Kansas," Kat said. "Which is all very well, but my mother keeps asking me about the weather." She rolled her eyes.

"Maybe Mr. Tracy could give us some indication of just what we can tell our parents." Nikki commented, playing peek a boo with Joshua from behind her chair.

Just at that moment, a movement from the top balcony caught their attention as Christopher leaned over. He hesitated and then raised his arm. "Hi there," he called.

"Hi," Nikki called back.

"Come and join us!" Kat shouted up to him.

Conversation paused as Christopher entered. "Hi, everyone," he began nervously. Kat pulled up another chair and Elise offered him a drink.

"We were just discussing how nice it is to actually all sit down, excluding Callie of course, and have a really good discussion," Brandon stated.

"Yes, I must agree," Christopher nodded. "Things have certainly been busy since we all started work for IR." He relaxed and drained his drink in a long, breathless swallow.

Elise stood up and refilled her glass. "Anyone else for a refill?"

Christopher looked at his now empty glass, "Do you have any fruit juice?"

"Sure," Elise answered, "Will orange juice be okay?" She looked around at the others.

"Not for me thank you. I must leave you all," Dominic said, as he bent and picked up Josh. "It's time for a little nap before supper. Goodbye. Say goodbye, Josh." Josh giggled and waved his hands to the little group.

"Well, I must be away as well," Kat said, smiling. "Brains has lent me some manuals for the auxiliary vehicles, and I think he expects me to read them all through before we start maintenance work."

"Well, I'm going to have a workout," Brandon said as he rose from his chair, "Anyone care to join me?" Nikki and Elise nodded and the three headed up to the apartments. Brandon turned to Christopher. "Will you join us?" Christopher smiled and followed the others.

Post by Tawnyangel22 on 25/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:32:54 GMT  
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Jeff tapped his stylus on his chin as he considered the rescue that was wrapping up. I wonder if that space station could use a little help from other parts of the private sector? They have the support of several medical entities, but coming up with better treatments for cancer and perhaps even a cure would be good for the corporate bottom line. Insurance costs alone would drop.

He turned to his computer and began to compose an email. He sent it to his head of manufacturing and flagged it to several other vice presidents as well.

"What are you doing, love?" Dianne asked, coming up to embrace him from behind.

"I'm starting the ball rolling to give this cancer center a corporate partner. Possibly more than one. I think that it's time for Tracy Industries to step up to the plate here.

International Rescue can help in an acute situation like the one we faced today, but some long term assistance might bring this center online a whole lot faster. Once I hear from my vice presidents and head of manufacturing, we'll contact the station and see what their needs are, then see what we can do to help. I also plan to bring some friendly pressure to bear on some of our suppliers as well. This project is a whole lot more vital than most people realize, and if it manages to find better treatments or even a cure, it's worth the small sacrifice we could make."

Dianne smiled, and reached around to kiss Jeff on the cheek. "Ah lahke the way you think, deah."

He turned his chair around, and pulled her onto his lap, planting a hot kiss on her waiting lips. She responded eagerly, and they shared a few more kisses, nearly forgetting where they were.

"Ahem," came a sound from the wall of portraits. The two looked over to see John's live feed picture looking at them wryly. "Base from Thunderbird Three."

"Base here. Go ahead Thunderbird Three," Jeff said mildly, not relinquishing his hold on his wife.

"We are on final approach. Einstein reports that Maverick will need to undergo decontamination protocols."

"What about Ursa?"

"Einstein says her radiation levels are within tolerable limits."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Three. We will be prepared. Base out."

John's picture became static again, and after another deep kiss, Dianne got up with a sigh.

"Ah'd bettah get the decontamination chamber ready, an' the radiation counter agent." She started out of the lounge, but turned to give Jeff a sly smile. "Later?"

"Later," Jeff said. He winked at her and she blew him a kiss as she left. He sighed, and applied himself to his emails again.

Post by Tikatu on 27/02/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 18:40:18 GMT  
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Brandon followed his three team mates as they went to the workout room. He bantered back and forth with them while his mind recounted the events of earlier that day.

FLASHBACK: Late Afternoon-April 5th, 2068

Brandon walked slowly back to his apartment. He had spent the last two hours in the simulator attempting to learn how to operate Thunderbird Four, and things had not gone well. "Man, do I need more training," he complained as he continued walking. "That session was the worst yet." In two hours, he had managed to crash Thunderbird Four into the ocean bottom numerous times. As he continued walking, he heard Christopher's cheerful voice call out to him

"Hello, Brandon. How has your morning been?" Christopher quickened his pace to catch up with his friend. As he walked next to him, one look at his friend's face told him all he needed to know. "Not so good, I take it."

Brandon rolled his eyes at Chris and kept walking. "You got that right!" he said disgustedly. "I thought the simulator would be easy."

"Give it time. You'll get the hang of it. All you need is a little bit of patience."

Brandon smiled slightly. "It's not easy. Patience isn't one of my strong points."

The two men continued talking until they arrived at their respective apartments. "Don't worry about

it. It'll come," Chris said as he turned to enter his apartment. Brandon nodded in agreement and, after saying goodbye to his friend, he went inside his place and sat down on the couch to unwind. He had just decided on a shower and moaned when the phone rang.

"Sorry to bother you, Brandon, but I forgot to tell you something important."

"Oh, what's that?" Brandon asked.

"Doc's inserting the implants. You're the last person in the queue."

"Thanks, Chris. I'll get down there as soon as I freshen up."

Brandon stood in the shower, and as the warm water coursed down his body, he thought about where to put the implant. He considered and rejected several different places, including the upper arm, the shoulder and the small of his back. As he soaped his washcloth and began to wash, a smile crossed his face. That's it. I bet nobody thought to put one there.

Dianne heard a noise and looked up from the notes she was dictating to find Brandon standing inside the door.

"Hello, Brandon. What can I do for you?"

"Hi, Doc. I'm here to get my implant. Is it too late to get it today?"

"No, it isn't too late. Just tell me where you want it and we'll get it done."

He paused, looking quickly around the room to make sure no one was present, save for Dianne, who was amused at his attitude.

"Mister McCain, neither one of us has all day. Just tell me where you want it." Finally, after stalling a bit, he told her.

Dianne chuckled as she remarked, "I've got to admit, that place is one of a kind. Now Brandon," she said to the young man, "I want you to go wait for me by the exam table while I get the injection ready."

"Sure thing, Doc." He did as she asked, while she went to prepare the injection. A few moments later, she returned, two needles in her hand, one small, and a larger one containing the chip.

"All right, we're ready now. All I need you to do is uncover the area."

"Aww, come on Doc. Isn't there another way?"

"No there isn't. Look, the sooner you do this, the sooner we both get out of here."

"Okay," Brandon sighed, doing as he was told. As she took the smaller needle and numbed the area, he put his head down thinking; I sure hope Gordon doesn't catch me like this. I'd never live it down. He felt a sharp pain, similar to a bee sting, followed by a numb sensation that spread

farther than he expected.

When Dianne was sure the area was completely numb, she brought forth the bigger needle and injected the transmitter.

"There you go, Brandon. All done."

"Whoa, Doc," Brandon said as he re-covered the area "That was fast. I just wish the numbness would go away as fast."

"Don't worry, it will be all but gone by the time you get back to your place."

Brandon left the sick room, going back to his apartment, and rubbing the spot where the injection had been given. I know it was an inconvenience to have these things implanted, but if it'll prevent a repeat of the North Sea mishap, then it's worth it.

Post by MagicMaster8 on 08/03/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 19:01:13 GMT

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Kyrano looked at the list in his hand and frowned. One by one, the denizens of the Cliff House had come to him and told him that they weren't going to be at dinner that night. Christopher and Nikki had begged groceries from him and said that they were going to cook dinner for the crew over there.

"Well, Kyrano. How many do we set the table for tonight?" Emily asked as she came into the kitchen, tying on her apron, and followed by the three designated table setters: Cherie, Alex, and Tyler.

"Just for the Tracy clan it seems," Kyrano said, looking up from his list. "Those who live in the Cliff House will be eating together there."

"That's a surprise," Cherie said as she began to take out plates. "Let's see. How many of us are there, anyway?"

"And will Scott and John be able to make it?" Alex asked. "I heard they had to go to the decontamination room."

"There are thirteen of us, counting Lady Penelope," Kyrano said. "Mr. Parker and I will eat in the kitchen as usual."

"I wish you'd just come on out and eat with the rest of us, Kyrano," Emily groused, frowning. "You're just as much a part of this family as anyone."

Kyrano smiled. "This is true, Mrs. Tracy, but since it is part of my job to serve the food, I feel it is

better for me to wait on my own meal until all the preparation is complete and dessert is served. I do join the family when Lisa is here."

"I know. I just feel like we're not being fair," Emily complained.

"It is not you or Mr. Tracy who keep me in the kitchen, Mrs. Tracy. I have chosen this," he returned with a gentle reminder.

"Hmph. Well, as long as you don't feel left out, I suppose I need to just accept it," Emily said with a sigh. "In any case, let's finish up our dinner preparations. Then I'll check on Scott and see if we need a tray for him or not."

\*\*\*\*\*

Down in the decontamination room, a concrete chamber close to the lab, Scott was showering. His contaminated uniform and space suits had been dumped into a barrel full of a special decontamination mixture, and Dianne, wearing a radiation suit of her own, sealed it up until Brains could tend to the clothes. The uniform and space suit would be cleansed and rinsed until there was no trace of radiation remaining, and the fluid used would be added to the waste from the household power plant. This would be further dealt with by the waste treatment plant, situated in a lava-carved cavern a half mile from the main complex.

Scott used a special soap that would break down the radiation on his skin and hair. He tried to ignore the presence of his stepmother in the shower room, attempting to think of her as the family doctor instead of "Mom". Her own serious and professional manner helped to foster this view of her. Still, he blushed as he turned around to let the suds in his hair run down his back and ended up facing Dianne. Fortunately, she was busy with some medical equipment, including a syringe of radiation counteragent.

Scott turned off the water, and began to dry himself off. He approached Dianne gingerly, knowing what was coming, and not liking it very much.

She motioned to him. He sighed and moved closer, sticking out his hip and part of his buttock while trying to cover his privates. Dianne wiped a spot with the swab, then jabbed the sharp needle in deep, pressing down on the syringe. Scott winced, but didn't watch. She watched carefully for signs of his earlier faint. But though he uttered a barely audible, "Ouch!", he seemed to take the injection in stride.

"Okay, Scott. You're done. This will take a bit of time to get into your system. Go into the dressing room and get a gown. Then to the sleeping room. Tin-Tin's waiting there to put on the auto nurse."

Once Scott was safely beyond the confines of the decontamination room, she checked the radiation levels in the room itself, then stepped out of her own suit, putting it in its own bucket of solution, and stepped into the dressing room to don her own clothes again. The Geiger counters in the dressing room didn't react to her presence, so she knew that the radiation suit had done its job in protecting her.

"We're going to have to make some changes in that room," she murmured. "Now that we have a

female astronaut..."

In the sleeping room, one of the four beds was now occupied. This room was only used in case of radiation exposure and poisoning and was not part of the sick room suite. The auto nurse equipment was up and running, monitoring the levels of radiation within Scott. The levels were more than she liked to see, but not enough to poison or cause radiation sickness. Even now, they were going down as the drug took affect.

"I may see to it that Callie gets a shot, too," Dianne murmured. "Her levels were borderline."

"My father wants to know if Scott will be joining us for dinner," Tin-Tin asked.

Dianne looked at her watch and the levels in the Scott's system and nodded. "I think so." She gazed at Scott and gave him a smile. "Now, you get some sleep. I'll wake you in an hour and a half or so."

"Okay, Doc," Scott said, yawning. One of the side effects of the drug was drowsiness, and it had been decided long before Dianne came on the scene that the treated patient should be encouraged to sleep it off.

Dianne tweaked his blankets then went into the office. Decontamination could be a tricky thing, and she was always on hand when her family was going through it. Afterward, she and Brains would scrub everything down with anti-radiation fluid. Perhaps it's time to get Nikki and Dom involved in this. They need to learn it and many hands make light work. I'll talk to them now and set it up for after supper. At that thought she raised her arm and called upon her nurses, making plans for them to learn something new about their job with International Rescue.

Post by Tikatu on 08/03/2005[color=sienna]

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 19:14:20 GMT

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Tracy Island, March 5th, 8.00 p.m.

Jeff looked at his wife and sons, together with Brains and Tin-Tin, seated at the table. It had been nice to have just a family meal together once more. The three youngest Tracy children had been allowed to leave, and Emily excused herself as well, but Jeff had said that he had wanted to talk to his wife and his older sons as well as Brains and Tin-Tin.

"Kat has asked permission for herself and a few of the others to go shopping on the mainland," he began "I did mention that one of you could fly them there. However, she intimated that maybe Christopher or Dominic could fly them. I have no problems with that at all."

"No, especially as we all have had our implants." Gordon remarked, glancing innocently at Scott. "We will be able to track them easily, if they should get lost."

"Which leads me on to another point, and the reason for this discussion." Jeff continued. "I would like some feedback from everyone as to the progress of the new recruits' training."

"Well, from my point of view," Dianne remarked. "I have no problems with either Nikki or Dom. Both have proved themselves highly capable, but," and she looked at Brains, "this last rescue has proved that we need another medic, or even two, to be able to work in space."

"Brandon is teaching Dom to scuba dive, with an eye towards learning something of what it's like to be in space," Gordon reported. "He also is beginning to train Nikki and Kat." Jeff nodded, and Gordon continued. "He is working with me in the Thunderbird Four simulator, too. He's had a rough start, but I think he'll improve with practice."

Brains took his glasses off to polish them. "Kat and I have been working on the auxiliary vehicles. However," and he replaced his glasses. "I think that she too should learn to work in space. After all, there have been times when I have had to go to Thunderbird Five."

"Kat will need a lot of very intensive training before she is ready to work in space, perhaps a bit too much. Being a mechanic isn't rocket science. Thunderbird Five is," Tin-Tin commented.

"Callie should have some time to work with Brains and Tin-Tin in the lab, so she can take some of the workload from them," Dianne added thoughtfully. "She will need more rescue-oriented training, as well as some basic first aid training."

"Not only that, but she needs some simulator training to prepare her should something go haywire up there," John added. "She knows how to do the job and handle the communications, but she didn't have time to learn all the systems and how they work."

"Elise is beginning to get more confident with Thunderbird Two in the simulator," Virgil said. "Although she still needs plenty of reassurance that she will be able to handle such a big craft."

"How is Christopher doing in learning to fly Thunderbird One?" Jeff asked Scott.

"He's coming along very well." Scott answered. "He is very conscientious, and understands what he is told. He will be an excellent second pilot."

"All right, then. It sounds like things are coming along. Carry on training Nikki and Kat to scuba dive, Gordon. Brains, Tin-Tin, give Callie some time in the lab. Scott, Virgil, see what she needs to learn to make her ready for planetside rescues. As far as Kat working in space is concerned, I think she has enough on her plate right now with flight and scuba training and learning to maintain the auxiliary vehicles. Not to mention maintaining our planes and boats, which is what we originally hired her for. The rest of you continue with the others as you have been doing, and let me know if anything else is needed."

Jeff rose from his seat, and collecting his crutches, began to hobble out of the room. Dianne joined him and together they left. "You know, Di?" he said. "I was a bit hesitant when it was suggested that I should increase my team. But we've found some good people." Dianne nodded in agreement.

Meanwhile back in the dining room, Scott was talking to his brothers. "So, now that I've had my little nap, what do you want to do with the rest of the evening?"

"Well, I for one am going to play a game of pool. Anyone care to join me?" Virgil looked around.

"Yep, I'll join you," John replied.

"Me too," Scott and Gordon added.

"I'm going to do some more work on Braman," Brains said. "Are you coming to help, Tin-Tin?"

"No, thank you, Brains, I am going to have a swim and then relax by the pool," Tin-Tin replied.

Post by Tawnyangel22 (with copious recent edits by Tikatu) on 08/03/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 19:22:15 GMT

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Tuesday, March 5, 2068, 10 p.m., the Cliff House, Tracy Island

Callie sat out on the balcony in a lounge, staring up into the clear night sky. She didn't turn when a rustle announced that someone had sat down in the lounge beside hers.

"Hey, Callie," said a familiar voice.

"Hey, Elise," Callie replied.

"What's up?"

Callie sighed, a deep sigh of contentment. "The stars. I've never seen them so clearly from Earth before. The lack of light pollution makes this an ideal place to stargaze. Looks like I'll have to brush up on my southern hemisphere constellations, though."

"Maybe John could help you with that," Elise said as she turned her own face to the sky.

"I'm sure he could. He must be really used to seeing these stars."

There was a moment of silence between the two women. Only the sound of the breakers could be heard, and that faintly.

"That was some dinner wasn't it?" Elise ventured.

Callie chuckled. "Sure was. That Chris is a good cook. Too bad Nikki and Dom got called away to help Doc with the decontamination."

"Yeah, and too bad Brandon was the one who got roped into helping Chris. He seems to be all

thumbs in the kitchen."

"I would have helped if someone had mentioned it to me," Callie said.

"No, they weren't going to ask you because you'd just been out on a rescue," Elise explained. "And when they asked me, I said, 'No'. It's not that I can't cook, it's that I can't stand to have help in the kitchen. Either I do it by myself or not at all."

"Hmm. I'll keep that in mind," Callie replied drily. Another long pause and then she spoke again. "It was nice of Kat to keep Josh while Dom was helping Doc."

"Yeah," Elise said, nodding. "She seems to get along well with that little boy. I'm glad though that they were back in time to eat. I'd hate to have to feed Joshua. He gets so messy."

Callie laughed. "Par for the course, Elise. Kids that age always eat messily."

Elise looked over at her companion. "How come you and Brains didn't have to go through radiation decontamination?"

"We didn't get anywhere near the reactor like Scott did," Callie explained. "I was glad to see that they've got a good procedure for decontamination. It's faster than any I've ever heard of."

They were silent again for a bit, then Elise asked, "What's on the agenda for you tomorrow?"

"Training in the simulator on Thunderbird Five's systems. I have to learn how to track down faults and learn to repair them for when I'm on my own. You?"

Elise made a face. "More simulator training with Virgil on Thunderbird Two. Man, that guy is a perfectionist! Especially when it comes to his 'baby'. Sometimes I think I'm never going to please him."

"You'll get it eventually," Callie reassured her. "You wouldn't be here if Mr. Tracy didn't have faith in your abilities."

"I'm glad he does. I wouldn't think he'd have much faith in me after... you know."

"I think that's why he does have faith in you. He saw you in an emergency situation and knows what you're capable of."

It was Elise's turn to sigh. "Well, they do say that any crash you walk away from is a good one. And I at least managed to walk away."

"And he'll be walking good as new any day now," Callie reminded her.

"Yeah, he will." They sat quietly for a time, then Elise asked, "So, what can you teach me about these constellations without brushing up on them?"

"Well, that one over there, you see the four points of light? That's the Southern Cross..." Callie

began to show Elise the constellations and tell her the stories behind them as a slight wind ruffled their hair and the exhausting day came to a close.

Post by Tikatu on 09/03/2005

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Subject: Re: Gear Up and Buckle Down

Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 19:23:01 GMT

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And with that we end Chapter Four: Gear Up And Buckle Down!

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