
Subject: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:53:17 GMT
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Half of June has passed, and the time of celebration is nearly at an end. Winter has set in on Tracy Island. The Tracy family has fully recovered from their sudden illness, and the new recruits have shown their mettle by successfully handling a rescue by themselves. Training and cross-training proceeds apace, and the two teams are beginning to blend into a seamless unit. But there are still challenges to be faced, and the emotional fallout from frightening encounters to deal with. Enemies of the family and of International Rescue are plotting, continuing to probe for weakness, and attempting to acquire the technology that makes the Tracys and both of their businesses unique. The new recruits will come under surreptitious scrutiny from an old enemy, while a member of the original team faces an unexpected threat. The team members will have to be on their guard against the malevolent forces arrayed against them, doing their utmost to protect both themselves and the secrets of International Rescue.

From: Tikatu Sent: 12/29/2005 7:55 PM

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:54:14 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 1/6/2006 8:54 AM

Wednesday, June 20, 2068, 7:45 p.m., Tracy Island

Tin-Tin smiled happily at the family and friends sitting around the dining room table. It was her birthday, and not only hers, but Emily Tracy's as well, and as a result, the party was a big one. She picked up the gift Brains had given her: a gold cuff bracelet with the words "Nothing is worth more than this day" engraved on it in a simple script, and put it on her wrist. She put her hand on his, and whispered, "Thank you so much," in his ear.

"So, Tin-Tin," Scott called from across the table where he was currently devouring a piece of his grandmother's marble birthday cake (Tin-Tin had opted for turtle cheesecake, one of her father's specialties). "Where are you going for your birthday?"

"Milan," she answered eagerly. "Penelope will meet me there and we'll be going to François Lemaire's latest show. Then on to Paris, where Elaine Wickfen will be unveiling her autumn line of clothes. Just perfect for here at this time of year. I'll leave in the morning."

"Oh, I wish I were going with you," Kat exclaimed. "How I should love to see Lady Penelope again, not to mention all of those lovely frocks."

Alex, who sat next to Kat, rolled his eyes. "Girls' stuff," he muttered, shaking his head.

Emily heard him, and shook a finger at him. "One of these days, you young whippersnapper, you'll

have a girlfriend of your own and she'll be interested in such things, so you'd better learn how to keep your opinions to yourself!"

"A girlfriend? Me?" Alex shook his head sharply. "Uh uh. Not me. Not for a looonnnng time."

Those who heard the conversation laughed, then Dianne piped up. "Tin-Tin?"

"Yes, Dianne?"

"Please bring back a brochure from each show. I'd like to order some new things."

"Of course. I'll be sure to."

Brandon turned to Emily, smiling. "Mrs. Tracy, are you planning on a trip somewhere for your birthday?"

"Well, I was thinking about seeing a few of my old friends back in the States," she admitted. "It's summer there and the heat would feel good. But I'll wait until Tin-Tin comes back so that this place will be at full strength before I go anywhere. After all, someone would have to fly me to the mainland." She glanced across at Lisa. "Will you stay on while I'm gone visiting?"

"Sure," Lisa replied amiably. "When you're ready to come back, then I can head for the mainland and visit that brother of mine in California. We've got some catching up to do."

"That sounds like a good plan," said Emily. She took another bite of birthday cake and sighed. "I've come to the point where birthdays are just reminders of how old I'm getting."

"You're not getting older, Mom," Jeff said from his place at the table's head. "You're just getting better."

"Tell that to my arthritis!" she countered good-naturedly.

The people around the table laughed, and they went on to continue the celebration.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:55:39 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 1/6/2006 2:04 PM

Wednesday 20 June, 2068, 8.15pm, island time.

"Happy Birthday Grandma!"

"Why thank you for calling, John! You're always thinking about your grandma, aren't you?"

"Of course! How could I not?"

John grinned at the great smile his call from the space station had brought to his grandmother's face, but had to squash the impulse to reach through the screen and throttle Gordon, who was standing a little behind her and mimicking everything he said.

"Did you have a good celebration?" He asked, feeling his eyebrow wanting to twitch in irritation at Gordon's silent accompaniment.

"Why yes, I did. And thank you for the earrings, sweetheart. They're lovely. You know, they remind me of a pair that your grandfather bought me years ago. The same colour and shape of stone. I'll have to dig them out."

"That's great. I'm glad."

Gordon's display got frankly sickening at that point. John felt his eyebrow beginning to go.

"I'll wear them when I go back to the states after Tin-Tin gets back from Milan."

"Is Tin-Tin around, Grandma? I'd like to wish her a happy birthday too."

"Sure, thing. I'll just go and fetch her for you now."

"Thanks Grandma. Happy Birthday again. Oh, and save me a bit of cake, will you?"

"You know I always do. Thanks again for the call, John. Now, Gordon Tracy," she said before turning around, "you come with me. I have a few things to say to you, young man."

John smirked triumphantly as Gordon's face fell, but wiped it off his face immediately as he was suddenly on the receiving end of a warning glare. Instead, he smiled as sweetly as he could, and his grandma shook her head.

"You boys... Come on, Gordon. See you in a little while, John."

"Bye, Grandma. Gordon," he added curtly. He'd have to get his own back...though Grandma's words would probably be punishment enough.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:56:53 GMT
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Wednesday 20 June, 2068, 10.30pm, Thunderbird Five

The one thing that John had always found during his spells of duty on TB5 was that even though

the station was calibrated to mimic island-time, sometimes 'night' and 'day' ceased to matter. He sometimes found himself doing chores or sleeping at times that would have been weird for him on the island, and yet weren't when he was orbiting above it. It's hard to keep track of time up here, he thought. And anyway, it doesn't matter when I sleep. There's always going to be the potential for an emergency at any time.

And so it was at half ten at night that he found himself waiting for his evening meal to heat up. A little late for dinner, perhaps, but it had been a busy day. He did wish that he had been able to have dinner at home. His microwaved rations seemed even less satisfying than usual when he thought of the dinner he would have been having at home. I'll miss out on Virgil's birthday too... Oh well... He glanced at the digital clock on the appliance; there was still a little bit of time left. He wiped down one of the sideboards in the small, serviceable kitchen and threw the cloth in the sink. What to do... He snapped his fingers and grinned, before heading towards his bedroom and flicking on the computer. He opened his email account, and went to open up a new email. His eyes caught the very first email Kat had sent him, and he grinned. He could remember every word of the first one he had sent her.

Hey Kat,

This seems pretty weird, having to write to you instead of talking. I guess I've just gotten used to seeing everyone in person for two months instead of one. I was worried that maybe the new rotation would make me want to go to TB5 less, but I think it's actually made me appreciate the time even more! When I was a kid I never dreamed of having all these opportunities to observe the stars, and to do all the research I've been able to. The telescope up here is amazing. Outside of the atmosphere, everything is so much clearer. It's fantastic. It'd be cool if one day you could see it. Maybe you will.

I hope you using that portable telescope down there on terra firma. It's great that you're interested in the stars. More people should be. There's such a wealth of knowledge and inspiration existing above people's heads, and so few actually take the time to look up. I guess maybe it's an acquired taste. I'm glad you have it anyway! I really enjoy talking to you about it all.

How's life down there? What's it like with me not around? I'm joking! I'm not that big-headed! Sometimes I'm glad to get some time away from the island, especially now that we have so many more people living there. I think it's great that you've all come, but sometimes I just need a break! That probably sounds terrible. I used to get it all the time whenever I was a kid. Alan and Gordon drove me nuts! Still do, in fact. I think everyone just needs some time on their own at some stage. Saying that, and I hope this doesn't freak you out or anything, but I miss you. As I said, it's weird not being able to talk to you in person. Much as I'm glad for the time up here, I guess I'll be glad to be going home at the end of the month.

Anyway, I need to go run a diagnostic on the environmental systems. It's pretty routine, but necessary! I can't do my job if I'm frozen to the seat or collapsing from heat exhaustion, can I?

Have a nice evening, Kat,

Yours,

John.

John opened up a new mail and began to type, Dear Kat... He pondered for a moment, before beginning to type. Finally when he was satisfied, he hit the 'send' button. Well, I guess she'll probably get it tomorrow. John glanced down at his watch.

"Mmm, time for chow," he said aloud.

His boots clanked as he walked back to the kitchen, and already he was wondering, When will she reply?

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 17:58:47 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 1/7/2006 9:47 AM Tracy Island, June 21st

Kat had just returned to her apartment. She was her usual grubby self. It had been a particularly dirty job. Although it didn't seem to matter what work she was doing. She just seemed to be a magnet for any stray oil or dirt.

Changing into clean clothes, she heaped her dirty overalls into the washing basket and headed for the laundry room. Setting the machine going she went back to the apartment to get herself something to eat.

Sitting on the balcony enjoying a drink and waiting for her meal to heat up, she glanced up at the sky. Quite unconsciously she began to think of John. It was certainly strange not having him around. It wasn't until early evening, after she had retrieved her clean, dry clothes and tidied up her apartment, that she sat down at her computer, preparing to send a message to her parents. To her surprise and delight there was another message from John. She opened it and read the contents. She blushed slightly at the message. She remembered clearly, that first email from him and her reply.

Hi John

How lovely to hear from you. I agree it's strange not being able to talk to you. You've not freaked me out. I miss you too. Whenever we're all together either at the pool or on the beach, I just keep expecting you to appear with Tyler clutching your hand. Somehow there just seems to be something missing.

Life down here is pretty much as before you left. Yesterday Brains decided that we should test the jetpacks. Honestly I was looking around, quite expecting to find Gordon lurking, but not this time.

Everything went well. I managed to get airborne and bring myself back with no problem at all. You don't know how relieved I felt.

Today we have been working on the Mole. It was such a dirty job. I think that dirt jumps on me like a magnet. It's probably a good thing that Mum doesn't know what my job really is.

Anyway, it's getting late and Brains wants another early start tomorrow.

Hope your day goes well.

Kat

Now she sat down to reply to his latest message

Dear John

I too will be glad to see you back at the end of the month. And as you say, we shall have a lot of catching up to do. It will be nice to actually talk to you in person again. I have missed you...

Kat read through the message, and then finally pressed 'send'. By now it was quite late and dark outside. She went back on to the balcony and gazed at the stars. Goodnight John, sleep well.

Heading back to her bedroom, she changed into her nightclothes. Just before she fell asleep, the thought occurred to her that June 30th couldn't come soon enough.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:15:18 GMT
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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 1/11/2006 8:12 PM

Thursday June 21st. 2068 2pm

Brandon looked out the cockpit window at the vast expanse of water below him. He marveled at the waves rippling over the ocean's surface, and he could make out a group of marine mammals swimming in the water. "This is great," he remarked as he banked the plane, turning to head back to the island.

He made a couple of passes around the island before taking the aircraft in for a landing. His approach was dead on, but at the last moment, thinking he saw something on the runway, he pulled up. That caused the plane to bounce twice before leveling out and coming to a stop.

"Ah, man! I was doing so well, too," Brandon moaned as he watched the instruments begin powering down. The cockpit 'door' opened and he looked up to see Scott standing outside the simulator, wearing a satisfied smile.

He watched as the younger man came out, a look of disappointment on his face. "Hey, Big Mac, why the long look?" Scott asked. "You did well in the simulation."

"Yeah," Brandon said glumly, "until the very end. I shouldn't have pulled up like that."

"Brandon, listen to me. Nobody does a perfect landing the first time they try. That's why we're spending time on the simulator. You're doing so well that you'll have your license in no time."

After a few more practice rounds, Brandon went back to his apartment and, after a welcome shower, went to the kitchen to find something to eat. Nothing appealed to him, so he grabbed his journal and a pen, going out on the balcony. After a few minutes of thought, Brandon began writing.

Where should I begin? Things have been really busy around here the last couple of weeks. Not only have we continued training, but we also had our first major rescue as a team. I admit I was nervous at the time. Hell, who wouldn't have been? The rescue involved a monorail train crash in a tunnel in the Pir Panjal Range, in India.

Not only were there injuries (that Dom and Nikki took care of), but also the train was carrying containers of toxic chemicals that ruptured in the crash. We were working against time to get fresh air down into the tunnel, get the injured out, and neutralize the chemicals, which was done using every day baking soda. And here I thought it was just for upset stomachs and cooking.

Brandon paused for a moment, contemplating what he was going to write next. After a minute, he started writing again.

The assignment was tough, but we all came through with flying colors. It's good to know that when the going gets tough, we are ready to face the problem.

When all of us arrived here four months ago, I, for one, had serious doubts that we'd come together as a team, but I learned how wrong I was. Each of us has overcome his or her doubts to become a vital part of the team, and an organization I'm proud to be a part of.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:17:12 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 1/11/2006 8:25 PM

Friday, June 22, 2068, 10:45 a.m., Thunderbird Two's hangar

Damn it!" Elise yelled as the wrench fell to the floor, making a loud noise that echoed around the hangar.

Kat poked her head out from where she'd been working a few feet away. "Are you okay?" she asked hesitantly. Elise's sour mood had been evident from the moment they walked into Thunderbird Two's maintenance bay, and it had not improved as the morning had gone on.

"Yes! I'll be fine!" snapped Elise as she nursed her hand.

Kat didn't say anything more, instead giving her friend a look and returning to her work. It seemed that lately Elise had been more and more frustrated with even the most mundane of jobs. Kat had noticed, and so had a couple of the other team members. She sighed, thinking, Ignoring her won't help, and clambered down from her workspace. Elise had picked up the wrench and was about to continue her task when Kat approached.

"Elise, why don't you take a break? Go for a walk on the beach maybe?" Kat suggested, trying to help her friend.

Elise scoffed at the idea and answered, "The ever helpful solution for every problem... the beach! I'm so sick of the beach I could scream!"

Kat involuntarily took a step back. Elise was definitely ticked now. She looked squarely at Kat. "Do you have any idea how much I hate that ocean? I'm going STIR CRAZY cooped up on this island!"

Kat remained silent, thinking it best to let Elise continue to rant.

"Every time I need some R and R I can either come here," she indicated by waving her arms, "or... I can go out there!" She pointed towards the ocean. "Everywhere I turn there it is... the damn ocean! At least when I lived in the States I could walk a couple of blocks without running into water! I'm sick of the sight of it!"

She paused long enough to draw in a deep breath. Kat then seized the opportunity.

"You should talk to Dianne. I'm sure she'll understand, maybe even let you have some time off the island?"

Elise looked thoughtful and then looked towards the ground. "Yeah, maybe." she replied quietly.

"Why don't you go now, and see if she's available to talk?"

Elise looked around her at the tools strewn all over.

"Don't worry about anything here, I'll take care of it." Kat assured her, seeing the look on her friend's face.

The pilot sighed and nodded. "Okay, I'll go." She paused before adding, "Kat, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to direct my anger at you. It's just that..."

Kat held up a hand. "I know. I know. Elise. Now, go!" She smiled, hoping to give the other woman encouragement.

Elise wiped her hands on an old rag and headed towards the elevator to the main house, wondering how Dianne would be able to help her face her worst fear.

written by FrankieCTB2

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:19:25 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 1/11/2006 8:41 PM

Friday, June 22, 2068, 11:00 a.m.

Elise sighed before knocking on the door that now stood in front of her. What am I going say? I'm going nuts, get me off this island? Oh, I suppose I'll just have to tell it like it is. Elise raised her hand and knocked.

"Come in."

Elise opened the door to find Dianne typing away on her computer.

"Dr. Tracy, do you have a sec?"

Dianne smiled and stood up. "Sure, I'm just updating computer files. What's on your mind?"

It didn't take long for Elise to 'let it all out' as she sat there, pausing only to get a look of sympathy from Dianne, who listened patiently and observed the body language of the young pilot. She could understand Elise's feelings of frustration with being 'cooped up' as the pilot had put it. Elise finished by summing up, "After all, it's not like we're all living on Walton's Mountain!"

Dianne couldn't help but chuckle at the comparison. She was sure Jeff would not see the humor in a comment like that, and she made a mental note not to repeat it in front of him and especially not in front of Gordon!

As Elise talked, one thing kept popping into Dianne's mind: 'Closure' She began to realize that maybe Elise hadn't had the closure she needed after the accident. Yes, the girl had overcome some of her initial training fears and had coped surprisingly well since, but there was an underlying issue that wasn't going to go away anytime soon, unless....

"Elise? Has your fear of the ocean always been so evident, or is it something you just tucked away?"

Elise was caught off guard by the question. "Well, I, er, I guess I hadn't thought about it for years, until I came here. I mean, my other piloting jobs rarely involved being near so much water. Since

my parents died, I've never wanted to be near an ocean."

"Hmm. I see," replied Dianne.

Elise was sharp enough to pick up that something was bothering Dianne. "What is it? What are you thinking?"

The doctor didn't answer right away, instead continuing with another question. "Did your nightmares surface AFTER the helijet crash or have you always had them?"

Elise began to feel a little uncomfortable with where this was heading. She repositioned herself in her chair before answering. "When I was younger, sure. I had them almost all the time, it seemed. As the years went by, I had them less and less. Then, after the accident... well, they came back. Dr. Tracy, I don't mean to be impertinent, but do you think you could get authorization to get me some R and R and off the island for a few days? I really need it."

Dianne looked thoughtfully at Elise. "I don't think a change of scenery and some downtime will make it all better, Elise. I do think you need some time away from the island, but what I really think you need is some closure."

Elise looked blankly at her "What do you mean 'closure'?"

Dianne then proceeded to tell Elise about Jeff and their visit to the cabin, and the crash site. "The whole incident had affected me more than I ever knew, and being there brought all those feelings I had at the time of the rescue, back to the surface. Jeff and I were able to come to terms with what happened and emotionally start to heal. It wasn't easy, but both of us knew we'd found the closure we needed by being there, and I think it may help you too, Elise." Dianne watched as the girl said nothing and looked towards the floor.

"Elise?" Her voice was softer now, "I know that you saw the wreck when Gordon took you to pick up your things in New York, but you weren't ready then to face it all. Now I think you are. Do you think you are?"

Elise raised her head, her eyes meeting with Dianne's. "I hadn't really thought about it, but if you think it's what I need, then I'll go. Everything you've helped me with so far has worked, so I don't see why I shouldn't give it a shot." She smiled weakly.

"Good girl. I'll start making arrangements so that the team will be covered in your absence. I would like someone to go with you, so I'll first check with Jeff."

Dianne gave Elise a few more words of encouragement and a hug before the pilot left her office. Alone again, she sat back down at her desk and called Jeff to let him know she needed to discuss a serious matter with him as soon as he had a free moment.

Later that evening in their private suite, Dianne brought up the conversation she'd had with Elise. Although she didn't quote all the details, due to doctor-patient confidentiality, she made it clear that his pilot needed this trip.

"I see. So, who do you think would be most suitable to accompany her?" Jeff asked, walking up behind his wife to gently massage her shoulders.

"Hmmm." Her soft groan made him smile and he planted a small kiss on the nape of her neck. "Jeff, you'll make me lose my concentration on what I'm saying!"

"I hope so," he said huskily.

"I gave it some thought earlier and I think Scott would be the best choice... that is, if he wants to go."

Jeff's hands stopped momentarily. "Scott? I'm not so sure, Dianne. I mean..."

Dianne cut him off as he started to massage again. "If you're worried about TB1 being covered, don't. If there's a call-out, Alan is more than capable of flying TB1, and he's here if TB3 is needed."

She turned in his arms and he encircled them around her waist. "What are you thinking?" she asked, seeing a concerned look on her husband's face.

"I just had a flashback to one of the first times Alan flew One. He almost slipped off an oil rig with her."

Dianne smiled and kissed his already bare chest, then gently rubbed her fingers across it and down towards his abdomen, causing a sharp intake of breath on her husband's part. "Alan'll be fine, Jeff. You know it and Ah know it. So, can you let Scott go?" she asked in between soft kisses on his body.

She took his mumbled reply to mean 'yes'. With that issue resolved, they found their way to the bed and continued with a more pleasurable issue.

written by FrankieCTB2

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:20:15 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 1/11/2006 9:10 PM

Friday, June 22, 2068, 1:00 p.m., Paris, France

"Oh, Lady Penelope!" Tin-Tin gushed. "This has been such a wonderful birthday! The shopping, the fashion shows, the clothes, the dining... did I mention the shopping?"

Penelope laughed. "You did indeed, my dear," she said, smiling, wagging a finger at the younger

woman. "Several times. In several stores!"

The two women waited as the sommelier poured their wine, then Tin-Tin lifted her goblet. "To good friends and birthdays!"

"Here, here," the aristocrat replied, tapping her glass to her friend's.

Tin-Tin sipped her wine, then drew in a deep breath and let it out in a contented sigh. "François's latest creations were so... minty. The red frock and that slinky black sheath... I couldn't decide which to get."

"Don't think I didn't see you order them both," Penelope warned good-humoredly. "But I'll tell you a little secret. I ordered that blue silk trouser ensemble for you as my birthday gift."

"Oh, Penelope!" Tin-Tin exclaimed. "You didn't... you shouldn't..."

"I did, and we'll say no more about it," Penny replied firmly. She leaned over. "But I do hope you like it."

"I love it! Father will be so surprised, and Dianne will be so jealous!" Tin-Tin exclaimed, a twinkle in her eye.

"And what will the elusive Mr. Hackenbacker say?" Penny asked slyly, an eyebrow rising. "Don't think for a single moment I haven't heard rumors..." Her hand darted out and she took hold of Tin-Tin's wrist. "And there is this little trinket that I spied the other day. Is it from him?"

Tin-Tin blushed. "Yes, it is. His birthday gift to me." She sighed again happily. "He's so sweet and gentle. I'm just kicking myself for not noticing him sooner. He was so attentive and flirty at the trials for the Skythrust, but I was so wrapped up in Alan that I'm afraid I just teased him along." She looked down at her hands, then back up at Penny, giving her a wistful smile. "We're taking things one day at a time. I've been so disappointed lately... and he's aware of that."

"I think he is a fine man, though a bit on the dotty side," Penny said. She smiled mischievously. "Did I ever tell you about the time I had to extricate him from a psychiatrist's office where he had been sent for... ahem... talking to his watch? He was not at all discomfited by the experience. Just chalked it up to a new adventure. Really, Tin-Tin, you could do worse."

"Like Giles Hightower?" Tin-Tin said with a soft, sour tone.

"Now, now, my girl. We shall not bring that bounder's name up again," Penny admonished her. "He is a cad and we will leave him in your past." She smiled a bit. "Though it felt quite satisfying to put him in his place at that restaurant."

"Are you keeping track of him and his family since Mrs. Matumbo's... visit with them?" Tin-Tin asked.

"Yes, I am. With the help of some of Parker's old friends, and a computer expert I just happen to be acquainted with, I am compiling a dossier on the three of them." She waved a dismissive hand.

"But let's forget them for now. Have you decided on what you would like to eat for your last meal in Paris?"

"I think so," Tin-Tin said, perusing her menu. She sighed once more. "Back to Milan tomorrow to pick up my Ladybird, then home. But it has been such a lovely birthday. Thank you for spending it with me."

"You are most certainly welcome, my dear," Penelope said. "Now to order our luncheon."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:22:31 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 1/11/2006 9:21 PM

Tracy Island, Monday, June 25, 8.00 a.m.

"Kat," Brains called to his young assistant. "Have you had a good breakfast?"

"Yes, Boss, and I have remembered those glucose bars." She hadn't forgotten the talk she'd had with Dr Tracy. "What are we working on today?" she asked.

"Today, I am going to show you the Elevator Cars. Primarily these are used at airports, and can match the speed of most incoming aircraft. They can also be used to raise or lower equipment and personnel to upper floors of a building up to 30 metres high. They are very useful if specialised equipment needs to be taken through a window or up a fire escape."

Kat followed Brains to the auxiliary vehicle wing of Thunderbird Two's hangar. There were a half dozen Elevator Cars lined up by twos in a series of three bays. Brains went to the first one. "This is the master car; the others are all remote controlled," he began to explain to Kat. "Up to three radio controlled remote Elevator Cars can be controlled at one time from the this Master Vehicle."

Kat produced her notebook and pen. Brains smiled at her, pleased that she was taking notes. Maybe she had learnt from her experience in Thunderbird One with Scott.

Brains continued. "Wheels on the sides of the driver's seat control the steering, while foot pedals control the speed of the Master Elevator Car. Voice activated computer systems control other vehicle functions such as acceleration, braking and power management."

Kat was writing furiously, trying to keep up with what Brains was telling her. Whew! Wish I could do shorthand! she thought.

"Okay, then, let's go around the vehicle and I will point out the bits that need to be monitored and kept in working order." Starting at the front, Brains began, "This is the gearbox." Kat stood on tiptoe. "I think that you may need the steps to work on this," he said kindly.

"Next to that is the primary diesel engine powering the front wheels. Further along and a little higher is the hydraulics fluid. Over are the fuel tanks serving both the front and rear diesel engines." Brains paused. "I think we will have a break. I don't know about you, but I could certainly do with a drink." He went over to the far end of the hangar, and came back with a large bottle of orange juice and two glasses. They both sat down inside one of the elevator cars. Kat gratefully took the offered glass, and began to drink. He pushed his glasses up on his nose. "I hope you can read your writing; you were certainly scribbling well at one point."

"Well, actually," Kat replied, "I shall probably go back to my apartment when we have finished and type it up."

They continued to relax, enjoying the cool, refreshing orange juice and discussing their different work. "You know," Brains said, "your training is going very well."

"Oh," was all that Kat could think of by way of a reply.

"I have to say that you are a very experienced mechanic, and a conscientious worker, and I am proud to call you my assistant," he continued. "I'm going to arrange for John to train you on the computer system used on Tracy Island - when he returns - and I intend to start training you next on the Firefly. I know that both Virgil and Gordon are wanting to continue with your training on Thunderbirds Two and Four."

Kat smiled. "Boss, this is certainly the best job I think that any mechanic would want."

"Shall we continue then?" Brains stood up. Kat scrambled to her feet, rubbed her damp hands down her overalls, and proceeded to follow Brains.

"Under the platform is the primary load-bearing telescopic support column. Just down from that is the electric motor, and adjacent to it is the distributor box. Inside the wheel are the hydraulic brakes, and connecting to that is the rotary diesel cylinders. Those long arms you can see are the variable-position hydraulic support stanchions, and inside, under the middle, is the power generator."

Kat wiped her damp hair from her eyes, and continued writing. Brains stopped for her to catch him up. "Are you okay? There isn't much more to see."

"I'm fine. That drink really helped."

He pointed out the platform variable-height power unit. "Power is transferred to the support stanchions via conduits incorporated into the platform's underside groove," he said, pointing out the parts he was naming and describing. "Well, that's all for now, Kat," Brains said, looking at his watch. "I think that we have covered quite a bit this morning. Go have a rest and something to eat, and we will meet again this afternoon."

Kat thanked him and made her way back to her apartment. She took a long lingering shower, and after towelling her hair dry, brushed it well. Finally feeling happy with her hair, she dressed, headed for her kitchen and made herself a sandwich. Taking it with her, she went to sit down at

her computer and began to translate her writing into meaningful notes.

written by TawnyAngel22

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:24:01 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 1/12/2006 2:06 PM

Monday, June 25; 8:30 PM; Silver Spring, Maryland (12:30 PM June 26 on Tracy Island)

For once Lena wasn't working, reading or doing needlework. Instead she was sitting in her living room, deep in thought. She'd been there ever since she'd gotten home from work two-and-a-half hours ago; she hadn't even taken time to make dinner.

She went back over all that had happened to her since she had boarded that Metro train -- Has it been only tree weeks and four days? she wondered. It seems like a lifetime ago. First there had been those men who had kidnapped her, right there in that mass of humanity, and no one else had been aware of what was going on. Then there was the hotel room stay, while they waited for the jet to arrive, and afterward the flight to England. She was still amazed that she was able to get them to let her use the PDA. That bit of subterfuge was what saved her life.

Following that was the confrontation with Jacques Hightower. His threat and his sister's behavior combined to disturb her more than anything else. Reviewing that period was just about the most difficult thing she'd had to do -- no matter how often she did -- but she managed it.

She recalled her time on Tracy Island, first helping to nurse several members of the family, then watching them recover their strength. Somehow during that period, she'd been able to call her son and tell him a little about what had happened. He was understandably upset and worried, but calmed down when she reassured him that no one had harmed her. He'd promised to tell the rest of the family and told her to let him know when she would be coming home, so he could meet her.

She winced as she remembered her talk with Dianne Tracy -- I have some apologizing to do to dat woman; I was rude to her -- and finally being brought home by Scott. She smiled slightly, thinking about the look on his face when he saw her family, who had all come to the airport to welcome her home.

Her son and daughter had rushed to her, taking her in their arms and holding her like they never wanted to let her go. The rest of the family followed, the babies in their parents' arms. Naomi in particular was very emotional, and tears were running down her cheeks when she moved into her grandmother's embrace.

Matthew had then turned to Scott and shaken his hand warmly, expressing his gratitude to the Tracy family for saving his mother. Lena chuckled as she remembered Scott's reply.

"Actually, it was a friend of our family, and her chauffeur, who did the actual rescuing. And knowing them - especially him - they probably enjoyed every minute of it. We brought her to our home to help her get over the worst of her shock, and also because it would be easier to bring her back into the U.S. from there without her passport."

It had been a long trip and Scott had stayed overnight at her house then headed home the next day after a good night's sleep. Afterward, her son and daughter had tried to get more out of her about what had happened, but she still couldn't talk about it very much. She'd gone back to work, and even took her scheduled trip to visit the I&M office at the Tracy Industries branch in Chicago.

But the pressures of her job to take her mind off of other things hadn't helped get her back to normal. She'd even toyed with -- and rejected -- the idea of leaving Tracy Industries for about five minutes. It would be ridiculous to even think of quitting my job; I don't want to, and it wouldn't help, she'd thought, then considered Dianne's advice about talking to someone near her home for a long while. Finally she called her oldest brother, Luke, after dinner. He was a retired minister, and she felt that he was probably the only person she could really open up to about her feelings and thoughts. So she asked him to come for the weekend. She knew that Matthew had told him what had happened, so wasn't surprised when he quickly agreed to drive there from Pennsylvania the next day. He told her to expect him by lunchtime.

She'd freshened the guest room, and made sure some of his favorite food was in the refrigerator. Then, relieved that she was finally doing something to help herself get back to normal, she'd gone to bed.

Part one

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:27:26 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 1/12/2006 2:56 PM

(the reminiscences continue)

When Luke had arrived, she'd greeted him warmly then took him to the guest room to unpack and refresh himself. Shortly afterward they'd had lunch and gotten caught up with each other's lives. Then when it was over and the dishes were washed, they'd gone into the living room.

They'd sat side by side on the sofa and he'd turned to her. "Okay, Lena. Did you call me to talk about what happened to you a few weeks ago?"

"You are right as always, kaka. I need to talk to someone who can understand. I did talk to Dr. Tracy, Mr. Tracy's wife, but she couldn't understand certain things. You can."

A concerned look had appeared on his face as she spoke. He'd taken her hands in his and said,

"When you call me 'elder brotter', I know it is serious. Tell me everyting. I am listening."

She'd begun haltingly at first, but became better able to talk about it, feeling his sympathy and support through his hold on her. She'd been careful to leave out all possible references to International Rescue, just telling him that she had been able to get word out about her kidnapping, and someone had informed Jeff. He hadn't questioned her, just let her tell her story.

When she'd finished, he'd drawn her into his arms and held her closely for a long time. Afterward, he'd kept one arm around her. He'd said, "What is bottering you de most about what happened? You are a strong woman and have been trough a lot in your life. You aren't afraid dat he really would have killed you, are you?"

"N-no, not really. But I tink I was more afraid dat he wouldn't kill me, but instead would go after a member of de family to try to force me to do what he wanted. But even more dan dat, it was dat I was afraid. I am Masai, as you are. I shouldn't have been afraid."

He'd looked at her in confusion. "Where did you get dat idea?"

"From Baba."

"He told you dat? When?"

"When we were coming to America. I was frightened when he told us we were coming here, and he said dat we were Masai and shouldn't be afraid of anyting. We should tink of it as an exciting adventure."

Luke had sat back a bit, thinking about what she had just said. "Are you sure dat's what he said? You were very young when it happened, only ten, and it was a long time ago."

"Dat's what I remember."

"Tink back. What were his exact words?"

Lena had frowned, concentrating. "He said, 'Shani, we are Masai, and Masai never sh-'. . " She stopped suddenly and sat up straight. "He said dat Masai never show fear! Not dat dey were never afraid. Why did I remember it wrong?"

"You were very little. You could not have understood what he was saying. You took it to mean dat you shouldn't be afraid. Masai pride demselves on never showing fear, and as a result, often find demselves not fearing tings dat otters do. You confused one wit de otter, understandably."

"Oh my. I was feeling ashamed of myself and tinkng dat Baba and Mama would be ashamed of me, too."

"No, Ndugu. Dey would be proud of you, if dey knew. But we won't tell dem because it would upset dem very much." He'd pulled her to him and kissed her on the temple. Then he'd said, "But dere is something else. You fear reprisal from dese Hightowers? Or do you tink dey would try something else?"

"Yes, especially de something else. If dey try to kidnap or harm anyone in my family, I don't know what I would do."

"Maybe not now, but I tink you would come up wit some ideas. I know you, Lena. You're a fighter. You wouldn't be planning on quitting your job. So you'll find anotter way."

"I have to. I love my job and don't want to leave. In fact, de Hightowers would probably prefer it if I did leave Tracy Industries; it would be easier for dem to try to persuade me to work for dem, as far as dey are concerned."

"Maybe we can all put our heads together at Mark's anniversary celebration in two weeks."

"Dat's a good idea. But I'll want to come up wit a way to keep anyone from being kidnapped as well as a way to know and act if de first ting fails and someone is taken."

"But not right now. I don't know about you, but I'm tired and need to rest for a while."

"Of course; I'm so sorry. I'm tired, too. Why don't we bote rest and go out for dinner tonight? Dere'll be no more talk about dis until tomorrow. But you've helped me so much. Tank you."

"You are more dan welcome, Ndugu. Family members always help each otter, remember?"

She'd smiled as they headed down the hall. "I remember. Now get some rest and I'll see you later." She'd kissed him and given him an affectionate push toward his room. He'd grinned at her and entered, closing the door behind him.

(End of reminiscences)

Thinking back to that weekend, Lena knew that her conversations with Luke had brought her much closer to her old self, and she smiled. A few ideas had been percolating in her brain, and she slowly began to form a plan to protect herself and her family. Then she reached for her phone and called Matthew, telling him that they needed to have a "family meeting" at the party on Saturday.

Finally, she got up and went into her office. Instead of turning on her computer, she pulled out a box of notepaper and a pen. She took a sheet from the box and began to write.

"Dear Dianne," . . .

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:28:23 GMT
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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 1/14/2006 8:34 AM

Tuesday June 26 2068, 2:30pm, Tracy Island

Nikki picked up a pen and proceeded to look for her journal. Ever since she started her training with International Rescue, she had been noting down her experiences. She had done the same when she was training to be a nurse, but this time she didn't mention any locations, the names of the Thunderbirds or their vehicles, or anyone's surnames.

Once Nikki found the book, she hopped onto her bed, made herself comfortable and flicked through the pages to find the next blank page to write her new entry. When she found it, she put pen to paper and began to write.

I should've written this yesterday, but I was so excited by what happened that the idea of jotting it down completely disappeared from my mind.

Never in my 24 years (albeit the last few months) did I ever think I'd achieve this. It definitely wasn't on my "to do" list when I was still attending school and thinking about what I saw myself doing in the future.

Yesterday I had my pilot's test. I was so nervous. Nervous the night before, during the day before the test started and during the test. Even during my last lesson with Scott. It wasn't until I got back to my apartment that the nervousness depleted. After it disappeared, I was finally able to feel good about what I had done.

I remember talking to Scott during my last lesson about my worries for the test. I don't think I've ever let on to Scott about any worries or nervousness about flying before. I don't know why. Maybe I thought he wouldn't understand or wouldn't be the type of person to listen to how I felt about my test. Boy, was I wrong.

He actually shocked me. He knew I wasn't confident during my first few flying lessons. Well, he said first few, but I think it might have been the first ten. Was I that transparent back then? Did I shake, stutter or freeze up?

Anyway, he reminded me that I got over it then, and asked how I did it. When I told him that my confidence grew because I got used to the controls and gradually I knew what I was doing, he then asked if I still knew what I was doing.

I nearly answered with, "Well, duh! Of course I do." Luckily I chose my words carefully before I spoke.

I knew where he was going with this. Instead of telling him that, I let him speak. It was so obvious. If I knew the controls and what I was doing then the test would be a snap and I'd have nothing to worry about. How come it took talking to Scott for me to realise something as obvious and easy as that? I must've been losing it.

So, after all that, yesterday I took the test and passed. I should really thank Scott for all he's done. I'll do that today.

Gotta dash now. I have an appointment to kick Alan's butt in basketball. I'm so going to beat him. I

kinda didn't tell him that I used to play often with my brothers and I'm not going to either. I bet he'll think that he should take it easy on me because I'm a woman.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:30:43 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 1/16/2006 6:52 PM

Wednesday, June 27, Tracy Island, 10:45 a.m. (Tuesday, June 26, 5:45 p.m. in Opp, Alabama)

Callie was in the Thunderbird Three simulator. Working on her final practice in properly landing the red rocket, she landed it back in the silo flawlessly.

Alan smiled as he watched the monitors from outside. "That's it, Callie. You've made it as our third taxi driver." He couldn't help but chuckle.

She unbuckled her safety belt and nodded with a smile. When the door opened, she saw Alan standing next to it. "That had to be the best landing I've ever done."

"It sure was, Callie. I'm happy to say you've almost completed training on Thunderbird Three. Now all you have to do is fly it on your own."

Stepping out from the simulator, she shook Alan's hand. "Thanks so much, Alan. You and John have been great teachers for me here and at the space station. Now, according to Mr. Tracy, I should start training on Thunderbird Two in the next couple of weeks, right?"

He nodded. "Mm-hmm. We've got several people training on Two, but don't worry about that at the moment. The important thing is you've just about got it here."

"Good." She looked at the clock and started staring at it.

"Callie? Callie? You okay?"

"Huh? Oh, yeah. I'm trying to determine what time it is back home in Opp."

Alan was curious. "What's on your mind?"

"I'm going to call my family on my satellite phone. I've been so busy with training and missions I haven't had a moment to think about how my family's doing, and I wouldn't be surprised if they've been worried about me."

"I understand," said Alan. "You have a close-knit family. It must be hard when you're so far from your home."

With a nod, she added, "Yeah. I'm gonna wait until about 11 to call. It'll be 6 p.m. yesterday by the time they're done with dinner."

"Okay. Oh, listen, sometime this afternoon I need your help with restocking Thunderbird Three, since I'm heading back there next week."

Callie said, "I'll do better than that. I'll meet you there at 1:00. Sound all right to you?"

"Yeah. I'll see you at 1."

They parted ways for the remainder of the morning.

Same day, 11 a.m.

In her apartment, Callie picked up her satellite telephone and dialed her home in Opp, Alabama. "I hope they're okay," she said to herself. "I'll be glad to hear their voices."

Tuesday, June 26; 6 p.m. in Opp, Alabama

In the dining room of their family home, the Spencer family enjoyed another scrumptious meal made the matriarch of the family.

"How's the steak and baked potatoes?" asked Lorraine.

Richard smiled. "As good as ever, hun."

Brian and Joseph both responded with their thumbs up.

She was bringing her own meal to the table when she heard the telephone ring. "It had better not be another telemarketer." She set the plate down and walked to answer the phone. "Hello, Spencer residence."

"Hi, Mom," said Callie on the other end.

"Callie, is that you?"

The three men suddenly stopped eating when they heard Lorraine.

Tears began to fall from Callie's eyes. "Yeah, Mom, it's me."

Lorraine looked at her family. "Callie's on the phone!"

"Put it on vidphone!" yelled Brian. "Put it on video!"

"Hold on, son! Take it easy." She spoke into the phone. "I'll put you on the video."

When she did so, Callie dried her eyes and said, "Hi, guys."

Richard smiled. "Sweetie, it's so good to hear from you! How's your job going at Tracy Industries?"

Knowing she had to be careful about what to say, she simply said, "It's going great, Dad. The people here have been so helpful in training me, and I've already done my first solo job, working with some people in India." Oh, if you only knew what I was really doing in India.

"Cool, sis!" said Joseph excitedly. "Man, Mr. Tracy doesn't waste time getting new associates going, does he?"

"No way, Joe. He saw my hard work and dedication and sent me to the plant in New Delhi, India."

"That's awesome," said Brian. "We heard there was a monorail derailment in India a couple of weeks ago. I sure hope you weren't there."

"Relax, Bri. I was still in New Delhi when I received word about that derailment."

Richard breathed a sigh of relief. "Am I glad to hear it, honey."

"Trust me, if there were any perilous situations where I was, Mr. Tracy would've told me to leave for safety reasons. He's not a man who would leave anyone in danger."

"Now I see why he's a good man," said Lorraine. "He really cares about people."

Richard said, "Oh, Callie, there's something I've got to tell you. We seem to have made a discovery at the steel mill."

"Really?"

"Yeah. About a week ago an employee at the mill accidentally spread the wrong material over raw steel. When the supervisor wanted to yell at him, Joe stopped him because he noticed a strange reaction, as if the two materials melded together into a stronger form of steel."

"Wow," Callie said in awe. "The only question is whether this discovery can be made into something useful."

"Right," Joe added. "We'll have to test this consistently to see if we can duplicate the process. In addition, we have to look at cost efficiency."

"That's okay, bro. It's better to test it and make sure it works out before making a big announcement."

Brian said, "Hey, we can keep you up-to-date with the e-mails. We just don't want to flood your inbox with false hopes, if you know what I mean."

She nodded. "Sure, no problem." Changing the subject, she said, "You know, sending e-mails isn't so bad, but I love the sounds of your voices more. It's nice to hear them again."

"Same here, sweetie," said Lorraine. "We hope you can drop by for a visit soon. We really miss you around here."

"I know, Mom. I miss all of you, too. It's been just under five months since I started at TI, but I hope to come by for Thanksgiving or Christmas." One dreadful thought did cross her mind. [i]I just pray I never have to come as part of an IR mission. I don't know if I could handle it[/i]. "I just wanted to call you to let you all know I'm doing all right."

Richard smiled. "We're all glad you're doing all right, hon. Keep working hard and you'll make it to the top one day."

"I hope not too soon."

Lorraine laughed. "Hey, don't worry. You've got plenty of time." Looking at the clock, she was slightly concerned. "Honey, it's just after 1 p.m. over there in Hawaii. Are you sure it's okay to be calling right now?"

"Don't worry, Mom. I'm on lunch break for another 30 minutes." She giggled internally. "The work I have to do when I get back will be a bit strenuous, so I'd better go ahead and hang up for now."

"Okay, you take care of yourself, and we'll be waiting to hear from you again, by vidphone or by e-mail."

"Same here," Callie said with a smile. "I'll talk to you all later."

"Bye," they all said on the other end.

"Bye," Callie said just before she disconnected the line. She looked out the window and smiled. "Even if I am so far from home, at least I know I've still got my family." Looking at the clock again, she said, "Time for a little lunch before helping Alan restock Three." She left for the kitchen to fix herself a good lunch.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:32:13 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 1/17/2006 3:10 AM

Tracy Island -- Friday 29th June, 1.30pm

Kat flopped beside Callie and Elise, who were sitting by the pool, relaxing in the pale winter sunlight.

"How's your training gone today?" Callie asked her.

"Oh, um, not too bad. I have been working on Thunderbird One with Scott."

"How do you get on with Scott?" Elise asked.

"Well, actually not too bad now. At first things were really difficult. I got off on the wrong foot with him. Trying to make out that I know more than I do. He got very annoyed with me. I was grateful that Brains was helping as well."

Callie laughed. "That sounds like Scott."

"Actually, I'm glad you two are here. I want to ask you both something. Before I left for England I was talking to Dom in the gym. He was showing me some yoga moves and I asked if he would teach me, and anyone else who's interested."

"Interested in what?" Gordon enquired as he and Brandon came and sat down by the three young women.

"Dom has offered to give us lessons in yoga." Kat explained.

"I'm interested." Callie said.

"Me too." Elise added.

Kat looked at the two young men. "How about you two?"

Gordon winked at her. "Guess I could give it a try."

"Not if you're going to mess around." Kat told him.

"Moi?" Gordon gave her an injured look.

Kat laughed. "I know all about you and the kind of tricks you play. This is going to be serious."

"Do you think Scott and Virgil would be interested?" Elise asked.

"I could send them an email, if I don't see them to ask." Kat replied. "I shall also contact Tin-Tin and Nikki. Do you think Dr Tracy would be interested?"

"Dunno. You could ask her?" Gordon replied. Then he added, "pity John isn't here. I think he would have joined in."

Kat looked a little preoccupied at that remark, but then remarked,

"Well, once he is back on Tracy Island, I shall ask him if he wants to join us."

Seeing Tin-Tin walking towards them, she got to feet.

"I'm going to ask her." And she headed towards the young oriental woman.

Post by Tawnyangel22

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:37:07 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 1/17/2006 8:41 AM

Saturday, June 30, 2068, 8:00 a.m., Tracy Island (4 p.m. June 29th in the US)

Kyrano leaned over to murmur in Jeff's ear, "There is an urgent phone call from the New York headquarters."

Jeff glanced up at his retainer, then back down at his watch. "Either Jeanette's been sitting on this all day, or it's a major emergency. Thanks, Kyrano. Kids, finish your breakfast and clean your rooms before you go out to play."

Alex frowned. "That'll take all morning!"

"Only if you play instead of working," Jeff replied as he rose from the table. "Alan, your room could use some straightening, too, before you go up to relieve John tomorrow."

"Hmph. I thought that 'cleaning your room' was only for the squirts," Alan complained.

"If the shoe fits," Scott teased with a grin. He knew his own room was in apple pie order; his stint in the military had taught him to loathe a messy room.

"And don't appeal to your mother either!" Jeff called over his shoulder, as he left the room. "Let her sleep in!"

"Rats," Alex muttered before taking another bite of his oatmeal.

Jeff took the steps two at a time and strode quickly through the study and in to the lounge. Virgil sat behind the desk, talking with Jeanette Shapiro, Jeff's personal secretary. "Here he is now, Jeanette. Nice talking to you."

"Thanks, Virgil," the patriarch said as his son vacated the desk chair. He settled in and turned his attention to his secretary. "What's the emergency, Jeanette?"

The middle-aged woman on the other end of the line sighed. "It's not an emergency, Mr. Tracy, so much as it is a nuisance. Ned Cook has been calling the office everyday for the past week, trying to get your private phone number. Today he called three or four times."

"Damn that pest!" Jeff swore fervently. "Can't he leave well enough alone?" He pinched the bridge of his nose. "Did he tell you what he wanted?"

Jeanette nodded. "Yes. He did. He's preparing his annual recap show on International Rescue. You know, where he talks about the major rescues they've done over the past year? He wants to know if you would contribute, seeing as they were involved in... the incident." The secretary flushed red. She didn't really know how to approach the subject of the crash; her employer hadn't spoken to her about it at all.

"You mean the crash in New Hampshire?" Jeff asked. He smiled. "Don't worry about mentioning it in my presence, Jeanette. It's okay." His face turned thoughtful. "There's not much I could tell him about it. I don't remember a thing about my actual rescue."

"Then what should I say?" she asked. "That I've talked to you and you said you wouldn't do it?" She shook her head. "I don't think that will put him off."

Jeff was quiet for a couple of seconds, then shook his head. "No. Let me deal with this. Mr. Cook has been a thorn in our sides ever since the accident. I really should sic our lawyers on him, but maybe if I tell him that I don't remember my rescue, he'll back off. In fact, I'll tell him that, then sic our lawyers on him with a cease and desist order." He smiled at her. "You get in touch with the legal team, have them put things in motion for the order. They can call me to get specifics. But give me Mr. Cook's number, and I'll call him. I'd rather do that than let him have ours."

"Oh, thank you, Mr. Tracy," Jeanette said, sighing with relief and smiling. "You don't know what a pest he's been."

"Actually, I do," Jeff replied. "I'll take care of him."

Jeanette gave Jeff the requested phone number, then they ended their conversation. Jeff stared at the number for a moment, then dialed it, selecting 'voice only'. No telling what kinds of equipment he's got for getting pictures, he thought. However, it would be wise for me to record this conversation.

The phone rang three times, then Ned Cook himself picked up the receiver. "Ned Cook here. Talk and talk fast."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Cook. This is Jeff Tracy."

Ned sat up as he heard the familiar voice. "Mr. Tracy! I see your people got through to you."

"Yes, they did, Mr. Cook." Jeff's annoyance at the man showed clearly through his vocal tone. "And they told me what you were after, and why."

"Ah!" Ned said, eagerly hoping that Jeff would give him an interview. "Does this mean you're willing to participate in my homage to International Rescue?"

"Yes, but only to a certain extent. And to be fair, I'll let you know I am recording this conversation for possible future use."

Ned frowned. "What kind of future use?"

"Legal future use. As evidence that I spoke to you and what we said." Just in case you step over the line I'm about to set. "If this bothers you, tell me right now and we'll conclude this conversation."

"Well, all right. As long as I can tell the amazing story of your rescue!"

"Good. Here are my terms. You may mention the story on your show, and I will give you a quote. You may write the quote down but not record it."

"Ohhh-kay!" Ned took out a data pad and stylus. "I'm ready."

"You may quote me as saying: 'Although I remember nothing of my rescue by International Rescue, I am very grateful for their sterling efforts on behalf of me and my pilot'."

There was a momentary silence, then Ned asked, "That's it?"

"Yes, Mr. Cook. That's it."

Ned thought quickly, then asked, "Well, is there any way I can get in touch with your pilot? Interview her?"

"No, Mr. Cook. I will not expose my employee to you and the public at large. And listen to this, Mr. Cook, because it is that last time I or anyone in my family will say it to you personally." Jeff took a breath, pausing for effect, then said very forcefully, "Mind your own damned business." He stopped again, then continued, "To reinforce this message, you'll be hearing from my lawyers."

"Okay, okay! I get the message already. No need to set the legal eagles on me!" Ned replied hastily. Then he asked, almost hesitantly, "But I can use that quote? And mention the story?"

"You may mention the story and you may use my quote. That's the extent of my involvement and the involvement of any family member or Tracy Industries employee." Jeff sighed. "I can't stop you from taking pictures of the crash site, or interviewing the medical personnel, but as far as I'm concerned, we're done."

"All right, Mr. Tracy. And thanks for your assistance," Ned replied. Though I still intend to get a story on you and your family, especially those adopted kids of yours.

Jeff's response was, "Good day, Mr. Cook." Then he terminated the conversation.

He sighed, and stopped the recording. "I'd better download this to my legal team right away," he muttered to himself. "They may need the ammunition."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:38:11 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 1/17/2006 7:27 PM

3 PM Saturday, June 30; Rockville, Maryland (7 AM July 1 on Tracy Island)

There was a crowd of people at Joy's home -- all of the family members were there to celebrate David and Sheila's third anniversary. Lena arrived with Matthew and his wife, Amelia; he wanted to pick her up, as it was on the way from his home in College Park -- or just a little out of the way.

When they arrived, the house was in an uproar. Leslie was trying to put five month old Siti down for a nap, but the little girl wasn't having any of it. She was screaming at the top of her lungs, which caused the new arrivals to wince when they walked inside. Matthew said, "There's nothing wrong with that child's lungs. Excuse me. I'm going out to see how Tom is doing with the barbecue."

Amelia looked exasperatedly at her husband's retreating back. "Isn't that just like a man? Oh, hello, Joy."

Lena turned as her daughter walked in and embraced her, then her sister-in-law. "I hope Leslie can get Siti to sleep before David and Sheila get here with their two. We really don't need three squalling babies in the house."

"I tell you what. I'll go to Leslie and see if I can help. Why don't you two head into de kitchen and take care of tings dere -- if anyting needs taken care of, dat is. You probably had everyting ready before anyone arrived, Joy. It'll give you two time to chat before anyone else arrives."

"Bless you, Mom," said Joy with an exaggerated sigh and a grin. "C'mon, Amelia. Let's go see what our husbands are really up to." They left and Lena went upstairs to the guest room where cribs were set up for the little ones.

She found Leslie pacing back and forth, gently bouncing Siti in her arms. "Come on, sweetheart. You know you're sleepy. Shhh, now, please?" She looked up when she saw a movement out of the corner of her eye. "Oh, Nyanya. I can't get her to sleep."

"Leslie, calm down," replied Lena as she went over to her granddaughter. She looked at the baby, whose screams had subsided when her mother stood still. "She just needs to be held a few moments, not bounced. Come over here and sit down." She led Leslie to a rocking chair and gently pushed her into it. "Now, just rock her a little, slowly."

The new mother did as she was told and Siti quieted even more, her eyes slowly closing. Leslie looked up at Lena. "You always seem to know what to do. Was Mom this bad?"

Lena grinned. "Worse, sometimes. But if you tell her I said so, I'll deny it. Ah," she continued in a quieter voice, "she's asleep. Now you can gently stand up and put her into de crib."

A minute later, the two women stood watching the sleeping baby and marveling. Then they left the

room, closing the door. Leslie hugged her grandmother. "Thank you, Nyanya. Being a mother is hard!" They headed down the stairs.

"And dis is just de beginning," Lena replied. "But you'll learn as you go, and you'll be a good motter. Now let's go see what everyone else is up to."

Half an hour later, they were all together. Sheila's parents and younger brother would be coming later, but now they wanted to have a family meeting.

Once they were seated in the living room, Lena gave them a more detailed explanation about what had happened to her, with some of the previous history.

"You mean these Hightower people who had you kidnapped are the same ones who sent that anonymous email slandering Naomi?" asked Joy indignantly.

"Yes, I believe so, aldough we have no proof. It seems dat de woman is de computer expert, and was de one who actually did it."

"I'm glad you're safe, Mother, but I wish you could have been rescued in a way that would have exposed these people and put them in prison," said Matthew. "They are still out there, and could try again."

"Worse, dey could try to kidnap one of you and hold you hostage to force me to do what dey want. Dat is why I needed to talk to all of you. First, I have created a program to make sure dey don't access your computers. I have put it on a CD for each of you to download into your computers as soon as you can. I've created anotter to retaliate, should dey try to kidnap you. But I'd like to prevent dat from happening, if I can. So we're going to need to use a code word; if you get delayed, you must call home and in telling whoever answers what's going on, de code word will inform dem dat you are truly okay. It is only if it is not used dat we'll start to worry. But anyone answering de call must never ask for it; dat could alert someone we don't want to know about it. Does dat sound good to you all?"

"I remember us having one when we were little," said Joy, as Matthew nodded. "I guess it was because of all the kidnappings there were in the area at the time. What was it? Matthew do you remember?"

"It's been some time since I've used it," he replied with a wry grin. "But I bet Mom does."

Everyone looked at Lena as she chuckled. "Of course I do. De word is 'Sijambo', which is Swahili for 'I am fine'. And dat is why you'll use it when you are legitimately delayed. But you must take dis seriously, and watch your backs whenever you aren't at home, a friend's house, or work. You'll all have to remember dis, and never misuse it." She looked over at Kevin as she said that and he nodded at her.

"Don't forget, Nyanya, that you'll have to use it, too," said Naomi. Lena glanced over at her granddaughter with a smile, but saw that the girl was serious.

"I will, sweetheart. Dat's a promise. I don't want to go trough dat ever again."

There was an uneasy silence for several minutes, which was broken by Mark. "Well, we'll all have to be more careful, but for now, it's time to celebrate. C'mon, let's party!"

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:41:02 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 1/24/2006 10:32 AM

Sunday July 1st 2068, 1.00pm, Tracy Island

It had been one tiring day. At only one in the afternoon, Dom was shattered, and very, very cranky. Training had not gone so well. Diving had always been difficult, and now that they were long gone from the safety of the pool, it was getting unbearable. The water temperature had dropped just enough in the winter to make it more uncomfortable, and the dimmer sunlight meant that he could see anything else. Sometimes the depths of the sea beyond where they were training looked like eternity, and that was more terrifying than anything else. Even spiders, Dom thought with a little shudder.

He had picked Joshua up right on twelve thirty as arranged and transported the tot back to their apartment. It hadn't made the day any better. First Dom had trailed out Josh's building blocks as asked, which were promptly abandoned in favour of the storybook. However, sitting still proved impossible, and so the child went back to the blocks. That lasted for approximately two minutes before the appeal faded once more and Josh asked for Horsey. Horsey, however, was waiting to be washed after an unfortunate incident with some creamed corn. Joshua was not a happy little boy. Dom rubbed his temples as his head burst with licking pain and the tantrum began. Stamping feet, balled fists, and rampant tears ensued.

"Joshua, calm down."

The boy's face was growing redder by the second.

"Joshua, that's enough."

The screaming got louder and the stamping more violent.

"Joshua Kelly, calm yourself down."

When a building block was suddenly thrown and struck its target, namely Dominic's face, it was all over.

"That is enough! Behave yourself! For the love of Christ just stop it!"

Silence. For a few terrible moments Dominic squeezed his eyes closed and counted to five. That

was one big fat mistake. Joshua stared in shock, a few other blocks tumbling from his hands, before his lower lip started to go, and the terrible scream came, so much worse than the tantrum yells. Dom's heart went to his mouth, and he reached out to Joshua, but the child reared back and squealed all the way to his bedroom. The guilt was suffocating.

"Joshua! Jak, come back. I'm sorry. Daddy's just tired and -- ah, what's the use."

Dom rubbed his face with his hands, squashing his features together and massaging his skin. It was not a good day. He took a deep breath and pulled at the skin on his cheeks before following Joshua's route into his bedroom. The child was crying into his pillow, curled up into himself. Dom went slowly to his side and knelt down near his head. Joshua took no notice.

"Jak. Please, Jak, look at me." No response; just more of those awful, awful tears. "Jak, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have shouted like that. It was wrong." With a little sniffle the tears stopped, and one eye peeked over a podgy arm. Dom went on. "But you have to understand that you cannot, cannot, throw things at people. It's very, very bold." The eye disappeared. Joshua probably didn't really understand what he was saying, but he definitely realized that he had misbehaved. "But I am sorry for shouting."

He wasn't entirely sure what to do. The kid had behaved extremely badly and needed to be reprimanded... But then so had Dom. Yelling like that just never worked. There was a heavy knot in his stomach. He paused for a moment, thinking things through. Kids should come with owner's manuals...

"Are you sorry for what you did, like I am?" He thought that was a good approach.

Once again, there was nothing. Dom stood up and shook his head.

"Well, you're on a time out now."

"NO!" Joshua came to life like a spark of electricity. "No!"

Dom counted to five again and stood firm, keeping his voice level this time.

"Time out, Joshua," he said, and left the room.

He slid down onto the sofa and stared at the ceiling. I wish I didn't have to do this alone...

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:41:43 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 1/29/2006 10:31 AM

Sunday, July 1, 2068, 7 p.m., Los Angeles (2 p.m. July 2 on Tracy Island)

"Here we are, Lisa!"

Lisa smiled wearily at the sound of her brother's voice. The private jet departure lounge was crowded with people on their way to various spots in the US for the Independence Day holiday. Andrew Carmichael waved an arm to indicate where he and Maggie stood, waiting for the five people who had just entered.

"Come on, kids," Lisa said, herding her charges toward the waving figure. "Your Uncle Drew is waiting."

Andrew enveloped his sister in a hug, while Maggie greeted the four Tracy children, the three youngest ones and Scott, who had flown them over from Tracy Island.

"It's so good to see you all," she exclaimed, giving Scott a kiss. "You'll be staying overnight, I expect?"

"Yes, Aunt Maggie," Scott said grinning. "Dad wants me well rested when I fly back tomorrow."

Alex looked up at his older brother. "Does this mean we're taking a commercial flight to Greenville?" he whined.

"No, Alex." Andrew cut in, reaching out to ruffle the blond's hair. "I'm flying you east tomorrow, after a good rest at our place."

"You, Uncle Drew? I guess that's okay," Alex replied, smoothing down his hair with both hands.

"Then what?" Tyler asked, letting forth a big yawn.

"Then your Koch grandparents will be picking you up in Greenville for the drive to Florida so you can spend some time with them," Lisa explained. "You know that, Spud."

Tyler made a face. "I didn't know we were going to drive to Florida. That's boring."

The adults laughed. "I think being a Tracy has spoiled you," Scott said, good-humoredly.

"Can we just get out of here?" Cherie asked peevishly. "I'm hungry and tired of flying."

"Okay, okay!" Andrew held up his hands. "Scott and I will see to the luggage, and Maggie can take you all out to the van."

As the women herded the children out of the lounge, Andrew and Scott headed out to the Tracy Industries hangar where the family's private jet would be parked until the morning. The workers there had already unloaded the cargo hold, and were waiting for Scott to direct them.

"Why does Dianne still insist on the kids seeing Rick's parents?" Andrew asked his nephew-by-marriage. "And why does Jeff allow it?"

Scott shrugged. "I guess because they still are the kids' biological grandparents and Mom wants them to stay in touch. It's easier than having a nasty, very public custody battle. You know, grandparents' rights and all that."

"I guess I can see it," Andrew said. "I know I'd want to keep in touch with my girls' kids if something were to happen to either of them. Still, your dad is very generous to let them go, and with little security."

The two men glanced at each other. "Don't worry about the kids' safety, Uncle Andrew. Dad has that all covered. No one will get near the kids; not even Ned Cook," Scott assured him.

Andrew laughed. "If your father's security people can keep him away, they're very good."

"Yep, they are," Scott replied. "Now let's get this stuff out to the van. I'm kind of hungry myself."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:42:54 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 1/30/2006 2:03 AM

Saturday 2nd July, 2068, 12.30pm, Tracy Island.

"Hey, Dad!"

Jeff Tracy looked up from the Tracy Industries literature he had been pondering over and nodded to his son.

"What can I do for you, John?"

"I was wondering, would it be okay for a few of us to head over to Christchurch some Saturday afternoon? Some of the girls mentioned about needing to get a few 'essentials," he said with a grin.

Jeff set the papers down and rubbed his cheek with one thumb.

"How many are we talking about?"

"Just four," John said. "Myself and Kat, Callie, and Nikki. I think they've already been given lists by the others." He grinned again.

"Alright son, that sounds okay. You can go this weekend."

"Thanks, Dad."

"No problem. Now, you can do something for me by taking a look at these papers..."

Father and son were then engrossed in the business literature, working as one, as always.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:44:40 GMT

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From: Tikatu Sent: 2/5/2006 11:40 AM

Wednesday, July 3, 2068, 3:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff looked up as he heard Dianne's sigh. She was sitting on a nearby couch, a medical supply catalogue in her hands, thumbing through the pages distractedly. Jeff went back to his computer screen, reading the latest projections for the new fiscal year at Tracy Industries.

There was a moment where the only sound was the turning of pages, then Dianne sighed again.

"You miss them, too?" Jeff asked without looking up.

Dianne snorted a laugh. "Am I that transparent?"

He glanced over at her and smiled. "Yes. You are. And for the record, I agree. It is too quiet around here. In the past that would mean that Gordon was concocting some particularly inspired bit of mischief. but he and Brandon have been busy teaching our new recruits how to dive."

"I'd almost appreciate a good prank at this point," Dianne commented wryly. "Almost."

It was Jeff's turn to laugh. "So would I." He sat back and gestured to the catalog in her hand. "What are you looking for in there?"

"Some new equipment," she replied.

He frowned a bit. "Why? The infirmary is up-to-date, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is." Dianne rose and leaned on the front of his desk. "And Thunderbird Seven's okay, too. I think that the sickbay on Thunderbird Two could use a bit of upgrading, but I was wondering about Thunderbird Five's med bay. When was the last time it was upgraded?"

Jeff's eyebrows went up as his eyes widened in surprise. He nodded. "You have a point there, love. I don't think we've done any upgrading on the med bay up there. The computers and communications, yes. Even the living quarters and the entertainment systems have been enhanced. But not the med bay." He leaned back farther and tapped a stylus on his chin. "What would you want to put in there?"

She came around to him and opened the catalogue. "Here. It's a scanner bed much like what we

have in the surgeries, but more advanced. And when plugged into our communications array, it would give us real-time information on a sick operative."

"Should the operative make it to the med bay in the first place," Jeff reminded her.

"True. That's where these come in." She flipped over a few pages and pointed. "These are sensors that can be put in each room to monitor vital signs of anyone in there. They're being used extensively in geriatric settings to help caretakers keep a medical eye on older patients. With these installed, we'd know if someone was sick or hurt on the station."

Jeff scrutinized the pages. "So far it all sounds good." He glanced up at her. "Get me some more information on this, and I'll talk it over with Brains." He gave her a sly smile. "Are you willing to go up to Five and calibrate the sensors?"

She raised an eyebrow and made a rueful face. "I told you and the boys a long time ago; I don't do space."

"You may have to someday, Di," he warned her, putting a hand over hers. "I'd rather you be prepared for it."

Sighing again, she nodded. "I know."

"This is the perfect time to train. The kids aren't here to distract." He squeezed her hand, then reached out to pull her into his lap. "Please. I'll talk to John about training you, starting next week. Okay?"

"I need to set a date for taking Elise out to New Hampshire," she reminded him. "Some time when Scott is available, and the sooner, the better."

"Okay." Jeff pulled up the family schedule. "John is going shopping this Saturday with some of the new recruits. How about the weekend of the 14th? It will give you a week of training with John and Scott, then give Scott a bit of a break. You could visit your mother for a day or so afterward, if you like. I know that the kids won't be ready to come home then, and besides, I'd rather be in on picking them up myself." He looked over at her questioningly. "Will that work?"

"Barring rescues, it should," Dianne replied. "Pencil it in. I'll just have to figure out some way to keep Elise from going stir crazy until then."

"I'm sure you'll come up with something." He tightened his arms around her waist as she leaned against him, her arms around his neck. His hands began to roam, sliding up under her shirt, and she gently nibbled his ear with her lips.

"Shall we take this discussion elsewhere?" she murmured huskily.

"That sounds like a good idea..."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:46:09 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 2/5/2006 1:38 PM

Wednesday, July 3, 2068, 4:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Tin-Tin glanced over at Brains, who was overseeing Callie as she worked with their containment chamber.

"Do you think you have it?" he asked the chemical engineer.

Callie nodded. "Yes. The grabs are a bit tricky at first, but I think I can handle this. You get on with what you need to do."

"F-A-B," Brains replied with a smile. He retreated to his workstation, keeping an ear open for any signs of trouble, but focusing the rest of his attention on his computer screen.

"Ah. I've got mail," he murmured. Opening the email, he read it through quickly. "Very good." He turned to Tin-Tin. "I've just received confirmation for my lodgings at the c-conference in, uh, Paris on the 22nd."

"Oh, good," Tin-Tin replied. "Will you be speaking there?"

He shook his head. "Not this time," he said. "But I am scheduled to participate in a couple of, uh, panel discussions."

"Will you be here for Nikki's birthday celebration?" Callie said from where she was working. "Her birthday is on the 27th. We're giving her a party on 29th, when she gets back from a week with her family."

"I should be here for that," Brains replied. "I'm supposed to return on the evening of the 28th."

"Good," Callie replied, her answer ending with a small grunt as she struggled with the remote hands.

Tin-Tin got up and went to her. "Here, let me help."

"No, I think I've got it," Callie said. "I'm just not used to something that's so sensitive to my hand motions. You... I mean, we... certainly have some of the best equipment."

Tin-Tin chuckled. "Still having identity problems?" she gently teased.

"Well, not as far as Thunderbird Three and Five are concerned," Callie responded. "But I haven't spent too much time down here. Not until now."

"Well, now you can focus on more on some of our, uh, scientific endeavors," Brains said. "Mr. Tracy was wise to hire someone with more than one, uh, specialty."

"I just hope I can contribute to the team," Callie replied.

"You already do," Tin-Tin stated.

There was a few moments of comfortable silence between the three, then Tin-Tin asked, "When is your birthday, Callie?"

"August 13," Callie said. She sounded a little wistful as she added, "I'll have to wait to have my week of birthday celebration when I get back from Thunderbird Five." Straightening her shoulders a little, she said more brightly, "But that's okay. Lots of people work on their birthdays."

Tin-Tin and Brains exchanged troubled glances, and Tin-Tin made a mental note to let someone know about Callie's problem.

xxxx

6:45 p.m., Tracy Villa

"John? John! Please wait!"

John stopped on the bottom step from the upper level as Tin-Tin hurried up to him from her quarters.

"Hey, Tin-Tin," he said amiably. "How are you?"

"I'm fine," the Malaysian girl said as they fell in step. "But there's a little situation you should be made aware of."

John listened intently as Tin-Tin told him of Callie's birthday and how her duty conflicted with its celebration.

"Hmm. I know exactly how she would feel," he said, nodding slightly. "It's no fun celebrating your birthday so many, many miles from home."

He put a hand on Tin-Tin's shoulder. "Let me think about this for a while. There's got to be some way to alleviate the situation." He smiled widely. "Don't you worry. We'll think of something."

Tin-Tin gave John a quick hug. "Thanks so much, John! I knew I could count on you."

By this time, they had entered the dining room. John politely pulled Tin-Tin's chair out for her, then went to sit next to Gordon on the other side of the table. He looked around. "Boy, this place sure isn't the same without the little guys around."

"Too true," Gordon said, busying himself with his linen napkin. "It's too quiet."

Something in his younger brother's voice made John give the red-head a long, sideways look, but Gordon ignored it, his best poker face in place.

Someone had better watch out, John thought to himself. [/i]Gordon's got something up his sleeve.[/i]

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:48:14 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 2/6/2006 11:08 AM

Thursday, July 4, 2068, 5:28 a.m., Tracy Island

Gordon slipped out into the hallway and hid in the children's classroom, lying down so he could see through a three-inch crack near the base of the electronic door. His latest prank was set to go off in two minutes, and he wanted to see the family's reaction to it.

It wasn't hard to hack into the complex-wide intercom system. It wasn't used much these days, not since the wrist telecomms had pretty much replaced it, as the ear bud communicators had replaced the telecomms on rescues. But it was still active, and Gordon had found a use for it. The one problem he had was programming it so that it would only broadcast throughout the villa. He had thought about expanding his prank to the Cliff House, but remembered a certain blond toddler and extrapolated how that tyke's father would react to the prank.

Better keep it in the family, he had thought as he programmed his surprise. He had even managed to program a timed upload to Thunderbird Five so that Alan could join in the fun as well.

He had his escape route all planned out, and was dressed for long distance running. I have a feeling that, even in pajamas, Scott at least will be after me, he figured. But it's just too quiet around here without the squirts, and this will stir things up a bit. Not only that, it's appropriate for the day!

He unstrapped his watch, ready to leave it in the schoolroom as he made his escape. He gazed at the face, silently counting down in his head the seconds... five... four... three... two... one... blast off!

Suddenly, from every loudspeaker in the house, and from the communications console of Thunderbird Five, the amplified sound of Sousa's Stars And Stripes Forever march blared forth. Gordon timed how long it took for the first bedroom door to open and for the first of the rudely awakened occupants to show themselves in the hall.

Just as I thought, Gordon smirked to himself, Scott's first to show and in less than two minutes. A record!

The oldest Tracy son stumbled into the hallway, rubbing his eyes, his dark hair askew, his bathrobe open to reveal his airplane-covered boxers and sleeveless t-shirt. He shook his head

violently, yawned widely, then began to move, bearlike, down the hallway.

Uh oh! Gordon thought, his eyes widening. Dad's next. Not a good sign.

The Tracy patriarch emerged from the corner bedroom, his own hair mussed, his bathrobe securely closed but showing the salt and pepper of his chest hair in the open V at his neck. He motioned toward Scott, shouting over the deafening march for his eldest to wrap himself up and fasten his robe. Scott obeyed, and the two of them stalked down the hall towards Gordon's room.

Gordon was about to turn and make his escape through the classroom door nearest the stairs when Dianne made her appearance. He grinned to see his stepmother's hair sticking up in spots. She moved to join the two men who were pounding on Gordon's door and Gordon was suddenly blushing when he realized that she was wearing little or nothing under her satiny green dressing gown.

"Time to get out of here," he muttered to himself, closing the door to the school room and heading for the other exit, leaving his watch on Cherie's desk as he did so. He opened the door slowly to make sure the coast was clear, and suddenly pulled it nearly closed again as his grandmother came storming upstairs. Gordon looked out to see her hair in curlers and a thick bathrobe wrapped around her petite frame as she climbed the staircase. Her thick, fuzzy slippers padded by quickly, then Gordon opened the door and nipped across the hall to the study.

Sprinting through the study and into the lounge, then out to the balcony and down the curved staircase, Gordon had gotten a good head start before he heard Scott's voice behind him.

"Gordon Cooper Tracy, you are dead meat!" his elder brother shouted as he pelted down the stairs in hot pursuit.

Gordon legged it for the path to the beach, letting gravity help him pound down the pumice-sand path. He looked back to see his pursuer and found he had two: Brains had left the house via the door nearest the dining room and was actually ahead of Scott. But Gordon knew that neither of them could catch him; they weren't dressed for running in the cold sands of the morning and he had too much of a head start. All he had to do was make his way to his prearranged hidey-hole and no one would find him.

At the base of the path, Scott and Brains stopped. They could just make out Gordon's retreating form in the pre-dawn light, running full tilt down the beach.

"We'll never catch him," Scott said, shaking his head. He lifted one foot to dust it off and dislodge a small stone that had gotten stuck between his toes.

"But we can find him," Brains said between gasps for air. "He's microchipped."

Scott glanced at the engineer, patted him on the shoulder, and grinned. "Sometimes, Brains, you're a genius."

"It's why your father pays me the, uh, big bucks," Brains replied, returning the grin. "Let's get back to the villa. I'm sure I'll be needed to, uh, turn off the music."

"Right." The two men turned and headed back up the steep incline, while Gordon made good his escape... or thought he had.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:50:39 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 2/6/2006 7:48 PM

Tracy Island; Thursday, July 4th; 10 PM

Brains sat back and sighed in satisfaction. He was in his lab, and had just put the final touches on a program he'd come up with to get Gordon back for his early morning prank. Once he'd been able to turn off the music, he left it up to the family to locate Gordon and retaliate, as usual.

But several hours later, he was frustrated. He couldn't get what had happened out of his mind, and it was affecting his work. He'd been the butt of the redhead's jokes - alone and part of the group - too often and he'd never retaliated.

Maybe it's time I played a joke on Gordon, for a change. But what can I do to get him back? He sat back in his chair to consider the problem. A germ of an idea began to grow, and so did his smile. As he began to work, his smile turned to a grin. He didn't join the family for dinner, because he was afraid he wouldn't be able to keep a straight face, and his target would suspect something.

He set the program to begin running at midnight, and shut everything else down for the night. Then he headed to his quarters.

Midnight:

Gordon had settled in his bed less than an hour ago with a sigh. The family had given him a lot of grief about his prank, but he felt it was worth it. He hadn't expected anyone to find him so soon, and when Scott reminded him of the microchip, he mentally berated himself for forgetting that little detail. The day turned out to be a long one for him, and he was tired. So he was soon asleep.

Suddenly his radio went on, and the general lighting in his room with it. He sat up and looked around, blinking. "What the heck?" He got up and started across the room to turn the lights off, but he'd only taken a few steps when they went off. He turned around and went back to the bed, reaching toward his radio to turn it off, but it shut down before he could touch it.

He lay back in his bed with a sigh, and closed his eyes. Five minutes later, his bedside lamp went on, shining directly in his eyes. He cursed and reached for it, but it went off by itself. He rolled over, but sat up in surprise when he heard his toilet flush. What the heck is going on around here? he thought. He listened intently, trying to hear if someone was in his bathroom, but there was no

other sound.

Shaking his head, he lay back down, only to sit bolt upright as the radio and all the lights went on. Immediately after that, the toilet flushed and the shower turned on. He leaped out of bed and stood in the middle of the room, turning around to see if he could find any reason for these things to be happening. Then he checked under his bed, and started looking along the baseboards of both the walls in his bedroom and his bathroom. Before he'd gotten far, however, the lights went out, the radio turned off and the shower stopped.

He walked to the entrance to the bathroom and turned the light on manually. Then he looked at the switch carefully, to see if it had been tampered with. Finally, shaking his head in confusion, he headed back to bed.

Two hours later, he wanted to scream. He'd been unable to get a wink of sleep, due to the problems occurring every five to twenty minutes, in various combinations. "That's it! I've had enough! I'm going down to my Thunderbird to get some sleep!" he yelled to anyone who might be listening.

He grabbed his pillow and a blanket and headed out of his room and down to his yellow submarine.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:51:27 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 2/6/2006 8:03 PM

Thursday, July 5, 11 AM; Somewhere in Egypt, south of Baris (9 PM on Tracy Island)

A caravan consisting of five trucks was heading south-southwest into the desert. Riding in the lead truck were Sheik Farees al-Rahman and his eldest son, Mehdi, along with his most trusted bodyguards. The second truck had more guards, as well as his two advisors. The third truck carried supplies for everyone.

In the last two trucks were the four wives of the sheik - along with seven children too young to be separated from their mothers - and three concubines, one of whom two months pregnant. The news had raised her status, and she was included in the group.

News had come to the sheik that a small oasis, with a pure source of water, had been discovered on the edge of his territory. He was on his way with his entourage to investigate it and -- should the information prove accurate -- establish an encampment there, thus solidifying his claim to it.

He sat in the front seat, next to the driver, thinking about what he'd do should he find what he believed he would. It engrossed him for some time, but he finally noticed the driver looking in his side view mirror frequently. "What is it? What do you see?"

"Sir, I thought at first that we were being followed at a distance, but it has grown. I think there is a sandstorm coming -- a big one."

Farees looked in the mirror on his side and saw a wide wall of brown heading toward them. "Speed up! I will notify the other trucks by radio. There is a ruin a few kilometers from here. We can take shelter there."

As the driver accelerated, the sheik grabbed the microphone and barked orders into it. Soon all five trucks were traveling as fast as they could down the road. It seemed that they would reach the ruin well ahead of the storm, but things change quickly in the desert and this day would be no different.

The trucks with the family members weren't as new as the others, and fell behind. Then, as the leading edge of the storm neared, the first truck's right front tire blew, and it began to swerve. The driver struggled with it, but it skidded. Then the truck behind it clipped it on the left rear fender, and it went off the road, overturning as it did. The second truck began swerving and it, too, went off the road, hitting the first one again. It tilted, and rested on the first truck at an angle.

There were screams and cries for help then all was silent, except for the wind and the sand.

The first three trucks made it to the ruin only moments ahead of the storm. Both the driver and the sheik sighed in relief, the latter checking to make sure his son was all right then giving thanks to Allah for their safety. Then as they looked around, they realized that the last two trucks weren't with them.

The sheik got on the radio to the driver of the supply truck. "Where are the other trucks? Why aren't they here?"

"They fell behind. I don't know what happened."

Farees switched frequencies. "Amin! Where are you?" There was silence from the radio. "Amin! Sadek! Report!"

"Aiee!" said his driver. "The sandstorm has gotten them! They are dead!"

"No! That is unacceptable! I will not believe that! I will not lose my beloved Fahime! And Boushra, who is to have a child for the first time. NO!"

"What can we do? Even the local rescue services would not go out in this storm. And none of them are nearby. It would be hours before anyone could search for them, and by that time. . ."

"Enough! I don't want to hear any of your dark thoughts. Be silent while I think." Both sat silently until finally the sheik said, "I have heard that this International Rescue organization has females working for it. They can find the trucks and restore my women to me. I will call them."

Once again he switched frequencies and picked up the microphone. "Calling International Rescue! This is Sheik Farees al-Rahman calling. Come in, International Rescue!"

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 18:55:40 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 2/9/2006 4:12 PM

Thursday, July 5, 11 AM; Somewhere in Egypt, south of Baris (9 PM on Tracy Island)

"Calling International Rescue! This is Sheik Farees al-Rahman calling. Come in, International Rescue!"

Alan jumped at the sound of the call. Things had been quiet in the space station, and to Alan, quiet equaled boring. He rushed to the microphone to answer the broadcast.

"This is International Rescue responding. What is the nature of your emergency?"

There was a brief pause, and Alan could hear the speaker jabbering to someone in the background in what he surmised was fluent Arabic. Then silence for a second or two, and the speaker was back with him.

"Please, International Rescue. This is Sheik Farees al-Rahman. Before I discuss my matter with you, I must ask: is it true you now have females working for you?"

Alan frowned. This is a new one on me, he thought. But I guess it couldn't hurt to tell him. If he gets weird, I can always cut him off.

"Yes, sir," he replied. "It is true. We have women working with us now."

There was a short laugh, then the speaker said, "Praise be to Allah! I had heard of such a thing, but I could not believe it until you told me." He paused for a moment. "Now, as to my problem..."

xxxx

Alan shook his head as he opened up communications with the island. Dad isn't going to like this very much, and Mom will like it even less! he thought. Still, this man and his family need our help... and we can't be picky.

"Base from Thunderbird Five, come in, Base."

Jeff was ready to call it a night when the eyes on Alan's portrait began to flash. He toggled the switch on his desk, and responded.

"This is Base. We read you five by five, Thunderbird Five. Go ahead, Indy."

"Commander, we have an emergency call, but it's going to be a little bit tricky..."

Tricky, he says, Jeff said to himself internally. That's putting it mildly. He watched as the team members converged in the lounge, ready and eager to find out what rescue was in store for them. He stood, and took a deep breath before he began to explain.

"Team, we have a rescue, but an unusual one, at least for us," he began. "A pair of trucks holding a sheik's harem..."

He didn't get any further, because - as he expected - his wife spoke up. "A harem?" she repeated, frowning. The young men in the room began to nudge each other and grin at the thought of a modern day harem.

"Yes, Doc. A harem. A sheik's four wives, three concubines and seven children too young to leave their mothers, as well as two male drivers, were lost in a sandstorm in Egypt. The sheik has contacted us to find them for him. No one responds to his radio calls, and the GPS in the trucks is not working, at least, not at his level. Indy is doing what he can to try and use our more powerful sensors to track their signals." He paused, and looked around the room again. "The sheik has specifically requested an all-woman task force in accordance with his customs, and I have said he would get it. With one exception."

He turned to his oldest son. "Maverick, you are to rendezvous with the sheik himself and liaise with him, acting as the link between him and our me... our women in the field. However, at no time are you to approach the Danger Zone and you are to leave the vicinity when the women arrive at the sheik's current position. Is that understood?"

"F-A-B, Commander," Scott said briskly.

"Then off you go," Jeff told him. The field commander hurried off to the entrance to his Thunderbird's hangar, disappearing quickly behind the wall.

"Frankie."

Elise stepped forward, her face all business as she did so. "Yes, Commander."

"You are to take Thunderbird Two with pod seven, and include one of the recovery vehicles. Take two extra hoverbikes as well. I am sure that Thunderbird Seven will be needed at the Danger Zone. The trucks may need to be moved, and our recovery vehicles are the best things to deal with that situation." He looked around at the women in the room, making eye contact with each. "Ladies, all of you are going. Frankie is in command under Maverick, but remember that Doc is CMO and can overrule either of them in a medical situation." He smiled a little. "And please, ladies, try not to upset the balance of things. This is a situation in which... tact... is called for." Jeff looked pointedly at Dianne, who folded her arms and looked back at him just as pointedly. He motioned to Elise, indicating she should take her place at the rocket painting. "Frankie, on your way."

"F-A-B!" Elise stepped up to the painting and put her back to it, smiling.

Virgil pointed at her. "Remember, Frankie. Not a scratch!"

She snorted a laugh as, with a flick of a switch, the painting tipped her up and she disappeared.

"Sir?"

"Yes, MGM?"

"Am I to go on this rescue?"

Jeff sighed. "Yes, MGM. I said all of you ladies. There are trucks that are damaged but might be repairable. That's where you come in."

"Yes, sir." Kat smiled widely and gave John a triumphant look.

The commander leaned on his desk with both hands. "All right, ladies, on your way. Thunderbirds are go!"

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 19:42:46 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 2/12/2006 4:47 PM

Thursday, July 5, 2068, 9:25 p.m., somewhere over the Indian Ocean, Thunderbird One

"Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One," Scott said crisply. "What's the latest, Indy?"

Alan's picture showed up in one of Thunderbird One's screens. "I'm still trying to pinpoint the location of the trucks through their GPS," the younger man replied in a harried tone. "The storm is still going strong and the local weather services predict another four to five hours before it clears."

Scott shook his head. "That means protective gear all around, and I'll probably have to work Mobile Control from Thunderbird One. Gonna be hard to do that so far from the action. Pass the word on to Thunderbird Two. They'll need to be ready for the sandstorm. I hope it doesn't interfere with communications."

"I'm going to boost the signal feed, just in case," Alan assured him. "And the Arabic translation program is up and running, too. As long as communications are stable, Doc and the others will be able to get translations. There'll be a short time lag, maybe as much as five seconds, but no more than that."

"What about the reciprocal translations?" Scott asked. "Will the rescue victims be able to understand our workers?"

"Yes." Alan nodded. "The translation will sound out through little speakers in the visors... or that's what... Sweet tells me."

Scott couldn't miss Alan's grimace when he mentioned Tin-Tin's code name. "Keep your personal feelings out of the rescue, Indy," he warned.

"I will, Maverick," Alan shot back irritably. "I know how to be professional."

"See that you are. Let me know when you've pinpointed the trucks. Thunderbird One out."

Scott shook his head. We don't need the feelings between him and Tin-Tin getting in the way of the rescue. He passed a hand over his face. I hope he can find those trucks or else I may have to go looking with the thermal imager before Thunderbird Two gets there. And I hope that there won't be any conflict between our ladies and the men at the Danger Zone. We don't need to be offending those we're rescuing.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 19:44:53 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 2/13/2006 1:53 AM

There was a general buzz of chatter in TB2's cockpit, and for the first time in its history, the seats were occupied by pointedly female personnel. Through take-off there had been silence, some unsure, some perfectly comfortable. Now that they were en route, it felt as natural as the air.

"It almost feels like something's missing," Elise commented, pulling TB2 around in a shallow bank.

From behind her left shoulder, Nikki's voice rose in a chuckle and Kat 'hmm-ed'.

"It's probably the lack of testosterone," Nikki said. "This 'Bird probably doesn't know what to think."

"Yeah. I wonder if this is what an all-female world would feel like?" Callie's voice came from over Elise's right shoulder. "Men. Who needs 'em?"

There was a general murmur of agreement.

"Oh, now, they do have their uses," Dianne said, and Elise turned briefly to catch her grin.

"Such as?" she called as she went back to the instruments.

"Buying shoes and clothes, isn't that right, girls?" Nikki called out.

There was a louder murmur this time, but it was interrupted by the radio.

"Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird One. Hey, what's going on in there?"

"Just a little pre-rescue levity, Thunderbird One," Elise said. "What's the situation?"

"I'm only a few minutes from Danger Zone. What's your ETA?"

"Approximately twenty five minutes."

"I'm going to scope out the area and find these trucks. I'll let you know what I find."

"FAB. Thunderbird Two out."

All ears had been tuned in on the call, and now all minds were tuned into the rescue, and what was to come.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 19:48:23 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 2/13/2006 9:24 PM

"Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One," Scott called into his microphone. "Have you found those trucks yet?"

"Negative, Thunderbird One," Alan replied, his voice showing his frustration. "Their GPS is just not detectable."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Five," Scott replied. "I'll use the thermal imager and follow along the road... if I can find it through the sandstorm."

"I can give you the coordinates of the road itself," Alan offered. "And the two points from where the sheik was traveling to where he is now."

"That's a help, Indy," Scott replied gratefully. "I need to find these trucks before Thunderbird Two gets here so I can send them on to the actual Danger Zone. Then I can liaise with the sheik." He sighed. "I'm not sure I'll know how to handle him. I'm not exactly up-to-date on Arabic customs."

"Better you than me," Alan commented drily. "Here are those coordinates. Good luck in that sandstorm."

"Coordinates received and thanks. Thunderbird One, out."

Scott turned his ship toward the west, looking for that first point, the place where the sheik had started his trek. He turned on the thermal imager to maximum and began to trace the route that the caravan had taken. Below him swirled an angry brown cloud: the sandstorm. He was thankful

to be above it, and hoped that the women in the missing trucks were still alive to be rescued.

Alan returned to his communications panel, where he was still in touch with the sheik.

"Sir," he began. "Our lead ship is retracing the route you took today and using specialized equipment to try and pinpoint the location of the missing trucks."

"Is the pilot of this ship a man or a woman?" the sheik asked.

"He is a man. He'll be the one to direct the rescue from your location," Alan explained.

"And the other people you are sending? They are women?"

Alan stifled a sigh. "Yes, sir. They are. All women."

"Ah, very good. I will await your pilot's arrival, though I can offer little hospitality. The sandstorm still rages here."

"That will be fine, sir. He's not expecting hospitality."

The conversation ended there for the time being and Alan went back to his sensors, still trying against hope to pinpoint the GPS from the missing trucks.

Meanwhile, Scott had already reached the halfway point between the sheik's starting point and his current position. The thermal imager had as yet been unsuccessful in finding the trucks. He slowed his speed a bit more, giving the device more time to work and process the data it was receiving. Ten minutes later, his caution was rewarded.

"Yes!" he cried as the imager registered multiple hits, all clustered in one spot. He noted the coordinates, then took his ship into the sandstorm to double check his findings. The vicious winds tried to shake him, and he could hear the sand pelting like sleet against the hull of his Thunderbird. But, as he peered out through the viewport, he could see the dark hulks of two Hummer-type vehicles, one lying propped up on the other, which he could barely make out. But what he could make out chilled him; the one on the bottom had overturned completely.

"Thunderbird Two and Five to Thunderbird One," he said into his mike. "I have found the trucks and am uploading the coordinates."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird One," came Elise's voice, sounding faint over the noise of the storm. "Our ETA is nine minutes."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird One," Alan said. "I will pass along the info to the sheik."

"Thunderbird Five, tell him I will be with him in six minutes," Scott requested. "And Thunderbird Two? Good luck; it looks like you're really going to need it."

From: Tikatu Sent: 2/18/2006 7:25 PM

"This sandstorm is pretty nasty," Elise commented as she brought Thunderbird Two over the site where the trucks had wrecked.

"Yes, it looks that way," Dianne agreed. The physician glanced around at the other women on the rescue. "The fire resistant suits should do the trick and you'll need air tanks as well. Better start getting suited up."

The others began rising from their seats, making their way back to the supply room where the special use suits were stored, shedding hats and jackets on the way.

"Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Two," Elise called into her communicator.

"Thunderbird Five here." Alan's voice rang out in Two's cockpit. "Go ahead, Frankie."

"Indy, I need a direction on these winds if you can get one," she told him. "I think that using Two as a wind break may make our jobs easier."

"I'll see what I can do," Alan replied.

As she waited, she checked her own instruments to determine if there was a prevalent direction from which the winds were blowing. Her frown caught Dianne's attention before the older woman could head out of the cockpit, and instead, she approached the pilot, hoping her own experience would be of help.

"The winds are pretty fierce at ground level, but not so bad up here," Elise explained as Dianne came up behind her. "Nothing Two can't handle at either level, but I am worried about Seven, being a hovercraft and all."

"I think that creating a trolley for Seven, one like the Mole has, might be helpful in cases like this," Dianne said with a rueful smile. "Seven used to have caterpillar tracks; we abandoned them for the greater versatility of the hover jets. But now... I can see where we could use both."

"Something more for Brains when we get back, huh?"

Dianne nodded. "Looks like it."

The radio crackled to life. "Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird Five."

"Go ahead, Thunderbird Five," Elise said.

"The prevailing winds are coming from the north northwest," Alan explained. "Though ground level readings can be deceiving."

"F-A-B, and thanks, Indy," Elise said. She glanced up at her own instruments. "That's what I was getting, but it's good to have independent confirmation."

"Not a problem, Frankie," Alan replied. "Good luck. Thunderbird Five, out."

Elise touched her communications panel, changing frequencies, and spoke into the microphone. Her voice resonated through out Two's chassis and the pod as she announced, "Attention, ladies. We're landing in two minutes. Better strap yourselves in; it's going to be a bumpy ride."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 19:51:22 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 2/19/2006 7:08 PM

As Callie buckled her safety belt, her mind focused on the rescue at hand. This is so strange.

Tin-Tin noticed how quiet Callie was when she saw her staring out the windshield. "Callie, are you all right?"

She suddenly turned and said, "Oh, yeah, I'm fine. Tin-Tin, can I ask you a question?"

The young woman looked at Callie and said, "Sure."

"Whenever you go on a rescue, do you sometimes feel you don't really have anything to contribute?"

Tin-Tin shrugged. "I guess it depends on the actual mission. There are times I have been able to help with my own knowledge, and other times where I'm just along for the ride. Do you feel you're not really helping?"

"Yeah. I'm not really giving any expert knowledge in my field of study. It's almost like I'm hitching a ride."

"Don't worry. As long as you know the bigger picture, you'll definitely be needed."

Callie nodded and then said, "I was also thinking about why harems are still around in the year 2068."

"One thing that can never be changed five years from now or 500 years from now is tradition. Sheiks have had harems for centuries." Tin-Tin sighed. "In some cultures, women are still not permitted to do more than serve their spouses."

Shrugging her shoulders, Callie said, "I don't understand. In the past 60 years alone we've had

five female German chancellors, two female presidents in Liberia, three female presidents in Chile, and two U.S. Presidents."

"I know, but some women are actually happy living in servitude. For many of them, they know nothing else."

"Maybe," Callie said, "but you'll never find me happy living as a slave." She shook her head to break this train of thought. "Well, enough of that. Better get myself mentally prepared for rescuing these women and their children. I hope they're all right."

Tin-Tin smiled. "So do I, Ursa. So do I."

Bracing herself by holding her seat handles tightly, Callie thought, I've flown through space and around the world, but I never thought I'd have to go into a sandstorm...

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 19:53:17 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 2/25/2006 1:56 PM

Most of the men remained gathered in the lounge after the ladies had left.

"Say, how do like that?" Gordon exclaimed. "This is the second rescue where the Tracy family hasn't been needed. Except for Scott and Mom, that is."

Virgil nodded his head. "Seems kind of strange not to be going." Then he lapsed into silence.

"Elise will take care of your baby." Gordon grinned at his brother.

"Yes, I know she will. It's just that it feels strange not being the one in control of Two."

"She's a good pilot. She flew Thunderbird One well enough when you were all sick," John answered, and then continuing, "I wonder how Kat will get on trying to repair those trucks."

"Well, there should be no fear of attack this time," Brandon replied.

"That was very odd," Virgil agreed. "I wonder if it was our old enemy; the one trying to get our secrets."

Kyrano had been watching as Tin-Tin left with the young women. Jeff looked at his faithful retainer.

"She'll be okay."

"Yes. I know, Mr Tracy, but I still cannot help feeling a little concerned. It is a dangerous place, the

Sahara. There is no telling what the women will find."

Just then Alan's portrait flashed. "Base from Thunderbird Five."

"Base here," Jeff said, reaching over to activate the live feed. "What do you have for us?"

"Thunderbird Two has just arrived at the danger zone. Thunderbird Seven and the Recovery Vehicles are about to disembark."

"Good. Keep monitoring the situation," Jeff told him. "I want to know every detail."

"F-A-B, base. Thunderbird Five on stand-by." Alan's portrait stayed as a live feed, but he turned his attention to other matters.

"This has got to be the strangest rescue that International Rescue has ever undertaken," Virgil commented. "No men required." He shook his head. "I didn't know that kind of thing still went on. I mean sheiks with several wives and concubines. Sounds like something out of the Arabian Nights."

Jeff looked at his son. "Yes, it does sound foreign and old fashioned. But I'm glad we took on extra personnel, especially the women. It has really paid off."

At that moment Mrs Tracy entered the lounge. "Anyone interested in some coffee?"

There was a general sound of assent, and Kyrano said, "I will help you, Mrs Tracy."

"Thank you, Kyrano," Emily said, smiling as the two of them left the lounge.

Once in the kitchen, Emily watched as Kyrano busied himself, helping get the coffee ready.

"Now Kyrano. Don't go worrying yourself too much. I'm sure that Tin-Tin and the young women will be perfectly okay. Scott is close by and they have Dianne with them, too."

Kyrano shook his head. "I am not sure. This is such an unusual situation. The women will be very vulnerable. The sandstorm can change the landscape very quickly. They could easily be attacked or lost."

Emily put a hand on his arm. "They are sensible young women, and have very good training. Plus, they are all in direct contact with both Scott and Alan. I don't think there's much cause for concern."

Placing the mugs on a tray, together with the coffee pots, Emily and Kyrano headed back to the lounge.

"Thank you, Mother, Kyrano," Jeff said with a small smile. "This is a definite help."

"You're welcome, Jeff," Emily replied. "Now, I think I'll head back to the kitchen and start preparing a meal for the ladies."

by Tawnyangel22 and Tikatu

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 19:54:20 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 3/4/2006 3:12 AM

The wind buffeted Thunderbird Two from all sides, spinning in eddies and whipping up sand that practically blinded the pilot. The great craft was more than up to the task of keeping steady, in part thanks to the pioneering design, in part thanks to the skill of the pilot. Elise thought that she hadn't concentrated so hard on a landing before in her life. Nothing processed in her mind except the data from the monitors and the knowledge that it would go down fine. It did.

"Nice work, Frankie," Callie said as she unbuckled her safety belt.

"Thanks, Ursa," Elise replied.

"Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Two."

"Go ahead Thunderbird Two," came Scott's voice.

"We've landed at Danger Zone."

"FAB," Scott said, in full commander-mode. "Get the Recovery Vehicle and Thunderbird Seven out of the pod and then get TB2 back down on it ASAP. We need her to give us all the shelter she can. Ursa, you take the Recovery Vehicle. Doc?"

"Angel and I will be in Seven. And you'll be piloting today," Dianne said to Nikki with a nod.

The nurse's eyes widened for a fraction of a second before she nodded firmly.

"Right. Everyone else, go with Doc and Angel to get to the DZ."

"FAB, Thunderbird One. Thunderbird Two out," Elise said.

"Okay ladies," Dianne said from behind her suit helmet, "let's get to it."

There was a bustle of energy, and everyone, save Elise, ready at the controls, was gone.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 19:55:23 GMT
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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 3/5/2006 10:50 AM

Nikki shook her head slightly and concentrated on getting Thunderbird 7 close to the trucks. She had to make it easier to transport the injured aboard without exposing them too much to the elements surrounding them. Silently, she willed those who were aboard the trucks not to panic. She wished they could hear her reassure them that help was close by and getting closer.

As she slowed the medical craft before coming to a complete stop, she let out a breath. It had been the first time she'd controlled Thunderbird 7 during a rescue, and she had to admit she was nervous. Gently, she released the controls.

"Nice piloting for your first mission." Dianne placed her hand on Nikki's shoulder. "Well done, Angel."

"Thank you, Doc," Nikki replied with a slight nod before smiling.

"Right, we better get out there," Dianne said. She looked between Kat and Nikki when she spoke next. "MGM and Angel, I want you two to look into that overturned truck. Once you know what we'll be dealing with, Nikki, I want you to help me with the casualties in the other truck. We need to assess and remove them before we can move the truck."

Both Kat and Nikki answered in unison, "FAB, Doc."

Not wasting any time, both ladies exited Thunderbird 7 to proceed with the all female rescue.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 19:58:12 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 3/7/2006 7:46 PM

"Make sure communications are open, everyone," Dianne called to the group as they prepared to set out. "The program on Thunderbird Five will pick up what our patients say, translate it to us, then translate what we say back to them. There'll be a time lag, which will be frustrating to all concerned. But once we get them inside Seven, things should go more smoothly."

There was a chorus of "Yes, Doc," "F-A-B," and "Sure, Doc."

"How's your Arabic, Sweet?" Dianne asked Tin-Tin.

"I'm not fluent, but I think I can manage," the Malaysian replied.

"Good. You're with me. I want a more immediate translation if I can get one. We'll check out the first truck. Once we have that clear, then we can pull the patients out of the other."

"F-A-B," Tin-Tin answered as she fastened up the hood on her heat resistant suit.

Dianne put her mask on over her mouth and nose, made sure she was breathing easily, then fastened up her suit. "Thunderbird Five from Doc. Communication check, please."

"Reading you five by five, Doc." A tiny image of Alan flashed up on the HUD of Dianne's visor. "Should I do the same for the others?" Alan asked.

"If you would please, Indy. We'll need that translation program very soon."

"F-A-B," Alan replied. "I'm on it."

"Which way do you want us to go out, Doc?" Nikki asked.

"Through the control cab, Angel. It will keep the sand out of the medical cabin and surgery."

"F-A-B." The nurse turned and led the way to the control module. Dianne brought up the rear and closed the door firmly behind herself.

"Are we ready?" Nikki looked back at the other women, a hand on the door.

"Ready," Dianne said, nodding.

Nikki slid the door open, and all but jumped to the ground. She and Kat wasted no time in hurrying to the upside down vehicle. With both Thunderbirds Two and Seven acting as windbreaks, the storm was easier to deal with. Nikki gestured to Kat and they made their way to the front of the truck.

Dianne climbed carefully down, and closed the cabin door behind her. She and Tin-Tin went around the back of the overturned truck to the one that was leaning on it. It was partially sheltered by the first truck, but leaned at a precarious angle.

"Do we dare climb on the other truck to get into this one?" Tin-Tin asked.

"I don't think so. We'll either have to go in through the windshield, or through the back doors. And we need to be careful not to tip it over on its side," Dianne replied.

"Then let's hope we can get the back doors open," Tin-Tin said.

They reached the dirty white vehicle from behind, and Dianne reached up to wipe some of the clinging dust from the back windows. She and Tin-Tin peered inside. A child's frightened face looked back at them, and the little mouth opened in a shriek of terror.

"Damn!" Dianne swore. "These kids are going to be scared to death of us!"

"Let me go round to the front and see if I can speak to the drivers," Tin-Tin suggested. "Maybe if they see my insignia, they can calm the others down."

"Good idea, Sweet. I'll see if I can open these doors," the doctor replied. Tin-Tin hurried off to the front of the truck, and Dianne tugged on the doors. A young woman appeared, and Dianne pointed to her suit's insignia, hoping that the woman would understand that they were trying to help. She turned back toward the front of the vehicle once, then swung back and pulled on what looked like the door's locking mechanism. She pushed, Dianne pulled, and with a sudden release, the lower of the doors swung open, hanging down as gravity had its way.

The young woman jabbered loudly at Dianne in Arabic. After a few seconds, the translation sounded in Dianne's earpiece.

"You are from International Rescue? Allah be praised!"

Dianne nodded, and said, "We are. How many people are in this truck and who is injured?"

The response came a few seconds later and sounded out from a speaker in Dianne's visor. The woman looked at her, puzzled, as the words came out. She spoke again.

"I cannot hear you," was the translation of her next sentence.

"Computer, repeat operative's response, and amplify," Dianne murmured. Her own words played back at an earsplitting volume, but this time, the young woman heard and understood.

Tin-Tin came trotting around to the back. "I've checked the men. One of them has some cuts on his face from the windshield, and the other was unconscious for a while. He's come around, but he's been vomiting. They both complain of neck pain."

The young woman had been speaking all this while, too, and her words finally reached Dianne.

"We have four women and three children here. One of the children has a twisted arm that gives her much pain. Another child is unconscious, as was one of the wives. The other concubine has pain in her shoulders, and we all have pain in our necks."

"All right. I understand," Dianne said. "This is what we will do. We will take the able-bodied out first to make room for our equipment. Then we will remove those who are conscious but injured, then the unconscious." She waited for the translation to sound out, then turned to Tin-Tin. "I'm going to need a number of neck braces, and some Penelon blankets to help wrap them up and give them some extra protection from the occasional gust. I don't dare move Seven around here; it's as much of a windbreak as Two is."

"F-A-B," Tin-Tin said, turning to head for Thunderbird Seven.

Just then, she heard from Nikki. "Doc, MGM and I have managed to get in through the windshield. We have one fatality, one of the men. The other is unconscious. I'm starting to triage as best I can, but we'll need those back doors open to pull people out."

"F-A-B, Angel. I'm going to call for help." She reached up and tapped her earpiece under her hood. "Thunderbird Two from Doc."

"Thunderbird Two here, go ahead," Elise's voice sounded loud in Dianne's ear.

"Frankie, we need an extra pair of hands, and the power pry bar from Thunderbird Two's supply room. Bring it out with you and help get this overturned truck open."

"F-A-B, Doc. On my way," Elise replied.

"Doc to Recovery Vehicle," Dianne said, tapping her earphone once again.

"Ursa here, Doc. Are you ready for me?"

"Yes and no, Ursa. We need your hands out here right now to help evacuate this first truck."

"On my way, Doc."

Tin-Tin came up behind Dianne, a medikit slung over one shoulder. Dianne dug into it and pulled out a silver square.

"Take this to Angel, Sweet. They have a fatality."

Tin-Tin nodded behind her hood, a barely noticeable motion. Then she turned and trudged off. Dianne looked up into the precariously balanced truck and said, "Now, who's ready for a ride in a Thunderbird?"

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:00:43 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 3/12/2006 10:31 AM

As Tin-Tin trudged off, she wondered how she could get this Penelon blanket to Nikki. While she was debating this in her head, a voice sounded in her ear.

"Uh, Sweet?"

"Yes, Doc?"

"I need that medikit."

Tin-Tin stopped in her tracks and shook her head, rolling her eyes. "F-A-B, Doc. Sorry about that."

"Me, too, Sweet. I should have said something."

The Malaysian girl turned around and hurried back to the other truck. Dianne had managed to get herself inside. "Once you take care of that blanket business, hurry back. I'll have Frankie pick up a medikit for the other team on her way over with the pry bar; Angel says she has some suspected back and head injuries. I'll need your help to get these people out of here."

"F-A-B," Tin-Tin replied, handing the medikit up to the doctor. "I'll be right back."

This time, Tin-Tin ran as best she could in the heavy, heat-resistant suit. She began to sweat inside it as the exertion made her warm. She had gone around the truck that Dianne was working on and ended up at the hood of the overturned truck.

"Angel from Sweet. I have a blanket to cover your fatality with. What do you want me to do with it?"

Nikki's voice, terse and preoccupied, sounded in Tin-Tin's ear. "The driver is the fatality, Sweet. He's at the front of the truck. I've got my hands full right now and I can't turn around to reach him. Would you...?"

"I'll try my best," Tin-Tin replied. She took a deep breath, shook the blanket open, and ducked under the hood of the truck.

It was hard going to get to the driver. The sand had blown in, making less room to maneuver. Tin-Tin thought of the heavy engine above her, and was thankful that the other truck was leaning on this one in such a way that it kept the nose of the car off the ground. Sand still blew in to temporarily obscure her vision. Finally, she reached the driver. She took another deep breath, this one to steady her nerves. She had seen dead people before, but it was never easy to deal with, this one even more so since his eyes bulged out and his face held such an expression of terror.

She pulled the blanket towards her and draped it over the dead man. The job wasn't easy; she had to shift her position a bit because the blanket had gotten trapped beneath her as she crawled on her belly. But at last the job was done. A movement to one side caught her attention, and she looked toward the other man, who was coming around, moaning.

"Sweet to Angel," she said. "I've finished the job. The other man is waking up."

"I hear him, Sweet, but thanks for the heads up. I'll try to get to him."

"F-A-B. I'm heading back to give Doc a hand. Frankie will bring a medikit for you."

"F-A-B, Sweet, and thanks."

Tin-Tin turned from the moaning man, and crawled out from under the overturned truck. She gave it a last look, then sighed and hurried back to help Dianne.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:02:57 GMT
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 3/12/2006 5:20 PM

"Thunderbird Two from Mobile Control. I just received a download from Thunderbird Five about the storm." Scott's voice rang out.

Elise sat up, hoping for good news. "Receiving you Thunderbird One. Any changes?"

"No, still showing coming on strong. Can you still maintain current position?" Scott asked.

Elise scanned the control panel before replying, "At the moment, yes. But if this sand doesn't let up I'm going to be buried in it! I can't get airborne though until they've cleared the victims."

"Understood. I'll get any changes to you ASAP. Mobile Control out."

"F.A.B.," Elise answered. Gazing out the window she saw nothing but sand, lots of sand. It was then she started hearing the noise outside. It was almost like small hail hitting the fuselage. "Damn!" she muttered as she tried to peer closer through the window.

The strength of the wind hurling the sand around was actually causing the sand particles to have the effect of hail. Suddenly Virgil's words echoed in her head. "Remember, not a scratch!" She could still see him pointing at her as she stood against the painting, preparing to ride down to TB2. She'd scoffed at him humorously at the time but now she wasn't laughing.

Well there was nothing she could do about it, so she sighed and sat back. She hadn't heard from the team for a while and hoped they were doing okay. It seemed strange to have only the girls on this rescue, with the exception of Scott who, for all intent and purposes might as well not be here, as he was some way from the danger zone.

More sand rained down on Thunderbird Two. Maybe he won't notice. Her thoughts were picturing scenarios back at base. "Who am I kidding? He'll do more than notice! But it's not like it she actually feels anything; she's made of metal for crying out loud!"

The radio sparked to life, putting thoughts of Virgil immediately out of her mind.

"Thunderbird Two from Doc." It was Dianne.

"Thunderbird Two here, go ahead." Elise listened carefully as Dianne requested the power pry bar and Elise's hands to assist with the overturned truck. "F.A.B., Doc. On my way."

Elise signed off and exited the flight deck. Making her way out of the huge green giant, she grabbed the requested pry bar and was almost outside when she heard Dianne's voice again.

"Frankie, I need you to stop by Seven and grab an extra medikit to bring with you."

"F.A.B., will do."

Grabbing the pry bar, Elise made sure her heat resistant suit was on correctly, adjusted the helmet and proceeded out into the endless sands in front of her.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:10:09 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 3/13/2006 2:47 PM

Nikki and Kat looked at the truck lying on its roof, squashed underneath the other truck. The sand had been blown in such a way that it was almost covered.

"MGM, we'll have to climb in underneath," Nikki talked into her communicator.

"F-A-B." Kat replied.

Hindered by their cumbersome uniforms, Nikki and Kat struggled to crawl underneath the truck towards the windscreen. Kat looked up and froze, trying to fight back the rising nausea. The driver had obviously not been wearing his seat belt and had been flung through the smashed windscreen. He was half hanging through the broken glass, his face seriously lacerated, and his sightless eyes seemed to bulge out. His face had been frozen in a look of complete terror. The bodyguard was unconscious and hanging upside down, held firmly by his seat belt, which appeared to be securely stuck. Steeling herself, she managed to squeeze herself past the lifeless body and through the broken windscreen, thankful that her uniform was tear resistant.

Nikki joined Kat and surveyed the scene. Both the driver and bodyguard were large, heavy men. She examined the driver, feeling for a pulse but from the unnatural position of his neck, it was obvious that he was dead.

"There's nothing we can do for this guy. I'll contact Doc for a black tag." Nikki glanced at Kat, who was shaking. "Are you okay, MGM?"

"Yes, I am now. It was such a shock, seeing the driver."

Nikki then turned her attention back to the bodyguard. Crawling beside Kat, she tried to release the bodyguard's seat belt. The sheer weight of the man made it almost impossible to do. He was unconscious, with a deep cut and an angry looking bruise on his left temple and blood had seeped from a gash in his head.

"I don't think he should be moved," Nikki stated. "He needs a neck brace and backboard. But I think that unless he comes round, he should be okay as he is until we have the proper equipment."

She reported to Dianne the state of the driver and bodyguard, and then she and Kat continued to

crawl inside the interior of the truck. The roof was dented in, giving very little space for them to work in. Sand had infiltrated through the smashed windscreen, making the air inside the truck stuffy. Both Nikki and Kat were thankful for their breathing equipment.

Three women lay like rag dolls. A fourth was still in her seatbelt and hanging upside down. Two children were strapped in their safety seats; the third was clinging to one of the unconscious women. All three children were whimpering.

At the sight of Nikki and Kat, the whimperings increased to loud cries. Nikki bent over one of the women, who opened her eyes, moaned softly, and tried to move.

Nikki spoke gently, using the translator. "We are from International Rescue."

The young woman continued to whimper and moan, pointing to the other women and children.

Again Nikki spoke. "We are here to help you."

This time the woman seemed to understand. "Allah be praised," she whispered, before losing consciousness again.

Nikki began to triage the occupants. The young woman who had managed to understand them was drifting in and out of consciousness.

"She is suffering from concussion," Nikki explained.

Kat crawled to check the other two women. Seeing Kat approach, the young boy began to scream and shout, kicking his legs at her. He retreated as far as he could until his back rested against the truck's wall, holding his arm and continuing to scream.

Nikki joined Kat, and examined the two women. "They could have back and neck injuries. I don't want to move them, until we have backboards to move them onto and neck braces," she said. "Doc from Angel. There is a possibility that three of the women have back and neck injuries. I don't think they should be moved until we have backboards and neck braces."

"F-A-B, Angel. Will get them over to you," Dianne replied.

Nikki then turned her attention to the boy. She spoke soothingly, but he was having none of it. He continued to kick and scream, trying to keep the two strange women away from him. "Looks like his arm could be broken," she said. "I need to get him to Thunderbird Seven and give him a sedative so we can examine him more closely. Come along. We'll check that other woman. Maybe if we leave him be, he'll calm down."

As they moved away, the boy calmed, and shifted over to sit by one of the unconscious women.

Kat and Nikki then examined the young woman still hanging upside down, secured by her seat belt. She was conscious and, in her blind panic, was trying to free herself.

Nikki spoke in her most soothing voice. "We are here to help you. Let me try and release your

seat belt."

"No! No! Do not touch me! You cannot take my baby!" she wailed, holding her belly protectively.

"We are here to help," Nikki repeated. "Let us help."

Very gently, with help from Kat, Nikki managed to free the young woman, who crouched down in front of them, wailing and crying. Nikki carefully examined the young woman.

"She is suffering from extensive bruises where the seat belt cut into her body, but as she seems to be pregnant, I need to get her to Thunderbird Seven as quickly as possible for a further internal examination," Nikki said.

The IR operatives now approached the two children in their safety seats. They were still secure, but very young, obviously terrified, and the operatives' appearance didn't make things any better. Carefully Nikki tried to examine them, but they remained screaming and wriggling in sheer terror. Nikki decided to leave them in their seats. "They'll be safer there for the time being," she remarked. "I think it will be much easier to examine them in Thunderbird Seven," she added.

Nikki suddenly stopped and put a hand to her ear, listening. She glanced up toward the front of the truck and said, "The driver is the fatality, Sweet. He's at the front of the truck. I've got my hands full right now and I can't turn around to reach him. Would you...?"

Kat gave her a puzzled look. Nikki turned to say, "Sweet is here. She's going to cover our fatality up for us."

Just at that moment, there was the sound of grinding and screeching of metal.

"Angel! MGM!" Callie's voice could be heard. "The doors are badly dented in. Frankie and I are going to try and pry them open. Please make sure that the rear of the truck is clear."

"F-A-B, Ursa," Kat replied. She situated herself so that she could catch the one loose child in case he decided to investigate the noise. Elise and Callie began working on the doors. The children all began to shriek and cry. The truck began to shake and shudder in an alarming manner.

At the height of this confusion, a male voice could be heard.

Nikki listened again to her communicator. "I hear him, Sweet, but thanks for the heads up. I'll try to get to him." She paused, then added, "F-A-B, Sweet, and thanks."

She turned to Kat. "Seems like the unconscious man has come round. I'd better go back and try to calm him. MGM, try and keep those children calm."

Kat looked at the injured boy. He was rocking back and forth, wailing. I don't think he's going anywhere. I'll see what I can do for the other two. In the tiny space between the roof and floor of the truck, Kat joined the other two children sat in their safety seats. She tried to convey to them that she was there to help them. Their eyes were wide with fright at the noise coming from the rear of the truck. They totally ignored what she was saying to them and continued to scream and

cry almost hysterically. Kat tried to calm them down, but she had no effect on them. No matter what she tried to say or do, nothing would calm them down.

Shortly the rear doors were forced open and Callie and Elise could be seen. Elise handed Kat the medikit. "Take this to Angel, please, MGM. We've got the backboards, too, and we're ready to help."

"F-A-B," Kat said with relief. "And not a moment too soon."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:12:23 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 3/16/2006 7:51 PM

"Is that the last of the women?" Tin-Tin asked Dianne.

"Yes, it is. We'll get the men out of this truck, then I can tend to injuries and all."

"We may have a problem, though," Tin-Tin said. "The women can't be seen by the men without their burkhas on."

Dianne stopped for a moment, then shook her head. "You're right. We'll need to come up with some way of keeping the two groups separate in the med cabin. This rescue is getting harder by the minute."

"Is there any way we can string up some sort of curtain to separate the men from the women while we're in Seven? We could always move the men to the sickbay on Two if necessary."

"Hmm. I think we might be able to work out something. Partition off the two beds on the bulkhead near the big door... the third man might not need a bed." The doctor nodded decisively. "It will be a squeeze, but it will have to do until we can set something up in the pod. I'd much rather have them resting close to the surgery rather than on the diagnostic beds in the sickbay, just in case."

Dianne helped Tin-Tin lower the last backboard and patient down to the anti-grav stretcher. Elise stood in the light wind, waiting for them. She had been pulled from working with Nikki to help hurry along the evacuation of the truck Dianne was working in. Callie was helping to bring victims out of the upside down truck. Already there were four screaming children in Thunderbird Seven's medical cabin, watched over by the one conscious young woman so that the women of IR could do their work.

I'll have to check that one gal over, too. She must have been pretty addled to give me the numbers she did, Dianne thought. Either that, or she doesn't know how to count.

"Okay, gals. Take this one inside and put her on a diagnostic bed. I'll prepare the men for

transport while you're gone. And give me the readings on the woman that's already there. Tell me if she's regained consciousness yet."

"F-A-B, Doc," Elise said with a brisk salute. She and Tin-Tin moved off

Dianne climbed down from the truck, her medikit slung over a shoulder. This is one rescue where I wish we had more hands along. Even just Dom would have been a big help. But the local customs... blast those local customs! she thought angrily. When will people see that segregating the genders in times like these can be downright dangerous!

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:13:05 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 3/16/2006 9:24 PM

As Tin-Tin and Elise approached Thunderbird 7, they realized two things right away. The screaming from the children had died down significantly, and someone was singing. They got inside and looked in the direction of the music.

The woman who was watching the children was singing something soothing, as she held one of the children in her arms. Her eyes were closed and she seemed to be ignoring the cries, but the song she was crooning was obviously one that was meant to calm little ones. The tune was very serene and quiet.

They watched for a minute and the cries subsided to sniffles and whimpers, as the children began to listen to her. It was obviously a familiar and favorite song, for one of two of the little ones smiled a little and even tried to sing along with her.

Tin-Tin and Elise looked at each other and smiled, then moved quickly to get the patient onto the diagnostic bed and take care of the other tasks they needed to do.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:14:44 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 3/18/2006 1:03 PM

"Shh, shh-shh-shh, come on lad, shh..."

Joshua's crying wouldn't abate, and Dominic shifted the tot in his arms, jiggling him and cuddling him, trying to get him to calm down. It wasn't teething, it wasn't a fever -- in fact he didn't seem to be ill at all -- so what was it? Dominic sighed and rubbed the back of Joshua's soft blond head as the kid grabbed at the long hairs at the nape of his father's neck and wailed louder.

"Jak, Jak, what's the matter with you?"

"Jak tired!"

"Shall we go to bed then?"

"NO!"

"But you're tired, son."

"NO!"

Dom kissed the side of Joshua's head and pressed his cheek to his face.

"I don't know what to do with you, you know."

Joshua kept on wailing, his face the all-too-familiar red of the past few days. Poor Joshua, I truly don't know what to do. I'm no good at this... The calming muttering and the harsh cries melded in disharmony and filled the apartment from floor to ceiling with pressure that was almost more than either father or son could bear. Eventually Joshua dropped off in a descending spiral of sniffles and whines, and Dominic settled the child down on his bed, and sat on the chair beside him, shaking his head.

"Just what am I gonna do?"

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:19:44 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 3/19/2006 4:40 PM

Scott fidgeted in his seat in Thunderbird One. Even at the ruins where the sheik and his men had taken shelter, it was obvious that the sandstorm was too fierce for him to properly set up Mobile Control. So, after a brief consultation with the sheik, he returned to his 'Bird to coordinate.

I wish I was able to get closer! It sounds like the women could use a couple of extra pairs of hands out there. I feel pretty helpless just sitting here, listening to the talkback.

"Mobile Control from Frankie." Elise's voice filled his ears and the cockpit.

"Mobile Control here," Scott said, activating his boom mike and switching the audio to his earphone. "Go ahead, Frankie."

"We've managed to extricate all the survivors, and they're in Thunderbird Seven. Doc and Angel want to come back for the fatality once they've given the survivors a once-over, and treated those who need it. They're going to pull Seven back into the pod to do that. What's the plan for getting these people where they belong?"

Scott thought for a moment. "How many are able-bodied?"

"I'm not sure. I'm waiting on Doc for that information."

"All right. Once you have that information, let me know. In the meantime, do either of the trucks look salvageable?"

"From the looks of it, there's one that might be. MGM will be able to give you a better idea."

"Then here's the plan. Get the one truck that looks repairable into the pod so MGM can look at it. When Doc figures out who is relatively able-bodied, they should be brought back here with the truck. Seven can take the others on to a local hospital. I'll get onto giving the hospital a heads up, and get the coordinates for it."

"Won't Seven have some trouble with the storm?" Elise asked. "It is a hovercraft."

"My last reports from Thunderbird Five indicate that the storm should be abating within the hour. The winds are beginning to drop already. Thunderbird Seven should have no problem after that."

"F-A-B," Elise replied. "I'll pass the word along. Frankie out."

Scott sat back and sighed. Well, that helped... a little. I'll be glad to see the bulk of Thunderbird Two arrive. I hope it's soon.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:22:41 GMT

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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 3/19/2006 7:59 PM

After all the victims had been safely removed from the truck, Callie drove out to the scene in the Recovery Vehicle. The good news was that being inside the RV meant she could get out of her uncomfortable suit.

Kat scrambled in beside her, holding on to her mechanic's tool box. "Okay, ready to go." Kat said, taking off her helmet. "Phew, it's so hot! It makes doing anything such hard work. We shall have to try and drag the truck away from the other one. But it won't be easy; they are both so unstable."

Callie drove the RV to a point about 100 yards from the two toppled trucks. "The best thing to do is to get the top one off. I've got to aim the magnetic clamps carefully."

She used the crosshairs to find a point that was stable enough to keep the trucks from collapsing on each other. "Ah, there we go. Adjusting by 3.4 degrees right right."

Once the magnetic clamps were attached, Callie carefully reversed the recovery vehicle. The caterpillar tracks gripped surprisingly well in the unstable sand. Slowly, inch by inch, the truck was dragged clear of the upturned truck beneath it. She continued until the truck was well clear. "MGM, get your tools ready," she said. "I'm going to get this truck into the pod where you can fix it."

"F-A-B, Ursa. What about the other truck?"

"Leave it. It's too far damaged to be of any use." After about 30 minutes, the first truck was safely in the pod. "Mission accomplished on my end, MGM. She's all yours."

Kat opened up the hood of the truck and started the repair job. Somehow she managed to locate the fan belt and tightened it up. She checked the carburetor, and tightened some loose screws. "Ursa, can you help me see if this truck will start?"

"Sure thing." Callie stepped into the driver's seat and turned the key in the ignition. "Come on, baby." The engine spluttered and then died. "Come on, come on," she was praying aloud. She tried again but still the engine refused to fire. "MGM, can you double-check everything on the inside?"

"F-A-B." Kat climbed up and looked at everything under the hood again, finding nothing amiss. "I can't find anything wrong," she called to Callie. "Try it once more."

With a sigh, Callie turned the key, hoping the engine would finally start. Surprisingly, the engine spluttered into life. "Whoo! We got it!" she shouted excitedly.

"All right! It worked!"

"It wouldn't have worked without your mechanical skills, MGM."

Kat grinned at her colleague. "This was a real test of my mechanic's skills. I can't wait to see what Einstein has to say when I tell him."

"I think Einstein would be pretty pleased," said Callie with a chuckle. "Frankie from Ursa. MGM got one of the trucks working again."

Elise smiled. "Good work, MGM. I'll contact Doc and give her the good news."

*****By TawnyAngel22 and TracyFan4Ever.*****

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:26:22 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 3/20/2006 3:44 PM

"My baby, my baby," the young woman moaned. The translation arrived in Dianne's ear a few seconds later, and she sighed. The young woman, so hysterical in the overturned truck, was lying on the surgical bed while it scanned her. The doctor increased the magnification on part of the scan, looking at it critically.

Suddenly, Elise's picture popped up in her visor. Dianne blinked quickly.

"What is it, Frankie?" she asked irritably.

"Mobile Control wants to know how much longer," Elise said in a rueful tone.

"You tell Maverick that Ah'll be done when Ah'm done an' he'll be th' second one t' know."

Elise chuckled. "F-A-B, Doc."

Her picture winked out and Dianne turned her attention back to the scan. Increasing the magnification once more, she peered at the screen intently, then her face relaxed and she smiled. Turning off the monitor, she took the hand of the young woman and caught the girl's eye.

"Hey, there," she said, waiting for the translation to catch up with her words. "You're going to be fine and so is your baby."

"I... I'm not going to lose my baby?" the girl asked, her eyes wide.

"No, you're not," Dianne said firmly. "You're just a bit shaken and you have a relatively mild case of whiplash, that's all. Now, let's get you down from here. You need to keep that collar on for the next two weeks, and I will give you a pain reliever, as well. All of you that will be joining your... uh... husband, will have instructions to follow so you'll heal properly."

She pulled Boushra into a sitting position and helped her down from the surgical table. Escorting the young woman into the medical cabin, she uploaded her doctor's notes to the computer. Nikki was busy with the little boy who had the broken arm; Dianne had set it, and now he was asleep on one of the beds.

"Who's left?" Dianne asked her nurse.

"One of the men from the truck you triaged, and two of the children," Nikki replied. "He's a bit higher on the triage list than they are since they were both in safety seats."

"Where is he?"

"He's been waiting in the pod."

"All right," Dianne said with a nod. "Bring him straight into the surgery through the back. That way he won't see the women."

"Yes, Doc," Nikki replied.

Dianne went into the surgery and took the time to clean her hands with gel and don fresh gloves. She also prepared a hypospray of sedative and put it beside the surgical table.

The back door to Thunderbird Seven opened, and Nikki escorted the next patient inside. The back emergency entrance was rarely used since opening it ran the risk of contaminating the surgical area. But even if it was opened, there were safety procedures in place to cut any contamination to the minimum. Besides, Dianne didn't foresee any surgery in this case.

She patted the table. "Let's get you up here, sir."

The man looked around suspiciously. "Where is the doctor?"

Dianne folded her arms and glared at her patient. "I am the doctor."

He glared back at her. "I do not believe you. Women cannot be doctors."

"Maybe not in your world, but we can in the rest of it," she retorted. "Now, are you going to get up here under your own steam? Or am I going to have to sedate you?"

"You cannot make me submit to your examination. I wish to see a male doctor," he replied with rancor.

"Listen, you. If you don't get up on this table right now, Ah will sedate you." She showed him her hypospray. "And my nurse and Ah will do what we need to. Then, when we deliver you to your leader, we will tell him an' all your pals you were so afraid of a woman doctor that you fainted dead away."

The translation on this took some time, but by the end of it, the man understood his predicament. Grudgingly, he climbed up on the table, and Dianne helped him to lie back. "Okay, Angel. I think I have this under control," she said. "If I need help, I'll holler."

"F-A-B, Doc," Nikki said. She passed through to the medical cabin and sighed. Men.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:27:47 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 3/22/2006 4:44 PM

"One, two, three... lift!"

The two women, the doctor and the nurse, lifted the body bagged figure onto an antigravity stretcher. In the background, Thunderbird Two was powering up, ready to take the relatively able-bodied rescue victims to rendezvous with the sheik... and Thunderbird One. The winds had died down considerably, and Alan had provided Thunderbird Seven coordinates to the hospital in nearby Baris. Once Thunderbird Two had dropped off the repaired truck and its occupants, it would meet up with Seven on the outskirts of the city.

Nikki and Dianne maneuvered the stretcher to the rear of the mobile treatment center. The tiny morgue was back there, with access to the outside so that the dead wouldn't have to pass through the surgery to be stored. Nikki raised the strength of the antigravity field, bringing the stretcher slowly up to the level of the first long cubicle, then clamped the side of the stretcher to the opening. The man had been difficult to extricate, and he was heavy, so preparing him for his ride to Baris had taken time, and both women felt muscles that they knew they had, but hadn't complained until then.

"Again on three," Dianne said into her communicator. "One, two, three!"

Together, they slid the body over, grunting a bit at the bulkiness. Finally, he was in place, and Dianne unfastened the stretcher. Nikki folded it up while the doctor closed the cubicle up and locked it.

"Ready t' go?" Dianne asked.

"Oh yes," Nikki replied as they walked around to the front of the Thunderbird. She climbed in after Dianne, removing her helmet, and hanging it up on a hook. "I can hardly wait to get back to base and have a hot bath."

"Same here," Dianne replied, shedding her suit. She sat in the pilot's seat. Even though the winds had died down, they still had some surprises in them, and with Seven being a hovercraft, it was decided that Nikki would ride in the medical cabin at the doctor's monitoring station, and that Dianne would pilot.

Nikki stepped into the medical cabin. Of the seven women, seven children, and four men involved in the rescue, two women, one man, and four children were returning to the sheik, most of them with minor injuries. The five women who remained in the cabin had varying degrees of concussion, and the eldest, the sheik's favorite, had fractured vertebrae in her neck. Dianne had done what she could surgically, but it was for doctors with more specialized skill to fully repair the damage. The two men were also concussed, and the driver of the second truck had a severe case of whiplash. The two children included the boy with the broken arm, and a little girl who had broken ribs.

The nurse walked by them, tweaking a cover here, checking biosigns there. She pulled back the curtain separating the men from the women where the men's feet were located, and checked their biosigns as well. One of the men, who was conscious, grabbed her hand and kissed it. She stifled a smile and wagged a warning finger at him. Then she replaced the curtain, and sat down at the monitoring station, activating it. She strapped herself in, and called up to Dianne.

"I'm ready when you are, Doc."

"F-A-B," was the reply. The hovercraft lifted from the sand, and began the trek north to the hospital. Behind them, Thunderbird Two rose into the air and headed north-northwest for its own rendezvous with the field commander.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:30:12 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 3/27/2006 8:50 PM

Scott sighed with relief to see the bulk of Thunderbird Two settle down in the sands behind the ruins. Seconds after touching down, the body of the cargo carrier lifted up and away from the pod.

"Package delivery for one sheik... whatever his name is," Elise's voice quipped in his ear.

"Very cute, Frankie," Scott muttered. "I'll let the sheik know that his people are here."

"F-A-B," Elise replied. "You should have him get someone else to drive the truck; the guy who's in there now really isn't fit."

"F-A-B."

Scott climbed out of Thunderbird One, and walked over to where the sheik stood, organizing his remaining men. The man turned to him, a bright, white smile flashing.

"Many thanks to you and your organization," the sheik said, bowing briefly. "It is good to know that my family has been rescued and returned to me."

"You're welcome," Scott replied. He gestured with his head toward the pod. "You'll need a driver for the truck that we brought back; the man behind the wheel now is injured."

"And my wives and concubines? My children? Are they all here?"

Scott shook his head. "No, just those who were most able-bodied and had the fewest injuries. The rest have been taken in Thunderbird Seven to the hospital in Baris. You'll find them there."

"Ah, I see." The sheik hesitated. "One... one of my concubines is to have her first child. I wonder... could you tell me if she and the child are all right? And my favorite wife, my beloved Fahime, what of her?"

"Certainly." Scott tapped his communicator, and called, "Maverick to Doc. What is your status?"

Dianne, overseeing the unloading of patients in Baris, responded, "We're about halfway through unloading the patients. What do you need?"

"The sheik is worried about the pregnant woman," Scott said. "What is her status?"

"She's in the truck. No signs of miscarriage."

"And the oldest of the women?" Scott glanced at the sheik, who nodded confirmation.

Dianne sighed. "I've done what I could for her here, but she needs surgery right away from a specialist. She's already been transferred to the hospital."

"F-A-B," Scott replied. "Thanks, Doc. Maverick out."

Glancing up at the sheik, he took a deep breath before he spoke. "There's good news and bad news. The good news is that the pregnant woman is fine, in fact, she's in the truck. The bad news is that your... Fahime... needs surgery. She's already at the hospital."

The sheik's face broke into a broad smile at the good news, then he sobered with the bad. "I will send some of my men on to the oasis. My place is at Fahime's side."

They both looked up as the truck, now driven by one of the other men, approached, and Thunderbird Two settled back down over the pod. Scott checked his watch, then tapped his communicator again. "This is Mobile Control to all stations. Situation is in stand down. Time: 1530 hours local. Acknowledge."

"Thunderbird Five, F-A-B." "Thunderbird Two, F-A-B." "Thunderbird Seven, F-A-B." "Base, F-A-B."

He turned back to the sheik. "We're finished here. Good luck with your family."

The sheik grabbed a startled Scott by the shoulders and kissed him on each cheek. "May Allah bless you for the miracles you have done today."

"Uh, thanks," Scott said hastily. "Goodbye."

He turned and hurried back to Thunderbird One, climbing in quickly. The men at the ruins all waved their arms and cheered as he lifted his Bird off the ground. He glanced over at Thunderbird Two, which was doing the same.

"Frankie, time to rendezvous with Thunderbird Seven at Baris," he said.

"You're coming, too?" Elise asked.

"Hell, yes," Scott muttered. "Have to feel like I've done something during this rescue!"

He could hear Elise's laughter in his ear as he turned his craft to the north, and matched speeds with Thunderbird Two.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:35:17 GMT
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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 3/27/2006 9:54 PM

Tracy Island: 1 a.m. 7-06-2068

Brandon sat at his desk, trying to compose a letter to his parents. Each time he started, he looked at what he'd written and was dissatisfied with the wording. After several false starts, he gave up in frustration.

"I can't concentrate and I'm too keyed up to sleep," he said, throwing his pen on the desk. Used to being in the thick of the action, he couldn't stand being on the sidelines. He had attempted to keep himself busy and writing the letter was a last attempt at distracting himself. Finally he walked out onto the balcony. Leaning against the railing, he looked out over the landscape, deep in thought.

I know they're capable of doing their job but there are too many unknowns. They could be buried by a sandstorm; the equipment could get fouled with sand. They could get lost in the desert or pass out from heat stroke. Finally, he couldn't stand being still and decided to go to the gym and release some of his pent up energy.

He had finished lifting weights and was working out on the punching bag when a noise made him stop. Walking over, he answered the telecom.

"Hey, Brandon, where are you at?" Gordon asked.

"In the weight room at the apartments, why?"

"Stay put. I'm coming over."

Brandon shrugged. "Sure. I'll be here." He went back to his workout.

Within a few moments, Gordon had tracked him down.

"Hey, Gordon," Brandon said, reaching for a towel and wiping his face. "Why aren't you still in the lounge?"

"Stand down was called and I thought you and Dominic would like to know."

"Appreciate it," Brandon said, walking over and taking a drink of water. "I was wondering what was going on."

Gordon shook his head. "Why didn't you come up to the lounge? Almost everyone else was there."

I know Dad wouldn't have minded."

"I know, but I didn't want to be in the way."

"You wouldn't have been in the way. You're a member of the team and have every right to be in the lounge during a rescue."

The two continued talking, Brandon telling Gordon about his worries.

"I know they're all trained to respond to any type of rescue call but, to be honest, I would have felt better if I had been there with them."

"Whoa, Brandon," Gordon admonished. "You'd better rethink what you just said. Women have come a long way in one hundred years. And, if you don't have faith in their ability to do the job, you don't have faith in the team as a whole."

"What do you mean, rethink what I just said?" Brandon asked, unsure of what Gordon meant.

"What I mean," Gordon said in reply, "is your remark made you sound like you think men are the only ones capable of doing the dangerous jobs. "

"Huh? Wait a minute. I didn't realize how that came out. I didn't mean to sound like I'm a male chauvinist."

"Well you did, whether it was intentional or not, and that type of attitude has no place in this or any other century."

"Geez, Gordon," Brandon said irritably, "slack off, will ya? I said I didn't mean to!"

Gordon calmed down, realizing he had upset Brandon with his blunt words and knew he had to say something to calm his friend down.

"Hey," Gordon said, giving Brandon a smile, "if it's any consolation, I would like to have been there, too. But, listening to the rescue, I can assure you that they had things well in hand."

"Thanks, Gordon," Brandon said, looking at his friend returning the smile, "that makes me feel better. So, how long until everyone's back on base?"

"They should be back in three and a half to four hours." Gordon stood up to leave. "Hey, Brandon, how about we go wait for them to get back? I know you want to hear what happened."

"You bet," Brandon said, grabbing his water bottle and following Gordon.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood

Friday, July 6, 2:45 a.m. (Tracy Island time), somewhere over the Indian Ocean

Elise fought to keep her eyes open. The long day, the long rescue, and now the long flight home, at a time when, by rights, she should have been asleep, were finally catching up with her. She shook her head briskly and blinked hard, trying to focus on the instruments in front of her.

Suddenly, there was the aroma of fresh coffee and, surprised, she turned her head to see Dianne crouching beside her, a steaming travel mug in her hand. "Need this?" the doctor asked.

"Oh yeah," Elise breathed, taking the cup from her. She took the cup in one hand and sipped. "Ahhh. That's great." A small, puzzled frown creased her brow and she asked, "How did you know how I like my coffee?"

Dianne smiled, a weary but mischievous smile. "I am the doctor. I see all, know all."

"Yeah, right," answered Elise, raising an eyebrow in wry challenge. "Try again."

Dianne chuckled. "I asked around. Nikki was able to tell me what I needed to know." She sipped noisily from her own travel mug. "If you need a break, you could put it on auto-pilot and get a stretch. I can keep an eye on it for you."

"You know how to fly Two?" Elise asked, confused.

"I'm a doctor, not a cargo pilot," Dianne quipped. Elise snorted a laugh, and Dianne continued, more soberly this time, "I have been trained to do it, but I don't like to. The thing's too damn big... and Virgil doesn't like the way I handle it. Or the way I call it 'it' and 'the thing'." She shrugged. "I'm very low on the piloting pecking order; I only know how in case of emergency."

"Well, then, I'll take you up on your offer. A stretch would do me good."

She unbuckled herself and rose from the pilot's chair, coffee in hand. Dianne slid into her place, and Elise stretched, yawning. "I'm going to see what the crew's quarters has to offer in the way of cookies. Be back in a few."

"F-A-B," Dianne replied.

As she passed through the cockpit, Elise heard Tin-Tin say to Callie, "I can't wait to get home and get all this sand out of my clothes. Those heat resistant suits were good, to a point, but I still feel like I have sand in every fold."

"I know what you mean," Callie replied, stifling a yawn. "I'm really looking forward to a nice hot shower."

Elise passed Kat, who was as curled up in her seat as she could be, fast asleep. She should have gone back to crew's quarters to get a rest, Elise thought. Maybe I should mention it to her.

She reached out and touched Kat on the shoulder. "Kat? Hey, Kat."

Kat stirred and looked up at Elise with bleary eyes, "Wha...?"

"Why don't you go sleep in the crew's quarters?" Elise said kindly. "You'll keep yourself from getting a crick in your neck if you're lying down."

Kat rubbed her neck. "Too late," she muttered. "But thanks for waking me. I want to be able to sleep when I get home and I know that if I sleep on the trip, I shan't sleep in my bed."

"Ah, okay. You're welcome," Elise said. She gave Kat's shoulder a brief squeeze, and continued her journey back.

There was a definite steamy quality in the air of the crew's quarters as Elise entered. She rummaged around in the cupboard, looking for cookies, and turned as Nikki came out of the tiny onboard shower, towelling dry her hair.

"Oh!" the nurse exclaimed. "That feels so much better! I couldn't stand another moment with all that sand in my clothes!"

She shook out her uniform slacks, and Elise heard the minute sound of sand grains scattering all over the floor. "Hey!" she cried. "Watch it! I've got to clean this place, you know!"

"I'm sorry," Nikki said sincerely. "I didn't think of that." She sat down on the bunk to pull the pants on over her legs. "Now that I think about it, Thunderbird Seven's going to be a bear to clean out, too. All that sand... ugh!"

Elise found a tightly sealed container full of chocolate chip cookies. She opened the container, pulled out two sizeable ones, then offered the rest to Nikki. The nurse shook her head.

"Thanks, but no thanks," Nikki said, waving a hand. "I'm fine."

"Okay." Elise sealed up the container again, and sat down at the table with her coffee and cookies.

Nikki frowned, and looked from her to the door. "Pardon me for asking, but if you're in here... who's flying Two?"

"It's on autopilot," Elise informed her around a mouthful of cookie. "Dianne's watching it."

"Oh, okay."

They spent a few more moments talking while Nikki finished getting dressed again, and Elise ate her snack. She lifted her mug to the nurse and said, "Thanks for telling Dianne how I like my coffee. I really appreciate it."

"No problem," Nikki replied with a smile. "I figured you could use the caffeine."

"You were right," Elise replied. "The coffee, cookies, and the stretch were all I needed to wake up. Now, back to the cockpit and flying this 'Bird.'"

The two of them chuckled, and left the crew's quarters, heading back to where the rest of the women waited.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:43:06 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 3/28/2006 1:40 PM

As the two Thunderbirds vessels disappeared into the distance, Sheik Farees al-Rahman opened the door to the truck containing the relatively uninjured women, children and guards. The women immediately made obeisance to him, and he looked around at them.

"Is everyone all right? Boushra, how do you feel?"

"I am fine, Farees. The women who helped us also reassured us. The baby is well, also."

"Sharifa, tell me what happened."

His third wife took a deep breath. "There was a loud noise, and the truck started skidding. I understand that a tire blew. The truck behind us hit us and we went off the road, tipped and rolled over. I am sorry, Amin died in the crash." She looked down, then back up at him with tears in her eyes. "It was frightening, especially for the children. At first, when the women got there, they were in strange garb, with masks over their faces. The children were so scared, I was afraid they would harm themselves more. But our rescuers went to work to help everyone, and once the children were safe - and Loulou took care of them, calming them down - they did everything they could to treat the injured. Those who needed more help, they took to Baris General Hospital. The truck that rolled they left behind. I do not believe it can be repaired."

The sheik's face showed his approval. "Thank you, Sharifa. Loulou, well done." The two women beamed at his praise. "Sharifa, you and Boushra, along with little Negma, will accompany me and Mehdi to Baris to check on those who were taken there. Loulou, you remain here with the others and continue to take care of the children. Cover yourselves; we have no way to prevent some of my men from seeing you."

He gave orders and soon the switches were made. The two women and the child were now in the back seat of his truck, he and his driver in the front, and Mehdi and one guard were in the middle. The rest would go on to the oasis, along with the supplies. They soon headed out.

The sheik was quiet during the journey. Those women of International Rescue seem to have been very intelligent and capable, to have piloted that huge craft, gotten my people out, got one of the

trucks going again, and given the injured the medical treatment they needed. Perhaps my father was not wrong when he said on his deathbed that times were changing and women should not remain so subservient. But I must think on this. I cannot change everything at once. I know that in greater sheikdoms they have allowed women more freedom. But here in the remote areas, the old ways prevail. I believe small changes over a long period of time will be best.

"Father?"

Farees turned to look at his son. "Yes, Mehdi; what is it?"

"Why are we going to see Mother? She is only a woman."

He realized that here was the perfect opportunity to put his thoughts into practice. "She is your mother and my first wife, my son. And it is only right that we be there to support her. Besides, it was 'only women' who saved her, along with the other women, your little brothers and sisters, and the men who were with them."

"Except for Amin."

The sheik nodded. "Except for Amin. But I understand that Amin died before they arrived. Even another man could not have saved him." He paused, gazing at the boy -- no, not a boy. He is a young man. "What does this say to you?"

Mehdi frowned in thought for a moment. "I suppose it means that women are capable of much more, if they are given the chance. And they deserve our respect, as well as our love."

His father smiled slightly. It was a start. "Very good. So we will go see your mother, as well as the others who were taken to the hospital, and give her our love and respect."

The rest of the trip was made in silence as everyone who heard the sheik's words thought about them. When they finally arrived, they were surprised to see that members of the press were there. As soon as the sheik and Mehdi emerged from the vehicle, some descended on them.

"We learned that an International Rescue vehicle brought some of your people here. We understand they were badly injured during a sandstorm. Can you tell us more?"

"You probably know more than we do. I am here to see my people, especially my wife, who had to be operated on."

Another reporter aimed a mike at him. "I understand the rescue was performed solely by women. Is that correct?"

"Aside from one man who was with me, coordinating, yes. The women of International Rescue did all the work, including medical treatment for the injured and repairing one of the vehicles so it could bring the uninjured, or less so, back to me."

He came to a decision. "I want to thank International Rescue for coming to our aid. I wish to express my respect and admiration for the women of that organization - although I never got to

meet them - and to tell them they have given me much to think about. Change is never easy, especially that of long term beliefs and traditions, but it may be time to begin. Now, if you will excuse me, I wish to check on the condition of my people."

He turned and beckoned to his son, Sharifa and Boushra. They followed him inside.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:45:14 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 3/29/2006 5:12 PM

*****Friday, July 6, 2068, Tracy Island Lounge, around 3 a.m.*****

With the rescue winding down and the team coming home, John waited for everyone to clear out of the lounge so he could have a chance to speak with his father about Callie's birthday situation.

After Jeff saw everyone drifting out of the lounge (since it was so early in the morning), he noticed John stayed behind. "Do you need something, John?"

"Yeah, Dad. I learned Callie will be in Thunderbird Five next month during her birthday. I know it's not a problem between Alan and myself, but I really don't want her to miss her week-long birthday time."

Jeff nodded. "I understand, son. Before we added the new recruits, it was never an issue because it was just between our family. Now it's a completely different story. I don't want Callie to spend her birthday working at the space station, either. She could use that week to visit her family and just go on a little vacation for herself."

"That's exactly what I was thinking," said John. "If it's okay with you, Dad, I'd like to switch shifts with Callie. This way, she won't have to miss her birthday and can see her family."

"You go next month; then Callie returns in September? I don't see anything wrong with it. In fact, I may reorganize the schedule shifts so none of you have to be on Thunderbird Five during your birthday month unless it's absolutely necessary. We'll talk about that sometime before the end of the month."

John nodded, then looked at his watch. "I'm going to hit the sack for a while. I'll talk with Callie about it when she's well rested."

"Okay, son. Sleep well."

"Night, Dad." John left the lounge with a smile on his face, knowing he would give Callie the chance to be at home for her birthday.

Jeff looked out the window and smiled. "Yeah. Everyone deserves to spend time with family."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:46:36 GMT

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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/3/2006 7:59 PM

Friday, July 6, 2068, 5:30 a.m., Tracy Island

"All right, ladies, Maverick, we'll call this debriefing quits," Jeff said. He yawned widely. "You all did stellar work out there today... yesterday... whenever it was."

The women around the table chuckled wearily and began to rise from their seats, wishing each other goodnight as they did so. Scott did, too, waving goodnight to Alan, whose yawn echoed Jeff's and who promptly cut communications. His picture winked out mid-yawn.

Elise came up to Scott. "Can we put off my training today until I've got some sleep under my belt? I'm afraid I'd crash your baby if we didn't."

"Yeah, sure. in fact, let's cancel it for today. Give you a couple of days off... at least from me," Scott said. He grinned. "I'm sure that Virgil will want to see you in Thunderbird Two for post flight maintenance as soon as you're coherent."

Elise groaned. "Well, he'll have to wait until I am coherent. Right now... I wouldn't know one end of a wrench from the other."

"Hmm. I know what you mean," Scott replied as he stretched with a loud groan. "I'm sure he'll wait for you."

"I hope so. In any case, goodnight, Scott."

"Goodnight, Elise."

Jeff and Dianne had their arms around each other as they left the dining room; Dianne rested her head on his shoulder during the ride upstairs in the elevator.

"I am whipped," she murmured. "Totally whipped."

"You should be," Jeff said. "You worked hard and under difficult circumstances. You all did."

"Actually, Nikki had it worst of us all. She was trying to triage in that rolled over truck. She did a great job, too."

"I know." He turned her head toward him and kissed her softly on the lips. "Now, enough shop talk. Time for some sleep."

"Yes, sir," she replied sleepily. Then she pointed a finger at him. "But when we're both awake and able to think again, I have a thing or two to say to you, Commander."

"Okay, okay," he replied. "I won't even ask what about. Just come in here and get a shower, then let me tuck you into bed. Then I'll tuck myself in right after you."

"Sounds like a plan," she said as she let him steer her toward their bathroom. "I need to get this sand off before I hit the sheets." She raised an eyebrow and gave him a small smile. "Will you... scrub my back for me?"

Jeff blinked, then shook his head. "Dianne, you are... something else. Yeah. I'll scrub your back for you - if it will get you between the sheets faster!"

"Oh, and why do you want me between the sheets so fast?" she teased.

"Diannnnne," he warned. "I'm too tired."

"Okay, okay. Shower then bed... to sleep," she conceded. Grabbing his hand, she pulled him into the bathroom with her. "Now, get in here and scrub my back, mister!"

"Yes, ma'am," he replied with a smile.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 20:55:19 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 4/5/2006 11:17 AM

Tracy Island, and Christchurch, New Zealand - July 7th

Callie, Kat and Nikki waited in the hangar for John. Kat had a list from Dom, who wanted some purchases from a health food shop.

John joined the trio and soon they were airborne, heading for Christchurch. Having gone through the customary arrivals, they got into a car, made available through Tracy Industries, and headed for the large shopping mall.

Kat looked in awe. This is awesome, far larger than anything in England she thought to herself. I hope I don't get lost.

At the entrance they stopped, deciding who was going where.

"Well, I'm going to do some serious clothes shopping," Callie announced.

"Me, too," Nikki added. "Are you coming with us Kat?"

Kat shook her head, "No, I bought enough clothes when I went home for my birthday. I want to find a health food shop, so that I can shop for myself and Dom."

"I know where there is the kind of shop you want, Kat," John said.

Having agreed to meet back at the entrance at a certain time, the two groups went their separate ways.

The shop that John showed her sold almost everything a vegetarian could dream of. Fully laden with both bags of shopping for her and Dom, John led the way back up the mall.

"John, would you like to stop and have a cup of coffee?"

He glanced down at his watch. "Sure! Breakfast was a while ago, I'm starving."

They both laughed and found a little cafe in the food court. Kat sat at the table, and John went and bought two coffees. Noticing a plate of jam doughnuts, he bought two.

Kat bit into her doughnut and the jam oozed out onto her nose. Giggling, she reached for a napkin.

"You just can't eat jam doughnuts politely," she apologised.

John grinned at her, thinking again how nice she was, and that she was such a good friend.

They sat for a while enjoying their coffee and doughnuts and watching the shoppers passing to and fro, giggling at some of the people who were dressed in odd clothes. Parents were getting frustrated with their children. Mums were trying to maneuver their prams between the multitudes of shoppers. Just then they saw Nikki and Callie struggling with large bags. Kat tapped the window to catch their attention.

"Hi there," Callie and Nikki said as they joined John and Kat.

"Phew!" Callie flopped onto the chair. "My feet! If I ever see another clothes shop, drag me away."

The others laughed. John went and bought three more coffees.

"Let's see what you've bought," Kat asked, eyeing the shopping eagerly.

Bags were opened and articles thoroughly inspected.

"While you three are finishing your coffees, I'm just going to do some shopping," John explained,

as he rose and headed for the door.

"Hey see you later. Bye for now," the three chorused.

Chatting away, they didn't notice two young men come in and sit at an adjacent table until one of them glanced at the three young women.

"Good day, ladies. Can my friend and I join you and buy you all coffee?"

"No, thank you. We are waiting for a friend," Callie answered politely.

The young man didn't appear to take the hint.

"We wondered if you'd like some company?"

"We are perfectly okay. And, like my friend said, we are waiting for someone," Kat answered.

"Oho, English and Americans. Are you tourists? Maybe you would like a guided tour around Christchurch?"

Callie was just about to reply, when John reappeared.

The two men looked at the tall, athletic young man and thought better of it and slouched out.

"Were they annoying you?" John asked.

"They were getting kind of irritating," Callie replied.

"We were sure glad to see you," Nikki added. Kat nodded in agreement.

Nikki looked at Callie. "Remember that nice pair of trousers I saw? Well, I've decided to buy them."

Callie laughed. "If you can remember which shop you saw them in."

Nikki rose from her seat. Looking at both Callie and Kat, she asked, "Would you two like to go back with me?"

Callie nodded. "Sure, I'll go back.

But Kat shook her head. "Sorry, Nikki, I want to buy some CDs and books. I've read the ones I brought with me. Plus I want to update my CD collection."

"I want to buy some books as well. Let's go together," John remarked.

The four left the café, and headed for their various destinations.

"Kat and John seem to be getting on very well," Nikki observed. "Do you think there is something

going on between them?"

"Could be," Callie said thoughtfully. "But I guess we'll know more all in good time."

Meanwhile, John led Kat to a very nice store selling both music and books. Leaving her to wander around to her heart's content, he headed upstairs to the book department. Later, having found and purchased what he wanted, he went back to the music store. There was Kat, with some earphones on, foot tapping, obviously enjoying some music.

"Hi, found something you like?" He said, tapping her on the shoulder.

Kat took off the earphones, "Sorry, John, I couldn't hear you."

"I said: have you found something you like?" He repeated, grinning at her.

"Oh, yes, this is a New Zealand group; the music is so cool. I have been looking for music by the Electrics, that's my favourite pop group. They have a new album out but I don't think it has reached the shops here yet. I shall have to ask Lady Penelope to send me the CD."

Kat bought three CDs and then headed towards the book department. John followed her. By this time she was struggling with her bags.

"Here, let me help." John took three bags off her.

"Phew, thanks, I was beginning to think that my arms would be stretched to the ground."

Having bought herself some books, Kat followed John to meet the others, and start making their way back to the airport.

Once more back in the plane heading to Tracy Island, everyone was chatting away, discussing what he or she had all bought.

Kat, was thinking of the time she had spent with John. He really was so nice. She hoped they could spend more time in each other's company. Kat's eyes began to feel heavy and she fell asleep, dreaming of a tall, blond haired young man.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:03:33 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/7/2006 9:40 PM

Saturday, July 7, 2068, 4:30 p.m., Tracy Island

"So, what did you want to talk about?" Jeff asked his wife as they took a walk along the beach

together. "I know with sleeping in and all the vehicle maintenance yesterday we really didn't have time to talk, did we?"

"No, we didn't," Dianne said amiably. She took a deep breath and tugged her sweater around her a little bit more. "A bit chilly today, I think."

Jeff nodded. "It never gets too wintery, but once in a while there's a nip in the air." He put his arm around her. "Now, let's talk about whatever's bothering you."

Dianne sighed heavily. "It's just that this last rescue would have been so much easier if some of the men had gone along. I really could have used Dom's skills in Thunderbird Seven. Having Nikki along was great, just... not quite enough. We needed more personnel, especially since we were dealing with a lot of injured people." She looked up at him, her forehead puckered in a frown. "Why must we adhere to the cultural mores of the people we rescue?"

"Hmm. That's an interesting question," Jeff said, nodding gravely. He was quiet for a bit as he considered his answer. "I guess that we do it because, in some respects, we now have the capacity to do it. Before the women came aboard, we just didn't get calls that made it necessary for us to consider the culture of those we rescued. I'm under the distinct impression from Alan's report that if we hadn't had female crew to handle the situation, that sheik wouldn't even have called us."

"You're probably right," Dianne admitted. "Still, I think this is a dangerous precedent to set. There are going to be times when adhering to those cultural or religious standards is going to hinder us from rescuing people."

"How so?" Jeff asked. "Give me an example."

"Welllll," Dianne said, thinking hard. "Okay, try this. What if we need to use the Mole to get to some people trapped underground, but the safest and most direct route is through some sort of holy place, maybe a burial ground of some sort. What do we do then?"

Jeff stopped walking for a moment and thought over the question. "I suppose that we'd have to consult with the people whose holy place it was and see if we could come to an agreement. Or we'd have to devise an alternate route. But if we had to have that alternate route, we'd have to make it clear that the time we spent devising it was putting off the rescue, and that the people in danger might end up being there too long for our help to be effective."

Dianne shook her head. "You know that wouldn't be acceptable to the powers that be or to the public. We're not allowed to fail, Jeff. We are the 'miracle workers'."

"We've failed plenty of times since we started operations, love. You know that very well. But we have to at least give the people involved a choice; let us destroy their holy place and get to the people who need us in time, or avoid the holy place, and suffer the possible consequences." He sighed. "Being sensitive to a culture doesn't mean we always have to bow down to it. But it does mean that sometimes we have to make allowances."

"Even when those allowances get in the way of our effectiveness as a rescue team?"

Jeff nodded. "Even so. It doesn't hurt to have the full and eager cooperation of those who are waiting for us to perform that miracle." He raised an eyebrow in challenge. "Why do I get the feeling that this isn't so much about cultural mores in general as it is about the specific cultural barriers we faced in the last rescue?"

Dianne folded her arms. "Maybe because it is. It was frustrating, Jeff. Knowing that we could have done the job - not necessarily better - but much faster if one or two of the men were along. Even if Scott had been able to be right there, lending a hand. I know he was pretty frustrated to be so far away from the action; especially since none of us knew what we were going into." She shook her head. "It seems so backwards for women to be treated like... property in this day and age."

"I agree," Jeff replied mildly. "But... you and the other women gave that sheik something to think about."

"Huh?" Dianne's puzzled reaction was very real.

"I didn't see it myself at the time, but your mother emailed me about it and I checked it out. It's quite interesting. You'll have to see it for yourself, though."

"Hmm. I guess I will." Dianne put her hands on Jeff's shoulders and gazed up into his face. "How did you get to be so wise?"

"Uhhhh," Jeff said, stalling for time. Finally, he smiled mischievously. "Trade secret?"

Dianne's eyebrow went up in challenge and she folded her arms again. "Yeah, right. Try again... wise guy."

Her expression made Jeff laugh, and he pulled her to him, trying to get her to abandon her mock-belligerent stance. After a few minutes, she unfolded her arms and put them around him for a steady, loving embrace.

"We'd better go back," he said. "Dinner will be ready soon."

"Okay," she replied. He took her hand and they walked back to the villa together, their fingers entwined.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:04:59 GMT
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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 4/8/2006 10:43 AM

Sunday, July 8, 2068, 3:00 p.m., Tracy Island

Nikki adjusted the volume of the music that was flowing through her earphones and got comfortable on her beach towel before continuing the book she was reading.

"Tia read and re-read the papers in front of her. She couldn't believe he did that. Sure, Jack had a right to know about who she was, but going behind her back and getting her background information from a computer was downright out of order.

She would have told him everything but all in her own time. Tia had it all planned until she found the printouts.

Hearing the door open and Jack's voice waft through, Tia looked up with fury in her eyes..."

Nikki was so engrossed in the book that she didn't notice when Brandon sat down close by. And even worse, because of the volume of her music, she didn't hear a word he was saying either.

"Hey, Nikki. What've you been up to today?" Brandon cocked an eyebrow when he didn't receive an answer. "Nikki? Hello?"

He smirked when he realised why Nikki wasn't answering. Leaning over, he tapped her on the shoulder, making her jump slightly. He smiled when she removed her earphones and turned down the corner of her current page before closing her book.

"Good book? What's it about?" he asked.

"It's all right. Not exactly award-winning. I've read better." Looking at the front cover of the book, Nikki smiled at the picture. "It's about families. There's this guy named Jack who grew up most of his life without a family. His parents died when he was young. He'd been living on the streets until he was 17, not knowing that his relatives were looking for him."

"Do they find him?"

"Actually, it's the other way round. A friend, thinking she was doing the right thing, located and made contact with them. The only thing is, Jack becomes angry with her for interfering with his life. He thinks he's done pretty well without them and doesn't need them."

"Sounds like a lot of drama to me."

Nikki laughed slightly. "It is, and it gets worse. Reading this makes me think about my own family back home in England."

"Is there that much drama in your family?"

"No. Well, unless my brothers butt heads. Strangely, I miss that."

"Are you going to go to England when your birthday rolls around?"

"Yeah. It'll be good to catch up with my family and friends."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:06:08 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 4/8/2006 3:07 PM

*****Monday, July 9, 2068, Tracy Island, approximately 11:30 a.m.*****

John searched for Callie so he could tell her about their schedule switch in Thunderbird Five duties.

She had just walked out of the lab and was on her way back to her apartment when she saw John. "Hi, John."

"Hey, can I talk to you for a minute?"

With a nod she answered, "Sure. What's up?"

"I know your birthday's next month, and you're scheduled to be on Thunderbird Five, but I want us to switch next month and September out. Dad and I had a discussion, and we both agreed that you should have time with your family for your birthday. I'll go up in August, and you head back in September."

Her eyes widened in surprise. "Are you serious?"

"Yes. Dad also said he's going to revamp the schedules so none of us will be on duty during our birthday."

"Oh, John!" she yelled as she hugged him tightly. "You have no idea how much this really means to me!" Planting a quick kiss on his cheek, she added, "Thank you, John. I need to go thank your father, too! Oh, wow!" She ran off like an excited little girl on Christmas morning, hoping to catch Jeff before lunchtime.

"Dad's on his way to lunch, so maybe we can find him before he gets to the dining room."

While riding on the monorail, Callie started talking about what she wanted to do during her vacation time.

After the ride, they both saw Jeff about to walk into the dining room.

Noticing Callie's quick approach, Jeff said, "Whoa, Callie, is everything all right?"

Giving him a tight hug, she said, "Mr. Tracy, thank you for giving me the chance to go home and see my family next month."

"I'm glad to do it, Callie. You need time with your loved ones."

After releasing the hug, she said, "I'll bring something back for you. Hopefully my brothers and I can go fishing along Lake Martin. There's some excellent catfish."

Jeff chuckled. "I look forward to that. Now go relax."

"Yes, sir." She walked towards her apartment with glee in her voice and a big smile on her face.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:10:02 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 4/8/2006 5:03 PM

Monday, July 9, 10 AM; A hidden temple in Malaysia

The Hood was in his hideaway, pacing back and forth. I want to bring down the Tracys and their do-good International Rescue once and for all! I need to get more information on those new recruits, but the last time I tried to contact my fool of a brother, I ended up with a raging headache, and it took me three days to recover.

He went over to the statue of Kyrano he'd had made. As he stood in front of it, memories of the other times over the years he'd contacted the older man and the information he'd gotten flooded his mind. Suddenly one memory popped into his brain and his expression changed as he considered the implications.

I'd forgotten that he has a daughter. She was so easy to put under my spell. Maybe I can reach her wherever she is now. But without a statue of her to focus on, I must prepare myself.

He moved over to the area where he did his meditation and sat down. Slowly he cleared his mind of all thoughts but those of his niece. Finally he was prepared and he began to reach out to her.

xxxxx

3 PM; Tracy Island, Brains' lab

Tin-Tin and Brains were together in the lab, working as usual. Suddenly she stopped and clutched the sides of her head leaning over. She slipped off her chair and was on her knees, bent over in obvious pain. "Who . . . what. . . Go away!" A sob escaped her lips and she held her head tighter.

You cannot resist me. Tell me what I want to know. Tell me about the new people in the organization.

No. I won't. I won't!

Foolish girl! Obey me! Stop trying to resist me. The pain will only get worse.

Brains turned quickly when he heard her fall to the floor and was at her side in an instant. He put

his arms around her and lifted her up, hearing her muttering. Almost immediately he realized what was happening and he hit the intercom button at her workstation. "Kyrano! Come quickly! The Hood is trying to get information from Tin-Tin!"

"I am coming!" Kyrano moved faster than he had in a long time, concern for his daughter written on his face. He headed to the monorail, praying for her welfare.

Everyone in the Villa heard the call and three people headed for the monorail at the same time. Dianne had been in the clinic at the time and grabbed a syringe filled with a sedative, then took off on the run. Jeff dropped a business report he'd been reading, pressed a button, calling the car to the Villa and headed out of the lounge. Kyrano had been in his garden. They arrived at the terminal almost simultaneously, where a car was waiting for them, thanks to Jeff's foresight.

Brains held Tin-Tin tightly, encouraging her. "Fight him, Tin-Tin. Your father is on his way to help you. Don't give into him, my love. Keep resisting him. Help is on the way."

Go away! I won't help you. Father, help me!

That weakling brother of mine can't help you.

Then go ask him. Leave me alone. Leave me alone!

Tin-Tin sensed rather than heard Brains' words, and they gave her the incentive to continue to resist her uncle. But she felt herself weakening slowly but surely.

Father, please hurry!

You silly girl. No one can help you. Obey me!

It seemed like an eternity before help arrived. The lab door opened and Kyrano was the first through it. He rushed over and knelt in front of his daughter, taking her head in his hands. As Dianne knelt down, syringe at the ready, he looked at her and said, "Let me try to help her first, please."

She nodded and he gazed into his daughter's open eyes, concentrating. Daughter, it is I. Hear my thoughts. Let me help you.

Father? Kyrano heard the weakness in her thoughts and felt distressed, but he pushed the emotion back. He knew he would not be able to help her if he gave in to it.

I am here, my daughter. I will help you repel him.

He began to breathe heavily then her resistance to him faded and he was able to merge with her. Once he did that, he turned his thoughts to his brother.

Leave my daughter, brother, and do not return. You will not do to her what you did to me! Leave, now.

Don't be foolish Kyrano. Even the two of you together cannot resist me. I want information and I will have it!

No! You will get nothing from either of us. Leave! He felt a surge of mental energy from his daughter as he 'said' the last word.

You cannot stop me, 'brother'. You are not strong enough. You are not. . . Aagh!

Suddenly Hood was gone. Tin-Tin collapsed and Kyrano sagged, too. Jeff knelt down and braced his friend, who remained still for a few moments, then reached out to his daughter. He lifted her up, surprised to find that she was still conscious.

"You showed great strength and courage in resisting him, my daughter. I'm very proud of you."

"Thank you, Father. But I have a terrible headache. Will you teach me how to resist him better, so it won't hurt?"

"I have not been able to do that for myself, not completely, yet. But I will try." He looked at her tired face. "Maybe tomorrow. Right now, you are exhausted and need to rest." He started to reach out to her again, but Brains took her in his arms and stood up.

"I'll carry her to the monorail. You can make sure she gets to her room from there."

"And you get some rest yourself," Jeff added as he helped his friend up. "You are tired, too. In fact, Dianne and I will accompany you, to make sure you two reach your rooms."

Dianne nodded as she stood up and said, "And I'll give you something, Tin-Tin, that will help ease your headache. But you're to sleep as long as you need to, both of you."

"Yes, Dr. Tracy," Kyrano replied with a faint smile.

Tin-Tin kept her eyes closed, but when Brains placed her in the monorail car and started to move away, she reached out for his hand and squeezed it. "Thank you," she whispered.

"You're welcome." He stood back and turned to Jeff, who had put a hand on his shoulder.

"I don't like this. It hasn't been that long since the recruits did the solo rescue in India, and someone tried to steal a hoverbike. I think I need to question Kat about that some more."

"Why don't you let me do that, sir? I see her a lot and she's more comfortable with me."

"That's a good idea. Okay, but make it soon. We need to get to the bottom of this as soon as we can. Let me know what she says as soon as possible."

"I will."

Brains watched as the others entered the car and it pulled away. He remained at the platform for several minutes, gazing in the direction of the Villa. Finally he sighed and headed back to the lab.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:15:19 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 4/11/2006 11:15 AM

Tracy Island -- July 9th -- 5.30 p.m.

After work, Kat was in the laundry room, putting some clothes to wash. Her wrist communicator beeped and John's face appeared.

"Hi, Kat. Can you meet me on the beach in about twenty minutes? There's something I have to talk to you about."

Kat was puzzled. What on earth could John have to say to her that had to be said immediately? I hope he doesn't have any bad news.

John was waiting when Kat arrived. "Let's go for a walk," he suggested.

They walked for a while in silence. Then when they were completely out of sight of the villa, he sat down on some rocks. "Kat. There's no easy way to say this. I'm going to Thunderbird Five for August."

Kat was totally taken aback. "Why?"

"Because Callie's birthday is in August. I think she should have the chance to spend it with her family."

Kat couldn't believe what she was hearing. Her voice rose. "So. Then because Callie wants to spend her birthday on earth, you have to cover for her? That's so unfair. I suppose she just happened to ask, and you decided to cover for her."

John shook his head. "Callie didn't ask, but I knew of the problem and decided on my own to do this. I wanted you to know as soon as possible."

Tears filled Kat's eyes. "Why can't Alan cover?"

"It's not fair for Alan to spend two months in a row up there, and that's why I'm covering."

"Of course, Alan wouldn't put himself out, now would he?" she shouted as she turned her back on John and walked towards the sea.

He watched her walk away. From the way her shoulders drooped, he could sense that she was unhappy and that she wasn't taking this too well. She was probably feeling disappointed. He was

a bit disappointed, too. He had been looking forward to spending some quality time with her. But he could also understand Callie's feelings. She should be able to spend her birthday at home, like the other recruits. This is just the right thing to do. I hope that Kat can see the reasons behind my decision.

At the water's edge, Kat stood, staring out to sea. She thought back to the first time she had met John and how much she had liked him. She remembered that he had been the one to tell her about International Rescue after her interview. She had been so angry and upset. He had been very solicitous when her mother had been so ill. He had given her a lovely birthday present. She smiled when thinking how he had told her he wanted them to be special friends and how his emails had become warmer and friendlier during June. And now, he was calmly telling her he was going to Thunderbird Five in August so that Callie could have time with her family. It just seemed so unfair.

She knew she was reacting badly, that she was behaving selfishly. Maybe he was just as disappointed as she was.

After a while she turned and headed back towards him. Sitting beside him on the rock., she said, "John, I'm so bitterly disappointed. I was so looking forward to spending time with you." She sighed, a heavy and resigned sigh. "But I guess this sort of thing will happen from time to time, and I shall just have to accept it. I suppose Callie deserves to spend her birthday with her folks. After all everyone else has."

John took her hand. "Kat, I know you're disappointed. I still want us to be friends. But it's no fun spending your birthday alone on Thunderbird Five. I know from experience."

"Oh, well, I suppose I can understand that. I enjoyed my birthday at home. I probably would have hated not being able to go. But John, it will really be hard saying goodbye to you again so soon. Will there be some days we can spend time together, before you leave?"

John smiled. "Yes, there will be, and we will make the most of the time we have left. And if you think about it, this switch means I'll be home in December. We could go Christmas shopping together. Plus, you still have my telescope so you can watch for the comet. It should be very visible during August. I think that this time we could communicate via our watches as well as emails. I'll ask Dad; I think he'll agree."

She gave him a watery smile. "You know, I was half afraid you were going to tell me you had someone else you wanted to be friends with."

John squeezed her hand. "No, Kat. I want to be friends with the others, but not the same way I do with you. Once I'm back in September, we can spend September and October really getting to know each other well. Now how about we finish our walk? We'll head back to the villa and I'll make us both some coffee."

Back in her apartment, the enormity of what John had told her suddenly hit her. She felt so angry, angry with him, angry with Callie. I 'm not going to take this submissively. I'm going to confront Callie. I think she should know just how she has upset everything.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:17:12 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 4/11/2006 8:02 PM

*****Monday, July 9, 2068, Tracy Island, approximately 6:30 p.m.*****

Callie was in the kitchen of her apartment, working on her dinner, homemade spaghetti and meatballs. "Mmm...just these ingredients make this look good already."

Making dinner helped her think about what she planned to do for her birthday. "Boy, I can't wait to go home and see Mom, Dad, Joe, and Bri. Do some fishing, shopping... ah, I wish my birthday had fallen at the beginning of football season, not about two weeks before it."

Kat decided not to take the lift down to the first floor. Instead, she took the stairs from the balcony and crossed the patio to Callie's French doors. Taking a deep breath, she knocked sharply on the door frame, then stood back, arms folded, waiting.

Slightly startled by the sound of the knock, she put down her utensils and cleaned her hands. "I'll be right there." After washing her hands, she walked up to the door. She opened it and saw Kat. "Hi, Kat," she said with a smile. "Please, won't you come in? I'm starting dinner."

"Thank you," Kat said coolly, her face looking composed but unsmiling. She stepped inside and turned to face Callie. "I would like to speak to you."

"Sure, Kat," Callie said, slightly surprised by her friend's tone of voice. "Is something wrong?"

"Yes, there is." Kat took another deep breath to try and keep herself under control. "I understand that John is going to Thunderbird Five next month, so that you can spend your birthday with your family."

"That...is true. I was originally scheduled to go next month, but John and I switched next month and September so I can be at home for my birthday. Why?" Callie looked at Kat with some suspicion.

Kat could no longer keep the sarcasm from her voice. "I suppose you went to him and just happened to mention your birthday, knowing that he would be generous and offer to switch."

Her eyes widening with shock, Callie said, "What the heck are you talking about? I didn't tell John anything about my birthday. He told me first."

"I don't believe you. I can't think of anyone else who could have told him," Kat retorted angrily. She paused then, before Callie could respond, she asked, "Do you realize what you've done?"

Callie shook her head, frowning. She put her hands on her hips. "No... I don't! Suppose you tell me just what it is you think I've done!"

"Are you aware that John has admitted to having feelings for me? That we are trying to forge a

relationship?" Kat asked angrily. "We were planning on spending a lot of quality time together next month, getting to know one another better." She threw her hands in the air. "But now that's all ruined, thanks to you!"

Her own anger fuming, Callie said, "Me!? How dare you accuse me of trying to break you up! John and his father did this so I can get the opportunity to visit my family back home. You and I both know how tight we are with our families! I haven't seen them since just before I left to join IR!" Trying to fight tears, she snapped at Kat. "So you have to postpone spending your quality time together for a whole month? Big deal! If it's really that important to you, I'll ask John to switch the rotation back to what it was. Now get out of here!"

Kat took a deep breath again. "I am leaving. I shall be waiting to hear that the rota has been returned to the original schedule." She turned and, without another word, stalked out the door to the patio.

Trying to cast what just happened out of her mind, Callie went back into the kitchen and attempted to finish her spaghetti and meatballs. However, the argument had made her lose her appetite. "Ugh... I'm not hungry anymore!" she said angrily. "Now what am I going to do?"

She shook her head and left the kitchen. She went into her bedroom and lay on the bed as she stared at the ceiling. "I'll talk to John tomorrow. Hopefully I can get things back to the way they were."

Kat jogged quickly up the stairs back to her own apartment. She had done what she set out to do, confronted Callie and stood up for herself and her rights. Still, there was a butterfly in the pit of her stomach that wouldn't go away, and a thought niggling at the back of her mind that perhaps she had overstepped her bounds.

"No," she told herself as she entered her sitting room. "I was perfectly justified in what I said. Now to wait and hear that things are back to the way they should be."

*****By Tikatu and TracyFan4Ever.*****

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:18:30 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 4/12/2006 11:48 AM

It was late when Brains headed to his quarters in the Villa. The emotion filled event that took place earlier had drained him, and he'd fallen asleep at his computer -- not that it was unusual. But his nap didn't rest him; it was filled with dreams that he couldn't remember when he woke up.

He got to his door, and hesitated. He walked to the end of the hall and stopped, looking toward the entrance to Tin-Tin's room. Should I? If she's asleep, I wouldn't want to wake her. But I'd really

like to know that she's okay.

Several minutes later, he walked silently down the hall to her door. He was just about to knock, when it opened and Tin-Tin was standing there looking at him. "Hello, Brains."

"H-hello, Tin-Tin. I-I just wanted to see if you were okay. Um, how are you feeling?"

She smiled. "Much better, although I still have a little of my headache. I'm glad you stopped by. I wanted to talk to you."

"T-to me? What about?"

"Please come inside. It's silly to stand here in the hall, where we could wake my father or Grandma Tracy up. I'll leave the door open."

She moved back into her room and he followed. She went to a sitting area and sat down in one chair, indicating that he was to take the other. Once he was seated, she said, "I've begun to remember some of what you said to me before my father and the others came. It helped me to fight my uncle. And I thank you for that."

"You already thanked me. You don't need to do it again."

She looked down at her hands, which were folded in her lap, then back up at him. "There's something else. You said, 'my love' when you were telling me to hold on."

"I-I did? I don't remember."

"Yes, you did. Did you mean it?"

Brains swallowed hard. He was tempted to say no, that it was just something he said in the heat of the moment, but he couldn't lie, not to her. "Yes, I did. I know it's too soon, but I've loved you for a long time. I-I'm sorry if it distresses you."

"Distresses me? No, but I'm happy to hear you say that it's too soon. Brains, I do care for you, but after - after certain experiences I've had with other men, I don't want to rush into anything. I need to be sure, not of you, but of myself. Oh, I'm explaining this badly. I don't want to hurt you, but I can't commit to anything at this point. Do you understand?"

He smiled. "Of course. I do understand, and I don't want you to rush into anything either. It's wonderful that you want to see me and work with me still -- you do, don't you?"

She laughed and his smile got bigger. "Of course I do. I'm so relieved." She grew serious. "The last thing I want to do is to hurt you. And don't you worry about my work. I'll be back to the lab in no time."

She stood up and he followed. He saw a furrow develop in her forehead and realized the headache was getting worse. "You get back to bed and I don't want to see you in the lab until you are completely recovered. That's an order." He grinned at her and her eyes twinkled in spite of the

pain.

"Yes, doctor."

Moments later, he found himself in the hall again, and her door had just closed. Suddenly very weary, he headed back down the hall and into his own quarters for a good night's sleep.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:26:14 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/12/2006 5:40 PM

Monday, July 9, 2068, 11:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff stretched and yawned as he padded off to his suite. With the kids gone, I hardly know what time it is anymore. I miss the school routine and the bedtime routine. It'll be great to have them back home again.

He fully expected Dianne to be waiting up for him in their sitting room, or perhaps their bedroom, but when an examination of both showed she was in neither, he frowned. "I wonder where she is?" he murmured. "Should I go looking?" He thought about this for a moment then nodded. The lack of routine messes her up, too.

Leaving their suite, he sauntered downstairs and poked his head into the dining room. There was a light on in the kitchen, and he stepped through to see who was in there. His mother was, fixing herself a cup of herbal tea.

"Hello, Mom," he said with a smile. "Can't sleep?"

"No, not really. All the excitement with Tin-Tin and Kyrano today, I guess," she said. "It's been a while since we've had to deal with that creature, and for him to target poor Tin-Tin... it just makes my blood boil!"

"Mine, too, Mom," he admitted. "I hope he doesn't try again. By the way, have you seen Dianne anywhere about?"

Emily shook her head. "No, son. I haven't. But there's been someone in the games room, using the home theater this evening. Perhaps she's watching a movie."

"Hmm. She might be, though I'm puzzled as to why she wouldn't watch it on the plasma screen in our room."

"Maybe it was something to share with the boys," Emily suggested, taking a sip of tea. "Just pop your head in and find out. I'm going to take my tea back to my suite."

"I will." He kissed her on the cheek. "Goodnight, Mom."

Returning the salute, she said, "Goodnight, son. Sleep well."

As she walked off, Jeff noticed that there was a light on around the pool area. He walked out the dining room door that opened onto the flagstone veranda that surrounded the whole of the lower level. The air was chilly, but obviously not chilly enough. Gordon and Scott were sitting in the hot tub, laughing and trading jokes.

"Hey, Dad!" Scott said, waving to his father. "Come join us!"

"No, thanks, boys. The air's a bit too nippy for my taste tonight. Perhaps some other time." He looked out at the pool itself, but it was empty. "Have either of you seen Dianne lately?"

Both of them shook their heads. "No, Dad, can't say I have," Gordon told him. "Why?"

"She wasn't in our suite, that's all. Sorry to bother you, boys. Don't catch cold, now."

Scott chuckled. "We won't, Dad, promise."

He smiled, and stepped back inside, heading for the games room. He slid open the door and stepped inside, passing by the pinball machines, the pool and ping pong tables and opening the door to the small room that made up the home theater. There he found Virgil sharing popcorn with Elise and John. There was an old action movie on the big screen, with little fighter space ships zooming all over the place.

"Will you look at those crappy special effects?" John was saying. "It's a pity that no one's remade this thing."

"But it's a classic!" Virgil cried. "This was state-of-the-art at the time!"

Elise was laughing. "Look at those tactics! Couldn't they have hired someone from the military to give them some guidance there? They're going to lose half their squadron with that kind of dog fight!"

Jeff cleared his throat. Instantly, three faces whipped his way, their eyes wide at being startled.

"Hey, Dad!" Virgil called. "What's up? Want to join us?"

Jeff smiled. "No thanks. Just wanted to see if Dianne was in here."

"Last time I saw her, she was in the infirmary," Elise said.

"When was that?"

Elise consulted her wristcomm. "About an hour and a half ago." She grinned. "We're playing a double feature here."

"Well, enjoy," Jeff said, smiling back. "I'll check in the infirmary. Thanks."

"Goodnight, Dad," John called as Jeff left.

"Goodnight," Jeff replied as the door slid shut. He stepped backwards and turned around... to find himself face to face with his wife, who was coming out of Tin-Tin's suite. He smiled. "Just the woman I want to see." He motioned toward Tin-Tin's door. "How is she?"

"Still feeling a headache. She gave me a call and I brought her some painkiller and a light sedative. She needs the sleep." Holding up the hypospray, she added, "Let me dispense with these."

He nodded and followed her down the hall to the infirmary, and watched as she disposed of the empty hypospray ampules, then put the device itself into the sterilizer. She smiled at him as she washed her hands. "What brings you down here?"

"Looking for you, actually," he admitted. She went into her office and he followed her. On her screen was a freeze-frame shot of the sheik from their latest rescue. "What's this all about?" Jeff asked, gesturing toward the screen.

"I keep coming back to this sound bite from the sheik," she told him as she sat in her chair and began to put the computer on standby. "It's amazing that we made such an impression on him. I wish we could follow up somehow and see what comes of it."

"It would be interesting," Jeff said. "But impossible, I'm afraid." He rested a hand on her shoulder. "I know we've made a difference in a lot of lives over the years, but very, very seldom do we get to see or hear what those differences are. We've had to content ourselves with the knowledge that we did. Getting feedback like this is gravy."

"Yes, it is," Dianne responded. The computer screen went blank, and she stood up. Putting her arms around Jeff's neck, she smiled as their eyes met. "Do me a favor?"

"What?" he asked, surprised.

"When you finally get around to replacing Christopher, please consider hiring a woman," she said. "It would be nice to be able to field a completely female team when necessary."

"Hmm. I'll keep that in mind," Jeff said, lowering his face to touch his lips to hers. "And thank you for reminding me about hiring another pilot. It's not exactly been at the forefront of my mind lately." He sighed. "And it should have been, especially with the pressure that we've put on Elise."

"Well, consider yourself reminded," she said with a sly smile. "Now, Mr. Tracy, what am I going to do with you?"

He gave a glance in the direction of the sick room, then turned back to her with a raised eyebrow and a husky tone to his voice. "We could... you know... have a repeat of our first encounter..."

"An interesting idea," she said, brushing back his hair, "But I think I'd rather indulge myself in the

privacy of our own boudoir... or maybe even our Jacuzzi."

"Suits me fine," he replied, kissing her deeply.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:27:18 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 4/12/2006 5:54 PM

Tuesday, July 10; Tracy Island; approximately 7:00 AM

The next morning, when Kat checked her computer to see what her schedule was for the day, she found an email from Brains.

Kat,

We need to do a general checkup of the private jets. It hasn't been done in some time, and I want to make sure they are ready to go at a moment's notice. Please meet me by Tracy-1 at 9 AM.

Brains

Kat smiled; it was a pleasure to work on the jets and it might take her mind off the events of the previous evening. Working on the vessels and equipment used in the rescues was a challenge she enjoyed, but it was a nice break to take on something more familiar to her. She showered and dressed, then ate a good breakfast.

When she arrived at the hangar, Brains was waiting for her. "I needed a break from the lab, so I'll help you with the largest jet, then leave you to do the others."

He handed her a data pad. "Here is the list of everything I want checked over on all the jets."

She took the pad and looked the list over. "No problem," she said, grinning cheekily. "I could do most of this in my sleep."

He chuckled. "I'd prefer it if you did it wide awake, though. And don't rush through it." He turned and said, "Let's get started, shall we?"

They climbed aboard Tracy Three and went into the cockpit. Brains sat in the pilot's seat and indicated that Kat should take the other. He noticed that she was distracted and edgy. "Is everything okay? You seem nervous about something."

Startled, she looked at him. There was a long moment of silence, and then she replied, "Oh no. I just had a bad evening. I'm sorry; I'll try to focus more on what we're doing."

"Good idea. We don't want anyone crashing because the jets weren't in perfect operating condition, do we?" He smiled at her, and a moment later she returned it. "Okay," he continued,

"I'm going to get the engine going so we can check things out."

He started it, and as it warmed up, said, "Kat, do you remember anything more about the man who tried to steal the hoverbike when you were in India?"

She frowned. "Not really. Why?"

"We know of someone who has tried to steal the secrets of International Rescue, and Mr. Tracy and I are beginning to believe that your thief was the same person. What impression did you get when you saw him ride off? What was his physical appearance like? I know he had on a disguise, but did you notice anything?"

"Let me think," she replied. "Not really, except I noticed he had broad shoulders and -- oh, yes. I saw his hands, or his gloves, and I remember thinking to myself that they seemed to be very large. But other than that, no. He moved away so quickly, and I think I was a little stunned."

"Thank you; that helps. If you do think of anything else, contact me and let me know. Now let's get started. I'll call out the readings and you check them off. Then we'll examine the engine and the wings."

Kat assented and they got down to work.

xxxx

An hour later, Brains went searching for Jeff. Finding him at his desk in the lounge, he sat down and told his boss what he had learned.

"That sounds like the Hood to me, Brains. How about you?"

"Yes sir. That's what I remember about him from my encounter with him. But if he's planning on going after the new recruits, hadn't we better warn them about him?"

"Yes, I suppose we should," Jeff mused. "I'll have to look at the schedules to see when would be the best time for that." He sighed. "I don't mind telling you that I'm not at all pleased by this turn of events. I had hoped that he would give up; I even thought he had, since we have only had the one contact with him this year -- or rather Kyrano has. I guess I was wrong."

"We all hoped he had given up on us," Brains replied. "You aren't the only one. Well, I'll let you get back to work. When you notify the new recruits of the meeting, please let me know, too. I'd like to be there."

"Of course I will. I'd like to have as many people there who have encountered him as possible. I'll see you later."

Brains left the room to head back to the lab, and Jeff turned back to his computer.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:30:31 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 4/12/2006 7:55 PM

Tuesday, July 10, Tracy Island (Thunderbird Three Silo), around 12 noon

"I think we've come to a good stopping place, Callie," John said. He stood with data pad in hand, showing his prize pupil the ins and outs of restocking Thunderbird Three's living area and sickbay. "Do you have any questions?"

She shook her head. "No, I think I've got it. I just have to remember to restock it about a week before going up, right?"

John frowned a little. "No, Callie. This will be part of the post-flight restock. Stocking things up for Thunderbird Five is a whole different animal."

He put the data pad down, and smiled at her. "I think it's time for lunch. Why don't you join me in the dining room today?"

Turning away, she calmly said, "Um, no thanks, John. I'm not really hungry right now."

"Oh," he replied, slightly taken aback. "All right. I'll see you back here at one, okay?"

"Okay." She walked away, her head shrugged forward. The effects of the previous night's argument had begun to take not only an emotional toll on her, but a physical one. She had barely eaten since that argument.

John watched her climb into the monorail for the trip back to the Cliff House, then he descended to the "lounge", where the couch waited to take him back to the villa's lounge. Something's bothering her, that's evident to see, he thought. Question is: what do I do about it?

She went into her apartment, still slumping over. Taking a seat in her living room, Callie turned on the television set to see if anything could cheer her up. Watching a mariachi band surprise a carpenter, she normally would've laughed hard, but not this time. "If only I wasn't feeling so miserable right now, though."

Still not feeling any better, she opted to return to the beach. Unfortunately, that still didn't make her feel any better. "Not even the waves are doing any good," she said angrily. "Ever since last night, I'm completely off-kilter."

John just couldn't shake the sense that something was really wrong with Callie. He wiped his

mouth, and put his napkin by his plate. "Please excuse me, everyone. I just remembered something I need to do."

He went upstairs to the lounge, and activated the communications link to Thunderbird Five. "Quasar to Indy. Come in, Indy."

Alan's face appeared on the screen. He had mustard smeared along the corner of his mouth, and John caught a glimpse of the hero sandwich before his brother got it out of camera range.

"Indy here," Alan said, his voice sounding a bit thick from having just swallowed a hastily chewed bite. "What can I do for you, Quasar?"

"Hey, Indy," John replied, giving his brother a smile and a friendly greeting. "I need to know where Ursa is right now."

"Ursa?" Alan asked, intrigued. "Why?"

"I just need to talk to her, that's all," John replied, a bit of impatience coloring his tone. "Where is she?"

"According to her signal, she's on the beach," Alan said. He gave his brother a questioning look. "What's up?"

"Nothing you need worry about," John told him. "But I'm going to email you later about something I discussed with Da... the Boss. Okay?"

"Sure, whatever," Alan said, shrugging his shoulders.

"Don't let the Boss see you with that sandwich in the control room," John warned, grinning. "Gotta go. Talk to you later, Indy. And thanks. Quasar out."

He cut communications, and hurried out of the lounge. The beach, huh? Well, Miss Spencer, let's see if I can help you with whatever's bothering you. Even if it's just providing a listening ear.

At the beach, Callie found some stones to toss into the ocean. One by one, she threw each rock into the water. "So much for a happy birthday," she muttered angrily as hot tears streamed down her face.

John saw her as he came down the beach, and decided to give her fair warning. He waved an arm and called, "Hey, Callie!" in a cheery voice. When she turned at the sound, he added, "Stay put!"

He increased his pace and quickly came up to where she was standing. "Hey there," he said. Raising an eyebrow, he asked her, "Callie? What's the matter? Why are you crying?"

Facing him, she said, "John, can you change the schedule back, please?"

"Change the shift back? Why?" John asked, suddenly frowning.

"I don't want to take away your quality time with Kat," she answered, sniffing. "She said I had asked you to change the shifts between us, but I know that's not true."

"What?" he asked, incredulous. "Kat said what?"

Callie quickly replied, "Kat accused me of purposely asking for a change in the schedule so I can be home with my family. She had a lot of nerve saying that. I told her that you and Mr. Tracy had planned it out, but she thought I was lying."

John shook his head. "I don't understand this. I definitely told her that it was all my idea." He gave Callie a searching look. "So she came down to you and accused you of setting this up? And told you what? That you'd taken away our time together?"

Her anger fuming again, she said, "That's exactly it, John. She had the absolute nerve to say that to me, so I threw her out of my apartment!"

Shocked, John blew out a breath. He shook his head again. "I... I can't believe it of her." He looked up at Callie again. "But... I guess I don't know her as well as I thought I did." He put a hand on Callie's shoulder. "You leave this with me. I'll deal with it."

"Okay," said Callie. "Just one thing, though. Will you tell your father about this?"

"No, I don't think so," John said, frowning. "Not unless it affects the team. Then, yes. I'll go to him." He gave her a small, sad smile. "Hopefully it won't come to that."

"All right. Mind if I stay here a little longer? I just need to be alone for a while."

"Oh, sure," John nodded his head. "Just don't forget to come back up to Three, okay? We still have some training to do."

"I won't forget. I'll see you later." She went back to tossing stones into the ocean again.

John watched her for a moment, then turned and walked off the way he'd come, his hand in his pockets. I guess I need to have a little talk with Kat about this and make sure she realizes that accusing Callie was the wrong thing to do.

*****By Tikatu and TracyFan4Ever.*****

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:38:45 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 4/12/2006 11:56 PM

Tracy Island -- July 10 - 2068

After John left Callie, he went in search of Kat. He was appalled at what she had done. As he headed for the hangar, he tried to compose himself, and think of the best way to approach Kat. What's gotten into her? he thought. I've never seen this side of her before. He shook his head sadly. I've got to make her see how upsetting her actions were to Callie.

Kat was carrying out some checks on Thunderbird Two. She was still smarting from her confrontation with Callie. Her head ached as she tried to write on her data pad, the pen snapped. Damn, she thought, as she got another pen from her overall's pocket. Why me? It's so unfair.

Suddenly she heard footsteps. Looking round she saw John approaching. "Hi, John. Nice to see you," she said, smiling at him.

But John did not return her smile. Instead, he stopped a little way from her and said bluntly, "Kat, I've just left Callie on the beach. She was crying and she asked me to change the rotation back to what it was originally. When I asked her why, she told me that you've accused her of messing things up between us. She wanted me to reconsider my decision, so that you and I could spend more time together."

Kat swallowed hard, but remained silent.

"Is this true?" he asked tersely, trying to contain his frustration with Kat.

Kat had never seen John angry before, and thought he was very angry now. She took a deep breath. "Yes, it's true. I'm sorry, John. I just didn't think."

"You're right. You didn't think. Why do you assume that everything should be planned with you in mind?"

Tears filled Kat's eyes. John watched her, trying to keep his anger in check.

"I'm sorry, John. I was just so disappointed. I felt so hurt."

"Yes, I'm sure you were. But that didn't give you the right to ream out Callie. I made that decision. I was the one you should have come to."

Running his hands through his hair, he turned away for a moment, trying to collect his thoughts. Turning back to face her he continued, "I'm really disappointed in you. I thought you were mature enough to accept that sometimes decisions are made for the good of others. I thought you would see my offer to Callie as being generous and accept it for her sake. I didn't realize you'd be so selfish."

He stopped and took a breath. "Put yourself in Callie's shoes. How would you have felt if everyone else had been able to go home for their birthdays except you? I know you had a good time when you went home; would you deny Callie that? She's as close to her family as you are, maybe even closer. I heard all about her family when I was training her in Thunderbird Five. So I knew what a

gift it would be for her to be able to spend her special time with her folks." He shook his head. "I fail to see why you had to get so angry with her. It wasn't her decision. It. Was. Mine. I thought I had made that perfectly clear."

Kat's face blanched. She couldn't bear John to be so angry with her. But suddenly Kat felt angry. She wasn't going to take this lying down; she was going to make him realise just how she felt.

John watched her. He wished she'd react, tell him off, do something, anything other than stand there looking pitiful. Yes, he was angry with her, but it wasn't the end of the world. He wanted her to realize that though, yes, he had feelings for her, and wanted to get to know her better, his world didn't revolve around her.

"So, I suppose I'm expected to take this without saying anything? Yes, you have made things perfectly clear, but I happen to have feelings as well. I think I was justified in what I said to Callie, and I don't regret my actions at all. I think she deserved to know just how I have been affected. I know we are only just becoming close friends, but I was looking forward to spending time with you." She gave a hollow laugh. "Just how wrong could I be." Unchecked, the tears began to fall, and she angrily wiped them away,

"Excuse me," John said, his voice hard. "As I said before, the decision was mine. Mine and mine alone. If you had something to say, you should have said it to me. Not to Callie. She was innocent in all of this." He folded his arms across his chest. "What you said, and the way you spoke to me when I told you made me think you could accept it. I see I was wrong."

"So what now? I suppose you expect me to apologise?"

John nodded. "Yes Kat, that's what I expect you to do... and I expect you to be sincere. I'm not sure how she'll take it; you've hurt her very badly. But you have to try."

Kat wiped her eyes on the back of her hand and sniffed. John came closer and handed her a tissue.

She said quietly, but with sarcasm in her voice, "Well as long as Callie is happy, to hell with my feelings, is that the case? I obviously don't matter in this equation, do I? And there I was thinking you had feelings for me. I was obviously wrong. I suppose that you won't want us to be friends now."

John let out an exasperated breath and held out his hands. "How am I supposed to answer that?" he asked in a frustrated tone. "I still want us to be good friends, to know each other better. I still feel attracted to you. But I have to admit that I'm disappointed and angry with what you did." His voice got very low and intense. "But if you can't accept that I'm doing something nice for someone, then maybe we'd better do some rethinking of our relationship."

Kat's eyes widened. She was aghast that he would even consider it. "No, John. No. I'm sorry." She looked down at the floor. "It just seemed so unfair," she whispered.

He moved closer to her. "Kat, you should already know that very little in life is fair, even here. It wasn't fair that Callie would have to spend her birthday in Thunderbird Five when no one else had

to. Unfortunately, in making things fair for Callie, I made a sacrifice. I really didn't think you'd mind, seeing as it was in a good cause." He put a hand on her shoulder and sighed. "Now, you know what you have to do. In the meantime, I think that you and I should have some space so we can both cool down. Once you've apologized to Callie, and we're both less emotional, then maybe you and I can spend some time together before I leave for Thunderbird Five."

Kat took a sharp intake of breath. He gave her a small, rueful smile.

"I'll talk to you later, Kat. Let me know when you've spoken with Callie." Then he turned and headed out of the hangar.

"John?" Kat called after him. "I'm so very sorry! I will really try to never, ever do anything like this again."

"Okay, Kat." John stopped and turned to her. "Now go say the same to Callie."

Kat watched him go. She felt a little ashamed, but at the same time she still felt angry: angry with John, angry with Callie. But was she also in fact a little bit jealous, because John had taken Callie's feelings over hers? After all, he had spent time with Callie when they worked together in Thunderbird Five, and they must have got to know each other well. And now he was making sacrifices so that Callie could be happy. No, I can't believe that; it's me he has feelings for, she thought, but all the same she felt very unhappy.

John walked away deep in thought. Kat had really disappointed him, and made him angry. He had never realised that she could behave in the way she had. He hoped she would reflect on her actions against Callie, and see that she was wrong. And not only that what she did was wrong, but also that, sometimes, it's better to give a little to make someone else happy. He also hoped that she'd think twice if a similar situation arose.

Kat watched his retreating figure, and then crumpled to the ground, her tears flowing freely. Finally, feeling completely drained, she got up and continued her work. She found it hard to concentrate, but forcing herself to work began to take her mind off the recent argument with John. After she had completed the checks and work on Thunderbird Two, she cleared away her tools, headed for her apartment and a task she wasn't looking forward to.

...fallout by ArtisticRainey and Tawnyangel22

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:41:46 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 4/13/2006 7:16 PM

*****Tuesday, July 10, 2068, Tracy Island, approximately 5:45 p.m.*****

After eating a very light dinner, Callie found herself sitting on the beach again, throwing stones into the sea, frustrated by her conversation with Kat. "The nerve of her," she said as she tossed another rock. "She thinks I've shattered her world or something!"

Kat hugged herself as she made her way down to the beach. She had broken down and asked Alan where she could find Callie; she didn't want to warn her of her coming. She stood behind her teammate for a long moment, watching as Callie threw stone after stone into the sea. Then she took a deep breath and approached.

"Hello, Callie," she said, trying to keep her voice neutral.

Turning around, Callie saw her colleague. "What do you want now? If it's for me to change the schedule back, it's already been finalized."

Kat was taken aback by the anger in Callie's voice. She had expected hurt, perhaps tears... but not this biting tone. She shook her head. "No... no. I'm not here about that. I know it's been finalized." She nearly choked on a sob as she said, "John told me it had been. He was ever so angry with me."

She looked down at her feet. "I'm here to apologize. I'm very sorry for what I said."

Callie threw another rock into the water before facing Kat again. "After everything you just put me through, do you think an apology is going to be enough? You hurt my feelings, Kat. I thought you were my friend. I can't believe a simple schedule switch has caused all this!"

Kat shook her head again. "I didn't... I wasn't..." She swallowed heavily. "I am your friend, Callie. I was just so... hurt that John would do this to me." She wrapped her arms tighter around her shoulders. "I didn't mean to hurt you. I wasn't thinking."

"You're right," said Callie coldly, "you weren't thinking. What you did was cold, selfish, and inconsiderate."

Is that what she thinks of me? Kat thought in shock. Cold, selfish and inconsiderate? Why I'm giving up a month of time with John for her! She breathed out a small sigh. Still, I shouldn't have taken this out on her. John was right about that.

"I'm sorry, Callie. I'm sorry for taking this out on you when you didn't have anything to do with the decision," she said resignedly. "It was selfish of me, and wrong. Would you please forgive me?"

Callie turned her back to Kat. "It's not that easy to forgive and forget. Did you really come to apologize, or are you here because John asked you to come?"

Kat's eyes widened. "I'm... I'm..." she sputtered. Then she stopped. Am I really here because I'm truly sorry? Or am I here because I want to get back into John's good graces? For a brief, heart-stopping moment, she knew, she knew the truth. I'm not here because I'm sorry or because I think I've done wrong. Oh, how could I be so selfish and shallow, even now?

She swallowed heavily again, and tears came to her eyes. "I won't lie to you, Callie. I came here

at first because I wanted to get back into John's good graces. Yes, he did require it of me."

Slowly she approached Callie, and dropped to her knees on the sand beside her. "But, I realize that was as shallow and selfish as what I said to you, how I acted." She bowed her head and her tears dripped onto the sand. "And for that, I am truly sorry."

She looked up at Callie, sniffed a couple of times and said, "I've been a beast to you, Callie, and you didn't deserve it. Please forgive me for what I said and did and for being such a selfish pig that I couldn't see how happy John's decision would make you." She lowered her head again. "I know I would have felt horrid if I had been in your position, and not able to go home to see my family. And a true friend wants to make her friends happy." She shrugged off-handedly. "I guess I haven't been a very good friend after all, have I?"

"No, you haven't," Callie stated coolly. She stood and brushed the sand from her knees. Starting to walk away, she added, "No matter how I feel about you right now, I'll put aside our differences for the sake of the team, but that's it."

Kat stared, unbelieving, at Callie's retreating back. She got up from the sand and ran after her. "Does this mean you... you won't forgive me?"

"No, I won't forgive you... yet."

Kat stopped in her tracks, her mouth open. "Then... will you ever?"

"I will... in due time. It'll depend on how long it'll take for me to get over this." Callie closed her eyes and said, "I'll see you later, Kat." The last word came out like ice.

And with that, Callie stalked off, leaving Kat with a shocked and confused expression on her face and a painful feeling of loss in her heart.

*****By Tikatu and TracyFan4Ever.*****

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:42:56 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/14/2006 11:32 AM

Wednesday, July 11, 6:30 a.m., Tracy Island.

"Ugh." Dom groaned as he rolled over to turn off his alarm clock. Josh had been fractious the night before, and it was well past midnight before the toddler had dropped off, exhausted.

Flopping back to the mattress, Dom sighed heavily. What am I going to do? he asked himself, his eyes closing on their own volition. I can't keep this up. It's not good for either of us. It's like a

vicious cycle.

He suddenly jerked awake at the sound of Josh's cry from the other bedroom. A quick glance at the clock made him sit up quickly and throw back the covers. Seven-thirty! I must have fallen back to sleep. At this rate, I'll be late for work.

Striding into the shared bath, he heard Josh slamming his little hand on the door between the bath and his own room. "I'm coming, Jak," Dom said wearily. He opened the door to find his son waiting for him, one arm around his stuffed horse and as many fingers of the other hand now crammed into his mouth as possible. There were wet handprints on the door; mute evidence of Jak's alternate banging on the door, then sucking his fingers.

The wet fingers came out of his mouth, and he reached upwards. "Da!" he cried, wiggling his fingers to be picked up. "Up, Da!"

Dom crouched to his son's level, his training in how to lift correctly automatically directing his actions. He slid his arms under Josh's armpits and pulled his son close as he stood up again. A kiss to the blond head, then Dom asked, "Do you want breakfast, Jak?"

"Beckfust!" Josh answered. Dom smiled at his son's pronunciation; the proper sounds would come, he knew, and he'd become adept at translating his son's baby speak.

He carried Josh out to the kitchen, and sat his son down in the booster seat at the small dinette table. He hoped and prayed that they'd get through the meal without a tantrum; too many times Josh would ask for something, only to reject it and demand something else. How does Mrs. Tracy handle him when I'm at work? he wondered. I'm going to have to ask her for some advice and soon.

Glancing out the French doors to the balcony, he sighed again. It was raining out; which meant no sand castles and no outdoors to entertain his son during the hours that he'd be working in the infirmary. Not that there was much to do; everyone had been healthy and injury-free lately.

Hmm. Maybe I could ask for a personal day, just to so we could catch up on our rest... I wonder if Nikki would mind covering for me. I hope she didn't hear Josh's tantrum last night; I'm always leery about those balcony doors. He nodded slightly. I had better ask.

With that, he filled a sipper cup with milk for Josh, then pulled out his communicator to ask his neighbor and co-worker for a very important favor.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:46:04 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 4/14/2006 3:13 PM

Tracy Island, July 11, 8.30 a.m.

John stepped off the elevator and waited for the monorail car to appear in the terminus. He was heading to Thunderbird Three for some routine maintenance. The car slid into place, slowing and stopping for him. He was surprised to find it already occupied.

"Good morning, Kat," he said cordially. "What are you up to today?"

Kat was huddled in the far corner of the car. Her face was white and there were dark circles under her eyes, as if she had not had enough sleep. She looked rather strained. Without glancing up at John, she said, "Oh, er, hi John. I was going to the lab to work with Brains."

John frowned in concern. "Is something wrong? You look rather... upset. And tired. Did you get enough sleep last night? And did you eat this morning?"

Kat couldn't meet his gaze. "I didn't sleep at all last night. I have had a glass of milk this morning. I couldn't face anything else. I tried to apologise to Callie. I was really and truly sorry, but she wouldn't forgive me." She looked at him. In a whisper she said, "I don't think she ever will. Oh, John, what have I done? I've really hurt one of my friends."

John's eyebrow climbed as he considered Kat's words. Then he took the controls of the monorail and set them to go past Thunderbird Three, taking the long way around to the lab. He sat down on one of the benches that edged the inside of the monorail car, and patted the seat next to him.

"Kat, come sit next to me and tell me what happened."

Kat sat down beside him. "I have apologised to Callie. I told her I realized that it was your decision and that she had nothing to do with it. She intimated that I was only there to apologise so I could get back into your good graces." She looked down. "I admitted that you were the reason I was there in the first place." Then she gazed at John. "But then I realized how much hurt I'd caused her and that I'd had no right to accuse her. After that, I tried to sincerely apologize." She shook her head sadly. "She would have none of it. She accused me of being cold, selfish and inconsiderate. Oh, John, I'm not! I just made a mistake and let my heart rule me rather than my head. Because of this, I have lost one good friend, and maybe will lose more when this gets out."

John took a deep breath and let it out. "So, you originally went to apologize because I told you to?" He shook his head. "Kat, I'm sorry I put you in that position. Yes, I wanted you to apologize, but I wanted you to do it because you knew that what you'd done was wrong. Not because it would satisfy me."

He shook his head again, and smiled a little. "But it does sound like you realized it at some point. And for that I'm grateful."

"Now," he said, putting a friendly arm around her. "About Callie. I did warn you that I wasn't sure how she'd take an apology. She was very hurt and angry when I spoke with her. She probably did see that what you did was... how did you put it?"

"Cold, selfish and inconsiderate."

"Yes, that. She probably saw what you did as exactly that. And admitting that you were there because of me... well, I suppose owning up to the truth was a good thing, even if it wasn't too wise. But the main thing was that, in the end, you were sincere."

"Oh, John, what have I done? Why did I go rushing in without engaging my brain?" All at once, the enormity of what she had done came to the surface again and tears filled her eyes. "I guess I have been selfish and inconsiderate, but I'm not cold. I have feelings, and now I guess I shall reap the repercussions from this action. Not only from Callie, but probably from you as well."

"Kat, I'm not going to fault you if you really did understand that what you did to Callie was wrong," John assured her. "Once you apologized sincerely, it's up to her to accept that apology."

"I have to admit that I didn't think Callie would hold a grudge. She didn't seem to be that kind of person. I guess it's an indication of exactly how much she was hurt." He gave Kat a little squeeze. "Perhaps I should have a little talk with her myself. Keeping a grudge will eventually seep into working together, no matter how much someone tries to keep it out."

Kat looked rather doubtful. "She was very angry and hurt, John. It certainly will be a long time before she does forgive me. She said she will work with me for the sake of the team. But how long will it be before others notice the coolness between us? It's bound to get out. This is going to take a lot of living down, isn't it? Suddenly I am not feeling too confident. I've not had this kind of upset since my early days working as a mechanic."

"Then I guess I'll have to have a talk with her," John replied, resignedly. "I wish I'd known that trying to be generous would backfire on me to this extent. No good deed goes unpunished, I guess." He looked up to see that they'd finally arrived at the lab. "Here's your stop. I'm glad you apologized to Callie, and did it sincerely. Thank you for that. I'll be in touch about getting together again. I want to try and iron this thing out with Callie before then, so it won't be hovering over our heads."

Kat gave him a rather watery smile. "Thanks, John. I'm sorry that I've caused all this antagonism. I was just so bitterly disappointed at not being able to time with you. I think my emotions got the better of me. Maybe after you have cleared the air with Callie, I could cook you a meal one evening?"

"We'll see what develops," John said, smiling softly back at her. "For now, I think you'd better get to work, and I should, too." He stepped over to the controls, then looked up sharply. "Oh, and Kat? Get something more to eat. Please. Remember your blood sugar, and what Mom said."

Kat took his hand and squeezed it. "Goodbye, and thanks for talking to me; it has really helped. And as far as eating something is concerned," she added, "you'd be surprised to know just where I have my own private supplies of cereal bars." With that, she got off the monorail.

"Have a better day, Kat," he called as the doors shut between them. He put the monorail back in motion and stood there, deep in thought. Then he sighed heavily. I think a little conversation with Callie is in order, and soon.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:51:03 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 4/14/2006 3:57 PM

July 10, 2068; Anchorage, Alaska; 2:25 PM (10:25 AM July 11 on Tracy Island)

Lena's plane touched down at the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport on time. When she disembarked, she was relieved to find that a man from Tracy Industries was waiting for her. It was the head of I&M there, himself, Anthony Cooper.

"Lena. It's good to meet you face-to-face, finally. Welcome to the 'City of Lights and Flowers,' he said as he took her carry-on bag from her. "How was your flight? You don't look too tired."

She smiled at him as she replied, "Tank you, Tony. I'm a pretty good traveler, generally. And it was a smoot, comfortable flight. I even napped for a couple of hours."

"That's good; I wish I could sleep on planes, but I've never been able to. Now, your hotel is only a couple of miles from the offices, so after we get your other bag, we can either head there, then to the office, or vice versa."

"I don't have anotter bag; I'm only going to be here until Friday, and was able to pack what I needed into what you're carrying. Why don't we go to de office, so I can meet your people?"

He gave her an admiring look. "I wish you could show my wife how to pack; she needs two suitcases for an overnight stay across town." He grinned as he led the way to the curb.

She laughed. "Oh, I'm sure she's not dat bad."

He chuckled as they went outside to the limousine waiting for them at the curb. "Mr. Tracy insisted on it," he said when she protested that she didn't have to have such fine transportation. "And I must say that I'm enjoying it. I don't get to ride in a limo very often."

They got in and it took only 20 minutes to get to the building. Tony told the driver that he'd take Lena to her hotel, but the limo should pick her up the next morning at 8 AM. They went inside, where Lena was given an ID badge then headed up to the floor where Tony's office was.

There were six people on his staff, who were able to maintain the computer systems smoothly and efficiently. She was introduced to them, and told them, "I'm here to see how you do tings in dis neck of de woods and see if your procedures would work in any of de otter branches' I&M departments -- or vice versa. So basically I'll just be hanging around and watching, perhaps asking a few questions."

She chatted with them some more, watched them work, and talked to Tony in his office, seeing what his normal weekly schedule was like. It was very similar to her own, and they joked that they couldn't come up with a way to improve it in either city. Before she knew it, quitting time had come, and they were heading to his car.

As he drove her to the hotel, he suggested a few places she might like to see while she was in town, so her visit wouldn't be all business. "There are the Anchorage Museum of History and Fine Art, the Alaska Native Heritage Center, the Heritage Library, the Alaska Botanical Gardens. . ."

"Stop," she interrupted with a laugh. "All dose places sound wonderful and I'd love to visit dem, but I don't tink dat dere is enough time. Right now, all I want to tink about is a bite to eat, a hot bat and a good night's sleep."

He was contrite. "I'm sorry, Lena. I forgot that it's four hours later where you're from. You must be starving!"

"Not quite, but I am hungry. Can we stop someplace where I can get someting to eat in my room?"

"Of course. I know just the place. Not fast food, but good food, fast."

Twenty minutes later, he pulled up to her hotel. She took the food, her bag and purse and got out of the car after thanking him for all his help. She went inside and checked in. Half an hour later she was soaking in a hot bath, washing away the stresses of the day, and dining on some wonderful Chinese food.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 21:51:57 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 4/14/2006 4:53 PM

Wednesday, July 11; Tracy Island; 11 AM

Jeff finished rereading, for the third time, the memo he'd typed on his computer and sighed. The previous day, shortly after his talk with Brains, he'd received an urgent email from Tracy Industries headquarters. A problem had arisen, and it had taken all afternoon and most of the next morning for him to get all the facts and come to a decision about it. He started to read it again, then stopped. Why should I read it again? It isn't going to change, and I've made my decision. He hesitated for one second, then hit the "send" button, then sat back with a sigh of relief.

Dianne heard him sigh as she walked into the room. "Is something wrong, Jeff?"

"There was an emergency at Tracy Industries headquarters and I've been working on that since Brains was here yesterday morning. I emailed my decision and instructions just before you walked in."

"It didn't concern Lena, did it?"

"No. In fact," he replied as he checked the time, "Lena should have landed in Anchorage a few minutes ago. I think she's almost completely recovered from her ordeal, but you'd know better than that. Hasn't she been in touch with you lately?"

Dianne smiled. "I got an email from her yesterday, and she sounds very much like her old self. This brother of hers must be a wise man, to have given her exactly the advice she needed. I'm happy for her. But we've gotten off the subject. What was the emergency?"

"Something went wrong at the eleventh hour with a prototype we were building. They wanted to know if we should scrap it or go back to the drawing board. I needed to see the data and the specs. It took some time to study all the information, but I finally came to a decision, and now it's up to the people in New York to implement it."

"Well, I'm glad that's over, then. But you said Brains was here. Is something wrong with one of our vessels or . . ."

"Oh, damn! I completely forgot!" He looked up at his wife apologetically. "After what happened to Tin-Tin the other night, I wanted to question Kat about her encounter in India with the person who tried to steal the hoverbike. Brains offered to do that and let me know what she said."

"And?"

"She described a broad-shouldered man with large hands. It sounds like International Rescue's old enemy, the Hood, has come back into our lives. We both feel that the new recruits should be informed. I meant to email them to have them come here for a meeting, but completely forgot when I heard from New York."

"I agree completely that they should be informed, and the sooner the better. I really thought he'd found more profitable ventures to go after."

"He probably did, for a while. But he's back, and his mental attack on Tin-Tin proves that. So I agree we need to tell the others. I think I'll have them gather here tomorrow afternoon. I'll want you and the boys here, too, as well as Brains, Kyrano, Tin-Tin -- and mother, too. I'd better get the message out now, while I'm thinking of it."

She bent down and kissed him. "I'll leave you to it, then, and see you later, at lunch."

"Okay." He leered at her as she turned to leave. "If I can get this out quickly, maybe I'll see you before then."

She laughed and replied as she walked out, "You'll have to find me first. And no using technology to do it. Or Alan."

He chuckled as she disappeared through the door, then sobered as he thought about how to word his message. Soon he typed something into the computer and then looked it over.
To all here on Tracy Island:

Recent events over the past few weeks have led me to decide to call a meeting in the lounge for

5:30 PM tomorrow, barring any emergencies. I and some of my family and staff have some vital information about which you who are new to International Rescue need to know. This is a mandatory meeting. Please be on time.

Jeff Tracy

He addressed it to everyone on the island and sent it. Then he called Alan and told him to be ready for the meeting, and why. Finally, he shut down the computer, cleared his desk and began the more pleasant task of finding his wife.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:08:59 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 4/15/2006 9:34 AM

Thursday, July 12, 2068, Tracy Island; Thunderbird Three Silo, 10 a.m.

"Now, when this particular reading comes up on the diagnostic, it means that there's a blockage in the fuel lines for the chemical rockets," John told her, pointing to the computer screen. "This is just a simulation of the problem, but it's a big one, especially on take off and landing. If you ever get this in your pre-flight checks, power down immediately."

"What happens if it appears as a warning during landing?" Callie asked, frowning in concern.

John leaned up against the console in Thunderbird Three's maintenance room. "Depends on where you are when you see it. If you're landing off-planet, you need to abort the launch and return to Five." He folded his arms. "If it's on return to base, you need to abort the landing and proceed to Mateo Island. Nobody's there and it's easier to land in that silo."

He blew out a breath. "It's a dangerous situation either way, but taking Three to Mateo means that there won't be... collateral damage."

Callie nodded. "I understand. We can replace the rocket." Letting out a long sigh, she looked downward.

John echoed her sigh. "Listen, Callie. Can we talk about something? Something unrelated to your training?"

"Sure. I probably know what it's about, but I need to get it out of my system anyway."

John took a deep breath and gave Callie a rueful smile. "Yeah, you probably know. I talked with Kat yesterday morning and she was really upset. She basically told me that you thought her to be

cold, selfish, and inconsiderate and that you wouldn't forgive her. I can understand why you feel the way you do about her personally after what she said, but can I ask: why won't you forgive her?"

He unfolded his arms and rested his hands on the console's edge. "She's sure she's lost you for a friend, and that she'll lose more when this becomes common knowledge... and you know it will."

Her eyes widening, she said, "I told Kat I wouldn't forgive her yet. I never said I wouldn't forgive her at all. Like I told her, I need time to get over this."

He rolled his eyes. "She didn't tell me that... the part about 'yet'. Just said you weren't going to forgive, period." Giving her a keen look from beneath furrowed brows, he slowly asked, "If you're planning on forgiving her anyway, why not just do it, and save everyone the drama?"

"Because I'm still hurting, John," she said, her anger slowly building up. "I can't just forgive someone with the drop of a hat! She accused me of something I didn't do." She turned away, tears threatening to fall. "I don't want this affecting us to the point of creating problems for the team, but this hurts. Do you know how this really feels?"

"Yes, I've been in situations like this before, and I know it's painful," John said softly. "I just hope you can see your way to forgive before it does affect your work together. And not only that, but before the others find out and feel that they have to take sides." He shook his head. "If I'd known that my decision would cause this much drama, I would have thought twice about making it."

"I'm sorry this had to happen, John," she said sadly. "I do want to forgive her, but I need time. The last thing I want to do is lose her as a friend. But even the best of friends - and family - can have rough times."

He shook his head. "I can see that I'm not going to sway you. Just don't leave it too long, please." Glancing at his watch, he added, "I think we need a break. Take a half hour, then we'll get back to running diagnostics."

With a nod, she said, "Okay. Thanks for hearing me out."

She went back to her apartment to rest and gather her thoughts. "He's right. The longer I hold this grudge, the more it'll affect Kat and me, and eventually all of us. What should I do, though?" Thinking back to a time when a friend played a mean practical joke on her, she remembered that she forgave that friend after a week. "A week may not be so bad, but in this case, a week may be too long."

John walked off, rubbing the back of his neck, where the beginnings of a tension headache were beginning to make themselves known. He rolled his head around slowly as he walked to release the tension.

I really should have just stayed out of it entirely, but... it feels like this is all my fault. In any case, I'll have to watch my step with Kat; she didn't quite tell me the whole truth of the matter. And if she's already written Callie off as a friend, will any move on Callie's part bring a reconciliation? He stopped rubbing and put his hands in his pockets. No more intervention. It doesn't do any good.

Still, maybe a chat with Scott would help me clear my own head.

*****By Tikatu and TracyFan4Ever.*****

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:12:29 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/16/2006 8:16 PM
Thursday, July 12, 6 am: Tracy Island

The sun was just beginning to rise over Tracy Island and nobody was stirring, save one person. Gordon made his way quietly down the hall leading to the simulator room.

"I'd better hurry before I get caught," Gordon said to himself. Looking around, he entered the simulator room and set up his practical joke. After five minutes, he exited the room and casually walked away as if nothing had happened.

10:30 am

Brandon had just finished his breakfast and was doing a quick e-mail check before he started his training. Just then, the elevator buzzer sounded, startling him.

"Just a minute," he mumbled, getting up to answer the door. When the door opened, Virgil was standing there.

"Good morning, Brandon," Virgil said cheerfully. "Ready to continue your training?"

"You bet I am," Brandon said enthusiastically. "I can hardly wait to get my pilot's license."

"Well," Virgil said, "you do have a ways to go. You still need thirty-eight more hours of flight time before you can go out for your license."

"Okay, then," Brandon said. "Let's get down to business."

They arrived at the simulator room and Virgil booted up the computer.

"What do you need work on?" Virgil asked, waiting for his colleague's reply.

Brandon thought a moment. "I have the take-off part down pat. It's the landings that are still a little rough so I'll practice them."

"Okay", Virgil said, programming in the necessary simulation. "In you go."

Brandon entered the simulator and, as he sat down, a very loud, rude noise echoed in the cockpit.

"What the heck was that?!" he said loudly, standing up quickly. He looked down in the seat and, laughing slightly, picked up the offending object. Sticking his head out the door, he looked at Virgil, who had a puzzled expression on his face. "Look what I found sitting in the seat," Brandon replied, holding the whoopee cushion up so his friend could see it.

Virgil took one look at the thing in Brandon's hand and shook his head, smiling. Gordon, we really need to talk.

written by MagicMaster8

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:23:04 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/19/2006 6:43 PM

Tracy Island; July 12; 5:25 PM

Jeff watched from behind his desk as the recruits showed up one by one. His look of puzzlement when Brandon went over to Gordon and handed him something, saying, "I believe this belongs to you", changed to amusement when he recognized what the object was. Then he watched as Dom walked in with Joshua. The boy saw Emily and reached out to her. Dom handed his son to her and took a seat beside her. Emily began bouncing Joshua lightly on her knee.

When Callie walked in, she paused as she saw Kat, then took a seat on the opposite side of the room. Jeff noticed this and glanced around, catching a small shake of the head and a "let them work it out" look from John. He shot a quick look at Dianne, who had gotten the same expression from her stepson, and she shrugged.

Finally everyone was there and he opened communications with Thunderbird 5. Then he began to speak.

"A couple of recent events have occurred which has prompted me to call this meeting. One you all know about - Kat's encounter with a man who stole a hoverbike during the rescue in India. The other happened three days ago. Someone tried to invade Tin-Tin's mind, in order to get information about you new recruits."

He would have continued, but was interrupted by gasps and exclamations of "What?", "Oh no!", "Are you okay, Tin-Tin?" and "Who could do a thing like that?".

"That's why we brought you here today," Jeff continued, answering the last question. "We believe the perpetrator is an old enemy of International Rescue, known as The Hood." He turned to his longtime friend. "Kyrano, you probably know more about him than anyone. Will you begin?"

The Malaysian stepped forward so he could be seen by everyone in the room. "The Hood is in actuality my half-brother, Belah Gaat. He has become a master criminal, specializing in appropriating new technology, either for someone who has hired him, or to sell to the highest bidder. He has certain powers that make him more successful than others at what he does; he can invade minds, mesmerize others, and force them to do his will."

"What does this Hood person look like?" asked Dom.

"We aren't certain, since Kyrano hasn't seen him in many years, and Hood is also a master of disguise. But our best guess comes from Brains, who encountered him at Lake Anasta a couple of years ago," replied Jeff. "Brains?"

"Yes, well," Brains began, standing up, his hands behind his back. "The man I first saw looked very much like a Bedouin, with a dark beard and bushy eyebrows. But... I believe that was a disguise. I encountered the man while underwater, where he could not wear a disguise. At that point, he was bald, with a cruel face, and bushy dark eyebrows."

He took a deep, steadying breath. "In both cases where he used his mesmerizing powers on me, his eyes glowed a sickly yellow color. I couldn't help but focus my own attention on them; they were that unusual and hypnotic.

"In both of his guises, he had large, powerful looking hands. He was well-built, muscular, and relatively tall. I'd say about Gordon's height." He glanced over at Jeff. "I... I don't know that I can remember anything more."

"I don't understand," Kat said. "Why is he after us?"

"He wants International Rescue and our technology," Scott answered. "At first, it was just the machines, especially the Thunderbirds. But he was thwarted time after time, and it's become an obsession with him."

"Then why hasn't he already gone after one of you guys?" asked Brandon.

"He did," Gordon replied. "He went after Brains. Not only that, but he's managed to get pictures of various Thunderbirds at different times." He shook his head. "He's never succeeded, partially due to Pink Lady's diligence."

"He has also attacked my father from afar," Tin-Tin added. She looked at her entwined fingers. "My father has found the strength to counter him. I only hope I can do the same."

"Apparently he needs a familial link to invade a mind from a distance, as he has in the past with Kyrano and now Tin-Tin, who has fully recovered, I understand," added Jeff as he looked over at her. She smiled and nodded, and he continued. "Otherwise International Rescue would probably not have lasted very long. But with more people in our organization, and more rescues in remote areas, the chances of him trying to get to any one of you who goes out increases, as does the possibility of him succeeding.

"I had hoped, since we hadn't seen or heard from him in a long time, that he had lost interest, or

found easier targets. But if he had, he is back now. And you all need to be warned so you can be on your guard. My sons are also vulnerable, but from what Tin-Tin has told us about her ordeal, he's after one of you new recruits."

He noticed Brandon was shaking his head with a look of disbelief on his face. When the young man saw Jeff watching him, he said, "This is hard to take in. It sounds more like the plot of a bad science fiction movie."

There were a few chuckles and Jeff smiled slightly. "I know it does, but believe me, it's real."

"Why would he be after one of us?" Elise asked, a perplexed look on her face. "I mean, it's not like we have extensive knowledge of the Thunderbirds, like Scott, Virgil, or Brains would."

"He probably thinks that you'd be an easier target," Dianne suggested. "After all, we Tracys know to be on the lookout for him. Until now, you had no idea he existed." She glanced over at Jeff, then continued, "But now that you do, you have to be alert and watch each other's backs."

"So what, besides that, do we do to keep him at bay, so to speak?" asked Nikki.

Dianne glanced at Jeff to see if he wanted to answer that first, and when he indicated that she should speak, she said, "I think we should all check in at regularly scheduled intervals, either with Mobile Control or Thunderbird 5. Say every fifteen to twenty minutes?"

"Sounds like a feasible idea," Alan said. "It might be wise to indicate which operatives are to check in with which station, so no one assumes that someone has checked in with the other." His face screwed up in a puzzled frown. "Did that make any sense?"

Jeff smiled. "Yes, it did. We'll come up with a list of who checks in where later. Does anyone else have another suggestion?"

"I suppose," Callie said slowly, "that we should try not to get so absorbed in what we are doing that we forget about each other, or about checking in. We need to keep track of each other when we are together, not only because of a possible kidnapping, but because of one of us getting injured as well. I especially should remember that, since I have a tendency to concentrate so hard on my work, I block everything else out at times."

"You do that, Ursa?" Alan said with a teasing grin. "I hadn't noticed."

There was a round of chuckles and groans. Jeff noticed that Kat didn't participate, but just shifted in her chair. John smiled, but it looked a bit strained. Do I ask? he wondered. Internally, he shook his head. If it was something that affected the team, John would say so. I can trust him to tell me if I need to know.

He held up a hand for attention. "Any more suggestions?"

"Set a meeting place?" Dom said hesitantly. "If there's ever a spot of trouble, we can meet by Mobile Control, or in Thunderbird Two or something... count noses..."

Jeff nodded. "Good notion. It's a sound safety precaution in any situation."

"What about sending extra people out there, just to keep an eye out for trouble?" asked Kat.

"I don't think that would be feasible, for several good reasons," Jeff replied.

"Would making more beepers, like the one Kyrano has, be a possibility?" Virgil looked from his father to Brains and back. "Although if the Hood does get to any of us, I doubt we'd be in any shape to use it."

"I concur with that, Virgil," Brains said. "He had me under his thumb so fast I could barely utter a word." He shook his head. "For Kyrano, it's different; though the attacks come out of nowhere, he has learned to recognize them and has that little bit of time to warn the rest of us."

"I wish I knew how he did this," Scott said, folding his arms. "You'd think he'd have to be close to invade another's mind."

"I do not believe he does, Mr. Scott," Kyrano said quietly. "Else we should have been aware of his presence near the island."

"Does anyone else have suggestions?" asked Jeff. When no one answered, or they shook their heads, he continued. "All right. Scott, I want you to work with me in deciding who checks in with you and who checks in with Thunderbird 5. We'll do it tonight and email you all so you'll know first thing in the morning." He looked around. "Are there any questions or comments?"

There was a general shaking of heads. Jeff nodded, and added, "If you think of anything later, please ask. I want to have you all as fully briefed on this threat as possible."

Elise raised a hand. "I just thought of something. Can we see any logs where you've encountered this guy before? Maybe we can see some kind of pattern or something."

Jeff glanced over at Scott, and the latter nodded. "Yes, you may. See John to set you up with the logs; he and Alan know more about them than anyone." He surveyed the room again. "Anything else?"

Again, there was a general shaking of heads and uttered negatives. He nodded, and said, "Then this meeting is adjourned."

fair warning by Hobbeth and Tikatu

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:27:38 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/20/2006 2:46 PM

Thursday, July 12, 2068, 9:30 p.m., Tracy Island

John shivered slightly as he left the warmth of the villa for the outside. How can he do this? he wondered as he wrapped his towel tighter around him. In the spring and summer, yeah. The autumn? Possibly. But the dead of winter? Does Scott have a death wish or something?

He had spoken quietly to his oldest brother during dinner, indicating that he wanted to talk later, just the two of them. Scott had smiled and suggested that John join him in the hot tub that night. So now John was hurrying across the damp, chilly concrete and flagstones, nothing on his feet but a pair of thin shower flip-flops, wearing a swimsuit and t-shirt, his towel acting as a blanket.

As he approached the hot tub, he saw that Scott was there before him, submerged to the neck in the hot water. "Come in, the water's fine!" Scott called, grinning.

"How can you do this?" John asked as he divested himself of t-shirt and flip-flops and quickly slid into the water. The relief he felt was immediate; the water was really hot and comfortable, and he sighed in pleasure.

"I think you just answered your own question," Scott pointed out. "The dichotomy of cold to hot is so sharp..."

John wagged a finger at him. "Don't you go using words like 'dichotomy' with me, bub. I'll have you remember that I'm the linguist in the family."

"And I'll have [i]you[/u] remember that I'm the graduate of Yale and went to Oxford," Scott snapped back in an amused tone. "So if I want to use big words, I'll use 'em!"

The blond rolled his eyes. "Okay, okay. I give. It just sounds funny coming from you."

"I don't think so, but... to each his own, the woman said as she kissed her cow."

John flat out stared at his brother. "Where did you get that one?"

"What one?" Scott asked, pretending to be blasé.

"The one about the cow."

"Did I say cow?"

"I distinctly heard you say cow."

"You heard a cow?"

John stopped to think for a moment, then sat back, a wry smile on his face. "You're not getting me with that 'herd of cows' joke, Scott. That's old and lame."

"Oh? I thought it was rather clever," Scott replied. "Tyler got me with it."

"It was clever... when Tyler got me with it, too," John admitted with a grin. "What did his birth father teach that kid, anyway?"

"I dunno, but he must have had a weird sense of humor," Scott replied. He sat back and gave John a long, piercing look. "So, what did you want to talk about?"

John blew out a frustrated breath, and pushed his hair back with a wet hand. "Well, I tried to do something nice for one of our new recruits and it backfired on me, rather spectacularly." He went on to describe the situation between Kat and Callie. "I feel like no good deed goes unpunished, y'know?"

Scott whistled. "Yeah, you got yourself into a pretty pickle, John." He stopped to think for a moment. "I think that, as much as you'd like things to smooth over between Kat and Callie, you need to let them work it out now. You've done all you can. You know that Callie will eventually forgive Kat. But you'll have to remember that they'll still be cool for a while. And for the record - I think your gesture was a generous one. I know how frustrated you got when Alan would weasel his way out of some of his duty. For you to actually volunteer to go up so soon is really big of you. Kat and Callie don't understand how generous your offer really is."

"And no one is going to tell them, either," John said in a warning tone. "I don't want them to know."

Scott nodded. "Hey, if they find out, it won't be from me." He cocked his head a little and frowned slightly. "Y'know, this also gives you an indicator of what Kat thinks of pursuing a relationship with you."

John sighed. "Yeah. I noticed. I've basically tried to tell her that, though I want to get to know her better, at this point, my world doesn't revolve around her. I don't want to rush into anything, or feel like I'm being rushed into anything. I want things to develop slowly, starting with a friendship. I also don't want her world to revolve around me. She has other friends to make." He shrugged. "I'm giving us both some space. Maybe over the weekend we can do something together."

"You do want this to go somewhere, though, don't you?" Scott asked. "You were so shocked when you first found out you had feelings for her..."

John cut in. "Yes, yes. Of course I want it to go somewhere... maybe even down the aisle if that's in the cards. But I want to be sure. Sure of myself. Sure of her. And sure of us together." He chuckled. "Kind of like Mom and Dad were. And like Dad and Dianne are."

"No divorces in your future, huh?"

"Not if I can help it."

The two men sat back in the water and let the bubbling jets massage away some of their tension. John rested his head back and sighed in relaxation, closing his eyes. But his eyes flew open as a large, cold raindrop fell between them, the water running down both sides of his nose.

"Damn," Scott muttered. He rose from the water. "I was hoping that the rain had stopped for the

night. Help me turn this off and cover it up, will you?"

John hurriedly got out of the tub, the cold rain showering down on his back and making him shiver. He hastily threw his t-shirt on and put his towel over his head and shoulders. But it didn't help much. Even Scott's teeth were chattering by the time they had gotten the hot tub squared away. The two scurried back into the house, rubbing their wet arms and shivering as they entered the warm dining room. There they got strange looks from Tin-Tin and Brains, who were sharing a pot of hot cocoa.

"C-C-Can w-we have s-s-s-some?" Scott asked plaintively.

Brains smiled and shook his head. "Tin-Tin, would you please make these two drowned rats some cocoa while I fetch some dry towels?"

"Of course," Tin-Tin said with a chuckle. "You two had better wait for the towels, though. Father would not be pleased if you got the dining room upholstery wet!"

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:29:01 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/21/2006 1:53 PM

Thursday, July 12, 11 p.m., Thunderbird Five

Alan yawned and stretched. The night had been rather uneventful. A forest fire in Serbia - well contained by the local firefighting squads. A power grid failure in Johannesburg - experts were coming from outlying areas to help restore power. A multi-car pile up in California - the verdict on that one was out, but it seemed that the locals were coping with it. Nothing intense enough to involve International Rescue.

He checked his email for a final time before heading for his bunk. "Hey!" he said softly. "Here's something from John!"

Opening up the email, he began to read.

Hey, squirt!

Thought you should know that I'll be taking the next shift in Five. I found out that Callie's birthday is in August, and thought she should spend it with her family instead of a lonely space station. So I offered to swap duty months with her, she accepted, and Dad approved it. In fact, Dad's going to make the swap permanent so that none of us have to spend our birthdays in orbit. I'm sure you'll be hearing from him later.

Things are relatively quiet down here. Since the kiddos are in the States, there's none of the usual

political infighting, and no one here to give me a run for my money in pinball. Gordon played the old "whoopie cushion" joke on Brandon; seems that our new aquanaut is a match for the old - he gave Gordon his little toy just before that meeting today, in front of nearly everyone.

Speaking of that meeting, whew! A chill ran up my spine when I realized that the Hood was back in town! Right now I just feel like we're waiting on a powder keg of sorts, waiting for it to explode - and for him to make the next move. I really wish we could do something proactive; like find him and beat the crap out of him for what he's done to Kyrano and what he just did to Tin-Tin. I'm so glad that whatever he was after in India, he didn't have time to really mess with Kat. Shoving her down and stealing that hoverbike was enough!

Hope you're okay and not leaving your dirty socks strewn around. I'll give you a call sometime later this weekend.

Ciao,
John

Alan chuckled. "So, things are quiet down there, huh? I'd like to see that for myself. Unfortunately, by the time I get home, the twerps will be home, too." He shrugged. "Oh, well. At least I know who's coming in August."

He yawned again. "I'll answer John in the morning." Sliding his sash over his head, he draped it over one arm and approached the bank of receivers, flipping a switch to send the polyglot murmur downstairs where he could hear it. Then he walked over to the window. The portion of the Earth over which he orbited was dark now, with spangles of man-made stars outlining the major cities that edged the Pacific. He smiled, and looked to the spot where he knew his family resided. It was too small to see, and the lights were never bright enough, but he knew where it was.

"Goodnight, guys. Talk to you in the morning," he said softly. Then he turned and headed for the little elevator that would take him to his quarters on the lower level.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:32:03 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/22/2006 5:20 PM

Tracy Island, Friday, July 13th, 4:30 am

Elise zipped up the duffel bag she'd packed and headed towards her front door. Scott had wanted to get an early start on their long flight to New Hampshire. She sighed, worried about the next few days, and trying not to think about it. Of course, today being Friday the 13th didn't help matters either.

Opening the door and stepping into the lift, she noticed a cream colored envelope with her name

on it lying on the floor. She picked it up and opened it. Inside was a note.

'Elise, I know the next few days will be hard for you. I want you to know you're not alone, and even though I won't be there in person, I'll be thinking of you. Take care, honey. Virgil.'

Placing the note back in its envelope, she fought back the sudden, unexpected tears. Having so many people care about her made her all the more determined not to let them down. She tucked the envelope away in her bag and, closing the door quietly, headed towards the hangar to meet Scott and Dianne.

Scott had been up for hours it seemed, and was anxious to get going.

"She'll be here any moment and then we'll be under way," Dianne softly re-assured her stepson.

"I know, I guess I just want to get this over with as much as Elise does."

Dianne smiled gently and squeezed his arm. "We all do Scott, we all do."

At that moment the subject of their conversation walked in. "I'm ready," was all she said.

"Great, let's go." Scott answered and the threesome made their way to board Tracy One. Scott settled himself into the pilot's seat and started his pre-flight check. Dianne and Elise made themselves comfortable in the cabin.

"How long do you think it'll take us?" Elise asked Scott.

"I'm planning on flying Mach 2 most of the way. We'll re-fuel in LA so I'm estimating we'll touchdown in New Hampshire around 8:30 pm Thursday night. So sit back and relax, unless you want to take over sometime later?"

She thought for a second and said, "Yeah, I'd like that. Thanks."

"No problem," Scott answered.

They were under way in no time and the constant humming of the engines soothed Elise as she sat back and thought about what lay ahead. She remembered Virgil's note in her bag and smiled. It was comforting to know that people truly cared about one and another at IR. Well, most of the time anyway.

Her mind then recalled an argument she'd overheard few days earlier in Callie's apartment between Callie and Kat. She wasn't sure what it had all been about, but Kat had not been a happy camper!

Dianne watched Elise from across the cabin, noticing the girl's expression. "Penny for your thoughts?"

Elise turned and said "Oh, just thinking how we've all got demons we'll have to deal with at some time or another."

Dianne chuckled. "Ah think you are quite right." She paused before continuing, "Elise, Scott and I both know how difficult this trip may be for you. I've been through it with Jeff. But I want you to know that we're here with you every single step of the way."

Elise saw the sincerity in Dianne's eyes. "I know." was all she could manage to say in reply.

In no time at all it seemed, they were approaching LA and landing for re-fueling.

"Care to stretch your legs, ladies?" Scott came into the cabin and the group exited the aircraft for a few minutes.

Outside Scott approached Elise, while Dianne went for a walk. "How are you holding up?"

"All right, I guess." she looked up at him, squinting in the sun.

"How 'bout you take us the rest of the way and give me a break?" He grinned at her.

"Fine. If you can't hack it, I'll show you how it's really done!" she teased as she started back towards the aircraft.

"Hey, Collins! I only have one answer to that... does the word 'Fireflash' mean anything to you?" Scott shouted humorously.

She turned in mid-stride and yelled, "Shut-up, Tracy!" and disappeared into the plane.

Scott laughed out loud, and was still laughing when Dianne came back. "Well, so far so good it would seem?"

Scott looked at his step mother. "Yeah, I think she'll make it."

The rest of the flight was uneventful and soon they were approaching Conway, New Hampshire. Scott came up to the cockpit and got comfortable in the co-pilot's seat.

Elise gave him a look and said, "I can see in the dark you know, I think I can land this plane!"

Scott returned 'the look' and replied, "I know that! I just thought you might like some company."

"Uh huh." Her tone said it all; she was not convinced. The plane touched down smoothly and came to a halt outside the private hangar.

first steps by FrankieCTB2

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood

From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 4/26/2006 10:15 AM

Friday July 13, 11:15 AM, Tracy Island

Virgil's fingers moved slowly across the piano keys as he read the unfamiliar score. He had received a package of new sheet music with the last post. It's always good to have a new challenge, he thought. He frowned as he hit the wrong note, and started over undeterred. No matter how much concentration he gave over to learning the music, however, he couldn't quite get Elise out of his head. I hope her own challenge won't prove too much for her -- scratch that, I know it won't... He got to the end of the fifth bar and hit the wrong key again, and started over. I hope she got my note, he thought as he continued. And I hope it helped.

Soon enough he was making his way through the piece fluidly, and he smiled lightly. Ever since he had first touched a piano, it had come easily to him. He played it through once more, and looked up to see Gordon walking in somewhere around the middle. He finished with a little flourish, and Gordon shook his head.

"Show off," he said. "I've never heard that one before."

"It's new. Got it in the mail."

"Huh. I thought you'd graduated beyond using other people's stuff. I should have guessed, though. It was too good to be one of your compositions."

Virgil held up one fist in mock threat, and Gordon grinned cheekily.

"One does not 'move beyond' using other people's work," Virgil said haughtily. "One always keeps on top of the latest developments, so one can be better than them."

"Oh, I do apologise," Gordon said with a little bow.

The two chuckled as Gordon straightened, and Virgil started to gather his sheets together.

"So, what's up?" He asked.

"Nothing much. I too am enjoying a rare lazy morning."

"For you, they're hardly rare," Virgil said, and was rewarded with a light smack to the back of his head. "Hey!"

"Actually," Gordon said, his tone suddenly becoming sober, "I was thinking about Elise. I sure hope she'll be okay."

"She will be," Virgil said as he rose from the piano bench. "She'll do just fine."

"Yeah."

"Now, if you'll give me a minute to tidy this away, what do you say to a little 'friendly' pinball competition? I want to whup your butt before I start some diagnostics on TB2."

"You whup my butt? I think not. You're on!"

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:35:39 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 4/26/2006 5:30 PM

Thursday, July 12, 2068, 10:00 p.m. local time (1:30 p.m. July 13, Tracy Island)

"Oh, yeah! I remember this place!" Elise exclaimed as Dianne pulled the SUV up into the drive, parking before the A-frame cottage. She gave the older woman a wide grin. "What did you think of it when you first saw it?"

"I love it, and I love the man who gave it to me," Dianne said with a soft smile. She glanced back at Scott, who was sitting in the back seat. "What do you think, Scott?"

"Ah, ooh, wow!" Scott said, looking stunned. "Dad certainly has good taste. I hope my wife doesn't expect these kinds of Valentine's gifts!"

The women laughed and Dianne shook her head. "You'll remember, Scott, that I didn't exactly ask for this," she reminded him. "But if you think this big when your wife's birthday or Valentine's Day roll around, you'll have a nice, long, loving marriage."

"He's got to get the woman first," Elise quipped.

"Watch it, Collins!" Scott growled as they got out, and began pulling their bags from the vehicle. Dianne had made sure that they stopped both at a restaurant for a light meal and at a grocery for supplies, so in addition to their luggage, they had several grocery bags to pull out and tote up to the house.

"Oh my word!" Elise said when Dianne turned on the lights. "This is gorgeous!"

"Yes, it is," Dianne agreed.

Scott whistled. "Did you decorate the place or did Dad?"

"Your father did, but he did say that if there was anything I didn't like, I could replace it."

"Oh? Have you found anything to replace?"

Dianne shook her head. "Not yet." She glanced around the living room, then took her grocery bags to the kitchen. "There's one bedroom downstairs, and two upstairs. I think you can figure out which one is mine and Jeff's."

"The one with the vase of roses?" Elise said as she opened a bedroom door.

"Vase of roses?" Dianne said, hurrying to join Elise in the door to her room. "How'd that get in here?" She smelled the fragrant flowers and noticed an envelope with the words, "To my Valentine" on the front. She opened it, glancing up at Elise and Scott, both of whom had leaned around the door jamb to watch her. Her cheeks flamed and she smiled as she read it, then she put the missive back in the envelope.

"Seems that Jeff has had th' local agent keepin' an eye on th' place," she said, a hint of drawl in her voice. "Ah'm glad. We don' need any bothah from th' local hooligans, an' bah thet Ah mean th' media." She stood up and took a deep breath of rose scent. "All right, folks. Let's get the groceries put away and get some sleep. Tomorrow will be a tough day."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:36:56 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/3/2006 7:06 PM

Friday, July 13, 2068, 2:30 p.m., Tracy Island

A sudden beeping made Jeff look up from the email he was writing to the Human Relations office in New York. A small window popped up on his computer screen, with the words, "Unauthorized Approach" flashing on it in bright red.

I'm glad we were able to ditch that screen behind Alan's portrait, he thought as he expanded the box. Now, who do we have coming in for a visit? There's nobody scheduled for today, and the mail plane has already been and gone.

He waited to see if the plane's identification code would flash up in his window, and when it didn't, he turned and opened communications.

"Tracy Island to unidentified aircraft. Please identify. I repeat, please identify."

There was a crackle of static, then a female voice cut in. "Tracy Island, this is Tracy Industries cargo flight 702, requesting permission to land."

"Flight 702?" Jeff muttered. He bounced his computer back to his email box, then the flight schedule for the surrounding airports and Tracy Island facilities. Finding nothing, he went back to the radio. "Flight 702, please confirm point of origin."

"Tracy Island, we are out of Los Angeles, with a stopover in Honolulu," the pilot replied. "We have freight destined for your location. Name on the packing order is Tin-Tin Kyrano."

"Please hold, Flight 702, while I confirm things on our end." Jeff hurriedly called down to the lab. "Tin-Tin? Are you there?"

"Yes, Mr. Tracy." Her voice came floating back up to his intercom. "Is there something I can help you with?"

"I have a cargo plane, purporting to be from Tracy Industries, carrying freight with your name on the packing slip. Any notion what it could be?"

"Oh!" Tin-Tin sounded both surprised and pleased. "It must be the new Penelar uniforms! I had a message from our agent in charge of collecting the pieces on Monday. I... I'm afraid that with what happened and all... but I did forward the email." She sounded very apologetic.

"I understand, Tin-Tin." He saved his email as a draft, signed off of the corporate server and onto the IR server. "Yes, there it is, with the flight number and all. I must have missed it in all of the excitement. I'll give them permission to land, but you'd better get out there to sign for it all."

"I'll be there momentarily, Mr. Tracy. I'll make sure to bring a float, too. I expect this will be a large delivery."

"Yes, I expect so. I'll have a couple of the boys head down to the airstrip to give us a hand. See you in a few moments."

"Yes, sir."

He cut off the intercom, and went back to the radio. "Flight 702 from Tracy Island, you have landing clearance and welcome."

"Thank you, Tracy Island. Beginning approach now."

Jeff signed off the IR server, and back onto the corporate one. "I should have just enough time to finish this email about hiring another 'personal pilot'. It's time to find a replacement for Christopher Jordan."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:38:43 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 5/6/2006 8:27 PM

*****Friday, July 13, 2068; Tracy Island, about 6 p.m.*****

Callie sat in the kitchen of her apartment, finishing her dinner. "I'm glad to have my appetite back, but I can't stop thinking about what happened between Kat and me this week."

Since her conversation with John, her anger had slowly turned into sadness. She didn't want to lose Kat as a friend, but she still felt the pain in her heart. Walking into her bedroom, she grabbed her diary from the night table and sat on her bed. With a sigh, she started writing.

It's been such a wild week. I was so excited when John and his father both gave me the chance to spend time with my family. That elation disappeared fast after what happened with Kat. I do intend to forgive her, but life's not like a 30-minute TV show where people are forgiven by the end of an episode.

What really irks me is the fact she accused me of trying to take away her time with John. I mean, from the argument, I think the two have something going, but one thing she's failed to understand is that the real world rarely has whirlwind romances. Those things may happen in the romance novels, but not in real life. Any true relationship needs time and trust between the two people first.

I hope Kat and I can be good friends again someday. Right now, however, it'll be hardest for me to forget about this. Things will probably remain cool for a while. She's still an important member of IR, though, and I won't allow the personal differences to get in the way of our job.

She closed her diary and placed it back on the night table. Writing her feelings on paper did help ease some worries on her mind. "That's life," she whispered.

Walking back to the living room, she turned on the television set and noticed something she had missed earlier in the week. "The Home Run Derby," she said with a smile. "I completely forgot it was on a couple of days ago. Oh, well, so it's tape-delayed. At least I can see who won this year."

As the competition continued for another 90 minutes, she said, "I feel a lot better than I did earlier." The relaxing feeling returned, and whatever she thought about the argument disappeared...with someone's 21st home run in the final round of the derby.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:41:12 GMT
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 5/8/2006 7:37 PM

Tracy Cabin, New Hampshire. Friday July 13th. Early.

The sun had barely poked it's head above the trees and mountains, yet for two of the three occupants of the quiet cabin, it seemed like mid-morning already. One was up because that was what he routinely did no matter where he was sleeping. The other was up because of her nerves and over-active mind.

Scott had showered and was making a fresh pot of coffee when Elise appeared in the kitchen wearing rumpled sweats and a messy ponytail. He took in the view and asked, "Sleep all right?"

"Not really. I thought I was tired, but then lay awake most of this night. Time change I guess."

Scott didn't reply but knew the last part was a lie. She was a pilot; with years of time changes in her system so there was no way the time change was the cause for her restless night. Fear had been the culprit for keeping her awake. He handed her a mug of hot coffee.

"Mmm...thanks." she said, sipping the liquid slowly.

He walked into the living room and sat on the couch. Elise walked over to the large windows and gazed at the view. Mountains and trees and sky were all there seemed to be; yet it was breathtaking.

"Beautiful isn't it?" Scott said.

"Yes, it is." She turned and went to sit down opposite him. "It's certainly different from the last time I saw it, all barren and bare, the night..." She suddenly stopped mid-sentence and changed the direction of what she was saying. "So how long will it take us to get there?"

Scott sensed her uneasiness and knew today was going to seem like an eternity. Truth be told, he wasn't sure he wanted to relive that night again either. "It shouldn't take too long; the back mountain roads will get us there in no time. Speaking of which, if I don't get Dianne up, we won't have enough time to do anything." He put down his mug and headed off towards Dianne's room. Elise swallowed the last mouthful of coffee, placed her cup in the sink and dragged herself to her room to get ready.

Scott was rather surprised that Dianne had answered her door just as he'd finished knocking. She was fully dressed and ready to go. At his look, she had simply stated, "Ah don't want to miss one moment of what Elise maybe going through today and the sooner we all get going, the better...Ah hope." They exchanged worried glances but said no more.

The ride to the crash site had been silent for the most part. Elise had sat in the back by herself, Dianne was up front and Scott was driving. Of course, they got there in no time. Dianne had to remind him a few times to slow down and told him the vehicle would never reach Mach One, no matter what he did to it! Elise had chuckled at that comment, and received a 'look' in the rear view mirror for her effort.

Dianne spoke as Scott slowed the SUV down to a stop. "This is as far as we can go by car, we'll have to walk the rest of the way."

The three stretched as they got out and looked around. The scenery was spectacular. Summer had come full blown to the wilderness of New Hampshire and Mother Nature had provided a serene, peaceful valley that was worlds away from the harsh, winter snow covered peaks that had brought tragedy into their lives.

Dianne led the way and soon the three of them were in a clearing where some trees had been broken down and strewn around. Flowers grew in between the fallen limbs and leaves and grass swished gently in the warm breeze. Scott and Elise slowly looked around them.

Dianne watched them closely. She'd been here with Jeff not too long ago and had watched him in much the same way. She'd spoken to him last night before retiring, and had told him she feared Scott might have a reaction that would surprise him. At first, Jeff had been willing to just let Scott take Elise, thinking his son's level head would be able to deal with anything. His wife, as usual, had persuaded him otherwise. Jeff had finally agreed and praised his wife for having the forethought to go along on this trip with Scott and Elise. Dianne smiled as she remembered Jeff's comments about 'rewarding her' when she returned home!

Although Elise had wandered off on her own, she was still in view and Dianne and Scott watched her. She seemed to be looking every which way and finding nothing, as if she couldn't place herself here. Elise sighed as she continued to look around, trying to imagine the surrounding area covered in snow. She didn't recognize any of it. This couldn't have been the crash site, could it? It was at that moment she kicked something. Moving her foot around she unearthed a shiny object. She reached down and picked the object up. It was about the size of her palm and black in color, with no signs of weathering. That's strange. Whatever it is it's well made...

Elise drew in a sharp breath. "No, it couldn't be!" She suddenly realized the material was the same as was used on aircraft fuselages. The last time she'd seen a black fuselage was on the chopper she'd been piloting. The same chopper that slammed her and Jeff Tracy into these mountains.

Scott had started to say something to Dianne when he heard Elise cry out and, as he turned, he saw her drop to her knees, clutching something. They both ran over to her, and Scott bent down gently touching her shoulder as he did so. "Elise, what is it? What's wrong?"

It took a few moments, but she finally turned and looked at him like a frightened child and held out the piece of wreckage. She struggled with her words while trying to breathe and not disintegrate into tears. "Oh God... Scott... it's, it's the chopper."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:41:55 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/16/2006 8:21 PM

Saturday, July 14, 2068, 1 a.m., Tracy Island; 8 a.m. Friday, July 13 in NH

Jeff rolled over in bed, his arm reaching out to its usual nighttime perch and finding... nothing. The lack of warm body beside him woke him enough that he opened his eyes and, seeing the relatively neat side of the bed, he remembered.

"Uhh." He rolled back over, drawing the cover with him. He closed his eyes, and tried to drop off again, but it was no good. He was awake now, and he sighed deeply.

Sitting up, he scrubbed his chin with a hand, then ran the other through his hair. He rose and padded to the bathroom, intending on using the throne, getting a small drink of water, then going back and trying to sleep again.

While he was there, he eyed the Jacuzzi speculatively. It brought out the memory of his and Dianne's visit to New Hampshire. The Jacuzzi in the master bedroom there certainly had gotten its share of use. He smiled, and remembered the quick phone call he'd gotten the previous afternoon.

"Hello theah, you rascal," Dianne had said. Her flirty drawl had made him chuckle.

"I guess that means you found my little surprise," he had answered, grinning.

"Ah most certainly did," she had replied. "An' yoah lettah. You made me blush, an' in front o' Elise an' Scott no less."

"Well, the sentiments were heartfelt, love. I can't wait until you get back."

"Me eithah. Ah jes' hope this does Elise all th' good in th' world. Ah don' want to lose her as a pilot."

"Nor do I." He had looked at his watch. "Isn't it getting late there?"

"Yes," she had replied with a sigh. "I've already sent the other two off to bed. Now I'd better get ready myself." Jeff had been disappointed that the drawl had dropped from her voice; that accent now turned him on, but only when she used it.

"Then I won't keep you. Goodnight, love. Sweet dreams."

"You know I won't have any sweet dreams until I'm home with you," she had said, her tone soft and regretful.

"Yes, you will," he had replied. "You just remember our time there and your dreams will be as sweet as honey."

"I remember our time here, and I'll be having problems with hot flashes," Dianne had quipped. "But I will try. Goodnight, Jeff. See you again soon."

"See you, love."

He smiled as he wandered back into the bedroom. One a.m.. That would make it roughly 8 a.m. there. I wonder... no, I'd better not. Dianne needs to focus on Elise and what they're going to do. I'll wait until after breakfast. Things should have come to a head there by then.

With that, he slipped back beneath the covers, and pulled her pillow out so he could perch his arm

on it. It wasn't as firm as her waist, but it still smelled of her, and it would have to do. Sighing, he closed his eyes, focused on his memories of Dianne in that Jacuzzi, and fell back to sleep.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:46:13 GMT

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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/17/2006 5:44 AM

Friday, July 13, 2068, 8:45 a.m., local time, Black Mountain, NH

Dianne reached a hand out to take the piece of metal from Elise's grasp. "May I?" she asked, letting her professionalism control her drawl. Elise didn't even look up as she held out her hand, robot-like. Dianne slowly took the piece without taking her eyes off Elise. Trying to control her own rising emotions, she looked at the small piece of wreckage. It was definitely the Tracy helijet. She closed her eyes briefly, and then spoke softly. "Scott, here. Take this."

Scott looked up at his stepmother and then took the piece from her. Scott's reaction was much the same as Dianne's. Neither one of them had expected to be looking at a piece of the wreckage of that awful night. Scott fingered the metal, feeling the familiar coolness and texture of the special material that Brains had come up with. He took in a deep breath and let it out shakily.

Dianne put a hand on Elise's shoulder. "Elise, what are you feeling right now? What are you remembering?"

Elise couldn't answer right away. She tried to process Dianne's questions, but it was as if her voice was fading far into the distance. The cold was creeping in, bitter cold and it was snowing again. She shivered. "Cold, so cold. The rain won't stop. The storm..." The memories flooded in then and Elise was thrust back into the nightmare which she'd tried so hard to escape from...

"Storm Straight ahead is the front of a severe ice storm... I'm afraid we maybe in for a rough ride Mr. Tracy. Wind speed is outrageous, I've never seen anything like this before." The controls started to fight her command. The chopper reared violently and started losing altitude. The rain/ice pounded the aircraft as it fought to remain airborne...

Elise started to shake her head and repeat, "No, no," over and over, caught up in the memories that were now so very real again.

"Elise? Talk to me Elise." Scott tried to bring her back to the present but one look at the girl's face told him she was caught up in the nightmare. (Flashback)

"Elise? Elise talk to me." Jeff Tracy's voice could barely be heard above the howling rage of the storm. Then the warning lights went off, growing louder and louder.

She fought to regain control but to no avail. "The instruments? they can't be right...something's not

right!" ...

"Elise I'm coming up there to help."

"NO! Mr. Tracy! Stay where you are... stay where you are..."

Elise raised her eyes to Scott. "I tried to get him to sit down with his seat belt on, he wouldn't listen." she sobbed. "He just wouldn't listen." Tears started to roll down her face and Scott gently started to rub her shoulder, hoping she'd feel the comfort he offered.

"He's a stubborn one all right," Scott said softly. He rubbed her shoulder some more. It seemed to calm her a little.

Dianne took advantage of this to redirect Elise's focus. "What then, Elise?" she asked, her voice soft but insistent.

"We rolled." It was a blunt statement, said to no one in particular. Scott closed his eyes knowing full well what Elise meant. A roll under full control of the pilot was one thing, but a roll out of control meant certain disaster. "We dropped like a bird and then there was this sound....this crunching thud and that was all...it was over. We were down."

Dianne didn't like the way Elise was suddenly so very calm and blunt. It meant she was removing herself from the memories, and that wasn't good.

"Mom? What's wrong with her?" Scott started to sound worried. He'd picked up on the change in Elise, too.

Dianne rubbed her chin, and blew an audible breath from her nose. "She's withdrawing," she murmured. "We have to bring this out." Glancing at Scott, she said, "Tell her what happened from our end of things."

Scott looked startled, but nodded. He took a moment to think back, then said, "I remember we were getting worried. Dad hadn't called in and no one seemed to know where he was. We heard that he'd taken his personal helijet out, and we had Alan - who was in Thunderbird Five at the time - track his watch. We were really surprised to find out he was in New Hampshire." He looked into Elise's face as he spoke. "I tried to call him on his watch, but there was nothing. He wasn't answering. I began to use the International Rescue call signs. Then, suddenly, there was a noise, and you started talking."

Elise's lip started to tremble as she held Scott's eyes and mumbled, "We weren't in New Hampshire, Scott, we were in hell, a living hell. No radio, no instruments, no one knew we'd gone down. There was no sound. I thought your dad was... he wasn't moving, and I couldn't get to him. I couldn't help him." She started crying again, more intensely this time and Scott moved closer to wrap both his arms around her as the horror unfurled once again...

There was pain, lots of pain and cold. She woke up confused and hurting on her right side. The cabin of the helijet came into focus and it was a mess. Realizing they had crashed, she started to clamber across the wreckage calling out for Jeff. There was no answer. Making her way to the

seat he was supposed to have been strapped in, she found instead a crumpled mass of fuselage and pinned underneath was Jeff.

"Oh God, he can't be.... no. He can't..." Scrambling to find the first aid kit, she managed to tuck some thermal blankets around him, his face, ashen and grey, remained motionless and she pleaded with him to wake up. "Mr. Tracy? Can you hear me? Wake up!"

He never moved.

Somehow making her way back to the radio, she tried to call for help. "Mayday! Mayday! Tracy Chopper One down, need immediate assistance."

There was no answer, not even static.

She suddenly felt very alone and helpless. Making her way back to Jeff again, she started pleading with him not to die, and then heard beeping. Knowing it wasn't the radio, she fumbled about until she realized it was his watch. Trying to find an alarm button she pressed something and then heard it. The voice of Scott Tracy.

"Tracy Island to Jeff Tracy! Come in Dad!" Relief overwhelmed her and her frozen fingers tried to find the contact button to talk to him.

Cradled in Scott's arms, Elise spoke again. "I couldn't believe I heard your voice, and then you said 'International Headquarters to Jeff Tracy. Come in Jeff Tracy.' I remember how confused I was at that, I thought I was losing it due to the cold."

Dianne watched Elise's reactions carefully, trying hard to push back her own visions of what had happened, her own memories of what she had seen and heard and done. I've dealt with it, and I'll continue to deal with it. But not now. Now it's time for Elise to deal with it, and go on from there. She waited a few moments for Elise to calm once more, then she asked, "How did you feel about what happened? You said you were confused when you heard Scott's voice; what happened after that?"

Elise was quiet for a minute or two, putting her thoughts and the memories into some order. "I remember talking to Scott, telling him we were down and we were critical."

"Scott! Thank God! It's Elise, we're down and we're critical. Storm... couldn't make it through... wind shear..." Breathing was becoming more difficult as the cold seeped into her veins. She wanted to close her eyes and go back to sleep. "Your dad, Scott... not good... gotta help him, Scott. You've got to help him! So cold in here..."

"It was then that I heard John's voice, promising me that Scott was coming, coming to get us. International Rescue were on their way. I don't remember much after that, I remember seeing you, Dianne, and you said you were his wife. I didn't get that at the time. God, I thought we were dead for sure." She started to cry more again, "I didn't want to die alone!" Scott felt her hands gripping his arms tighter. "I didn't want to die like they had, like my parents had."

It was then that she broke down completely and sobbed her heart out. Scott didn't know what to

say, so he just held her and comforted her.

flashbacks by FrankieCTB2 and Tikatu

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:47:34 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/17/2006 6:23 AM

Dianne sighed, feeling as if a weight had lifted. She waited patiently until the pilot had cried herself out before speaking. "I think, Elise, we've come to the crux of the matter. Your parents drowned, dying in the cold waters, wet and alone. You nearly did as well; there was nothing you could do to help them. And here you were, facing a similar situation, cold, wet and alone, with someone relying on you for salvation, just as you thought your parents were relying on you." She knelt down and put a hand on Elise's shoulder and squeezed it. "Elise, look at me."

Elise turned her tear-streaked face to Dianne. "Now listen to me," the doctor said firmly. "When your parents died, you were nine. There was nothing humanly possible that you could do to save them. But when the chopper went down, you could - and did - do everything possible to save both yourself and Jeff. You took control, Elise. Now you need to take control again. It's not easy; I can attest to that. But it can be done, and you are strong enough to do it. Especially since you now know where the root of your fears comes from." She smiled. "You're no longer a child in a situation that is out of your hands. You have tools to help combat the fear. And you have people who are willing to help you through it."

"I... I don't know if I'm strong enough," Elise whispered.

"You are. You've come here and faced your demons," Scott said, his voice raspy. "I'm not saying it'll all go away with a wave of Dianne's magic wand..."

"What magic wand?" Dianne quietly retorted, a smile playing about her lips.

Scott rolled his eyes and continued, "But you can work on it now. You know what the demon is, where it came from. That knowledge is a very powerful weapon." He gave Elise a short hug. "And, like Dianne said, you're not alone in this."

"This is only the start, really, but it's a good start towards healing," Dianne added. She looked up. Elise followed her gaze and, suddenly, the clearing, with its bright meadow, came alive to Elise again. The birds were singing, the insects were buzzing around, and she could feel the warm sun on her face. The scent of the grass, and the wildflowers, and Scott's sweat, all rolled over her, and she sighed.

"How do you feel now?" Dianne asked.

"Tired. Washed out," Elise replied truthfully. "But better."

"Good." A rumbling noise sounded out, and Dianne colored, then smiled. "Well, there's another country heard from. Are you two ready for breakfast?"

"I sure am," Scott said, grinning.

"I... I guess so," Elise said. She was still feeling a bit unsettled, but she did feel immeasurably better.

"Then let's go into town and find one of those little Mom and Pop places," Dianne suggested, as she stood. "Those are the spots for the best breakfasts."

"You're on," Scott replied. He stood, and reached down to help Elise up. That's when he realized that he still had the piece of wreckage in his hand. He used the other help her lever herself from the ground, then he held out the bit of metal and asked, "Do you want to keep this?"

Elise shook her head. "No. Leave it behind."

"Okay." Scott smiled, and tossed it away.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:50:36 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/17/2006 9:14 AM

Friday, July 13, 2068, 1:30 p.m., local time, Jacksonville, FL (roughly 6:30 a.m., July 14, Tracy Island)

"There they are," the woman said to the man who sat beside her, watching the children cavorting in the subdivision pool.

"Which ones?"

"Hmm. Let's see." The woman peered through the windshield. "Yeah. See the teenager with the long, kind of honey brown hair and the shades? She's wearing a blue maillot."

The man lifted a vidcam to his eye and adjusted his zoom lens. "Yeah, I see her. Can't get a good shot from here; the windshield's too dirty."

"Okay. Then the blond boy who's playing with the smaller boy... the one with the brick red hair. They both have buzz cuts but I think you can see..."

"Yeah. The older one's wearing a t-shirt?"

"That's him."

"The younger kid is the brother?"

"Yes."

"Okay, got them. Let's go."

The pair got out of the sedan. The man leaned up against the hood of the car, lifting the camera, and using the zoom lens to try and capture the three children who were sunning themselves or swimming among the others from the upscale subdivision. The woman started to go around the fence, planning on calling out the name of the girl and trying to get a few words with her.

Suddenly, a hand thrust itself upwards, covering the lens of the camera and dragging it down. The photographer glared at the older woman who had hold of his device. The would-be interviewer was intercepted by a brawny man, who stood in her way and blocked her every attempt to get closer to the pool.

"Get out of my way. I'm with the press," she said, trying to push past him. He merely smiled and changed his position.

"Let go of my lens!" the cameraman said, frowning. "You're putting hand prints on it!"

"Sorry, but no pictures," the older woman said, firmly taking hold of the vidcamera, keeping her hands over the lens. He struggled to pull it free, but she had a good grip.

"That's enough!" A sharp voice cut between the two small parties. All four people turned to see a young woman, dressed smartly, a Tracy Industries lapel pin on her suit's jacket, standing beside the sedan. "Maureen, Elliott, bring them back here."

The interviewer, seeing this woman as someone in charge, flounced up to her, beckoning for her photographer to follow. "I am Sarah Gerrold, with NTBS Jacksonville. My cameraman, Sid, and I are here to get a few words with the Tracy children. You are interfering with freedom of the press!"

"And you, Ms. Gerrold, are interfering with the Tracy family's right to privacy," the well-dressed woman said. "You get one warning; do not try and interview or take pictures of the Tracy children. If we see you or your cameraman loitering around them again, we will turn you over to the police."

"On what charge?"

The smartly dressed woman smiled. "Trespassing. Haven't you seen the signs? This is a subdivision pool and only members are allowed." She looked at her fellow security people. "And before you ask: we have standing permission to accompany the Tracy children to the pool and the other subdivision amenities." She poked a well-manicured finger at Sarah. "Now, leave them alone, or find yourself in jail."

"And what will you do if we don't?" Sarah Gerrold put her head up proudly.

"Besides having you arrested for trespassing... or stalking?" the security chief said. "Cease and desist orders against your affiliate here and your main headquarters in New York, civil lawsuits against both you and Sid seeking damages for the children's emotional distress, a lawsuit against your affiliate for the same... in other words, we will tie you in such legal knots that you'll lose your job, and more."

"But the Tracys are newsworthy!"

"Correction: Mr. Tracy is newsworthy and a public figure. His adopted children are not. Now go."

Sarah Gerrold looked as if she was going to be stubborn, but the security chief merely said, "Elliott?" The brawny man took out his cell, and began dialing for the police.

"All right, all right. We're going." Gerrold motioned to Sid, and they walked back to the sedan. "We'll find another way," she whispered to him. "Later."

He nodded. They both got into the car and drove out of the parking lot.

"Do you think they'll be back, Liz?" Maureen asked as she watched them go.

"Probably," Liz said, sighing. "Fortunately the kids only have two more days here then they're on their way to South Carolina to their maternal grandmother's house. Then the security people up there can deal with the press."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:52:09 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/17/2006 1:46 PM

Friday, July 13, 2068, 7:45 p.m., local time, Black Mountain, NH

Scott stood out on the balcony of the cottage, a cold beer in his hand. He leaned forward on the balcony rail, and looked out on the high cirrus clouds, reflecting the sun's light in the pinks, and peaches and lavenders of sunset.

Dianne had planned a nice dinner, and had set him to grilling steaks. Elise helped out; she was still subdued to some extent, but by the end of the meal she was laughing at Dianne's stories along with Scott. The women were cleaning things up, and Scott took a quiet moment to reflect on the morning's events.

Finding that piece of wreckage was so... so eye opening. The meadow was so different from what I remember that winter night... was it only six months ago? It was as if the clearing was a different place, the wrong place. But that little bit of wreckage...

"Penny for them," came a voice from behind.

Scott turned abruptly to find Dianne behind him, a glass half full of wine in her hand. "Oh, hi, Mom." He went back to looking at the clouds as she joined him at the railing. "I was just thinking how... different that clearing was from the night when... it happened."

"I know what you mean," she said, standing close. "I could barely believe it myself when your father and I were here." She took a sip of her wine. "It was a rough time, but it went far to help me get over what happened."

"Do you think it will help her?" he asked, glancing back with a shake of his head toward the cabin.

"Yes, I do. She knows now what she is afraid of more than anything. It's not the water; it's dying in it." Dianne glanced back. "It will still take some time, and I don't know if she'll ever fully shake it, but she'll be able to realize the fear for what it is, and take control of it."

"Good." Scott took a swig of his beer, but glanced up, startled, when Dianne put a hand on his shoulder.

"And what about you?" she asked, her voice quiet.

He gave her a smile. "What about me?"

"How did you feel, seeing that place today?"

His smile faded, and he took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. "I'm... I'm not sure. It was hard. I couldn't stop the memories from flooding out. I tried to put them aside to help Elise."

"How did you feel, remembering?"

Scott could tell she was in her doctor mode. "I remember feeling so helpless to do anything, except keep that light shining on the wreckage. It was worse than when one of the boys gets hurt on a rescue; at least there I usually can do something, even if it's order the others around, or coordinate information. But I couldn't even land."

"You don't like feeling helpless, do you?"

"Does anyone?" he replied with a snort. "It was hard because it was... Dad. Maybe I'm prepared for the possibility of my brothers getting hurt or even killed; we've been at it so long that I... I've gone in with that at the back of my mind. But Dad? No way. I know I should be prepared; he's not going to last forever, but not that way. Not so suddenly and without any warning."

Dianne squeezed his shoulder. "I understand that feeling, Scott. No one is prepared for a death in the family and even less if it's sudden, and violent. Yet, you have to realize that, although you weren't able to land and get your hands dirty, you were far from helpless. You were the steady rock that everyone leaned on, and that was no small feat considering the situation." She gave him a small smile. "You helped me focus when I needed it, too, and for that, I thank you."

Scott put down his beer, and mother and son embraced. He didn't know why, but somehow his eyes were tearing up and he found it hard to breathe properly. He let out a shuddering sob, and suddenly, instead of him being his stepmother's support, she was his.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood

Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:55:12 GMT

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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 5/20/2006 7:20 PM

The sun sank in glorious splendor of reds, oranges, and pinks in the sky as a two-seater, silver blue, Mach 3 model Jet Star made its approach on the landing strip at the Tracy Industries Testing Grounds outside Wichita, Kansas. Richard Tate, test pilot as well as emergency donor pilot, stood watching with arms folded, feet apart, as the swift plane landed and then taxied up to its hanger bay. The name of the plane, Blue Streak, was painted on the right hand side near the nose cone. As soon as the plane rolled to a stop, Tate drove a small tractor up to the plane and hooked it up to prepare for berthing.

The scream of the engines died away suddenly. The owner pushed the canopy back. A pair of hands reached up to pull the navy blue helmet off, revealing a crown of braided auburn hair encircling a soft pale oval face and a confident smile.

Tate got back out of his tractor, concerned. The pilot was taking her time getting out of the jet. "Hey, Heather!" A navy blue glove gave him a slow, royal wave, and then grasped the sides of the cockpit to push herself up and out of the seat. Tate walked purposely up as close to the side of the cockpit as he could and offered the lady a helping hand. "So, were you able to get that heart to the patient's medical team in time?"

Heather smiled with yawn. "Yes! I cut it kind of close though. There was a thunderstorm halfway to Kansas City and I had to make a slight detour. Donor tissues can't take a lot of shaking around. The flight has to be as smooth as possible." Pulling herself out onto the Blue Streak's wing, she continued, "I'm tired, but at least today I didn't have to test fly. I played a long streak of poker here at the testing grounds, and then I got the emergency flight call. Oh, Richard, the sky was just beautiful!"

"How did you do in the poker game---or dare I ask?"

"I cleaned up, and I ticked off one of the players so bad, he attacked me as I was trying to get to the plane for that trip to Kansas City."

Helping her down off the wing, Richard shook his head. "I heard security arrested Jack Little. I didn't know he took it out on you! So, what happened?"

Rubbing her forearm in remembrance and wincing again, she walked with Richard to the hanger's exit. "He was drunk, and you know how he gets when he's drunk?"

"Yup. I do---unfortunately. Then what?"

As they talked, she noticed Richard was walking with her through the hanger. His body hugged her personal space and after flying in a cramped cabin, she needed some room. "Dick, you don't have to escort me, you know."

"Hey," Richard replied. "I know you can kick some serious butt with your Tae Kwon Do and all, but I would be remiss in my duties to make sure you are all right. We're partners! Live with it." He received a snappy salute. As their boots tapped a slightly out of sync beat against the cement flooring, Richard pulled out a piece of paper with a name and phone number. "Your mother called. Turned off your cellphone again, eh?"

"Oh no," Heather sighed, pulling out her cellphone and turning it on. "Did you have to take it? I told her not to call the testing grounds! If Maw isn't careful, Mr. Tracy himself will chase me out of here because of her!"

"Maw'? Boy, that prairie accent is definitely kickin' in, Kennedy."

"And yo not helpin', Tate!"

"That was bad!"

"Yup! Ah know!"

Richard dropped her off at the nearest exit that would take her into the airport's facilities. Heather made her way down the hallway, eventually coming out in a map room that held a long briefing table and chairs. Stepstools sat pushed up against a contour map of Kansas at the Oklahoma border. From the map room, she walked down another short corridor until she reached the testing grounds' comfortable lounge room. Here, Heather savored the quiet, while making herself a glass of iced tea from a nearby iced tea brewer near the bulletin board. She barely had a moment to take a sip when the electronic beeps of Pomp and Circumstance came from an inner pocket of her leather flight jacket. She groaned to no one in particular. "I am not in the mood for this. Grrrr!"

Leaning against the bulletin board where several notices, both large and small, were posted, she pulled out the cellphone. One notice was for a pizzeria. Heather cringed. "Forget that. Maybe a hamburger somewhere. A third pounder! Or a taco salad. No, wait---a T-bone steak medium rare!" Her stomach rumbled. Popping the lid of the little phone, she answered it. "Hi Maw---"

"Heather Marie Kennedy!" came the response from her mother, causing Heather to pull the receiver away from her ear. "I did not send you to private school all those years so you could lapse into talking like a-a-a hayseed from Dodge City!"

"I love you, too, Mother. How are you?"

"Hi 'Feather'!" a young male voice said next, interrupting her mother's conversation.

"Hey Donnie! How's life treatin' you?"

"Hello, Heather. How's my sweetheart doing? How's that bird of yours holding up?"

Hearing the multitude of questions, Heather laughed while trying to sort them out. "Hi, Dad! The Jet Star is lovely! She flies like a dream."

"Oh, Heather!" She heard her mother say. "Honestly, by all rights you should come home, stay home, and be properly married--"

"Martha, leave that girl alone for right now. Ignore her, Heather. You sound tired. How was your day, sweetheart?"

"Not too bad. I made about \$2,000 tonight at a local poker game and then I received an emergency call from the hospital...."

"Another donor flight?"

"Yes, Dad. I hit a large thunderstorm and had some high winds to contend with--"

"Heather!" her mother interrupted. "I think it's high time you got rid of this 'job' of yours testing aircraft for Tracy Industries. Does that man ever appreciate the job you do?"

"Mother--"

"And does he realize how dangerous it is? Didn't you have to--oh what is the word now? The last trip you made and something went wrong, and you had to escape...?"

"'Bailed out' is the phrase you're looking for."

"Honey, I'm tired of worrying about you every single day, wondering if we're going to get a call that you're dead!"

Come on, Dad. Cut in any time now! Heather inwardly groaned, dropping her forehead against the bulletin board's posts for positions opening. Suddenly, she felt exhausted as her mother rattled away her worries. Her eyes stared at one plain white index card. Jeff Tracy was looking for a new personal pilot. He's asking for a new pilot already? What happened to the one he just hired?

"Heather," James said with a carefully gentle voice. "I do have to agree with your mother on this. I worry, too. There's no reason why you can't just 'retire' from your work at the testing grounds and get a position with my company."

It was bad enough that she had to hear that from her mother almost every time she called, but now with her father adding his voice to her mother's, Heather felt defeated. Fuming at what she considered a slight betrayal from her father, who helped finance her Jet Star in the first place, Heather decided it might be time to try again in applying for personal pilot with Jeff Tracy. Making her decision, she felt better already.

"Okay. I give up. I've decided you are right and I'm going to go ahead and apply for a new

position." She could hear her mother praising God, her father's heavy sigh of relief, and almost wished she hadn't said it.

"Wonderful!" Martha said with delight. "When can you make it home?"

"Oh, I'm not coming home," Heather said with a smile on her face.

"But you said--"

"I said I was going to get a new position--as Jeff Tracy's personal pilot! Bye, Maw! Bye, Paw!" With that, she firmly tapped the cellphone, cutting off the connection in Virginia. With iced tea in hand, she walked out of the exit, heading for the parking lot where her jet black Jaguar waited for her.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafroe](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:56:22 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 5/21/2006 8:49 AM

Tracy Island -- July 14, 2.30p.m.

Gordon peeked round the kitchen door. Grandma was busy cooking, and the smell had drawn the young man to see what she was making.

There was a large plate of chocolate muffins lying temptingly within his reach. She had her back to him, so slowly, inch-by-inch, he moved nearer and nearer to the plate.

"Gordon Tracy! Just what do you think you're doing?"

Her voice made him jump, and he accidentally knocked the plate onto the floor, smashing it and ruining the muffins.

"Goodness, look what you've done. I was making them especially for when your mother, Scott and Elise return."

Feeling guilty, he said, "Aww, gosh, Grandma, I'm sorry. They looked so tempting."

"Then you'd better help me make some more."

"But I can't cook," he protested.

"Then I think it's high time you learnt."

"But Grandma, I promised Virgil and John I'd join them in the games room. I've challenged them to a game of pool."

"Then the sooner you help me, the sooner you can join them," Grandma said sternly, handing him one of her frilly aprons. "Here put this on."

"Do I have to?" Gordon protested.

"While you're cooking with me, yes, you do."

Gordon began to measure out the ingredients under his Grandma's eagle eye. He was just starting to mix the ingredients when to his horror, Virgil stuck his head around the kitchen door.

"Grandma, have you seen...?" Then he let out a howl of laughter at the sight of his brother with a frilly apron on, vigorously stirring something in a large bowl.

"Man, Gords, the lengths you'll go to avoid a thrashing at pool."

"This had better not go any further," Gordon said through gritted teeth.

Virgil continued laughing. "Well, Grandma, I'll not hinder your little helper. See you later, Gordon; happy cooking. I'll just tell John you are temporarily indisposed."

When he left, Gordon muttered, "If this gets out, I'll be the laughing stock of the family."

"Then maybe you'll think twice before trying to help yourself next time," Grandma said smiling.

As soon as the muffins were baked and Gordon had taken them out of the oven to cool, he rushed out of the kitchen and headed for the games room. In his desire to get away quick he had forgotten that he was still wearing Grandma's apron.

"Aww man," he said quickly undoing the apron strings. He was just going to shove it under a cushion in the lounge, when he heard Brains coming in. Gordon disappeared as quickly as he could back to the kitchen to return the offending apron to Grandma. Once he made sure there were no traces of what he'd been doing on him, he headed out to have that pool game.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 22:58:08 GMT
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[b]From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 5/23/2006 12:16 AM [/i]

Tracy Island -- July 14th, early evening.

It was now three days since John had spoken to Kat. She had told him that she had tried to apologise to Callie, but that in fact Callie was finding it difficult to accept Kat's apology. In fact according to Kat, Callie had intimated that she might never forgive her friend. He had agreed to

have a word with her.

"Hey, John, care to join me in the gym?" Virgil approached his brother.

But John shook his head. "No thanks, Virgil, I'm going to have a chat with Kat. I want us to start spending more time together before I leave."

He activated his communications watch. Her face came into view.

"Hi Kat." He smiled at her. "I'm just going for a walk on the beach; would you care to join me? "

"Yes, I'd love to. I'll be right with you."

"Meet me by the pool and wear something warm; it's rather chilly."

Shortly she joined him. Giving him a slight smile, she said, "Hi, John."

"Hello, Kat. How've you been doing?"

"I have to say that things are cool between myself and Callie, but I guess that was to be expected considering how I treated her. As for the others, nothing has been said, but I sometimes see them looking at me. I think they must wonder what has been happening."

"Kat," John began. "I've had a talk with Callie. She told me that you had apologised to her, and that she may be able to forgive you in time. That's not the impression you gave me."

Kat took a deep breath and with a shaky voice said, "Oh John, I was so upset at how Callie acted, that I don't think I really took on board what she was saying. She was so icy; I guess that in my distress, I just heard her say that she wouldn't forgive me. I'm sorry, if I mislead you." Here her voice faltered. "I have really missed seeing and talking to you." Then she added, "Actually, I don't usually act like this. I can stand up for myself, but this time I was rather a bitch. My mother says that at times like this, I should engage my brain before I act. I just over-reacted at the acute disappointment I was feeling."

"Okay, Kat," John said. "Let's just leave it here and consider it a valuable lesson."

For a while they continued walking. Then he stopped and glanced down at her.

"I have missed seeing and talking to you as well. Now I think that we should arrange to spend time together again. Also, when I'm in Thunderbird Five we can communicate by emails as we did last time but, if Dad agrees, then maybe we can chat via the satellite phones as well." He glanced down at her. "I'll miss you more than I did last time," he added.

"You will? Oh, John, I'm going to miss you so much as well. August will seem such a long month."

Then looking up at the darkening sky, where one or two stars beginning to appear, he remarked, "You know, tonight looks like the right conditions to stargaze, and view the comet."

Kat half-smiled, and said, "I'd love to spend the evening on the roof with you again."

They continued walking along the beach.

"Have you read any of the books I lent you?" she asked.

"Not quite," John admitted, "but I like mystery whodunits, and these medieval stories add an intriguing twist. I fully intend to read them all."

By now it was getting quite cold. Kat began to shiver, even though she was wearing her warmest sweater. Noticing her shiver, John took off his jumper and helped her put it on. As he did so, their hands touched. Kat giggled. It came down to her knees, and she had to roll up the sleeves. John laughed as well.

"You look so funny, Kat."

"Well, you're so tall," she replied.

"How about we go to the kitchen and make some hot chocolate to take with us on the roof?"

The pair headed back towards the villa. In the kitchen, John made two steaming mugs of chocolate and, handing one to Kat, they continued through the villa. They stopped at his room to enable him to grab a sweater, and then continued up onto the roof.

"The box is still here?" Kat sounded somewhat surprised.

"Yes, I knew you'd be back to have another look through the telescope," he replied.

Kat was glad that it was dark, and that he couldn't see how she coloured at his remark.

For the next hour, he pointed out to her the various constellations and the comet.

"There you are!" he said. "Now you can show your friends the comet."

Kat wrapped her arms around her. Noting this; John placed his arm around her shoulders.

"It's getting colder. I think we had better go back inside. I don't want you catching cold."

They went back inside the Villa and headed for the kitchen.

"How about another warm drink? It was very cold on the roof," John asked.

Kat nodded in agreement. "I'd love another hot chocolate, please."

Sitting in the kitchen, sipping their drinks, John remarked, "It was nice spending time together again. I intend to make sure that we have more time together before I leave for Thunderbird Five. Maybe we could meet after work one day."

"I should like that, John. I could cook you a meal?"

John smiled at her. "That's a date, then. I'll arrange to meet you after work, later in the week."

Having finished their drinks, he accompanied her back to her apartment.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:00:48 GMT
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12:38 AM [/b]

Thunderbird Five -- Sunday, July 15th -- 10.00 pm, Tracy Island

Alan was bored. There was just no getting away from it. After the recent rescue carried out by the women of International Rescue, there had been no more calls for help. Time always dragged when there were no calls and, unlike his brother John, Alan wasn't a great reader, nor did he care to spend time looking through John's telescope. Those things just didn't interest him at all. He had carried out the usual checks for the day, and reported back to base that all was well and rather quiet.

He wished that someone would call him and have a chat with him. After all, there were all the new recruits; surely Brandon or Dom or even Nikki could have called him. Thinking of Nikki, he remembered some of the chats they had had together before he came up to the tin can. She definitely had her own views on the male population. He was looking forward to having more discussions with her when he returned to base.

Now, what to do? He turned on the satellite TV, and scrolled through the channels. To his delight he saw that the British Grand Prix was scheduled to start in half an hour's time. Great! That's something to watch! he thought to himself.

His boots clanking on the metal floor, he headed for the kitchen to fix himself something to eat. He needed something that would be tasty and quick to make. Grabbing the bread, he made himself a double decker sandwich of cheese, ham, tomatoes and pickle. Fetching a soft drink from the fridge, he went back and sat down in front of the screen to enjoy the race and his snack.

The commenter was holding interviews with many of the drivers and team managers. Alan was suddenly interested to learn that the British driver was only one point above the American driver, but the American driver had pole position. That makes the bet I have rather interesting, he thought.

Once the race started, it was excitement all the way. The race had to be stopped and re-started following a very bad crash on the first bend. There was some very dangerous and daring overtaking. But eventually the drivers settled down and the race continued without any more problems - until the penultimate lap.

The British driver was catching up the American driver, taking less and less time on the laps, until he was just behind the American. He tried to overtake on the inside of a bend, but completely lost control, and spun off into the sand at the side, hitting the tyre wall hard.

Alan couldn't believe what he was seeing. Ambulances and the marshals hurried to the crash, where smoke was coming from the smashed car. The scene returned to the race, and Alan watched as the American driver raced over the finishing line, a hand clenched above his head.

There seemed to be a wall of silence surrounding the British driver. Alan stayed tuned; he wanted to know what injuries the driver had suffered. Just as they were announcing that the British driver had broken his collarbone, both legs, suffered concussion, and would be out for the rest of the season, the satellite phone rang.

"Hi, Alan, have you been watching the race?" Gordon's voice sounded far away

"Yes, I have," Alan answered. "Pity about the British guy. I wonder if any of the others are watching the race?"

"Not sure. It's past midnight," Gordon replied.

"So, how're things back at base?"

"Oh, fairly quiet at the moment, although I played a trick on Brandon the other day. Just before Brandon began his lesson in Thunderbird Two, I placed a whoopee cushion on the pilot's seat. You should have seen his and Virgil's faces; it was priceless!" Alan laughed heartily. "That's typical of you, Gordon. But you ought to be careful, because eventually your jokes will backfire."

"No chance." Then Gordon continued. "There seems to be a certain coolness between Kat and Callie. That all started after John decided he was going to Thunderbird Five in August so Callie can spend her birthday with her family."

"Yeah, I got an email from John telling me of his decision. But why that should cause a problem, I've no idea. Maybe I'll find out once I'm back. You know, the worst thing of being up here is that I really miss Grandma's cooking. I can't wait to get home," Alan said.

After Gordon had terminated the call, Alan went to make himself another sandwich. He returned to the TV, and scrolled down the channels, seeing what else he could watch. He noticed that a French channel had a documentary on about the Follies. Grinning to himself, he sat down to watch. I wonder when the French Grand Prix is? I'd sure like to go, and see the Follies as well.

Two hours later, he woke with a start. Bleary-eyed, he looked around, wondering what had awakened him. He glanced at the dark screen. Damn, I fell asleep, he thought as he got up and went to check the main monitor console.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:02:07 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/25/2006 5:39 AM

Sunday, July 15, 10:00 a.m., Jacksonville, FL (3 a.m., Monday, July 16, Tracy Island time)

"So, who's supposed to be flying us to Grandma P's place?" Alex asked as they waited in the VIP lounge at the airport.

Tyler shrugged. "Don't know. I suppose it'll be a company plane. It usually is." He nudged Cherie, who was sitting with a drawing pad and pencil in hand, and her headphones on. "Hey, do you know who's flying us to Greenville?"

The teen shook her head emphatically. Tyler rolled his eyes, and sighed. Sisters! he thought mutinously.

Alex was peering out to the tarmac from where he sat, and now he got up to walk toward the tall glass windows. He frowned, squinting, then waved his brother to his side. When Tyler reached him, he pointed to a plane that was taxiing in toward their position. "Tell me; doesn't that look like Tracy One?"

Tyler peered out and his eyes grew big. "Yeah! It does. I think... it is! It's Tracy One! Woo Hoo!"

Cherie glanced up at her brothers who were giving each other high fives and jumping up and down. Rolling her eyes and shaking her head, she removed her headphones and went to them. "What is wrong with you two?" she snapped in a half whisper. "You're making fools of yourselves in front of everyone."

"Who cares!" Tyler cried. "Look! Just look! It's Tracy One!"

Cherie sighed heavily, repositioned her glasses, and looked out the window. A slow smile spread over her face and she cried, "You're right! It is Tracy One!"

"I wonder who's piloting," Alex said excitedly.

"I don't know, but I'm sure gonna be glad to see them!" Tyler vowed.

The jet taxied out of their sight, closer to the boarding ramp, so they couldn't see who got out. They waited impatiently, their bags ready, the boys' forms almost quivering with anticipation, and Cherie's eyes darting here and there. Finally the attendant opened the boarding ramp, and out strode...

"Scott!" Cherie cried, almost launching herself at her brother.

"Mom!" Tyler and Alex both shrieked, nearly tackling Dianne in delight. Elise came up behind her, amused and bemused by the reactions of the children. Alex caught sight of her and gave her a wide grin. "Hey, Miss Collins!"

"Hi, Alex," Elise responded, returning the grin.

"What are you doing here?" Cherie demanded of her mother, after giving her a hug. "Are we going home early?"

"Wait a minute!" Dianne turned to Elise. "Elise, could you please do the flight checks and make sure we're refueled? We aren't going far, but I'd rather be safe than sorry."

"Sure, Di... uh, Dr. Tracy," Elise said. Scott glanced at her quickly, frowning. "Need to earn my paycheck as pilot for Tracy Industries," she murmured to him.

His face cleared, his mouth opened in a whispered, "Ah," and he nodded in understanding. Elise gave him a jaunty salute and went off. She needed a restroom, first and foremost.

"Okay, here's the plan," Dianne said once she had her offspring's attention. "We are flying to Greenville as soon as we're loaded, refueled and have done the proper checks. Miss Collins, Scott and I will be staying overnight with you at Grandma P's, then we'll head out on Monday morning to get back to the island." She smiled at them, a touch wistfully, Scott thought. "We were in New Hampshire on business, and though I would have loved to stay there and do a little sightseeing, I wanted to see you more."

"So, we're still going to stay with Grandma for the week?" Cherie asked.

Dianne nodded. "Yes, and then we'll be out to pick you up next weekend, okay?"

Alex looked disappointed. "I was kinda hoping we could go right home."

Scott reached out and rubbed his brother's soft buzz cut. "Sorry, bud, but Grandma P. will want to see you and so will your friends." He glanced over at Dianne. "Besides, I think Mom and Dad are sorta looking forward to one final week without you three."

Dianne chuckled. "Come on, gang. Let's start getting all this... stuff gathered up so we can load it in the cargo bin and get underway. I don't know about you, but I'd like to get to Grandma's in time for lunch."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:03:11 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/25/2006 9:02 PM

Monday, July 16, 2068, 10 a.m., Tracy Island

"Phaugh!" Emily Tracy wrinkled her nose as she stepped into the empty apartment that had been

Christopher Jordan's. "It smells like... cat."

"It seems that Durian has marked this as his territory," Kyrano said as he followed her in, pulling a maintenance float behind him. He shook his head. "I shall have to get the black light and find where the spots are. It will not be easy to deodorize the apartment."

"I'm sure he peed on the rug as well," Emily groused. "We'll have to order new."

"Which we should do in any case," Kyrano replied with a sigh. "I only hope it comes in a timely fashion. Mr. Tracy would like his new pilot, whoever they might be, settled in early in August."

"Right." Emily squared her shoulders. "Well, let's get to it. I'll open the windows to air the place out while you get the black light. Then we can determine what else needs doing."

Kyrano nodded, and headed back into the elevator. He could see that cleaning up for a new tenant would be a long job.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:05:43 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 5/25/2006 10:01 PM

Tuesday, July 17, 2068, 11:30 a.m., Tracy Island.

Elise shut off the jet's engines, and took off her headset. "I never thought I'd be so happy to see this island," she said.

Dianne rubbed the back of her neck as she removed her own headset, then stretched. "I'm sorry that our time away was so short," she said apologetically. "If you still need some more time off, we'll make arrangements for you to have it."

Elise looked thoughtful. "I don't know. Let's see how I do now that I'm back." She smiled at Dianne. "It was nice to spend a day with your family, though. I haven't really gotten to know the two older kids, though Tyler and I have had a couple of encounters. And your mother is a terrific cook."

"Thanks," Dianne replied with a smile. "I'm sure my mother enjoyed having you. The kids will either think that the week with Grandma is too short or too long. Depends on how many of their friends they get to see."

Scott popped his head into the cockpit. "Are you two ladies coming? There are a couple of people waiting out here to see you."

Dianne grinned and blushed, but Elise got up and pushed him back out into the cabin. "Just you let us finish our girl talk," she said. "We'll come out when we're good and ready."

Scott laughed, and headed down the steps. Elise came back into the cockpit, and Dianne asked, "How did you do over the ocean? How did you feel?"

Elise looked down at her hands. "I was nervous at first, especially when you asked me to switch places with you over the sea. But I remembered what you said about being in control... and I remembered the little trick Gordon played on me a couple of months ago." She glanced up at Dianne. "I knew I could do it. And eventually, I relaxed."

"Good. I think I noticed when you finally stopped gripping the controls so hard," Dianne replied. "You did very well."

"Yeah. I think I'm over the worst," Elise remarked.

Dianne shook her head slightly. "Don't assume that it's all gone and everything will be great and wonderful from now on. It takes time to get over such a deep-seated fear, and truthfully, you may never completely do so. But you've faced it; you know the whys and wherefores of it, and that gives you the tools for controlling the fear."

Elise thought about this for a moment, then nodded. "I understand. But I know I can control it, now. That makes a big difference." She looked out the window on the copilot's side. "I think that someone's looking for you."

Turning, Dianne saw a rather impatient looking Jeff outside, peering in through the window. She stuck her tongue out at him, and turned back to Elise with a wink and an impish grin. They giggled together like a couple of girls, then the door opened beside Dianne, and a second later, the one beside Elise did the same.

"C'mere, woman," Jeff growled as he pulled on Dianne's arm. The tug caught her off balance, and she practically fell into his arms. He placed her on the floor, and before she could make another move, he had fastened his lips on hers, much to her startled surprise.

On the other side, Virgil offered Elise his hand in assistance. She laughed, and took it with an exaggerated, "Why, thank you, kind sir!"

As she stepped out of the cockpit, he bowed elaborately. "My pleasure, m'lady." The play acting set them both to chuckling, then to laughing. "Let me give Scott a hand with the luggage, and you can tell me about the trip," he added.

She swept a hand through her hair, and nodded. As the men dealt with the cargo bay, Elise looked around the hangar, and over at Thunderbird Two sitting there on its hydraulic legs. She gave a long, satisfied sigh. Suddenly, she couldn't wait to get into the cargo carrier's pilot seat again.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:06:34 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 5/26/2006 12:41 PM

Canberra, Australia, July 18, mid morning (Tracy Island late morning)

In the departure lounge of Canberra Airport, King Bhumibol Adulyadej III of Thailand shook hands with the Australian Prime Minister. Beside him, his Queen Manya-Phathon chatted informally to the Australian Prime Minister's wife.

"This has been a good visit, Prime Minister," he said. "The relations between our two countries as well as the export and import situation will be much improved."

"I agree, Your Majesty," was the reply. "Ah. It looks as though your jet is ready for you to board," he added as one of the bodyguards approached. "Farewell, my friend. I will come visit you and your country very soon, to formalise our agreement."

"I look forward to that day," the king replied, then he and his entourage crossed the tarmac and boarded the aircraft. He went to the cockpit and spoke briefly to the pilot and co-pilot, then acknowledged the two members of the cabin crew before taking his seat, joining his wife and the others of his entourage who had already buckled themselves in. Once they were ready, the plane taxied to the runway and shortly took off. Their flight plan showed that they would head northwest, over the Malaysian peninsula and on to Bangkok.

xxxx

The Hood sat back, a satisfied smile on his face. He was in his temple, monitoring the news reports. He had been looking for a way to get close to International Rescue, and when he learned of the King's visit to Australia, a plan began to form. The jet's return trip would have it passing within a few miles of the temple hideout. This would make it simple to jam its systems, including communications, bringing it down. No one would be able to locate it -- except International Rescue. And that's exactly what he wanted. He continued to monitor transmissions between the jet and ground control, in order to be ready. As he waited, he verified that all the other elements of his plan were in place. He'd plotted this down to the last detail. Today he would learn more information about that infernal organisation, and soon have a way to bring it down, and obtain their technology.

It wasn't long before the transmissions made him realise it was time to put his plan into motion. He switched on the jamming controls, and waited.

xxxx

The cabin crew was just starting to bring round refreshments, when without warning the plane suddenly lurched. The 'please fasten your seat belts' sign came on and everyone complied.

"Probably turbulence, your Majesty," one of the bodyguards said.

But in the cockpit, the trouble was certainly not turbulence. The pilot struggled with the controls. Nothing was reacting. He looked at his co-pilot in horror.

"The controls are completely dead, nothing is working. We are descending completely out of control."

The co-pilot grabbed the microphone and called urgently, "Mayday, Mayday! This is King Bhumbol Adulyadej's private jet. We have lost control and are descending rapidly." He heard nothing but static in reply. "Mayday, Mayday! Can anyone hear me?"

There was nothing. The two pilots looked at each other. "Whatever is affecting the controls has also caused communications to go out as well. We can't let anyone know we're in trouble."

"Is there no way we can glide the plane down?" The co-pilot said.

"Look where we are! We are flying over dense jungle. Where on earth can we land?"

xxx

The Hood went to an observation area at the peak of his temple hideout and began searching the skies with his binoculars. Soon he spotted the jet. He smiled evilly. Soon it will be down, and only a few kilometres from here. Once I know it has crashed, I will get into my disguise and be ready to go to the site as soon as I know International Rescue has arrived. He watched as the plane descended, until it was too low for him to see. But from his vantage point he heard the sounds of the crash and the animals frightened by it. He turned and headed back down to prepare.

xxxx

The pilot contacted the cabin crew and briefed them, giving orders to ready the passengers. The senior member then went to the front of the cabin and said, "Your Majesty, something has gone wrong with the controls and communications. We are going down. Please, everyone, make sure your seat belts are securely fastened and assume the crash position you have been shown."

The King looked out, the jungle was coming up to meet the plane at a frightening speed. "Allah preserve us! Everyone, do as you have been told! Now!"

There were screams and cries of "Allah, preserve us," repeating the king's exclamation. But everyone was used to instantly obeying any order he gave them, and they did what they were supposed to. The cabin crew quickly went to their seats and buckled themselves in. And, amid sobs and prayers, they waited.

The jet hit the upper canopy of the jungle nose first, with a savage jolt, and began to slide and scrape through large branches and thick vines. The noise of the branches on the metal was deafening. The plane came to a halt suspended a long way from the ground and listing over at a 30 degree angle. Birds flew away in all directions and there were screams and cries from both within the jet and outside. Finally there was an uncanny silence.

Malaysian disaster by Tawnyangel22 and Hobbeth

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:09:26 GMT
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 5/27/2006 1:51 PM

Tracy Island, July 18th.

As mornings go on Tracy Island, this one was turning out to be a pretty normal one. The weather had been cooler, so Gordon was griping about not being able to get his usual early morning laps swum. He was almost to the point of annoying two of his elder brothers.

"If it had been just a few degrees warmer at 5 a.m., I could've at least got 5 laps in! This is ridiculous! This body needs to be kept in shape guys!" he complained, rubbing his abs for emphasis.

Two sets of eyes rolled simultaneously. "For the tenth time, Gords, give it a rest!" Scott growled. He had been enjoying his newspaper and magazine while sitting in the lounge and listening to Virgil's soft melody wafting from the piano.

Gordon ignored him and paced over to Virgil, who suddenly became much more serious about what he was playing and averted his eyes to the sheets of music in front of him.

"Virge, you understand, don'tcha?" No reply came. "Virge? Are you even listening to me?"

The chestnut-topped head came up and Virgil stared at his sibling. "Yes, Gordon. I'm listening. Scott and are both listening. We've been listening for the past 15 minutes!"

Gordon noticed the increase in decibels as Virgil spoke, and decided with a huff that shutting up might be advantageous at this point. "Fine!" He replied. He then slumped down on the couch opposite Scott and tried to find a nautical magazine in the pile that was strewn over the nearby coffee table.

Scott looked up from the article he'd been reading. It was about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and possible new discoveries for treating it in certain cases. "Gords?" he asked.

The redhead looked up. "What? I didn't say anything!"

Scott sighed impatiently. "I know that, dork, I was going to ask you something about Elise."

At the mention of the pilot's name, Virgil stopped playing and now gave his attention to his brothers.

For a second, Gordon was thrown by Scott's statement. "What about Elise? She's okay, isn't

she?"

"I think she will be, but I wanted to ask you about when you with her in New York. You accidentally came across Dad's chopper, didn't you?"

Gordon nodded. "Yeah, that was a shocker, I'll tell ya."

"What was her reaction to it?" Scott inquired.

"I thought you knew; why are you asking now?" Gordon now seemed more confused about where the conversation was going.

Scott shared the article he'd been reading with Gordon and Virgil, who'd now left his piano and was seated in a chair near Gordon.

"Ah, I see." Gordon said, now understanding. "She freaked Scott. I mean the girl almost flipped out on me."

"Define 'flipped out', Gordon!" Virgil asked, a little impatient with Gordon and his choice of words.

"Relax, will ya! She panicked, almost started to hyperventilate. I tried to calm her without frightening her more, but at one point it was like I wasn't even there. She was re-living the crash, I think." Scott nodded, understanding.

"Isn't that how she was in New Hampshire, Scott?" This came from Virgil, who was now concerned.

"Yeah, like I told you when we got back, her fear was incredible. I was shaken myself, having to re-live that night up there, but Elise was terrified." Scott looked at both of his brothers and spoke again "It wasn't just the crash, guys; her terror is real."

"What are you getting at, Scott?" Virgil asked worriedly.

"She's terrified of dying," came Scott's quiet reply.

"We've all gone through that! Every time we're out on a rescue!" Gordon stated. Scott and Virgil looked at him as if they were about to throttle him. "Now what?" the redhead asked.

"It's not the dying, it's dying ALONE. Elise watched her parents die alone; she barely survived, and was alone. She's had no real family to speak of. When she and Dad went down, she thought he was... well, dead." Scott found himself struggling to say it, even now, but he continued on. "She was alone in the chopper, miles from anywhere, no communication and was terrified of dying."

"She told you all this?" Virgil asked.

Scott looked into worried brown eyes. "No, Virge. Not exactly anyway. She'd said it out loud, but it was Mom who figured it out, that being alone and dying alone was Elise's real fear. She may still have a lot of healing to do, but now that we know what the fear is, we can help her."

Gordon had been listening intently and had come to his own conclusions about the information Scott had shared. "So, you're telling us that the fear is not the actual water, like we thought, but dying alone in it?" he asked.

"Or alone anyplace else, I guess." Virgil added.

Gordon continued, "If that's the case, then I can get her training with me in the water! Ah man, if only I'd known that this morning! If the water had been..."

"GORDON!" his brothers exclaimed.

Whatever else they were going to say was cut short by the wailing of the klaxon. The emergency signal sounded throughout the island. "Here we go," Virgil stated.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:12:08 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 5/28/2006 10:03 AM

*****Wednesday, July 18, 2068, Tracy Island, around 11:45 a.m.*****

Having received her new IR uniform, Callie was eager to try it on to see whether it was comfortable. She separated the uniform into its different pieces: vest, shirt, belt, hat, visor, pants, and boots (which were on the floor). "Well," she said, "time to see how good this will look on me."

After she undressed down to her underwear, she first grabbed the pants and noticed the color trim. "Neon Aqua, just like I chose." Putting them on, she felt the comfort. "So, this is what Penelar feels like. It's got a nice smooth feeling to it."

In his apartment, Brandon checked out the uniform he received a couple of days earlier. He fingered the sand-colored material, marveling at how it felt.

"Wow, Penelar feels just like silk," he said. He put the shirt over his head. "Perfect fit." Next he put on the vest and, going to the mirror, admired how the top fit his upper body.

Callie had put her boots on and then her belt. "Just a couple more pieces, and I'm good to go." She grabbed her shirt when she suddenly heard the alarm going off. "Oh, no...not again! I keep getting caught off-guard when that happens!" With no time to lose, she put her shirt on, then grabbed the vest and practically threw it over her shirt. "Emergencies never agree with me," she said as she rushed out of her apartment.

Brandon had just begun to try on the pants when the alarm went off. "Oh, crap!" Brandon exclaimed as the alarm went off. "Talk about lousy timing." He quickly finished putting on the

pants. Grabbing the boots, he hopped around first on one foot and then the other, finally getting the boots on.

They joined the others in the monorail as Callie worked on getting her shirt tucked in and Brandon adjusted the belt buckle on his pants. "Trying out the uniform?" Dom asked.

"Yeah," Callie answered. "I was in the middle of putting on my shirt when the alarm sounded."

"The same thing happened to me, too, so don't feel bad." Brandon looked around. "I sure hope the Boss won't get all over us for looking ridiculous in uniform."

The monorail arrived at the lounge and, with Brandon in the lead, the group filed into the room and stood facing Jeff.

Noticing how disheveled Callie and Brandon were, Jeff nodded in acknowledgment and simply said, "Apparently you were both trying on your new uniforms."

"Yes, sir," said Callie.

"Well, don't worry about it." He suddenly noticed something not quite right with Brandon. "Brandon," he whispered, "your zipper."

Brandon looked down and noticed that his zipper was wide open. With everyone looking at him, his face turned three shades of pure red in embarrassment. "Oh, yeah, thanks, sir." He quickly turned around and tended to the matter before Alan started the briefing.

He looked around and noticed Gordon smiling slyly with a raised eyebrow. Oh, boy, he's seen it. I won't hear the end of this one anytime soon.

*****Some fun before the seriousness by TracyFan4Ever and MagicMaster8.*****

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:13:43 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 5/31/2006 11:07 AM

"Go ahead, Indy," Jeff said, as the mood became serious once again. "What has happened?"

"The jet belonging to the king of Thailand has gone down. He and his wife, as well as their retinue were in it. I was contacted to try to locate it, since none of the control towers in the area were able to. It took a while; there was some kind of interference that could easily prevent them from finding the plane, but not our instruments."

He sighed. "However, when I advised them of the coordinates, the man I was speaking to gasped, and said they would not be able to get anyone to go into that area. It seems that both people and

vehicles have gone there, and were never seen again. Locals living nearby say it's cursed. They have asked for our help."

"You'd think that, by now, superstitions would be a thing of the past," remarked Dom.

"They've been around too long to ever disappear," Dianne replied. "But I never thought it would be the reason we'd be called out."

Jeff glanced up at her, then turned his attention back to his youngest son. "Do they have information on the number of people who are on the jet?"

Alan consulted his data padd. "Yes. Including the flight crew, there are twenty. And, from what I can tell, the jet isn't on the ground. The foliage is thick in that area, and the jet is fairly light for its size, so it appears to have gotten stuck in the trees. But I doubt it'll stay there."

"All right. Maverick, off you go. Get the coordinates from Indy once you are airborne."

"F-A-B, Boss." A moment later, he was gone.

"All right. We will need Thunderbird Seven, and the entire medical team. Van Gogh, take Pod Seven and load jet packs and the Mobile Crane into it. Quasar, Ursa, and Cousteau, I want you three to go. MGM, Frankie and Big Mac, you three may stand down. Indy, advise them that we are on our way."

"F-A-B. Thunderbird Five, out."

Those assigned to the rescue hurried off to be on their way as soon as they could. Brandon, still slightly red-faced and muttering to himself, left to change out of his uniform. The two women left together, Elise telling Kat that she half wanted to go, but was still tired from the trip and the time zone changes. Kat's reply was lost as they moved out of earshot.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:16:58 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/2/2006 9:21 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 8:20 a.m. local time, west of Ipoh, Malaysia (12:20 p.m., Tracy Island)

Scott's stomach growled as he flew over the jungle toward the coordinates that Alan had provided. "Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird One," he called into his boom mike. "What's your ETA?"

The answer that came back was garbled. "Thund... Two.... One... five minutes."

He frowned, and keyed the radio again. "Your transmission is breaking up, Thunderbird Two. Say

again."

The reply was as garbled as before. "Thund... Two to... bird One... rep... plea... peat... break... repeat..."

Taking a deep breath to calm himself, he toggled a switch. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One. Come in, Thunderbird Five."

Alan's face appeared briefly before the monitor before Scott was awash with static. Scott cursed under his breath, and switched the feed to his visor. The same thing greeted his eyes, and he shook his head, transferring it back and switching to voice only. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One, do you read me?"

In Thunderbird Five, Alan was startled to hear Scott's voice, garbled and dropping out in spots. "Thund... from... One, do..." He touched some switches, made some fine adjustments, and called back, "Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Five, say again. Your transmission is breaking up." This time, he got. "Thu... do you..."

He shook his head. Let's see if Virgil is having the same problem. "Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird Five. Do you read?"

"Thunderbird Two here." Virgil's voice and picture were clear and sharp. "Reading you four by four."

Alan frowned at that. He made a few more adjustments before answering. "I'm losing contact with Thunderbird One, Van Gogh. Can you reach him?"

Virgil shook his head. "Negative, Indy. I get a garbled signal from him, and the last contact I had indicated that he was getting the same on his end. Reminds me of that OD-60 interference."

"Hmm." Alan looked thoughtful. "This could be tied in with the loss of contact that the air traffic controllers reported, but I doubt it's from the same cause. I wonder how widespread it is, and if you'll be affected, too, once you come into range of the Danger Zone."

"I guess we'll see, won't we?" Virgil replied. "ETA to Danger Zone, now 40 minutes. I put our arrival time at 9:10 a.m. local."

"F-A-B, Van Gogh." Alan said. "I'll report this to base, see what the Boss has to say."

"F-A-B," Virgil replied. "Thunderbird Two, out."

His brother's face disappeared from the screen, and Alan switched over to his link to the island. "Base from Thunderbird Five, come in, Base."

Jeff's face appeared. "Base here, Thunderbird Five. Go ahead."

Alan took a deep breath and began. "Base, I've all but lost communication with Thunderbird One. Thunderbird Two reports getting a garbled transmission from One, as well. Van Gogh says it

reminds him of the interference we had with the OD-60/alsterene combination. I wanted to inform you of the situation."

"We're aware of it," Jeff said. "We got a flash of static on Thunderbird One's visual, and some broken up audio as well. I've been trying to re-establish contact, but I'm having no luck." He paused for a moment, then added. "Have Thunderbird Two report to you every five minutes until they reach the Danger Zone. Let's see if this is a general interference, or something specific to Thunderbird One. And set it up on tri-circuit. I want to know what's going on."

"F-A-B, Base," Alan said. "Thunderbird Five on standby." He turned from the monitor and began to set up the tri-circuit contact. We'll get to the bottom of this.

XXXX

In his temple hideaway, the Hood smiled smugly at the readouts he was getting. The anti-aircraft scanner I... appropriated... is working well. I see that Thunderbird One has entered the airspace surrounding my temple. My communications jammer is fully operational, and by now, the rest of International Rescue should be scratching their collective heads over the sudden lack of contact. He checked his monitor screen again. Now to await the arrival of Thunderbird Two. Then I will set the next phase of my plan into action.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:18:28 GMT
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 6/4/2006 8:30 AM

Elise folded the last of her laundry and put it away. Walking back into the living room of her apartment, she slumped down on the sofa and picked up a magazine. After absently thumbing through it, she put it back down.

The rescue was on her mind and, if she was honest with herself, so was Virgil. She'd been wanting to thank him for the note he'd given her before she went to New Hampshire. Unfortunately, on this island, getting someone alone for a few minutes was sometimes impossible. Now he was out on a rescue!

Deciding she'd go nuts alone in her apartment, she headed for the villa. There she could at least listen in on things. Arriving in the lounge, Elise found Kat and Brandon must have had the same idea, for they were both there.

Jeff looked up from his desk, also known as command center during a rescue. "Couldn't stay away, huh?" he asked with a smile.

"It's too quiet in my apartment, besides I like knowing how they're all doing."

Jeff nodded, understanding. Just as Elise sat down, Mrs. Tracy came in holding - and trying to calm - a very frustrated little boy.

"Oh, hush there, little Josh; all this fussin' ain't doin' you any good," Grandma crooned. It didn't work. Joshua let another wail. Jeff looked up, giving his mother a frustrated look of his own.

"Is he hungry? Maybe some of your wonderful cooking will help him," Jeff offered hopefully.

"We just came from the kitchen, and the way he ate reminded me of Scott at that age. The entire plate was clean! He's just fussin' 'cause his daddy is away." As they were talking, Joshua calmed down to just a sniffle and squirmed out of Grandma's arms. She put him down and he toddled off to find the toys that Dom had brought with them earlier. "See, he's found something to keep him occupied."

"I hope so, Mother, as it seems we're having some communication problems, and we're barely hearing some things as it is. A baby with the 'terrible twos' isn't going to help if I can't hear what does come through!" Jeff sounded irritated; something that didn't go unnoticed by Brandon, Kat and Elise as they exchanged looks.

"I'll play with him if you like," Kat offered.

"Thank you, dear; that would be a real help," Grandma replied.

As Kat got on the floor to play with Josh, Jeff called Alan... again. "Base calling Thunderbird 5.

Alan answered immediately, and as his portrait sprang to life, the occupants of the lounge could see the irritation on the blond's face. He got straight to the point. "Still not connecting, Boss, I've tried all the frequencies continually; I'm not sure what the problem is. I raised Maverick twice but he faded out too quickly. It's like something is jamming the signals."

Jeff became more irritated. "Well keep trying, Indy! We've got to establish consistent contact! I'll have Brains check things from this end. Base out."

"FAB." Alan disappeared again.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:25:40 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 6/4/2006 2:07 PM

The Malaysian Peninsular

The interior of the plane was in partial darkness, with the dense foliage of the jungle causing an eerie glow, giving the occupants an almost unearthly appearance. The only lights visible were the tiny safety lights running along each side of the aisle. It was hot: unbearably, stiflingly hot, as the

air conditioning had ceased to operate. Mosquitoes were buzzing around, having gained access through the smashed windows. There was a very real danger of snakes and spiders gaining access in the same way.

The senior bodyguard - drenched with perspiration and trying to swat the annoying, biting insects - cautiously inched his way along the aisle towards the king and his wife. With every movement he made, no matter how slight, the plane moved, as vines and branches began to give way under its weight.

"Your Majesty," he whispered, "her majesty's maid is unconscious. The other three bodyguards are conscious, but I have asked them not to move about for fear they will cause the plane to fall further. The members of the Thai press are conscious as well."

The king looked at his wife. She seemed to be sleeping, but there was a nasty cut over one eye.

Glancing around he thought to himself Will we be found? With all communications failed, how will anyone know where we are?

The king was trying to rid himself of mosquitoes when the queen moaned slightly. Opening her eyes, she stared at her husband in disbelief. "We are still alive?" she whispered.

"Yes, my dear, but I fear that others may not have been so lucky."

"Do you think we'll be rescued?"

"I feel sure that someone will find us, my dear. Are you in pain?"

"A little, my love. My neck is very stiff and sore, and I have a very bad headache."

"Then just try to keep still and rest," the king said gently.

Some monkeys, out of sheer curiosity, began clambering on the plane. Their angry, noisy chatter startled the occupants. One large and bolder monkey managed to gain access through the smashed windows in the cockpit.

In the front of the cabin, the two cabin crew were sat motionless in their seats. Seeing the monkey, the young woman began to shriek in terror. The monkey bared its teeth and shrieked back at her. The members of the Thai press were beginning to panic.

One young female member of the press began shrieking. "I don't want to die! Not here! Not now!"

"For the love of Allah, Solada, sit still and hold your tongue!" one of the translators shouted angrily. "Sudden noise may well encourage other creatures to investigate us and the more movement we make, the greater danger there is of the plane crashing to the ground."

"I'm sorry, Your Majesty," he called. "She will be still from now on."

The impact had caused hand luggage, cameras, books, and brief cases to be strewn among the

passengers. Bhichai, the PR staff member, had been knocked out by a laptop that had been sent flying during the impact. Nataya, the Queen's secretary, was trying to reach her briefcase, which had fallen into the aisle. Suddenly, she realised that she had a nasty gash the length of her arm, which was bleeding and attracting the mosquitoes. Trying to fight down the feeling of nausea and, at the same time, swatting the persistent insects, she collapsed back into her seat. Pairat, the King's secretary, took off his jacket and placed it over her arm, in an attempt to keep the insects away.

The bodyguard continued along the aisle and reached the cockpit. Both the pilot and co-pilot were dead. The impact of the plane crashing into the upper canopy had caused the front of the plane to be pushed in with such a force that the control console had crushed the two men. There was just a mangled heap of switches, dials, bodies and shards of glass.

Averting his eyes and trying not to be ill, the bodyguard returned to the king. "I'm sorry to report that both pilots are dead, Your Majesty."

The king spoke to the conscious passengers. "We must all remain calm, we are in the hands of Allah. I feel sure that the authorities will find us." And before it is too late, he thought to himself.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:43:43 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 6/4/2006 2:30 PM

Tracy Island, early afternoon

After the rescuers had left, Kat began to follow Elise. Then having another thought, she turned and headed to the kitchen, to see if she could be of help. But seeing that Kyrano was making a meal, obviously for Jeff, and Grandma was giving Josh his lunch, she headed back to the lounge to sit in and listen to the rescue.

She hadn't been there long before Brandon entered the lounge.

"Looks like we have the same idea," he said.

Some time later, Elise entered the lounge.

"Couldn't stay away, huh?" Jeff asked with a smile

"It's too quiet in my apartment, besides I like knowing how they're all doing," she replied, sitting down next to Kat.

At that moment, Grandma and Josh came into the lounge. Josh was obviously going through the terrible twos stage. He was restless and miserable, and Grandma was doing her best to calm him

down.

"Mother, we are having communication problems; we can barely hear anything. I hope you can keep him occupied."

Noticing the irritation on Jeff's face, Kat realised that Josh was obviously not in a mood to be quiet.

"I'll play with him," she offered

"Thank you, my dear; that would be a real help," Grandma replied.

Jeff made contact with Alan. "Base calling Thunderbird Five."

"Hey, Josh. Look at all your cars, shall we play with?" Kat said, kneeling down and pushing a car along the floor.

For a while Josh began to play with his cars, then he stood up.

"Want Daddy," he said.

"Hmm, well, Daddy is busy right now. Would you like to go for a walk?" Kat said, holding out her hand.

But Josh ran past her, screaming. "Want Daddy! I want my Daddy!"

Jeff looked irritated at the sudden noise, and Grandma and Elise tried to stop him.

He ran on towards the veranda doors. As Kat reached him, he began to cry; his little face crumpled up. She suddenly felt sorry for him.

"Hey, Daddy won't be long. Shall we go and watch a cartoon?"

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:44:50 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 6/4/2006 3:09 PM

"Mrs Tracy, would it be okay, if I took Josh to watch a cartoon?"

"Yes, of course, my dear. I'm sure you'll find a few in the cinema." Grandma replied.

"Ice cream?" Josh asked hopefully.

Kat smiled at him. "I'm sure that Kyrano will be able to find us some ice cream." Taking Josh's hand, Kat led him out of the lounge. "Now, Josh, let's try and find some cartoons."

As they left, Grandma smiled to herself, and mentally thanked Kat for taking care of him.

In the cinema, Kat was looking through the films. Josh was toddling around picking up films and bringing them to her. "Hmm, can't find any here. Wait a minute; here are some Mickey Mouse and Pluto cartoons. Shall we watch those?"

"Ice cream?" Josh asked.

Kat laughed at him. "Okay, Josh, let's go and ask Kyrano."

In the kitchen, Kyrano filled two bowls with ice cream. Kat carefully carried the bowls back to the cinema, Josh insisting on carrying the spoons.

Kat put the cartoons on, and Josh sat down beside her, eating his ice cream.

"Finished," he said, handing her the empty bowl. She placed it on the adjacent seat and Josh scrambled on to her knee. Kat was amused to note a few minutes later that the little boy was fast asleep, his head resting on her shoulder. Deciding to let him sleep, she watched the rest of the cartoon, wondering how the rescue was going.

It was some time later that she carried the sleeping young boy back into the lounge. Grandma took Josh from Kat and carried him to her suite.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:46:14 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/4/2006 9:17 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 8:35 a.m., west of Ipoh, Malaysia (12:35 p.m. Tracy Island)

"Damn."

Scott was frustrated. He'd barely been able to raise Thunderbird Five twice since he'd entered the area, and his communication with Thunderbird Two had stopped for a while as well. He found he could receive no downloads, and he needed more precise coordinates to find the plane he was looking for. So, for the time being, he was relying on the thermal imager - which was also proving to be less than reliable - and his eyes.

"Hm. There seems to be a cut of some sort in the foliage ahead," he muttered to himself. "The imager is registering a much warmer mass..." He flew over it carefully, and was rewarded with the glint of metal. "Yes!" he cried. "Found it!"

He swung around and passed over the area again, recording the coordinates. "Let's see if I can raise Alan, or even Virgil, and pass these numbers on," he murmured. "Maybe some height would help."

Thus saying, he took his Bird straight up, 1000, 2000, 3000 meters and more, all the while listening for any communication on the IR frequency.

At last the annoying, everlasting static resolved itself into words. "...do you read? Thunderbird Two from Thunderbird Five, do you copy?"

"Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One," Scott said crisply. "Do you copy?"

Alan all but pounced on the communications panel. "Thunderbird Five here. Go ahead, Thunderbird One."

"I have the coordinates of the downed plane. I still can't get through to Thunderbird Two, so I'd like you to pass them along."

"Sorry, Maverick," Alan's face appeared on the tiny screen in Scott's visor. "We've lost communication with Two the same way we had with you. How'd you counter the jamming, anyway?"

"Is it jamming?" Scott asked, looking thoughtful. "I wasn't sure. In any case, I gained altitude and must have come out of whatever field is doing this. I'm uploading the coordinates now."

"Thunderbird One from base," Jeff's picture on the visor grew as Alan's shrank to half its size, and his father's voice sounded in Scott's ear. "What is your status?"

"I'm currently holding at 10,000 meters above the Danger Zone. The plane is lying on its side in the upper canopy of the jungle. One of the wings seems to have sheared off in the crash; I have no idea if the other is intact or not. It's a pretty remote spot west of the town of Ipoh. I'll be looking for a clearing nearby the crash site big enough for both One and Two to set down in."

"F-A-B, Maverick." Jeff nodded. "You should be aware that we only have sporadic contact with Thunderbird Two, but its ETA to the Danger Zone is roughly now. Also, we've been informed by the Thai and Australian governments that the King's plane is flying with a load of an experimental fuel. You'll need to get Ursa onto figuring out how to deal with it. Rho has some specifications to upload to Five, then down to you."

"Standby for the download," Alan said.

"F-A-B." The computer screen showed a file automatically downloading to Thunderbird One's computer's buffer. "File received," Scott told him.

Jeff continued. "Since we have only sporadic contact, and the jamming seems to be a man-made occurrence, you need to be on high security alert."

"F-A-B, base. Will do." Scott looked at his watch. "Need to get back to the Danger Zone, base,

and find Thunderbird Two. If we cannot regain communications, I will report again in one hour."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird One. Get in there and be careful. Base out." Jeff's picture winked out and Alan's grew back to its original size.

"Be careful out there, Maverick, and don't forget your bug repellent." Alan smiled and winked at him.

"Like I would, Indy," Scott replied, rolling his eyes. "Back to report in one hour. Keep trying to raise Two for me."

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

Alan's picture disappeared, and Scott sighed. "Back to the jungle," he muttered as he aimed the nose of his craft Earthward again.

xxxxx

The bodyguard who had crawled the length of the plane to reconnoiter had seated himself in a spot where he could look to the sky. The local monkeys crossed back and forth over the small cabin window, and the bird droppings were covering it as well. Suddenly, a shadow passed over, and the bodyguard gasped.

"What? What is it?" called the king.

"I do not know. It might have only been a cloud..." His voice trailed off as the shadow passed over again, and as he could hear the noise of powerful engines over the noise of the monkeys. The tree tops shifted with the passing of the craft, and he see the dull gray of shadowed fuselage. There was hope in his voice as he called, "It has returned. It is an aircraft of some kind, passing slowly overhead. We have been found! We have been found!"

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:47:06 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 6/5/2006 1:50 AM

"Damn interference," Virgil muttered as he tried the radio again. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Two, do you copy? Come on..."

As Thunderbird Two hovered over the leafy canopy, the dulled sounds of the jungle pressed against the cockpit. The treetops swayed slightly under the influence of the jets.

"Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Two, come in Indy. Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird

Two...dammit..."

"At least we know we're in the right area," Gordon said, "so we'll be there in no time once we know exactly where." He cocked his head to the side with a thoughtful look. "That was a mouthful, wasn't it?"

"Sure was. I'm surprised you got it out," John said. He stood up, and started towards the comms panel. "I'll try --" but whatever John was going to say was cut off.

"Thun-bird Two -om -derbird One. Do you --py? C-me in Th-erbird Two."

"Thunderbird Two here. Receiving you strength two. What are the co-ordinates?"

They received nothing but static. Around the cockpit, there were worried glances.

"Repeat, Thunderbird One."

They received more static.

"Repeat, please."

"...damn st-tic... co-or-nates--"

After a few more tries, John managed to make out what they hoped were the right co-ordinates. The area was a mere half a mile from where they were already.

"FAB, Thunderbird One. We're on our way."

Virgil closed the comm. channel, and the cessation of static brought relief to the ears of all present. In a matter of moments they could see Thunderbird One, and below, the wreckage of the plane hanging in the treetops.

"That does not look safe," Gordon said.

As soon as the words were out of his mouth, the plane lurched downwards deeper into the foliage, and there was a collective yell.

"All right, let's get to it," Dianne said crisply, her eyes widened but steely.

Virgil nodded, and began looking for a place to set his Bird down, so they could get on with helping the trapped.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:49:14 GMT

From: Tikatu Sent: 6/6/2006 12:37 PM

"Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Two." Virgil called, but didn't hope for any cessation of interference, even though he was hovering over the clearing where Thunderbird One was already parked.

"Thunderbird One here! Man, it's good to hear you clearly, Van Gogh!" Scott sounded tremendously relieved.

"Same here, Maverick! Looks like we'll be able to communicate locally, even if we can't get through too well on a long-distance basis."

"Right. You'd better get down here so we can reconnoiter the situation. I've had a look, but I'll need some other eyes and opinions on how to approach this. It's going to be a tricky one."

"F-A-B." Virgil turned to his passengers. "Better strap in. This may be a bit bumpy."

"Yeah, right," Gordon said, buckling himself in. "Bumpy to you is perfectly fine to the rest of us."

Virgil ignored his brother's grouching, and scanned the clearing below. He moved forward a few meters, then turned the orientation of his 'Bird slightly to the east. Then he fired the VTOLs and began to slowly descend.

"Van Gogh, you need to move right right two degrees," came Scott's voice. "You're heading for a moss-covered boulder."

"F-A-B," Virgil replied, turning his craft the required amount. He checked the foliage on either side, and was satisfied that he wouldn't be touching any of the trees with Two's wings. Finally, he cut the VTOLs and they were down.

" 'A bit bumpy', he says," Dom said with a grin as he unbuckled himself. "If I were at the controls, you'd all know what bumpy really is!"

"You'd do fine, Dom," Virgil said, as he finished the shut down procedures. "I felt a quiver go through her, and to me, that's bumpy."

"Perfectionist," Gordon muttered.

"Enough," Dianne said with a smile. "Let's get going. Dom, Nikki, you're with me."

"Van Gogh to Maverick," Virgil said as he transferred his communications to his earpiece. "Where to you want us?"

"Before we can haul out any equipment, we'll need to take a look at this from the ground and from the air. You, Cousteau and Quasar come over to me and we'll reconnoiter. Ursa can stand by on the crane; she's going to need it. I heard from Five that the plane was carrying an experimental fuel, so she'll need to get close to the wings. Once we look at things from the ground, we can use

the jet packs to get up closer. One of the medical crew should go with us at that point to get a look at the passengers."

"F-A-B," Virgil replied. He ducked into the crews' quarters and pulled off his new vest and shirt. "Too bad we've got to christen these things with bug repellent," he said as he joined John and Gordon in smearing a colorless gel over his arms, neck and face.

"Uh, guys?"

The three Tracys looked up to see Callie standing in the door, blushing and trying to look anywhere but at them.

"Ah, oh, sorry, Callie." John smiled and held out a fresh tube. "It's an insect repellent. Hypoallergenic and guaranteed to work on any bugs, under any conditions. I guess you'd better go into the sickbay and put it on."

"Yeah. Uh, thanks." She grabbed the tube and quickly disappeared.

Gordon snorted a laugh. "One of the drawbacks of having a mixed team."

"I dunno, Gords," Virgil said conversationally as he rubbed the cream around his ears. "I can think of a couple of women who might find the sight of us shirtless to be rather... uh... stimulating."

"Oh? And who might that be?" Gordon asked teasingly, looking specifically at John.

"I'm sure I wouldn't know," John replied, giving his younger brother a glare through narrowed eyes. He looked down at his royal purple shirt. "Personally, I think that mosquitoes are going to find it tough going through this Penelar fiber."

"Yeah, but in this weather, long sleeves are pretty useless," Virgil said as he pulled his short sleeved shirt on again. "Thus, the repellent." He glanced at Gordon. "Why have you got your pants off?"

"I'm taking off the lower part and wearing shorts," Gordon explained as he smeared his legs with gel. "No long pants for me. The boots are tall enough to repel any snakes, and I'll be cooler with just shorts."

"Man, I'm glad this new uniform is so versatile," John said. "But I'm sticking with the pants unless I get really, really hot."

"Enough chatter, guys." Virgil finished fastening his vest and put a small tube of repellent into one of the pockets. "Let's grab our new sun helmets and get out of here."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood

From: Tikatu Sent: 6/6/2006 2:02 PM

"Damn, it's hot out here!" Virgil had raised Thunderbird Two's chassis away from the pod, and had left the pod through the smaller access door. They were in the shade of the cargo carrier, but the sticky heat still hit with all its force.

"Hate to see what this is going to be like come afternoon," John observed, looking at his watch.

Gordon lifted his sun helmet, its orange trim showing brightly against the pale gray, and wiped his brow. "My hair's already sweaty." He started rolling the short sleeves of his shirt up to the shoulder.

Scott came over to meet them. "Good to see you." He led them out from under Thunderbird Two, and pointed upwards into the trees. "You can just make out the plane from here. One of the wings has sheared off already; I'll show Callie where it is. I'm not sure of the other wing's condition. I couldn't get close enough to see without possibly knocking the plane down further with my VTOLs."

"Well, let's get a look at it from down here, then we can go upstairs to get a better look," John said.

"Right. You two take the port side; Virge, you come with me. Watch out for snakes!"

"F-A-B!" Gordon said cheerily as he and John moved off into the trees.

Scott and Virgil moved together into the darkness of the jungle foliage, stepping carefully and glancing up once or twice to be sure of their bearings. They pushed vines out of the way, and Scott was glad for the Penelar work gloves that were now a part of the uniform. The bugs swarmed around them, but didn't bite.

"There it is," Virgil said, looking upward. "That wing looks pretty dicey. Wonder how much fuel they've used?"

"Considering the distance they've flown, and the probable size of those tanks, I'd say there's probably a quarter tank left. Maybe a bit more." Scott picked up a branch. "The crash sure took a lot of branches; this is freshly broken." He tapped his earphone. "What have you got over there, Quasar?"

John's voice sounded in both Scott and Virgil's ears, and in the ears of those back in the pod. "The plane is turned about a quarter way on to its side. The port wing has broken off, the starboard wing..."

His voice was cut off by the sudden sound of creaking, shearing metal, and a crashing of branches. Virgil looked up, his eyes widening.

"Scott!" he shouted. "Look out!"

Before Scott could look up, Virgil had tackled him, taking him deep into the undergrowth and away from the wing that crashed down through the trees behind them. The wing fell heavily with a loud noise and a rain of branches.

"Arrgh!"

His ears ringing from the noise of the crash, Scott didn't hear his brother's cry of pain, but as he tried to get up, he found Virgil still lying atop him, his teeth gritted.

"Virge! Virgil!" he cried, shaking his brother by the shoulders. "What's wrong?! Maverick to Doc! We have a man down!"

"F-A-B!" Dianne's voice sounded in his ear. "Where are you?"

John and Gordon came running over. "Scott? Virge?" John asked, reaching for Virgil. "What happened?"

Gordon looked upwards, then back down at his brother. "Looks like a branch came down..."

"My leg!" Virgil tried to pull his knee up to his chest with his hands, grimacing in pain. Some more branches fell, and the three uninjured Tracys practically threw themselves over the injured one to shield him.

"Where are you?" Dianne's voice became more insistent. "We can't get to you if we don't know where you are!"

Scott looked up at Gordon. "Go, and bring them here - but be careful! There's no telling how much more is going to come down!"

"F-A-B!" Gordon said. He looked upward, then headed towards the clearing, moving carefully and ducking low.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:56:35 GMT
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 6/7/2006 6:24 PM

Tracy Island.

"Base from Thunderbird Five."

"Go ahead, Alan."

"I've managed to re-route the signal to a different frequency, overriding the jamming that caused the communications shutdown on 'One and 'Two. You should be able to hear feed back from the headsets and wristcomms, but I can't guarantee it'll be clear."

The occupants of the lounge, Brandon, Kat, Elise, Grandma and Jeff all exchanged worried glances.

"Okay, Indy, switch it through. We'll take what we can get," Jeff replied.

Alan got busy and looked as if he'd been frantically trying to get communications up and running for some time. "Okay, try it now, Boss."

"F.A.B. Thunderbird One from Base. Calling Thunderbird One from Base..."

Static came back as an answer. Jeff exhaled, and tried again. "Thunderbirds One and Two from Base..." If Scott couldn't answer, maybe Virgil could.

Brandon spoke quietly to Elise. "How bad do you think it's going to get? I mean without radio contact, we've no idea what's going on down there."

"I know, the dense jungle is no place to lose contact with your crew or base. I only hope they can 'talk' to each other. Maybe in close proximity, it's not a problem."

They both turned their heads towards Jeff as he muttered, "Dammit!" and continued to try to call. He was mid-sentence in calling Thunderbird One again when the static broke and voices came through. They weren't clear, as Alan had said they might not be, but Jeff took what he could get.

"The plane is turned ... ab ... quarter way ... side ... port wi... broken ... starboard..." More static cut off John's voice.

"Quasar? This is Base. Can you read me?" Jeff waited impatiently for a reply that didn't come. Elise and Brandon moved closer to the desk to hear better. Suddenly, the static broke again.

"Scott! ... out!" There was a loud crackling and muffled sounds on top of the static.

Elise leaned forward in her seat. "That was Virgil! Scott's in trouble."

"Oh my." Grandma's soft voice came from a few feet away. Elise and Brandon had momentarily forgotten she was still in the lounge.

"I'm sure everything will be okay, Mrs. Tracy." Brandon tried to reassure her. "Here, come and sit down, so you can hear better." He offered his seat and she sat down near her son. Jeff muttered something to her and she seemed to relax a little.

Elise started to worry. It wasn't like Scott to put himself or any of the team in harm's way; and why was Virgil yelling? The feedback had returned to static.

Jeff immediately raised Thunderbird Five "Indy! What the hell is going on down there? We've lost

the feed back again."

"I know Da ... Boss! ... I've got it recording up here, I'll transfer the rest of it to you." Alan was beginning to sound frustrated. He'd obviously heard the exchange between his brothers on the ground and not knowing who was injured and how badly, was not helping his attitude or his attempts at staying calm. He activated a switch and the radio on Jeff's end sprung to life again.

"Scott! ...out!"

"Arrgh ... "

Elise was on her feet, "Oh my God, that's Virgil!" Jeff glanced at her, thinking the same thing, though he didn't show it or say it.

"Maverick to Doc! We have ... man...down!"

"Jeff! Who is it? Oh my!" Grandma demanded as she heard the exchange.

"Mother, calm down; the boys will be okay." He paged Kyrano to come and assist in calming the distraught Mrs. Tracy. His wise friend knew just how to make her feel at ease. Hell, he knows how to make us ALL feel at ease. Jeff thought. Kyrano came instantly to the lounge and comforted Jeff's mother.

"Are you sure that was Virgil?" Brandon asked Elise.

She glared at him as if he'd grown two heads. "Yes! Of course I'm sure it was him. I'd know Virgil's voice anywhere!" She was now on her feet and pacing slightly. "Mr. Tracy, can you confirm who's down?" she asked nervously.

"I'm trying Elise, I'm trying," Jeff answered without looking at her, but continuing to work on restoring communications with Alan.

Elise sat back down again but was nervously fidgeting. When had Virgil suddenly become so important to me? Scott's my friend, and I treasure that friendship, especially after recent events, but Virgil? She thought about the note he'd written and how his words had given her strength and comfort. She'd been trying to thank him, but hadn't had the chance. Now he might be seriously injured. An uneasy feeling settled in her gut.

Although he was busy with Alan, Jeff hadn't let Elise's worry about his second eldest son go unnoticed. He filed the information away for later. Right now, he was worried enough about Virgil himself. As his youngest tried to fix the communications, Jeff tried to reach Dianne.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:57:25 GMT

From: Tikatu Sent: 6/7/2006 9:11 PM

The Hood watched the approach of Thunderbird Two with interest. He peered through his long range binoculars and watched as the cargo carrier slowly descended into the clearing near where the plane crashed.

"Good," he muttered to himself. "They are here. I know where they have landed, and I must make my way there to see who and what they have brought with them. Then I can choose one of them to spirit away and interrogate at my leisure."

He descended into the cooler portions of his hideout from the tall pagoda spire that was his physical lookout post. He was sure that the temple was well hidden; he had kept for himself the jamming technology he had stolen years ago. And though the spire projected up high enough for him to see, the entire complex looked overgrown and dilapidated from the air... should anyone be able to glimpse it as their aircraft went down, courtesy of the electrical disruptor that he had used on the king's plane. He had turned it off during the Thunderbirds' approach; he had no desire to crash the crafts he so coveted, or kill those who would provide him with the information he sought.

But the communications dampening field was on, and at full power. He knew from the readings that International Rescue was trying to break through it from wherever they had set up their communications relays and equipment. The dampener was set to analyze and counter those attempts as they occurred. The Hood had no fears that International Rescue's base would be in clear contact with their operatives any time soon.

He tied a cloth around his head, and adjusted his camouflage clothing. It was too hot to wear one of his special masks; though the heat near Lake Anasta had been just as fierce, it had been dry, and thus bearable. So instead of fitting on a mask, he smeared black, green and brown greasepaint on his face, covering as much skin as possible and giving his face an almost animal-like appearance. Looking in the mirror, he surveyed his work, and nodded. "That will do," he murmured. "Even if I am seen, it will be difficult to recognize me or give pursuit. Even the engineer would not know me in this makeup."

So saying, he left his temple by a secret passage, driving a vehicle through a long tunnel that usually took him to the sea, and his submarine. But part of the way there, he stopped, and crawled up through a hidden ventilation and access space, one of several that followed the track of the tunnel. It brought him up within a kilometer of his target, and he moved silently off into the jungle to catch his prey unawares. [/color]

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:58:19 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 6/8/2006 3:07 PM

After Virgil, Gordon and John left to reconnoitre the area and try to locate the plane, Nikki and Dom finished a final check of Thunderbird Seven.

"Do we have insect repellent?" Dom asked,

"Yes," Dianne replied, "we have some hypoallergenic gel guaranteed to kill all bugs in all conditions," and she handed them both a tube.

Nikki and Dianne smeared the gel over their arms, necks and faces, before replacing their shirts. After they finished, and had gone outside again, Dom took his shirt off and rubbed the gel on to his exposed skin before replacing his shirt and joining the women. The mosquitoes immediately began to buzz around them angrily, but the repellent gel certainly did the trick.

Once outside, the heat hit them like the inside of an oven.

"Gosh," Nikki remarked, "how are we ever going to work in this heat?"

All around them the jungle seemed to close in. The trees were twisted round each other. Large vines wrapped themselves around the trees and each other. Large fern-like plants were everywhere, hiding the floor of the jungle. Colourful birds flew among the trees, shrieking and squawking. High up in the canopy, out of sight, the monkeys chattered noisily.

"You know I can quite see why the locals are superstitious," Callie remarked. "This place is giving me the creeps already."

"I think we ought wait back inside Thunderbird Seven, out of this intense heat until we get more information from Maverick," Dianne remarked.

Just as they were about to return to Seven, "Maverick to Doc! We have a man down!"

"Where are you?" Dianne replied.

Nikki, Dom and Callie all looked concerned.

"I wonder who's hurt?" Callie said.

"Where are you?" Dianne sounded more insistent. "We can't get to you if we don't know where you are!"

"Maverick to Doc. I'm sending Cousteau back to fetch you."

"F-A-B," Dianne replied. "We'll be ready."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sat, 28 Jul 2012 23:59:31 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/10/2006 12:06 PM

Nikki looked to Dianne once she heard that they had a man down. "Doc, would you like me to go and tend to whoever is hurt?"

Dianne blew out a breath before answering. She knew that there was always a possibility of one of the team getting injured, but the reality of still affected her, no matter what the injury. "Nikki, please grab the med kit; we'll go together once Gordon has arrived."

"F-A-B," Nikki replied before leaving to grab what was required.

Dominic tapped his fingers against his thigh as he waited and thought about the so-called curse the locals believed in. The curse isn't real. It's just a superstition. That has nothing to do with this new incident, he thought. Dom acknowledged Nikki when she returned and smiled when he saw Gordon steadily running towards them.

xxxxx

Virgil grimaced at the throbbing pain in his leg. He tried to hide the pain he was feeling by lightening the mood slightly. "We've been here for less than 15 minutes and I get injured. Typical."

Scott laid his hand on Virgil's shoulder. He knew what his brother was doing. "Maybe you should've let me take the fall."

"Humph, I'll remember that next time," Virgil replied.

Scott smiled as he stood up from his crouched position. "John, you stay with Virgil and wait for Gordon to return with Doc. I want to check the surrounding area; make sure it's safe for them."

John nodded when he answered, "F-A-B," before taking up Scott's vacated position.

xxxxx

Nikki gripped the medical equipment in her hand when she saw Gordon approaching.

"What's the situation, Gordon?" Dianne asked when her stepson arrived.

"A branch came down on Virgil injuring his leg."

Dianne extended her arm in the direction Gordon just came from. "Lead the way."

"F-A-B, but we need to be careful as we make our way there." Gordon turned and led the medical staff back to his fallen brother.

Callie called out once they left. "I hope he'll be ok."

"I'm sure he will," Dominic answered back. He wondered how bad Virgil's injury was and if it would restrict him from flying Thunderbird Two back to base.

written by Nikki-browneyes1

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:00:04 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/10/2006 12:30 PM

Stumbling through the dense undergrowth, and at times ducking to miss the trees and vines, they hadn't been walking very long when Nikki gasped, "I thought I saw something move; over there behind those trees."

"It's probably an animal, Angel," Dom said lightly, but at the same time not wanting to think what kind of animal it could be.

But Nikki just stared into the dense undergrowth. "I just have a feeling that we're being watched."

"I think you're imagining things, Angel," Dianne said. "It's just as Ursa said, a very creepy place."

However, in the undergrowth, The Hood smiled to himself. This is going better than I had hoped. Soon, very soon, I shall know all of International Rescue's secrets.

Written by tawnyangel22[/i]

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:01:01 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/10/2006 12:32 PM

Watching the medical team leave with Gordon, Callie stood by herself next to the pod. She shuddered slightly after watching Dom put on his insect repellent. I'm not used to having a lot of guys around. Seeing my brothers shirtless is normal, but seeing men I've known for just a few months... that's not as comfortable. She had to pull her Penelar shirt back and forth to get any glint of cool air inside her upper body. The temperature readings in her visor made her sigh. "It's 100 degrees with a heat index of 124? This is worse than the summers back home."

She decided to contact Scott. "Ursa to Maverick. Is there anything you need me to do right now?"

"Yes, there is," he answered back. "I want you to get the Mobile Crane out here immediately. We'll need it help the passengers and cut back some branches to assist others. Bring a couple of jet packs as well."

"Will I be piloting the crane in the rescue?"

"No. Either Cousteau or Quasar will handle that task. Your job will be to examine the experimental fuel that spilled. We're not sure how it will affect the flora in this area or if there's anything we can use to neutralize it."

With a nod, she said, "F-A-B, Maverick. Getting that crane is a good reason to get out of this awful heat!"

Little did she know that someone was watching her closely. Ah, a female, all alone, and working for International Rescue, the Hood thought. Noticing the different look, he smiled wickedly. Hmm...interesting uniforms. I must assume the original uniforms were replaced with these to accommodate for these new members. They have apparently added special visors to prevent anyone from knowing who they are. If I can just get her cornered, I can get the information I so desperately seek.

As he started to come out, though, Callie shook her head. "I need some water before I overheat out here." She stepped inside the pod and grabbed some bottled water. Taking a sip, she let out a comforting sigh. "Ahh, that's much better."

The Hood grumbled in anger. No! I need her by herself! He stepped back into the lush forest to keep himself concealed from sight. There must be another way I can get her alone.

Meanwhile, Callie took the jet packs and placed them into the Mobile Crane. Then, she stepped into the crane with her bottled water. "It's a good thing there's a spot to put the water. I'll probably need it while I'm driving to the danger zone." Starting the engine, she alerted Scott. "Ursa to Maverick. I'm in Mobile Crane and on the way. How's Van Gogh?"

"Could be better. I'll feel a lot better when Doc and the others get here."

"I understand. As soon as I arrive, I'll investigate the area and gather samples to see if anything can be done to protect the flora."

"F-A-B, Ursa. We'll see you in about 15 minutes, and watch the thick parts. Going through the jungle may be difficult."

"F-A-B, Maverick." Seeing how thick the rain forest was, she knew she was in for a rough ride. "Well, if I can just get it over there, this should work out just fine."

The Hood noticed her driving the machine toward the jungle. "Perfect," he said in a barely audible tone of voice. "I may have lost one opportunity, but this young woman will give me International Rescue's secrets." He followed through the thick rain forest, just keeping out of Callie's view in the

Mobile Crane. "As soon as she is alone...I will strike."

Written by TracyFan4Ever

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:02:59 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/10/2006 12:38 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 9:50 a.m. local time, somewhere west of Ipoh, Malaysia

"Careful, everyone," Gordon said, looking up. "I think it's stopped raining branches, but in this place, who knows what could happen?"

"How much farther?" Nikki asked, gazing around carefully. That one sighting of... whatever it was... had spooked her slightly. Dom also kept a wary eye out, mostly looking up for the falling branches that Gordon had mentioned. Dianne stepped cautiously, trying to make sure she didn't trip over anything.

"There they are!" Gordon picked up the pace to where John and Scott both stood, and Virgil lay.

"He's tried to sit up, but we wouldn't let him," John explained.

"Good call." Dianne said, crouching down beside him. "What the hell happened?"

"The wing was coming down," Scott explained with a sigh, and pointing to the crumpled wing, which lay on one end, leaning against the bole of a tree nearby. "Virgil tackled me, pushed me out of the way. This branch over here," he motioned to a sizeable piece of jungle wood, "fell on his leg."

"An' which leg was that?" she asked.

"The left," Virgil said with a groan. "I don't think it's broken but it hurts like hell!"

"Ah'll be th' judge o' whethah it's broken or not," Dianne replied. She gently and slowly passed her hands down the calf, and Virgil gritted his teeth, then let out a cry when she passed over the worst of the injury.

"Ah don' think we should remove th' boot heah," Dianne said. "Nikki, Ah'll need an inflatable splint. Dom, get th' stretcher ready. We'll do a scan when we get back t' Seven."

Nikki opened the medikit and pulled out the inflatable leg splint. Between Dianne and herself, they got it properly wrapped around Virgil's leg, immobilizing it from just above the knee to the ankle.

Meanwhile, Dom opened up the stretcher, laying it on the ground next just behind where Dianne was crouched.

"I'll take the shoulders," Dom offered.

Dianne nodded. "Nikki, you an' Ah'll slide our hands beneath his back and knees. But be careful!"

"Right." Nikki crouched down and the two women slid their hands beneath Virgil's thighs and behind his back. Dom grabbed Virgil beneath the armpits.

"On three. One, two, three!" At the final count, the medical personnel lifted Virgil. Dianne stepped carefully backwards over the stretcher, and they put Virgil on it. Dom strapped him down, and activated the antigravity impellers.

"Take him back t' Seven," Dianne instructed. "Ah'll be along in a minute."

"F-A-B," Nikki said crisply.

"Can you find the way?" Gordon asked.

Dom nodded. "Yeah. I can."

"F-A-B," Gordon said, giving Dom a friendly pat on the shoulder.

They moved off, and Dianne faced Scott. "What are we gonna do about the people in the plane?" she asked.

Scott let out a deep breath. "Depends. We're going to take a look at the trees, and how they're holding up the plane. We might be able to cut some away and then perhaps use Thunderbird One's lances to stabilize it, keep it from falling any farther. Once that's done, we could probably put one of you inside to deal with the worst of the injured." He glanced up at the plane, its fuselage barely visible through the leaves. "If not, we'll have to use a sling or something to get it down safely. I've asked Callie to bring the crane and some jet packs."

Dianne nodded. "Sounds like a plan. Let me know when you're ready for us, either way."

"F-A-B," Scott said. "Let us know about Virgil. We may still need him to fly. And we could probably use Dom's help out here anyway."

"I'll keep you apprised." Dianne sighed, then picked up the medikit. She shook her head slowly. "This one has started out bad. I hope it doesn't continue in the same vein."

"You and me both, Doc," Scott said fervently. "You and me both."

Written by Tikatu

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:04:15 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/10/2006 12:40 PM

A collective sigh of relief was heard as Gordon and the medical team came into view. John stepped back and the brothers kept out of the way, once they had explained the situation. As the medical team worked, a thought occurred to John and he turned to his older brother. "How's Callie going to get here? No one is showing her the way."

His words caused stopped Scott in his tracks. "Man, I'm so out of it!" He walked back to Virgil, pulling a small box out of one of the pockets in his trousers. "I've had this homing device the whole time, intending to place it as soon as we reconnoitered the area. But when that wing came crashing down, it completely went out of my head."

Gordon turned to him with a grin and said, "You know, forgetfulness is the first sign of aging."

"Don't even go there," was the stern reply as Scott placed the box by Virgil and switched it on. "Maverick to Ursa. Do you read?"

"I read you five-by-five, Maverick. What do you need?"

"I've set up a homing device next to Van Gogh. You should be getting the signal now."

"A homing device? Good thinking. I'll need it if I'm going to find my way there. Stand by."

There was a brief pause, then she said, "I'm getting the signal loud and clear. Thanks for the assist, Maverick."

"You're welcome. Can you give me an ETA?"

"I don't -- WHOA!" There was a brief pause, then, "Now I know how a bronc rider must feel. Maverick, it doesn't look like there are many places long and wide enough for the Mobile Crane to get there very quickly. I'll have to make several detours, so I can't even hazard a guess at this point."

"F-A-B, Ursa. We'll keep an ear open and give you a yell when we hear you."

"F-A-B, Maverick. Ursa, out."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:05:06 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 6/10/2006 2:46 PM

The air was thick with the smell of rotting undergrowth and growing trees, though all Callie could smell was the filtered air of the Mobile Crane's air conditioning system. She took a quick swig of her water, not wanting to think about the heat outside that she would soon be in again. The signal from Scott's homing device told her that she would soon be there, provided there were no more unexpected detours. This jungle is so hard to get through, she thought as she changed her bearing once more. I'm surprised I've made it so far in this space of time.

The little blip on the radar came ever-closer. Soon enough, Callie heard Scott's promised yell, and as the Mobile Crane trundled around one last corner, and the rescue party came into view.

"Good timing, Ursa," Scott said as she jumped down from the cab. "I'll take it from here. Doc, Dak and Angel are on their way to TB7 with Van Gogh. You need to check out the fuel spillage, see if it's going to cause any problems. Quasar, Cousteau, get moving with those jet packs."

"Sir, yes, sir!" Gordon said with a mock salute.

The crew split, and Gordon and John headed for the Mobile Crane to get strapped into the jet packs. "Looks pretty high," the former commented as he began to fasten the straps of his.

"You're not scared, are you?" John asked lightly.

"Of course not," Gordon said in a mock huff. "I enjoy a challenge."

"Just don't screw up, and we'll be fine," John said with a wink.

Gordon gave an exaggerated roll of his eyes, and the friendly banter continued until they were ready to go. "Up, up and away," he said, and at the press of a button he began to rise above the ground, closely followed by John.

The sound of the jet packs mingled with the jungle chorus, and the brothers rose in harmony towards the fuselage of the tangled plane. He was about half way up when Gordon had a sinking feeling -- literally.

"Huh?"

The tone of the jet altered, and Gordon found himself getting closer to the ground, as John passed him by.

"What's wrong, Cousteau?" John asked, decreasing his ascent velocity.

"I don't know exactly. There's something -- WHOA!"

The jet pack bucked upwards, then lost all power for a moment. Gordon's fingers flew to the controls to try to get his speed back up, when suddenly the jet pack lurched sharply to the left, and then upwards.

"What is going on? Aaah!"

He lurched to the right, then left, up and down sharply, before finally the jet pack gave out a few meters above the ground.

"Aaahh! Ooof! Oww, my ass, damn..."

Scott and Callie had stopped what they were doing to watch the spectacle, and hurried over to Gordon when he had made his ungracious landing.

"This is no time for fooling around, Cousteau," Scott said with a smirk as he held out a hand to help his brother up.

Gordon rubbed his posterior as he stood and shook his head, feeling his face grow with a warmth that had nothing to do with the searing heat. "Some just desserts, I think," he said. "Kat must never find out," he muttered to himself.

"Sounds like blackmail material, eh Maverick?" Callie commented.

"Doesn't it just?" Scott said, chuckling, before sobering. "Right, get another pack and get up there. We have no time to waste."

Gordon nodded, and went to get the equipment. Just as he reached the Mobile Crane, he heard a voice from above.

"Hey, Cousteau!" John yelled as he descended a few meters. "Did that happen to be the jet pack you 'fixed' for MGM?"

Gordon withheld comment, but his eyes were drawn to the serial number of the faulty equipment, and he winced as he recognised it as the pack he had used in the prank on Kat. What goes around comes around, I guess, he thought. I just wish I could weasel out of it. He strapped himself into a jet pack for the second time, before beginning his ascent again.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:12:56 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/10/2006 4:11 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 10:10 a.m., somewhere west of Ipoh, Malaysia (2:10 p.m. Tracy Island)

Scott watched as his brothers took to the skies in the jet packs, and saw Callie heading off into the jungle with a sampling kit over her shoulder. She was almost out of sight when something clicked in his mind, and he shook his head slowly. Idiot! She's going off into this jungle alone! Then he tapped his earpiece. "Ursa from Maverick."

Callie kept walking as she tapped her earpiece. "Ursa here, Maverick."

"Since you're on your own for this fuel business, I want you to check in with me every five minutes, and yell if anything unusual happens," Scott told her. "I know we're out in the middle of nowhere, but there's still the potential for danger out there."

"Danger? What kind of danger?" Callie asked as she pushed up on a vine and ducked.

"Well, there are animals in this jungle....," Scott began.

Callie interrupted. "Are there snakes?"

Scott couldn't help but hear the hesitation in her voice. "Very likely. Why?"

Callie stopped and took a deep breath, then shuddered. "I hate snakes. I hate 'em, Maverick."

"Ah, I see," Scott said with a nod. "Well, in any case... every five minutes."

"F-A-B," Callie replied. "I'll set my watch as a timer. That will help me remember."

"Sounds good," Scott said, relieved. "Maverick out."

xxxx

"Indy, try Doc in Seven," Jeff said, his voice showing his growing irritation and concern over the situation. "Whoever is hurt, they'd have him there by now."

"F-A-B," Alan said. He muted the feed to the island so his father couldn't hear him mutter under his breath. "What does he think I've been doing?" He tweaked the gain on both the main antenna and the coded frequency antenna then tried his message again. "Thunderbird Seven from Thunderbird Five. Do you read? Thunderbird Seven from Thunderbird Five. Doc, do you copy?"

xxxx

In Thunderbird Seven, Dom and Nikki had transferred Virgil to the scanner bed in the surgery. Nikki took Virgil's visor from him, and his cap, and Dianne started up the equipment. The scanner, directed by her input, began to give them images of the inside of Virgil's leg.

"What's the verdict?" Virgil asked, sounding weary.

"Good news!" Dianne smiled at her stepson. "No break. Just some deep bruising. It's gonna hurt for a while though, especially when you move." She glanced up at Dom. "Let's get this splint off, then the boots."

"F-A-B, Doc," Dom said with a grin as he proceeded to deflate the splint.

There was a lull in the conversation as the medical team worked, then Virgil asked, "When can I

get back out there?"

"Who says you're getting back out there at all?" Dianne replied. "Unzip that pants leg for me, Nikki. I'll get a local for him. Otherwise, taking off this boot is gonna really hurt."

"I'm needed out there, Mom; you know that!" Virgil argued.

"Not with a bum leg you're not," she retorted. "You're going to rest where we can keep an eye on that leg."

"What about Two? Who's going to fly Two home?"

Dianne wielded the hypospray just below Virgil's left knee. "We'll let that take before pulling off the boot." She moved to the head of the bed where she could look her stepson in the eye. "Virgil, by rights, you should have a compound fracture. The only reason your leg isn't broken - or worse - is that you were wearing that Penelar. The boot kept the branch from jabbing into your leg and the pants cushioned the blow. Now, you are not going to argue with me. Gordon or John can just as easily fly Two home as you can." She glanced up at Dom. "Hey, from what I've heard, so can Dom here. So, follow doctor's orders, or I'll do worse than make you just rest."

Virgil huffed, and folded his arms across his chest, but said nothing more. Dianne shook her head. "Family makes the worst patients." She gave Virgil's leg a little pinch. When he didn't respond, she said, "Okay, team. Let's get this boot off."

Once the boot was removed, Dianne administered a more general analgesic, then the nurses helped Virgil to one of the bio beds. As Nikki pulled the bed down from where it was folded against the wall, she frowned. "Dianne? I think... I think I hear someone in the cockpit."

"Hmm. What do you mean?" Dianne stopped to listen, too.

"It sounds like... Indy," Nikki replied.

"Maybe he's found a way through the jamming," Virgil said.

"I'll go look," Dom volunteered.

He left Virgil's settling to the ladies, and opened the door between the medical cabin and the cockpit. Glancing around before he entered, he saw no one, and made a beeline for the pilot's chair.

"Thund... Sev... from... bird Five... you read? Thun... ven... Thundbird Fi... D..k ... copy?"

"Thunderbird Five, this is Thunderbird Seven. We copy. You're breaking up, but we copy."

Alan jumped at the signal. It was faint, and broken, but he heard it! He adjusted the gain some more, and leaned in closer to the microphone, as if that would make things clearer. "Thunderbird Seven, base wants status on injured. Do you copy?"

Dom frowned. "What was that last bit? Was it injured? What do they want?" He toggled the switch again. "Thunderbird Five, repeat. Your transmission is sketchy. Please repeat."

Alan took a deep breath to calm himself. He had understood from the reply that things were still garbled on both ends. "Indy to Doc, need status on injury."

"Well, it's obvious he doesn't know who he's talking to," Dom said. He glanced up and back as Dianne and Nikki both stepped into the cockpit. "It's Alan. I think he wants to know who's hurt."

"Tell him," Dianne said simply.

"F-A-B," Dom replied. "Dak to Indy. Van Gogh is injured but not seriously. Do you copy?"

Pounding on the console in frustration, Alan asked again, "Need status on injury." One word in four is coming through! This isn't good!

"V... Go... jured, not... ser... sly," came the reply.

Alan sighed in relief. "Van Gogh. Virgil. I'd better pipe this down to base." He returned to the mike. "Message understood, Doc. Five standing by."

Nikki snorted a laugh. "Sounds like he still thinks he's talking to Dianne," she said, shaking her head.

Dom frowned. "That brings up a small problem, doesn't it? There'll be other times when communications will be bad and our code names will be confused." He glanced up at Dianne. "I think I'd better come up with a new one. Yours is pretty much etched in stone."

"Let's discuss that when we're back at base," Dianne said.

"Maverick to Thunderbird Seven," Scott's voice came over the comm system. "How's Van Gogh? And we could use your help out here."

Dianne sighed, and smiled. "Let's tell him what's up, then make arrangements to get out there and help."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:14:53 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/11/2006 1:50 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 10:35 a.m., somewhere west of Ipoh, Malaysia (2:35 p.m. Tracy Island)

Jeff waited impatiently, drumming his fingers on his desktop. Alan's portrait was activated, but the space monitor was nowhere to be seen. "I hope he can contact somebody there," Jeff muttered

under his breath. "This waiting..."

Suddenly, Alan popped up, a relieved look on his face. He started talking, but Jeff's confused look made him roll his eyes and switch the sound feed back on. "Sorry about that. I have some news, Base. The interference is still bad, but I managed to get a bit of contact with someone in Seven. Here's the recording."

All those in the lounge listened carefully as Alan's clear speech, and the staticky bits and pieces of the response from Seven was played back. There was an audible gasp of shock when those listening heard that it was indeed Virgil who was injured, and an equally audible sigh of relief when they understood that he wasn't seriously hurt.

"Good work, Indy," Jeff said, smiling slightly for the first time during this rescue. "Einstein wants any and all data you have on this interference to begin some independent analysis on it. Maybe he can help find another way to punch through."

"F-A-B, Boss," Alan said. "It'll take a few moments to get a download ready."

"Understood," Jeff replied. "I'll patch you in to the lab. The two of you can take things from there. But keep an ear open for our rescue team." He leaned over to push a button on his computer. "Einstein, I'm patching you in to Thunderbird Five."

"F-A-B, we're, uh, ready," Brains said, the small window on Jeff's computer screen showing a very distracted looking scientist.

"F-A-B," Alan replied. "Thunderbird Five on standby." His picture stayed activated, but he left the scene, moving to one side to start compiling the data that Brains would need.

"Well, I'm glad to know that Virgil's not hurt too badly, though I'll be a mite less worried when I know the specifics of his injury," Grandma said with a small smile.

"So will I," Elise whispered to herself.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:23:11 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 6/12/2006 11:25 AM

Tracy lounge, Wednesday July 18th

There were murmurs of concern amongst those sat in the lounge when the news came that there was a man down. Kat sat with her fingers crossed. Oh, please, don't let it be John who has been hurt, she thought. Then, noticing how anxious Elise was, she went and sat beside her.

"You know, I think it's far worse sitting here, listening to what's going on and feeling so helpless," Elise said, smiling slightly at her friend.

Kat nodded. "I know exactly what you mean," she replied quietly as they both sat listening to events going on so far away.

Grandma was becoming agitated at the news that someone had been injured. Kyrano was trying to calm her.

"Come with me to the kitchen and I will make you a brew of my special herbal tea; it has great calming qualities," he suggested.

"I want to stay here; I need to know what's happening," Grandma began to argue.

"There is nothing you can do at this moment. Dr Tracy will take good care of whoever is injured," Kyrano replied, soothingly.

Grandma looked at Kyrano. "Yes, I would like some of your herbal tea, Kyrano. I must check on Joshua first; I don't want the little mite waking up and wondering where he is. If he's awake, I'll bring him back here."

"Then I will bring your tea back here for you," Kyrano replied, as they both left the lounge.

Grandma headed for her suite, where she found Joshua was just beginning to stir. When he saw Grandma, he held out his arms. She picked him up and cuddled him. "You've had a good sleep; shall we go and join the others in the lounge?"

Grandma and Josh walked back into the lounge, where Kyrano was waiting with her herbal tea.

"Mrs Tracy, would you like me to take Josh for you while you have your drink?" Kat asked.

Grandma nodded, and Kat took the youngster to the far side of the lounge, where they began playing with his cars.

Grandma began to sip the hot liquid, which soon began to help her feel more relaxed.

"My, this is a wonderful brew, Kyrano. What's in it?"

"It is a secret recipe that has been handed down in my family from one generation to the next," Kyrano replied.

At that moment, Alan was able to confirm that it was Virgil who had been injured, but not seriously.

While Kat had been playing with Josh, she had been listening to what was happening regarding the rescue. Although she was concerned that Virgil had been injured, she breathed a sigh of relief that it hadn't been John.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:24:03 GMT
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 6/12/2006 9:00 PM

Tuesday, July 17, 2006 6:30pm Near El Dorado, Kansas

That evening, Heather poured herself a glass of cognac from a sparkling crystal glass bottle and proceeded to walk back outside. Touching the branches of the old willow tree that stood at the center of the front yard, Heather looked at her solitary home with its crispy grass from the heat waves they'd experienced in the last two weeks. Bumblebees hummed heavily as they floated from one deep purple Four O' Clock blossom to the next. The sun was well on its way to setting and an unusually cool breeze brushed her hair forward. She frowned into the face of the wind, toward the farmhouse. Off in the distance, dark yellowish clouds loomed.

"First, dry heat and then cool breezes." Listening to the world around her, she heard the absence of bird song and saw the breezes picking up loose dust off the sides of the road. The crickets chirped louder than usual. "Not a good sign," she murmured, leaning on a piece of fencing that faced her Aunt Jenny's, wheat farm. Could she truly leave her prairie home that she'd come to love?

From her hip pocket came Hank Williams singing 'Your Cheatin' Heart'. Pulling out her cellphone, she answered the incoming call. "Hi, Aunt Jenny! How are you?"

"Ah kin see you walkin' in the front yard, Heather. You gotta nose fer weather like a beagle huntin' rabbit!"

Thinking about what her mother had said earlier, Heather tried to clean up her speech patterns and then gave up. "Usin' the high-powered binoculars I gave you?" she asked, giving a friendly wave toward the farmhouse.

"Best gift Ah ever got. Not only kin Ah see all the birds so much better now, Ah kin see what's goin' on Mabel's front porch! Land's Sakes! She's smoochin' the preacher's son--"

Heather's mouth dropped open for a minute. "What have Ah done?" she laughed to herself. "Now Aunt Jenny, that's not exactly what they were meant for. You shouldn't be snoopin' on the neighbors!"

An audible sniff answered Heather's admonishment. "Ah saw a beautiful meadowlark. Kin Ah help it if it flew in the same direction as Mabel's front yard?"

"Got your cellar prepared, haven't ya?" Heather asked, fighting hard not to laugh. If Mother only knew, she thought.

"Yes, dear. Got a storm comin' up?"

Looking over the clouds in the sky, Heather's feet crunched against the brown grass. "Sure feels that way. Ah think we've got a big one comin'."

"Oh, Ah hope not, but Ah've got fresh batteries for the flashlights, extra water, dried food to snack on if necessary and a battery powered radio! All the comforts of home!"

"Just keep an eye on the weather reports, Aunt Jenny. We're due."

"By the by, yo' Daddy called me today. He was a-tellin' me that you're lookin' to find a personal pilot's position. Does that mean you'd be movin'?"

"Well, it might, Aunt Jenny. Ah've sent my application in, but Ah haven't heard from him yet. It's a bit too soon anyway. He's a busy man--or so Ah hear."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:25:17 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/15/2006 7:19 PM

Scott watched Gordon rise steadily up to the plane, then turned back to the Mobile Crane and got a jet pack out for himself. He tapped his communicator and said, "Maverick to Cousteau and Quasar. I'm about to go up and check the other side. I'll also check the nose and cockpit; I want one of you to check the tail. If you can communicate with anyone in the cabin, reassure them that more help is on the way and we won't leave without all of them. Then meet me back on the ground, so we can plan our strategy."

"F-A-B," replied two voices at once. "I'll check the tail," Gordon added. "See you in a little while."

"F-A-B. Maverick, out." He put the jet pack on, walked to the opposite side of the plane and started up. It was slow going, due to vines and small branches hindering him. He also slowed his ascent when Callie checked in for the first time.

"I've reached the place where the first wing that came off landed. Upon first look, the fuel it carried appears to have been used up, but I'm going to confirm that before heading back to check out the other wing. I'll check back in when I'm finished, since it shouldn't take long."

"F-A-B, Ursa. Talk to you in five."

He continued upward, chafing inwardly at the time consumed, and finally arrived at his destination. He saw the smashed windshield, but found a spot where he could look inside. He watched the two men carefully for a few minutes, but saw no motion, no sign of life.

Shaking his head and sighing, he made his way carefully along the side of the plane.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:27:03 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/15/2006 8:16 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 10:50 a.m., local time, the Danger Zone. (2:50 p.m., Tracy Island)

"D'ya think we can get this in there?" Dom asked as he piloted Seven carefully through the crowded trees.

Sitting to his right and slightly behind him, Dianne shrugged. "I don't know. I understand the Mobile Crane got through, but I think this baby's wider than that."

Both of them winced as Seven scraped against a tree on one side. "Sorry about that," Dom said. "I think I overcompensated a bit."

The door opened behind them, and they could hear Nikki yelling, "You'd better get back here, Virgil, before I knock you out myself!"

"Need any help driving this buggy?" Virgil asked grumpily as he stood on one leg in the doorway, leaning in on both arms. Nikki tried to duck under his arms, to get around him, but he did his best to bar her way.

"Dom, you just concentrate on drivin'," Dianne said. "Ah'll take care o' this." She unstrapped herself from the copilot's seat and stood, striding over to her stepson with her most obstinate, no-nonsense expression on her face. "You let Nikki by, Virgil, or Ah'll let her use that suckah punch on you!"

Virgil let a frustrated breath out of his nose, and leaned to one side. An aggravated Nikki slipped under his arm, and Dianne nodded to her.

"Take the copilot's spot, Nikki, while Ah deal with this recalcitrant stepson o' mine."

"F-A-B," Nikki replied, sounding a bit relieved as she dropped into the chair Dianne had just vacated.

"Keep tryin' t' raise Five while yoah at it," Dianne said. Then she turned to Virgil. She got right up in his face, even though she knew he was looking down at her, and snapped, "Back t' bed, mistah."

"I think I'd be of more help out here," Virgil said, trying to curb his impatience and sound reasonable. "I have more experience..."

"Not with Seven," Dianne told him. "An' y'all are injured... or had that little fact escaped yoah notice? Now, eithuh you turn around an' get back t' bed, oah Ah'll ground you for a helluva lot longer than you'd like. Y'unnerstan'?"

He glared down at her, still balancing on his two arms and one leg. She stared up at him, arms

folded, one eyebrow rising slowly. Finally, his shoulders slumped.

"All right, all right," he said, sighing. "You win." He turned, wincing as he accidentally put weight on his sore leg.

Dianne came in under his arm and supported him as she helped him back to the bio bed. "Y'know Ah hate pullin' rank on you, Virgil, but sometimes y'all are too stubborn foah yoah own good." She glanced up at him, and gave him a small smile. "Y'all get it from yoah fathuh."

He snorted a small laugh, and sat down as she maneuvered him around. She helped him put his legs up on the bed; he drew in a sharp breath and winced as she did so. A small shudder went through Seven, causing her to put a hand on the wall for balance as she reached over to cover him up.

"I'll give you some more analgesic soon; maybe something a bit stronger since the local is wearing off."

"Please don't give me anything that'll make me drowsy," Virgil pleaded. "I want to stay alert... just in case I'm needed."

"I'll think about it," Dianne replied. She tweaked the blanket once more, and swayed a bit as Seven took a sharp turn.

"You sure you can't use me up there?" Virgil asked.

"Not if you're injured," Dianne told him. "Besides, Dom's doing a good job for the terrain. You have to expect a few bumps when you're riding in the jungle." She shook a finger at him. "Get some rest, and I'll reevaluate things later."

"Okay... Doctor Mom," Virgil replied with a mischievous look on his face.

She rolled her eyes and sighed, then shook her head. "My family makes the worst patients," she muttered as she headed back for the cockpit.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:27:59 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 6/16/2006 5:54 PM

Callie walked around the first fallen wing for any signs of change in the environment. Getting chills in her spine almost every few seconds, she felt very uncomfortable, knowing there were snakes in the area. "If I see a snake, I'm gonna scream," she said to herself. "Ever since I saw that water moccasin near Lake Martin when I was a kid, I've never liked them."

She walked around the wing, checking for any evidence of the experimental fuel. Leaning against it, she didn't notice that a rat snake had taken refuge there no more than a few minutes earlier. About to check readings with the chromograph, she saw something moving out of the corner of her eye. Turning to look, she saw the creature approaching her. "AAAAAAHHHHH!" she screamed as she jumped back a few feet. Looking at it, she said, "I don't care if you're poisonous or not. I hate snakes!"

After taking a some deep breaths for about a minute, she composed herself to check the chromograph. "Okay, there's no evidence to support any environmental effects from the fumes, at least not from this wing anyway. I'd better check in with Scott. Ursa to Maverick. I can confirm no fuel spillage, and no adverse effects from any fumes coming from it. I'll head back to the site to check out the other one."

Scott was still checking the side of the plane when he received Callie's second call. "F-A-B, Ursa." Hearing her mumbling something, he said, "You sound strange. Is everything all right?"

"Oh, um, yes, Maverick. I just...found one of the local species around here. It decided to use the wing as a temporary home."

Scott shook his head. Probably a snake from the sound of her voice. I hope her fear of snakes won't affect her job performance. If I know her, though, she won't let it. She rebounded fast after the paintball game on my birthday, so she'll be fine here, too. "All right, Ursa. Come on back."

"F-A-B, Maverick." She headed back to the site, not having any idea someone else was watching her closely.

It will not be long now, thought the Hood, silently following her through the trees.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:31:34 GMT
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 6/17/2006 10:28 AM

The senior bodyguard was beginning to feel concerned. It had been some time now since he had last seen the dull grey of shadowed fuselage, and had heard the powerful engines. He began to have doubts as to whether their plane had in fact been seen. He moved to relieve his cramped limbs, and suddenly realised that he needed to answer the call of nature. Not daring to move, he turned his head to see how the other passengers were.

The Queen's maid had finally regained consciousness. She looked around her, fear in her eyes.

"Bahn," she called to the bodyguard, "Her Majesty. Is she alive?"

Bahn nodded his head. "Yes, everyone has survived except the two pilots."

"Then I must go to her." In her confused state she tried to push past a member of the Thai press, who luckily, hadn't been very badly injured. He was busily writing up the events, thinking to himself that this would be a great story. Her sudden movement knocked his laptop into the aisle.

"Foolish woman! Stay where you are!" he said. "This plane is very unstable. We have landed in the upper canopy of the jungle."

The maid slumped back into her seat; she had never felt so sick or frightened in all her life.

It was becoming increasingly difficult to breathe inside the cabin. With not even a breeze to freshen the air coming in through the broken windows, it was hot and stuffy. In addition to that, there was an overall stench of sweat, blood and vomit.

"No more sightings?" the King called to the bodyguard.

"No, Your Majesty," Bahn replied.

One of the translators was peering out of the window. Something had moved; he focused on the spot. It had looked like? No, he felt he was imagining it.

Suddenly Solada began to cry as she vomited over one of her male colleagues, who let out a vehement curse.

"I'm so thirsty," she croaked. "Please, may I have some water?"

Amongst the glasses and other debris strewn across the floor, were bottles of water. The male member of the cabin crew picked up a bottle and handed it to Solada, before passing more back to the other passengers.

"Here, drink this, but only take little sips."

As she took the bottle from him, she gasped and pointed to the window. "There's someone looking in!"

"You're hallucinating, Solada," Pairat, the King's secretary, called out. "How can anyone be looking in through the window; we are a long way from the ground."

"I'm not hallucinating," Solada insisted. "Look! Over there!"

All the occupants craned to look where she was pointing. Yes, there was someone looking in the window. They didn't understand how anyone could be there, but the fact that they were there meant that they had been found.

"This is International Rescue," John called out to them. "Please remain calm; we're working on getting you out of here."

Everyone cheered, trying to resist the temptation to move.

"We are saved!" Bahn cried out with relief.

The translator settled back in his seat; he knew now that he hadn't imagined seeing someone in the foliage.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:33:38 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/17/2006 3:49 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 11:10 a.m., the Danger Zone, (3:10 p.m. Tracy Island)

"Thunderbird Seven to Maverick." Nikki's voice rang in Scott's ear. "We're approaching your position."

"F-A-B, Seven. We'll be down to meet you in a moment."

"F-A-B."

He tapped his ear comm and said, "Quasar and Cousteau from Maverick. How is your recon going?"

"I'm just about finished," Gordon replied.

"Done and ready to make my recommendations," John said.

"Then meet me at Seven."

"F-A-B," they both replied.

Scott alighted near the Mobile Crane, turning off his jet pack just as Seven lowered its landing gear and cut off the hoverjets. John and Gordon joined him and the trio moved toward the medical unit as the cockpit door opened. Dom and Nikki climbed out, followed by Dianne, who hollered, "You stay put!" over her shoulder.

Scott grinned. "Virgil giving you trouble?"

"Not at the moment," she replied with a sigh. "But earlier, yes." At Scott's questioning look, she added, "His leg is badly bruised but not broken. Still, it's gonna hurt like hell for a good while, and he's grounded until further notice."

"I bet he took that well," Scott said, snorting a laugh. He stopped for a moment as his earpiece crackled to life.

"Maverick from Ursa; I'm checking in."

"Maverick here, Ursa; what's your status?"

"I'm getting near to the second wing. There are vines all tangled up down here, though. I'll have to find a way around them."

"F-A-B. Keep in touch. Maverick out." He turned toward the small group. "So, let's get cracking on some plans."

Gordon took off his helmet and swiped his arm across his brow, then passed his gloved hand through his sweaty hair. "I thought at first we might rig a sling around the fuselage, but that's a no-go. The trees are too crowded in around the plane to do that."

"I agree," John stated. He too removed his helmet, and shook his head vigorously, sending drops of warm sweat flying, much to the disgust of some of the others.

"Hey, stop that!" Nikki cried, holding her hands up as protection. "You're not a dog!"

"Oh, sorry about that!" John stopped and pushed his own hair out of his eyes. "I did make contact with the people inside. Several voices answered, but I couldn't tell how many."

"Good," Scott said. He turned to Dianne. "There are at least two fatalities. The pilot and copilot are definitely dead." Glancing at the others, he continued. "The nose portion is lower than the tail and the whole thing is tilted toward one side. There's no way to get the plane out of its current position intact."

"Then how will we get the passengers out?" Dom asked.

"We're going to have to stabilize the plane, then send you people in. We can use the Mobile Crane to transport people down to the ground level," Scott explained.

"How do you intend to stabilize it and get us inside?" Dianne asked.

"Well," Gordon ventured, "we can secure the tail of the plane to the trees behind and around it. That should keep it from falling further forward."

"Yes," Scott said. "Then we can lash the trees around the nose together with cable and keep it from moving downward. Between the two secure points, we should be able to get you medics in, and the people out safely."

"As long as the tail holds," Dianne reminded them.

"I think it will," Gordon said. "The fuselage is actually in fairly good shape. Battered and dented, but in one piece."

Scott glanced around at his team. "All right, here's the plan. Gordon, you and Dom go back to Two and pick up some cable. Load it into one of the hover bike trailers and come back on the bikes.

They should be maneuverable enough to get here quickly." He grinned at Nikki. "How's your head for heights, Nikki?"

"Fine," she replied. "What do you want me to do?"

"Take Gordon's jet pack and go up to the plane with John. Try to find out how many people are alive up there, how many are injured, and a general sense of what the injuries are. That way we can be prepared for them down here."

"F-A-B," she replied, smiling.

"What do you want me to do?" Dianne asked, as Gordon took off his jet pack and helped Nikki to put it on. She took his helmet, too, as hers wasn't available to her.

"Ride herd on Virgil is one thing. You know he'll try and get up to help," Scott replied. "Prepare for the people in the plane, and keep an ear out for Callie. She's supposed to report in every five minutes since she's out there on her own. I'm going to take One up far enough to relay our status and plans to Five and base. I'll be back as soon as I can."

"And what if she doesn't report in? Then what?"

"Either send someone after her or go after her yourself," Scott replied. "And make sure you're armed."

"F-A-B," Dianne replied with a nod. "I'll do it." She paused. "We did make contact a little earlier with Five. It was garbled, but I think we managed to impress on them the fact that Virgil was injured and his current status."

"That's good news," Scott said. "At least they're not totally in the dark." He glanced around. Gordon and Dom had already started off toward the clearing where the Thunderbirds were parked. "Wait up!" he called. They stopped, and he nodded at John and Nikki. "Be careful up there."

"We will be," John said. He nudged Nikki, and they moved over toward the Mobile Crane. John gave Nikki a word of instruction, then they both rose slowly into the thick, humid air.

"I'll let Callie know to report to you," Scott said. Dianne nodded, and he went off to join Dom and Gordon. Dianne stood outside, watching the two who were wearing the jetpacks disappear into the upper canopy.

"Ursa from Maverick."

Callie stopped, getting her bearings. The gleam of the wing was off to her left. She sighed, and wished she'd thought of bringing a machete. She tapped her earpiece. "Go ahead, Maverick."

"I'm taking One up top to relay our situation to Five and base. While I'm gone, I want you to check in with Doc just as you have been with me." Scott ducked under a vine. "Check in with her now to let her know you've received my instructions. She's expecting your call."

"F-A-B, Maverick. Ursa out."

Scott sighed. He hated splitting his team up like this, but he could see no other way to deal with the many tasks they had before them. Stabilize the plane, first, then get the people out. After that, we can work on the mystery of the communications jamming, and what brought the plane down in the first place.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:34:25 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/18/2006 7:47 PM

Back on Tracy Island, Jeff paced around the lounge, wondering if the team was safe. He walked to the line of portraits, almost willing the interference to clear up. Damn it, If we don't get communications up soon, we may lose more lives. After a few seconds, he resumed his nervous pacing.

Feeling tense, Elise turned to Kat and whispered, "This is not good."

"I know," Kat replied, nervously tapping her foot. "I hope they're okay. I hate not knowing what's going on."

"I know what you mean, Kat. Usually, when we're out in the field we have a handle on things."

Sitting next to Kat and Elise, Brandon was in deep thought. Man, I wish I were out there instead of stuck here doing nothing. He thought about the rescues he'd been on and the rush they gave him. Sitting on the sidelines was something Brandon wasn't used to doing. He looked at Jeff and wondered how he could stay relatively calm amidst all the chaos of the rescue mission.

As if reading his mind, Kat turned to him asking, "How does he do it, Brandon, how does he stay so calm?"

Brandon leaned over to Kat and whispered, "I don't know, but I'll tell you one thing. I'd be going absolutely nuts if I were in his place."

Going back to his desk, Jeff pressed a button, contacting the lab, hoping for an update from Brains. After a few minutes, he broke the connection, disappointed that the news wasn't what he had hoped for. However, knowing both Brains and Alan were doing the best they could kept his hopes up. It's not the first time we've had to go blind. He turned around and watched the radio console, a small smile playing across his face. It's not the first time we've had to go blind. They've done it before and I know they can do it again.

Post by MagicMaster8

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:42:45 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/18/2006 8:32 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 11:45 a.m., the Danger Zone, (3:45 p.m. Tracy Island)

"Thunderbird Five and Base from Thunderbird One. Come in, Thunderbird Five and Base."

Alan breathed a heavy sigh of relief and almost jumped over to the communications console. On the island, Jeff sagged with relief and the others smiled and cheered when Scott's portrait became active.

"Thunderbird Five here, go ahead Thunderbird One," Alan replied.

Scott winced as his younger brother's tenor voice was mixed up with his father's bass one calling, "Base here, go ahead Maverick," in his ear.

"Have you found a way around the signal jamming?" Jeff added.

Scott shook his head. "Negative, Base. I've taken One into the air and past the jamming field to communicate with you."

"Understood," Jeff said. "What's your status?"

"The king's plane has come down nose first in the upper canopy of the jungle. There doesn't seem to be any way to safely get it out of the trees, so we're going to secure it as best we can and send the med team inside to treat and extricate the passengers."

"What's the status of the passengers?"

"We're still working on find that out, base. We do know that the pilot and copilot are fatalities, and that a number of the passengers are alive. How many, we're not sure of yet." Scott made a face. "We really haven't gotten as much done other than a recon of the situation, but since our communications have been so bad, I thought you should get an update."

"Understood." Jeff paused, then asked, "What happened to Van Gogh and how is he?"

"One of the wings fell when we first arrived at the Danger Zone. It was headed for me, and he tackled me, pushing me out of the way. The wing brought down a good number of branches, one of which fell on his leg." Scott let a frustrated breath out through his nose. "Fortunately, Doc says his leg is only badly bruised, not broken. She's grounded him for the time being."

"I bet he's giving her hell for that," Alan commented.

"Can the commentary, Indy," Jeff growled. He turned his attention back to Scott. "Anything else we should know?"

"Ursa is checking the wings for that experimental fuel. I think we're fortunate that it didn't catch fire. I left Angel and Quasar to ascertain the conditions of the passengers, and Dak went with Cousteau to bring some cable to the site. When I return, we'll start work on securing the plane."

"Sounds like you have things under control, Maverick. Einstein and Indy are working to try and break through the jamming field, with limited success." Jeff paused, then asked. "How are communications at the site itself? Do your comm links work?"

"Yes, they do. We have no trouble communicating within a short range."

"Good. Continue operations as you have, and report in this way every hour. Apprise us of any emergencies or changes as soon as possible, and notify us when you're ready to leave."

"F-A-B, base," Scott said smartly. "We will need a hospital to take these people to."

"I'll contact one of the hospitals in Kuala Lumpur," Alan told him. "When you're ready to leave, I'll be able to give you coordinates."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Five." Scott looked relieved. "It's been hard to be out of touch, base."

"It's been hard here, too, Maverick," Jeff admitted. "I'm glad you came up with a solution of sorts."

"I'd better get back to the Danger Zone. The king and his party await."

"F-A-B," Jeff said. "Good luck."

"Thanks, base. Thunderbird One, out."

His portrait went static again, and the people in the lounge looked at each other. The weight of not knowing was lifted somewhat, and everyone felt better. Jeff stood.

"I think I need to stretch my legs. I'll be back in a few minutes." He glanced at Brandon. "Brandon, you have the desk."

"M-Me?" Brandon stammered.

"Yes, you," Jeff replied. "You can handle it for a few minutes. Notify me if anything important happens."

"F-A-B," the aquanaut replied, still stunned.

Jeff left the room, stretching his legs and thinking, Time to pay a visit to the lab and see how Brains and Tin-Tin are doing with this jamming puzzle.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:46:11 GMT
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[/color]From: Tikatu Sent: 6/19/2006 1:26 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 4 p.m. local time, Tracy Island (Noon, the Danger Zone)

"Do you have a handle on the jamming yet, Brains?" Jeff asked after a few moments of watching the engineer at work.

"No, Mr. Tracy." Brains shook his head in frustration. "It seems to be more of a, uh, signal deflector, one that uses a multiphasic frequency variation. Signals from the outside can't get, uh, inside the field; signals from below can't get out. However, signals within or without can be, uh, detected" He sighed. "I don't know high the, uh, field extends, or how large an area it encompasses. If I knew that, I might be able to find the, uh, epicenter."

"We just heard from Scott. He took Thunderbird One up in order to call us. He says that local communications are fine; the team can talk to each other."

"That goes a long way to, uh, proving my theory, Mr. Tracy." Brains frowned behind his glasses. "If AAlan can try to bounce a signal off of the jamming field, we could get an idea of how large an area it, uh, covers. We could determine where the epicenter is, and try to disrupt the field from there."

Jeff nodded, but he frowned. "I'm more concerned with the actual rescue right now, Brains, but have Alan work on your idea anyway. Do you think that the signal jamming and the plane going down are connected? Could one have caused the other?"

"Our vessels had no trouble getting to the Danger Zone," Brains reminded him, "but they are in the midst of the communications blackout. I'd, uh, venture that the two phenomena are, uh, unrelated."

"I don't like that, Brains," said Tin-Tin, who had been listening intently. "I don't like the implications."

"How so, Tin-Tin?" Jeff asked.

Tin-Tin walked over to the computer. "It seems that a number of flights have gone down in this particular region. Not only small planes, but other groups, in ground based vehicles, have also disappeared. Yet, the Thunderbirds reported no trouble before entering the communications black out; not even turbulence that would suggest a more natural cause. Scott was able to fly Thunderbird One without trouble, yes?"

"He didn't mention having any," Jeff replied, thoughtfully stroking his chin. "He would have told me if the 'Birds were malfunctioning."

Tin-Tin nodded. "My theory is that someone is controlling whatever force is bringing these planes down, and cut it off when our vessels approached." She looked up at Jeff with a grave expression. "It is almost as if they wanted the Thunderbirds there, and in one piece."

There was an uneasy silence in the lab, then Jeff took in a deep breath and let it out through his nose. "I'll take that under advisement, Tin-Tin, and warn Scott the next time he makes contact. Keep working on the communications problem; we've got to have a way to talk to our people real time."

"F-A-B," Brains replied.

"Yes, Mr. Tracy," Tin-Tin responded.

Jeff stayed a moment more, then turned around and headed out of the lab. As he took the monorail back to the elevator stop, he thought, Someone is taking a great deal of care to hide something within that area of Malaysia. I wonder who... and why.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 00:48:50 GMT
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 6/19/2006 2:31 PM

After receiving her instructions from Scott, Callie contacted Dianne. "Ursa to Doc, I just wanted to check in with you. I'm investigating the wing now."

"F-A-B, Ursa," said Dianne. "Watch yourself. Doc out."

Walking around the other wing, Callie checked for any signs of the fuel. She could already smell the odor from the fumes. "Yuck! How acrid could that get? Then again, this is experimental fuel, not a bed of roses." Taking out the chromograph, she watched for any readings to appear. When the device started lighting up, she said, "Ah, there's something here. At least I know the fuel's more evident." She walked to the side of the wing with the tank and saw a steady trickle falling from the tank. "Finally, I can get all the components of this stuff."

The Hood kept a close eye on her. Excellent. She has become absorbed in her work. I will wait until she has finished collecting her information, and then I will get what I want from her.

She knelt down and placed the chromograph under the hole where the liquid came from. "This is an interesting combination," she said to herself. "I wonder how they were able to mix in the alsterene safely, though? That's never been safe in a fuel mixture up until now." Her watch chimed, telling her it was time to check in with Dianne. "Ursa to Doc. I've got the components of

the experimental fuel. It consists of ethanol EA-85, hydrogen, vegetable oil, and alsterene."

Dianne was surprised by one part of the mixture. "Alsterene?" From what I remember reading the logs, that's the chemical which mixed with the OD-60 and caused problems for the two Ocean Pioneer ships a couple of years ago. "Are you absolutely certain?"

"Yes, Doc, I'm positive." She then moved the chromograph onto the ground. "I'm detecting increases of hydrogen and alsterene in the ground, and I see the ground already changing from green to black."

"Is there any way to reverse the effect?"

"Unfortunately, no. Because this is a new mixture, there really isn't anything we can do to neutralize it, at least not right away." Putting away her chromograph in her belt, she took out a couple of test tubes. "I'll gather some liquid and soil samples to give to Einstein. Maybe he can come up with some answers when we get back."

"F-A-B, Ursa."

As a cloud covered the sun, the Hood smiled with wickedness. Now is the time. He started walking toward Callie, his steps silent.

Another chill going down her back because of her snake encounter earlier, she mustered her inner strength and gathered four samples. "There we go. Brains will get two liquid samples and two soil samples. I know he'd be interested in knowing how they got the alsterene into the mixture safely. We also need to see if we can neutralize it if it poses a fire hazard in during a rescue."

As she put the four test tubes into her belt, she felt her hair stand on end. There's something behind me... please, not another snake! She quickly stood up and turned around. "Hey, who are you?" she asked when she saw a man standing in front of her.

She was about to contact Dianne when the Hood's eyes started glowing with an eerie yellow light. "You will look into my eyes, my dear."

"Stupid vines!" Dominic had gotten the hoverbike tangled only a couple of times in the dense jungle vines, but it was enough to slow him down temporarily upon returning to Thunderbird Seven.

He was still muttering under his breath as he entered the medical cabin, and Dianne raised an eyebrow. "Vines. I hate vines," he said.

"It's not so much the vines as the snakes you need to worry about," Dianne said, before glancing back down at her comm watch, her mouth set in a straight line. "Hmm."

"What's up?" Dom asked.

"Callie was supposed to check in a few minutes ago. She hasn't been late so far."

"I'll go look for her," Virgil commented, trying to get up from the biobed.

"You stay right there, mistah," Dianne said, pinning him with a glare. "Ah'm not gonna tell you again." She turned her eyes on Dom. "Go and have a look foah her, Dak. Ah jus' don't like the ideah of her bein' on her own an' not respondin'."

"F-A-B, Doc," Dom said. As he started walking out, though, he realized, "Wait a minute, we don't have Thunderbird Five to help us determine where she is. Indy couldn't get the sub-dermal transmitter signal to us, even if he wanted."

Virgil nodded. "And with no Mobile Control this time, I'll have to give you directions to the wing she's checking... since one of the tree branches near it did get my leg."

Dom chuckled lightly, but listened carefully as Virgil gave him directions to the wing, and hopefully Callie.

Unable to resist his hypnotic gaze, Callie's arms simply went limp as she stood in an entranced state, staring into his eyes.

"You cannot resist me. I want the names of your fellow members of International Rescue."

The more Callie tried to resist, the more powerful his glow became. "I...I...Big Mac, Doc, Dak, MGM, Angel, Frankie, Quasar--"

"No, foolish girl!" he said angrily. "I want real names, not ridiculous code names! In fact, I want you to tell me your real name first."

She tried to keep quiet, but the Hood's eyes became even brighter. "Do not resist me! Your will is weak compared to my powers!"

Riding the hoverbike, Dominic was following Virgil's directions to the wing Callie was investigating, but so far hadn't come across her. This is weird, he thought. I've got a bad feeling...

Eventually, when he passed a clump of dense foliage, she came into view. Instead of relief, however, a surge of panic mixed with rage set his heart pumping. There was a man in front of her, and there was something about his physical appearance that sounded a mental alarm. A cruel face, bald, bushy eyebrows... When Dominic saw his eyes glowing yellow, the penny dropped. That must be the Hood! It snapped him out of his momentary stupor, and he suddenly jumped off the hoverbike.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?" he screamed, jumping over some half-covered vines.

The man's eyes suddenly lost their glow as they swung away from Callie, and for a moment Dom thought he was going to turn them on him. However, as the nurse got closer, the man seemed to

lose face, and instead bolted into the jungle.

Dominic kept running, and was gaining ground, before he stopped short and turned to look backwards. I can't leave Callie like this...and what if he - the Hood? - has accomplices? As he looked forward again, the man disappeared into the dense foliage, and Dom sprinted back to Callie. "Ursa! Are you okay?"

She still stood limp, and she didn't seem to acknowledge Dom's presence. "Maverick... Doc... Indy... Big Mac... I... I... oh, my God, I..."

"Ursa, snap out of it. Ursa? Callie? Can you hear me?"

"Sc-Sc-Maverick... K-K... MGM... no... no..."

Dominic grabbed her shoulders and shook her. "Callie, can you hear me?"

He shook her again, and her eyes focused on his face for a moment. "Dak? Oh, my God... that... that..."

Her eyes slipped out of focus again, and Dom caught her as she slumped forward. "Doc from Dak."

"Go ahead, Dak. Did you find her?"

"Yes. I'm coming back with her now. Get some smelling salts ready. I'll explain everything when I get back."

"F-A-B." Dianne's voice sounded tight.

Dominic tried to rouse Callie again, but to no avail. He lifted her into his arms and headed back to the hoverbike, thinking, I wonder if that was the Hood himself I just saw...

"Set her down heah," Dianne said, motioning to the ground just outside the cockpit.

Dominic did as so, and Dianne immediately started waving the smelling salts in front of Callie's face.

"What happened?" Virgil asked from the cockpit door.

Dianne gave him a quick disapproving look, but kept her concentration on Callie as she began to come around, coughing.

Dominic glanced up at Virgil with wide eyes, the gravity of the situation suddenly weighing on him as his adrenaline subsided. "Callie was attacked, and I'm fairly certain, from what we were told, that it was that Hood guy. His eyes were glowing; he was asking for names."

"Names? Did she give him any?" Virgil asked.

"Not as far as I know. I don't think so. When I found her she was saying code names." Dom looked down at Callie as she became more aware of her surroundings, still coughing, and frowned. At least I hope she didn't give any names...

"What... what happened?" she asked, before her face fell as memory returned.

Dom was about to open his mouth, when something long came shooting from above them and landed on Callie's shoulder. It took them all a moment to realize what it was, and suddenly Dianne, Dom and Virgil reeled backwards, as Callie screamed.

"SNAKE! Get it off me, GET IT OFF ME!" She quickly jumped up and swatted away the creature out of panic.

Adrenaline surged again, and Dominic delivered a swift kick to the creature, sending it flying once more.

She retreated up the steps into the cockpit and hid behind Virgil. "I hate snakes! I hate them!"

"Shhh, it's all right, Callie, it's all right. It's gone now. You're okay." He gave her a comforting hug and rubbed her back to help relax her nerves.

She continued breathing heavily as she looked around at her teammates. "Guys, tell me, please... what happened? I only remember those creepy glowing eyes."

*****By TracyFan4Ever and ArtisticRainey.*****

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:02:51 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/19/2006 3:15 PM

"How are you doing, Nikki?"

"Fine!" Nikki flashed John a bright, white smile. "Never knew that going on rescue could actually be fun!"

John laughed. "Yeah, the jet packs can be fun, but we'd better be careful. Things get more crowded in the upper canopy."

Already they were getting into the tangle of branches and foliage that topped the highest trees. "Come around here," John said. "This is where I called in last time."

"F-A-B," she said as she followed him through to a clearer spot near a window.

"Hello in there!" he called, peering through the broken frame. "Can you hear me?"

Inside, Solada called to her fellow passengers, "He is here again! The Thunderbird man is here again!"

There was a chorus of voices from within following her cry, and John tried to calm the clamor enough to ask his questions. Finally, Nikki motioned to him and he let her up to the window. "Quiet in there!" she bellowed, startling both John and the passengers into silence. When it was quiet, she said, in a less belligerent tone, "Now, I need one spokesman for all of you. Someone with a voice that will carry because it gets pretty noisy out here." Indeed the birds, who had flown off at her bellow were quickly returning, and John kept eying a monkey that seemed to be getting entirely too interested in the whole proceedings.

The king's secretary, who sat nearest to the window in question, spoke up. "I am closest. I will be the spokesperson."

"Good. What's your name?"

"Pairat."

"All right, Pairat. I need to know how many of you are in there and if there are any fatalities." Nikki tapped her communicator so that her information would be relayed to Dianne.

On the ground, Dianne heard the last few words and shook her head. She motioned to Dom. "Get Callie inside, please, and help her up onto the scanner bed. I'm getting information from Nikki right now."

"F-A-B," Dom said. "Come on," he said as he guided Callie to the surgery. "Dianne will want to take a look at you and make sure you're all right."

Callie nodded wordlessly, and gave Virgil's hand a squeeze in thanks. Dianne gave him a look and motioned with her head for him to get back into the medical cabin. He rolled his eyes and limped back in. She followed him in and picked up a doctor's chart, then went out to the cockpit and sat in the pilot's chair, already transcribing what Nikki was relaying.

"There are twenty of us, all told," Pairat said. "Everyone in the passenger's section is alive, but I understand that the pilot and copilot are dead."

Nikki relayed the information, and nodded. "We're aware of the pilot and copilot. Now, starting with the king, I want to know the names and injuries of each person in the plane. They need to report every symptom; don't skip anything."

Pairat turned to relay her instructions to his fellow passengers. "Beginning with His Majesty..." he began.

Dianne got up quickly while Nikki was instructing the passengers, and headed back to the

surgery, putting in the data as she walked. Virgil sighed as she passed by, but she wasn't listening. "Dom?" she asked, muting her microphone. "I need you to keep scribing in the data that Nikki is sending us about the passengers. Then I can take a look at Callie here and decide what to do."

Gordon poked his head into the med cabin and saw Virgil lying on the bio bed. "What's up, Virge?"

"I don't have all the details," Virgil replied. "but something happened to Callie... Dom said she was attacked--possibly by the Hood."

Gordon made a face. "Damn. Scott is not going to like this."

"Not going to like what?"

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:06:03 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/19/2006 6:50 PM

The Hood had run for a few minutes before he realized that there were no further sounds of pursuit. He slowed, then stopped to make sure. Except for the animals in the area, all was quiet. He cursed himself for running like a frightened deer, then turned and stealthily made his way back to the crash site.

They will be more on their guard now. I won't be able to get anyone alone. Curse that infernal International Rescue! Even their new operatives have all the luck. And now they have code names. How am I going to tell who has which?

As he made his silent way back, a plan began to form. I will get as close as possible and keep my eyes and ears open. Then perhaps I will learn something I can use another time. I will have their secrets!

As he neared the area where he had first accosted Callie, he slowed, listening. He decided to circle the area, to do some reconnoitering and find the best place to eavesdrop and observe without being seen. Several minutes later, frustrated because he couldn't get as close as he wanted, he crouched behind some bushes that allowed him to see most of the area, while still being concealed. But he felt he wouldn't be able to hear anything, since he was some distance away.

Bah! This may be a fool's errand, but I refuse to leave without knowing something!

From: Tikatu Sent: 6/20/2006 6:00 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 12:25 p.m. local time, the Danger Zone (4:25 p.m., Tracy Island)

"Callie was attacked, possibly by the Hood," Gordon told Scott.

Scott stood perfectly still, letting the news sink in, then, "Damn!" He strode through the medical cabin and would have pulled aside the door to the surgery, but Dom stood up from the doctor's monitoring station, and stopped him.

"Just wait a bit," he counseled. "Dianne is with Callie now, examining her. She won't be long."

Scott nodded. "I'd better call John and Nikki in," he said.

"Wait a minute or two on that, too, please" Dom warned him, continuing his work with the pad. "Nikki's getting preliminary injury information on the passengers and relaying it to me right now. I think she's almost through."

"All right." Scott went back to the cockpit and asked Gordon, "What happened?"

"I don't know. I just heard the news myself."

Virgil sat up on the biobed. "She didn't check in on time, so Mom sent Dom after her. He brought her back on the hoverbike. Mom had to use smelling salts to bring her around. Then a snake paid her a visit and she went ballistic."

"Did Dom say what made him think it was the Hood?" Scott asked.

"He said that the guy's eyes were glowing and he was asking for names," Virgil replied.

"Damn," Scott muttered again.

The three men turned their attention to Dom as he said, "Thanks, Angel." He nodded at Scott. "We're done with the relay, if you want to call them in."

"Thanks," Scott said with a return nod. "Maverick to Quasar and Angel, we have a security alert. Rendezvous immediately at Seven. I repeat, we have a security alert, rendezvous immediately at Seven."

Two distinct voices called, "F-A-B," in his earphone.

Up by the plane, the two IR operatives exchanged glances. "What kind of security problem could we have out here?" Nikki asked.

John shook his head. "I don't know, but we'd better get moving." He raised his voice to the

passengers. "We'll be securing the plane shortly. A little more patience, please. You'll be out of there soon." With that, the astronaut and the nurse headed groundward for a meeting of the minds.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:08:03 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/24/2006 9:16 AM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 12:40 p.m., local time, the Danger Zone. (4:40 p.m. Tracy Island)

Callie lay on the scanner bed, squinting and fighting sleep. She was inwardly frustrated by her inability to remember what happened to her, and her heart was still pounding from her encounter with the snake. She turned her head as Dianne walked into the surgical area.

Dianne gave her an encouraging smile, then turned her attention to the plasma screen that held the data already collected by the scanner.

"Well," she said soothingly, "you'll live. Your adrenaline surge is beginning to pass and I don't see any physical results from what happened."

Her breathing now steady and less stressed, Callie shook her head. "Doc, I need to know what happened to me. First I see someone's eyes glowing at me, and the next thing I know is Dom shaking me up."

"Glowing eyes." Dianne sighed. "That seems to be the most telling fact about what happened." She motioned for Callie to sit up, and helped her off the scanner bed. "From both Dom's report, and what you just told me, it appears that you were attacked by our nemesis, the Hood."

"The strange person Brains and Kyrano talked about in that meeting?" Callie asked. Hanging her head in shame, she said, "I got too caught up in my work and let him get to me too easily."

Dianne sighed. "Don't go blaming yourself, Callie. If our previous encounters with him have taught us anything, he's very good at sneaking up on people." She shook her head as she led Callie out to the medical cabin. "On top of that, we're out in the middle of the jungle. Who would have thought he'd be here, of all places?"

The men who stood in a tight knot next to Virgil's biobed had been supplemented by Nikki and John's presence. They turned to Callie and Dianne, and Scott asked, "How are you, Callie?"

"Physically speaking, I'm fine," she answered. "I'm getting over the snake part, but there's this blank part in my mind. From seeing those glowing eyes to Dom shaking me, I don't remember a damn thing."

Scott shot a questioning look to Dianne, who nodded. "She'll be fine. She'll probably have to sleep off any aftereffects."

"Do you think it was the Hood?" Gordon asked.

Dianne nodded. "Yes, from her reaction and description of what happened, I'm sure of it."

"Hmm," Scott said. "I feel like I should report this to base immediately. But," he straightened and pulled down on the edge of his vest, "we have eighteen hurt people waiting for us to extricate them."

"And that comes first," John said, nodding in agreement.

Scott patted Callie's shoulder, a comforting gesture. "You get some rest, Callie, and don't let that memory lapse worry you. It's par for the course with this creep."

Callie sighed. "Okay, Scott. I do feel sleepy anyway. Maybe a nap will do me some good."

"Speaking of the passengers," Dianne said. "I'm going to need every bed available here." She glanced quickly at Virgil. "I think we'd be better off if Virgil and Callie were taken over to Two. Callie can rest in crew's quarters there, and - since Virgil's chomping at the bit to be useful - he can try to break through this communications jamming from Two's cockpit."

Virgil perked up at this possibility, while Scott rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "That's a good idea." He turned to the others. "Dom, you and Nikki take Virgil and Callie over to Two on the hoverbikes. John, Gordon and I can get started on securing the plane. Bring back the chainsaws, laser cutters, and oxyhydrite equipment. We're going to have to do some cutting to actually get into the plane." He pointed forcefully at Dianne. "You will lock this vehicle up the moment we leave. I want no chance of a repeat encounter with the Hood."

"F-A-B," Dianne replied mildly. She turned to the nurses. "Oh, and while you're at it, bring back some MRE's. I think we could all do with something to eat."

A few minutes later, Dom and Virgil rode on one hoverbike while Nikki and Callie were on the other one.

Nikki looked at Callie, who shook her head and frowned. "Come now, Callie. You'll be okay."

Yeah, on the surface, Callie thought. Deep down... I don't know.

Diagnosis by TracyFan4Ever and Tikatu

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:08:59 GMT

From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 6/24/2006 12:06 PM

Not hearing an answer from Callie, Nikki spoke again. "Callie?"

Callie sighed. "I know Scott told me not to worry about the memory lapse, but it's a horrible feeling. I guess the best way to describe it is that it feels like trying to remember a dream you had the previous night, but all you come up with is a blank. It's frustrating not knowing."

"Well, hopefully after your nap, you'll feel a bit better."

"Hmm," was Callie's only reply.

"Hey, if you need to talk later, I'm there for you." Nikki smiled. "Anytime you need it."

"Thanks. I appreciate the gesture." Callie smiled slightly, but it soon disappeared as she thought back to the glowing eyes. Kyrano has experienced this Hood's power and has found a way to counter it. I wonder if he can offer any advice on how to deal with the attack's aftermath, she thought.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:15:18 GMT
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 6/24/2006 6:50 PM

July 17th, 2068 Evening near Eldorado, Kansas

As she listened to her aunt's play by play of what was happening to their mutual neighbor Mabel, Heather saw a tumbleweed out on the drive. The southwest winds batted and kicked the crispy yellow plant until it bounced against the fence.

"Heather? Ah have to go! I need to call Ruby 'bout this! Shoot, I may as well just invite her over for coffee!"

"Aunt Jenny, wait just a min--" The dial tone replaced Jenny's voice and Heather could only roll her eyes, and turn to walk back into the house once more. "Aunt Jenny has to be the biggest gossip in the county! She can spread news faster than Ned Cook ever dreamed of!"

Stepping inside, she walked into the living room of her three bedroom house, sighing with relief as she felt the cool air surrounding her. In the corner of the room sat her favorite recliner with a HDTV remote control built into the right arm. Sitting down into it, she tapped the keys, causing the plasma television that hung on the wall across from the chair to spring to life, set to give a dual screen. The image on the left hand side gave constant weather reports and satellite images of the

skies from the California Rockies to the Great Lakes with Kansas as the central picture. A cold front slowly made its way across with thunderstorms lining the edge as cool air mixed with the warm. "With the heat index like it is in the plains, the sky is just going to boil like a witch's cauldron."

Meanwhile, on the right hand side of the screen, her favorite news channel ran a continuous, twenty-four hour broadcast covering both local, state and world news. David Smith began his broadcast with a worried expression. "This is WKRT TV 23. David Smith reporting. Repeating our latest breaking news, it has been reported that the luxury aircraft belonging to the King of Thailand, Bhumibol Adulyadej III, has disappeared from Malaysian radar after the king and his wife paid a visit to Canberra, Australia. This area which you see here on the map are places where air traffic controllers have lost several planes and authorities are at a loss to explain the aircraft's disappearances. The natives call this area 'Lorong pada Maut' or 'The Path to Death' and is similar to the Bermuda Triangle. It is suspected and almost certain that a call has gone out for International Rescue. In the US today, forest fires continue to rage in Arizona-- "

The phone rang on the small table sitting next to her chair. Picking up the receiver, Heather immediately crossed herself as she answered. "Hi Mother."

"Heather, I was just talking to Mrs. Wilson. You know her? She's a distant relation to the former President?"

"Oh, that Mrs. Wilson," Heather answered. "How is she doing? I know she's taken a bit of a beating in the press with Johnathon's girlfriend--"

"Well, that's what I wanted to talk to you about, you know. Johnathon's free now and he's been asking about you--"

"Oh, is he? How nice," Heather replied politely.

"I told them both that you were planning on coming home--"

"Then I'm afraid they will both be disappointed, Mother."

"Have you heard from Jeff Tracy yet?"

"No, I haven't, Mother, but I'm going to sit tight and keep my day job until I do," Heather said firmly, while adjusting her feet up on the foot rest. I need a drink...no. I need a long vacation! she thought to herself. Somewhere tropical. Blue waters, palm trees swaying in the breeze. Prance around in nothing but seashells! That thought had her laughing.

"Heather, really, I don't think it's at all funny! If you'd simply had accepted his marriage proposal, he would never have gotten into that mess--"

"Mother, that man has got a vicious temper on him. I want nothing to do with the creep!"

"Heather!"

"It's true! He tried it with me once! He got the surprise of his life! There isn't a man who's got enough prestige for me to marry him. I'm really tired, Mother. I've got to go. Bye!" she said hurriedly, hanging up the phone. She looked back to the screen. Realtime footage of the Arizona fires had taken the place of the Thai king's disappearance. Her thoughts went to the victims. "C'mon International Rescue! Where are you? If anyone survives at all it will be a miracle! That region is a terrible place to crash in."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:17:53 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 6/25/2006 9:11 PM

The Hood watched as everyone went inside Thunderbird Seven, and decided to try to get closer. He made his silent way toward the vehicle and circled it, getting as close as possible without being seen, and hoping to be able to hear something. But once again he was foiled. So he found a spot to watch and wait.

Soon he saw the others leave the vehicle and go off in different directions. He noticed that one person remained behind inside. My luck seems to be changing. Perhaps I can get more information, and maybe a Thunderbird vehicle plus an operative as a bonus after all. But I must act quickly. Any of them could return very soon

He watched to be sure the others were well out of sight, then he made his move. He crept up to the side of Seven, and tried to open the cockpit door as silently as possible.

It was locked.

He went around to the other side and got the same result. He searched for other entrances and found them also locked up tight. Cursing under his breath in frustration, he stepped back, then stifled a cry of pain. He looked down to see a small, young python with its teeth sunk into his calf. He limped back to his hiding place, dragging the snake, then took out his knife, using it to remove it from his leg. Then he tossed it aside.

As his calf began throbbing, he stood there indecisively for a few minutes. Bah! A thousand curses upon International Rescue and all those who work for it. One day, I will find a way to get their secrets. And then nothing will stop me!

Slowly, muttering under his breath, he made his painful way around the crash site and toward his vehicle. He then headed back to his temple to nurse his wound and make new plans to find a way to learn more about International Rescue.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:19:19 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 6/25/2006 9:33 PM

Inside Thunderbird Seven, Dianne was busy stripping down the biobed that Virgil had used, disinfecting it and setting it up again for the next patient. She folded it to the wall and, taking the doctor's chart, headed over to the monitoring station to download Virgil's information into the on-board computer. She took with her the pad on which Dom had keyed in the data dictated to him by Nikki, so she could download that as well and have the names and symptoms ready to upload ahead of time.

She had just sat down when a noise from the outside made the hairs on the back of her neck rise. She listened carefully, the muted sounds of the medical cabin's air filtration and conditioning system humming quietly in the background.

There! There it is again! She stood up and crossed as quietly as possible to the big sliding doors on the side of the medical cabin. A sharp noise, seemingly loud in the near-silence, startled her. It sounds like someone's trying the door!

She debated internally about whether or not to call Scott and, as she did, she heard a faint clank, as if someone were stepping off the rungs leading up to the doors.

If there's someone out there, where would they go next? she wondered. The cockpit? She backed away from the door quietly, and padded toward the cockpit. The inner door swished open, and she peered out through the windshield. There was no sign of anyone nearby. She listened carefully, but the sound didn't repeat itself.

Maybe I'm imagining things, she thought as she took a deep breath, forcing herself to calm down. Callie's run in with the Hood has got me spooked! Then her face brightened. "Here come Dom and Nikki," she murmured. "Now I'll at least have some company."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:21:48 GMT
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 6/27/2006 3:26 AM

"Ready, Dak?" Scott asked.

"Aye, Maverick," Dom replied.

The two were going to secure the plane's nose, while Gordon and John had gone to work on the tail section. Dominic strapped himself into his jet pack with no hesitation, although a minor tremor

was running through his hands. That man... he thought, as images of yellow eyes flashed across his mind again. My blood just boiled when I saw him with Callie. I hope she'll be okay. If I'm a little shaky after that, I can't begin to imagine how she must feel.

"Let's go," Scott said, rousing him from his stupor, and the two of them began to rise off the spongy earth and up towards the tangled plane.

Dominic's heart skipped a beat at the precarious position of the plane. It hadn't seemed just as bad from the ground, but up close, he could see the fuselage moving slightly against the branches. The sooner we get this lashing done, the better.

Trying to bend the trees into position was no easy task, and at times it took the weight of both men to bring one down far enough.

"I'm going to have to talk to Grandma about feeding you up," Scott said as he went to help Dom bend one particularly thick branch.

"She's already threatened, several times," Dom said as beads of sweat ran down his face.

He uncoiled another length of rope, and with some fancy -- and as far as Scott was concerned, surely unhealthy -- bending, another two branches were lashed together. They continued for the next few minutes, before they ran out of cable and accessible branches.

"That's just about all we can do," Scott said. "I just hope it holds out long enough."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:22:28 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/2/2006 3:03 PM

While Dom and Scott headed towards the nose of the plane, John and Gordon made their way towards the tail section. Once there, both of them stopped and looked up.

"This is going to be a challenge," John said.

"Yep," replied Gordon, letting out deep sigh.

John looked down at the equipment they'd brought with them. "Okay, let's get going. You grab a chainsaw and cable and I'll get the laser cutters.

"F-A-B." Gordon reached down and picking up the cable, slung it over his shoulder. As he bent down to retrieve the chainsaw, he couldn't help the wicked thought that crossed his mind. Suddenly he stood up waving the machine around for a second or two and maniacally making sounds of terror. "Look out Texas! Here I come!" He looked at John who just stood there and

rolled his eyes. "You remember that movie, don't you?"

"Yes, I remember the movie. Now c'mon, we've got work to do!" John answered impatiently, not amused by Gordon's antics.

Switching on the jet packs they rose up into the trees. John managed to park himself on the left side of the tail and Gordon secured himself on the right. Surveying the trees around them, they located the branches that had the best flexibility and hopefully would hold the tail in place.

"Quasar to Maverick, preparing to start on tail section."

"F-A-B," came Scott's reply.

After some more fidgeting about, Gordon announced he was ready with the chainsaw.

"Okay, Cousteau try to get those branches down first and then I'll try to get the bigger ones with the laser cutter; it'll be quicker," John said as he pointed to the branches above.

"Okay! Here we go!" replied the redhead. He pulled on the starter on the chainsaw and it roared to life. The branches came down easily enough and Gordon descended to put down the chainsaw. As he rose back up to the tail, John had just finished using the laser cutter and was going down to the ground with it. A few moments later they were both pulling branches and maneuvering cable around them.

"See if you can get that branch as far around the tail rudder as you can, Quasar; I'll pull it tight from here."

"F-A-B." John pushed the branch as far as he could around the rudder. Gordon stretched out his right arm, while steadying himself with his left, caught the branch and, with a hefty pull, managed to pull back towards him then got busy with the cable. John and he worked together like this for a while until they were sure the tail would hold. Both were breathing heavily by the time they were done.

"That should do it," Gordon said, removing his helmet and wiping his arm across his forehead. "Yeah, I reckon she'll hold long enough."

Gordon nodded, as he called Scott. "Cousteau to Maverick."

"Go ahead, Cousteau; how's it going?"

"Tail's as secure as we can get it. We're heading back now."

"F-A-B. Good job guys."

securing the tail, written by FrankieCTB2

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:23:30 GMT
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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 7/2/2006 7:14 PM

Brandon sat at Jeff's desk, in charge of IR while he had gone to the lab to check the status of communications. Being in charge was uncomfortable for him, and he fidgeted nervously, hoping he would return soon.

He looked up as Jeff came back into the room and walked over to the desk, relieving him

"Thank you, Brandon; I'll take over now."

"Yes, sir," Brandon replied, relinquishing the position back to Jeff. Excusing himself, he went back to his apartment to get his drawing supplies and head to the beach. He sat under a palm tree, looking out over the ocean.

"That's not right," he said, ripping another piece of paper from his sketch pad. He had learned how to draw early on and used it as a means to relax.

"This is not working!" Brandon said in annoyance, crumpling up another piece of paper and adding them to the pile by his side.

"What's not working?" a voice beside him asked.

At the sound of the voice he turned around, looking up to see Kat. "Sorry," he said, "I didn't hear you come up."

"I didn't mean to startle you," she said, sitting down beside him. "I had to get out of the lounge for a bit."

"I know what you mean," he said, picking up the papers so the wind wouldn't blow them. "I had to get out of there because it was too quiet."

"What do you mean, too quiet?" she asked her friend.

He looked down at her, saying, "It's hard to explain. I'm an adrenalin junkie and 'quiet' doesn't cut it with me. When I was home, I liked to go to this park and run. Other times, I was part of an extreme skydiving group that got together on weekends to see how far we could push the envelope. Since I've come to the island, I've had to find other ways to keep myself busy."

"What's your definition of 'pushing the envelope'?"

"My idea of pushing the envelope was to see how far I would free fall before I opened my 'chute,'" he said, a twinkle in his eyes. He went on to describe some of his other hobbies, including drawing. "So what do you do in your spare time?"

With a chuckle, she answered, "It's tame compared with your hobbies. At home, I like to ride

horses. The countryside around Lady Penelope's estate is beautiful and so peaceful. I also like to cook and I adore children."

"I could see that in the way you handled Joshua earlier. He calmed right down when you took him."

There was a moment of silence. Kat looked over at Brandon and saw him looking in the direction of the villa. She said, "I wonder if Mr. Tracy's heard anything yet."

"I was wondering the same thing; why don't we go find out?" Together the two friends stood up and headed back.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:24:36 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 7/2/2006 7:51 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 1 p.m., the Danger Zone. (5 p.m. on Tracy Island)

Callie slept on one of the beds in Thunderbird Two's crew quarters. Her sleep was very uneasy, as she was unable to shake off the memory of the Hood's glowing eyes. Why me? Why did he get to me?

Waking up and running a hand through her hair, she pulled herself out of the bed and put her boots back on. Slowly walking out of the quarters, she decided to join Virgil in the cockpit. I hope he's had any type of luck in breaking the jam. The guys back home are probably worried sick right now.

Virgil heard her approach and turned to give her a weary smile. "How do you feel, Callie?"

Taking the seat next to him, she answered, "To be honest, I've seen better days. I can't get those eyes out of my mind. The Hood sure had easy pickings with me."

Virgil nodded. "That was how Tin-Tin felt after her run-in with the Hood. Brains, too. But, like Dianne said, we're out in the middle of nowhere. Who could anticipate his appearance here?" He snorted a laugh. "In fact, Brains and Tin-Tin were also out in the middle of nowhere." He smiled at her. "Don't go beating yourself up over it, Callie. There's no way you could have anticipated him, and - from what I understand - no way you could have stopped him, either."

"I know, but I can't shake it. I don't even know what he was after." She looked straight at him. "Virgil, was there any clue as to what he wanted from me?"

Virgil looked away for a moment, then sighed and looked back at her, catching her eye. "Yeah, there was. Dom says he was asking for names and you were going over code names aloud." He

took in a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I know that sounds bad, but if code names were the only things you gave him, it's not going to be a big deal. We can always change our code names if necessary. And it's not like he had a lot of time to do much more than ask that."

Callie sighed. "Thank goodness he didn't get what he really wanted." Looking at the communications console, she asked, "Are you having any luck getting past the jam yet?"

Virgil shook his head. "No, not yet, but I'm going to keep trying." He winced a bit as he changed position. "Ugh. This leg still aches. Not as bad as it did at first, but still, I almost wish I had another local for it." He grinned wryly at her. "Don't you go telling my stepmother I said that now!"

Callie put up her hands and giggled, saying, "Don't worry, Virgil, my lips are sealed. I won't say anything about it." After putting her hands back down, she said, "Is there anything I can do to help up here?"

"Well, yes," he said, blushing a little. "Can you keep trying to raise Five while I... ahem... hobble off to the loo?"

"Sure, I'll give it my best shot. Now go to the little boys' room before you have an accident." She couldn't help but laugh.

"F-A-B," he said, levering himself to his feet and limping off in the direction of the crew's quarters.

She turned to the console and pressed some buttons in any attempt to get through to Alan on the space station. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Two. Do you copy? Repeat, Thunderbird Five, this is Thunderbird Two. Can you read me?" Only static came from the speakers.

Sitting back and sighing in defeat, Callie looked out the window, her thoughts away from the current rescue. Her experience with the Hood made her think back to her argument with Kat more than a week earlier. I've waited too long, she thought. It's been nine days since we argued. If I don't forgive her now, she'll probably go on thinking I won't do it at all.

At that moment, she made an important decision for herself. As soon as I'm back on the island, I will go to Kat and tell her I forgive her. My run-in with this Hood character has made me realize life is too short. I can't carry the grudge forever. We've had enough time to calm our tempers, so I'll be straight with her. I will make it clear, though, that I won't forget it, either. Things will remain cool between us for a while, but we'll both live. I hope we'll be good friends again someday.

Returning from his bathroom trip, Virgil limped back into the cockpit and noticed her staring outside. "Callie, are you okay?"

"Huh?" she said as she snapped back to reality. "Uh, yeah, Virgil, I'm fine. How are you feeling?"

"About a pound lighter." Taking his seat back from her while she switched to the seat next to him, he asked, "Any luck reaching Alan yet?"

"Unfortunately, no. I'm still getting nothing but jammed signal."

He rubbed his head. "As long as we can't get through to base or Five, we've got quite a challenge."

"Yeah, but how will your father react when he finds out about my encounter with the Hood?"

"We'll just have to wait and see when we get back," he answered straightly.

She felt sleepy again. "I'm gonna head back for a nap again."

"Go ahead, Callie. I'll continue trying to contact Alan."

As she walked from the cockpit and back to the crew's quarters, her thoughts about the Hood were replaced with forgiving Kat. "Remember," she whispered to herself, "forgive Kat upon returning to the island."

*****Time to Reflect by TracyFan4Ever and Tikatu.*****

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:25:35 GMT
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

From: Tikatu Sent: 7/2/2006 7:54 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 1:45 p.m., local time, the Danger Zone. (5:45 p.m. Tracy Island)

Scott met with the cutting team in the clearing, near the Mobile Crane.

"Now that we've got the plane secured," he said, "we have to cut our way to the plane and create a doorway on this side so that our medical team can get in." He pointed at Gordon and John. "You two will come up with me and we'll do the cutting. Dak, you head back to Seven and start pulling the supplies you medics are going to need over here to the crane."

"F-A-B," Dom said. "But I have a condition; one that Doc would back me up on."

"What's that?" Scott asked, sounding annoyed.

"That you all come and get something to drink." Dom gestured to the jungle surrounding them. "Need to keep hydrated, you know."

Scott smiled a little. "F-A-B, Dak." He motioned toward Gordon. "You heard the man. Go with him and get a drink, then help him bring back some of the equipment the medics will need. When you come back, Quasar and I can go. I'll put in a call to Two and see if Virgil's had any luck with the communications." He glanced around, turning slowly. "I still want us to be on high security alert, though. No one out of sight or alone at any time. We don't need a repeat of what happened to

Ursa."

"F-A-B," Gordon said. He and Dom headed off toward Seven.

"How will we handle the medics in Seven?" John asked. "There'll probably need to be at least two of them in the plane, leaving one with the patients in the medical cabin."

"We can escort back and forth, and if need be, one of us can help out in the plane, while two are treating patients in Seven," Scott said. He shook his head. "It's the only solution I can come up with." Tapping his earphone, he said, "I'll better call Van Gogh. Thunderbird Two from Maverick, do you read?"

"Maverick, this is Thunderbird Two." Virgil's voice sounded in Scott's ear. "Go ahead."

Scott thought his brother sounded a bit tired and strained. "Status report, Van Gogh."

"No breakthrough with communications," Virgil replied. "Ursa has been sleeping for roughly 20 minutes."

"What about you, Van Gogh?" Scott asked, his voice low and sounding concerned.

"I'm... coping," Virgil replied. "My leg is sore and stiff and I've got half a mind to ask Doc for another local."

"You've got half a mind all right," Scott quipped. "Status update here: we've secured the plane as best we can, and we're going to start cutting our way in. Hope to bring out our first rescuees within the next thirty to forty-five minutes."

"F-A-B, Maverick. I'll keep trying with the communications."

"Good man. Let me know the minute you get through. Keep yourself cool and hydrated. Maverick out." Scott turned to John. "Let's get the cutting equipment onto the crane. Then we'll see about something to drink and a few minutes in the air conditioning of Thunderbird Seven."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:26:08 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/5/2006 8:37 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 2:30 p.m., local time, the Danger Zone. (6:30 p.m. Tracy Island)

"Are you ready, Doc?" Scott called.

"Ready, Maverick," Dianne replied with a nod.

"F-A-B! Up you go!"

The mobile crane moved smoothly up to the doorway, newly cut in the side of the fuselage, just where one of the emergency exits had been. Nikki, Dianne, and Dom all held onto the sides of the platform. They had consulted with Scott and decided that they would all do triage, then Dianne and Nikki would take out any critical red tags first to treat, while Dom stabilized any yellow tags, with Gordon lending a hand. Scott and John would transport patients from the crane to Seven. They would also transfer any green-tagged people to Thunderbird Two once the injured had been cleared. Then they could come back for the bodies.

"As much as is humanly possible, I want us to work in pairs," Scott insisted. "No one is to be alone at any time."

The others had agreed, and now they were finally at the point where they could actually enter the plane and do what they had come to do.

Dianne looked at her nurses. Nikki carried one of the medikits, while Dom held two of the antigravity stretchers. She herself had a medikit slung over her shoulder. They all also had their communicators as open as could be so that John could provide what translation he could. "My spoken Thai is little to non-existent," he had said apologetically, "but I understand more than I speak. I may be able to translate a bit for you."

"Ready?" she asked her team.

"F-A-B," they each responded.

Dianne smiled, and stepped through the doorway and into the dimly-lighted fuselage to begin her real work. Dom and Nikki followed.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:27:11 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/7/2006 6:57 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 4:00 p.m., local time (8 p.m. Tracy Island)

"These are the last," Dom said as he maneuvered a stretcher onto the Mobile Crane's platform. "Except for the fatalities, that is."

"Good." Gordon nodded as he operated the controls, mounted on one rail of the platform. He gave the standing head bodyguard a smile as the hydraulic arm lowered them smoothly to the truck's body. He pressed another button, and the arm turned ninety degrees, then lifted them up a little while moving forward so that the platform reached the ground. Gordon stepped off, pulling the

stretcher toward him as Dom took up the other end. Scott and John waited to take the bodyguard to Thunderbird Two, where he would be settled in a pod jump seat for the ride to Kuala Lumpur.

The bodyguard, however, had other ideas. "Where is His Majesty?" he demanded.

Dom glanced at Scott, who nodded and waved him and Gordon on. As the duo moved on with their patient, Scott stepped in front of the bulky man. "His Majesty is in our ambulance, with the queen," he said politely and firmly. "He will join you in our main vehicle as soon as we are ready."

"I would see him... now." Bahn stood close to Scott, his arms folded impassively. Even as sweaty, mosquito-bitten, and rumpled as he was, he was still an impressively large man.

Scott, however, was not impressed. "As I said, he will join you at our main vehicle as soon as is feasible."

In Thunderbird Seven, the last of the patients was brought aboard. Dom and Gordon eased the antigravity stretcher through the single open door at the side of the medical cabin. The heat and humidity outside had caused Dianne to keep one of the sliding doors shut, and to activate the sonic insect shield. The faint blue screen hummed lightly and Gordon, Dom and their patient all felt a peculiar tingle as they passed through.

Dom glanced around the cabin. Nikki was tending to the worst of the patients; there had been four red tags out of the eighteen passengers, with another two hovering on the brink. The remaining seven injured people were tagged as yellow, while five people had been determined as more or less able-bodied. Those had been taken out one by one, starting with the king, as there was room on the platform for them.

The king was standing next to the queen, who had been triaged as a red tag. Dianne had stabilized her as best she could in the time she had, and with the patient load she and Nikki were carrying. She hoped to give the queen further treatment once they were headed for Kuala Lumpur. Right now, she was bringing her latest patient out to the medical cabin. Nikki, seeing the two stretchers, moved to help Dianne transfer her patient to a bed, while Dom indicated to Gordon that they needed to move into the treatment area.

"This is the last one," Dom said as he passed the two women. Both breathed a slight sigh of relief, and Nikki smiled. Dom disappeared into the surgical area, and when the two women were finished, Dianne joined him. Nikki made sure that the doctor's notes for the patient she was now working with matched the thin bracelet around the patient's wrist -- a new innovation that had been delivered recently -- then she tucked the record pad into its slot, and covered the man with a Penelon blanket.

Gordon came out of the treatment area, two black packets tucked under an arm. The king stepped toward him and interrupted his determined stride.

"My people... how many more?" the monarch asked.

Gordon nodded his head towards the treatment room. "That was the last of your injured people, Your Majesty." He indicated the packages. "Now we're going to extricate the fatalities."

"Ah," the king said. "Thank you."

The aquanaut nodded. He tapped his communicator. "Doc, you want this side door closed?" The king could not hear the response from the doctor, but the young man answered, "F-A-B," and moved to close the door and retract the ramp. Then he headed for the cockpit.

The king watched him go, then turned back to his wife. "We are safe now," he murmured. "We are all safe."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:28:48 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/7/2006 7:55 PM

Dianne finished using the laser on the long gash in her patient's arm, then she reviewed her work critically, and took another look at the scanner. Dom was setting up an IV. "To help you with your wee dehydration," he said to the woman with a smile.

"Dak, I need an anti-malarial here."

"Yes, Doc."

The nurse brought Dianne an ampule, which she placed in a hypospray and pressed against the woman's neck. The hiss startled the woman, and she turned her wide eyes to Dianne, who smiled encouragingly.

"It looks to me as if you've been feeding far more than your share of the mosquitoes, miss," the doctor said. "The medicine is to stave off malaria. It works on the most recent strains." She patted her patient's shoulder. "Now, let's get a loose dressing on this and settle you for the trip home."

"Doc?" Scott's voice sounded in her ear. "We have a little problem out here."

"Where are you?" she asked, catching Dom's eye and motioning that he should work on the dressing himself. He nodded in acquiescence and they changed places.

"I'm outside of Seven's cockpit."

"F-A-B, I'm on my way," Dianne said. She shucked her gloves and hurried out, striding quickly across the length of the medical cabin. She opened the door between the cabin and the cockpit, and found the cockpit door open, with John standing in it, while on the ground, Gordon and Scott were facing down a burly Thai man whose anger was almost palpable.

"What's goin' on heah?" Dianne asked sharply, hands on her hips.

"I wish to see my king!" Bahn cried, glaring up at her.

"He refuses to ride with us to Two," Scott explained hotly. "He's the last of the green tags..."

Dianne glanced back at the medical compartment. Nikki was peering out, ready to offer back up. Dianne waved her back, then pointed at Bahn. "I'll take care of this. But you stay right there, understand?"

She didn't wait for an answer, but turned and went back to the medical compartment, approaching the king where he stood, next to the queen's biobed.

"Your Majesty," she began. "We're almost ready to go back to our main Thunderbird. But in order to do so, we must have everyone strapped in securely. With all due respect, sir, there's no way you can safely stay with your wife." She glanced over at the door she had just come through. "One of your men refuses to leave until he sees you. It would be a great help to us all if you would leave Her Majesty under our care, and go with our men to the main vehicle. There you would be directed to a safe place to sit for the duration of our flight." She smiled. "I know you're anxious, and would prefer to stay, but if something were to happen to you because we allowed you to, then we would have a problem." She gestured to the door with an arm. "Please, Your Majesty."

The king looked down at his wife, who smiled faintly and said, "Go. I am in the best of hands."

He nodded, sighed heavily, and held her hand to his lips. Then, not satisfied, he leaned over to kiss her on the cheek and on the forehead. "Be well, my dear." Then he rose and nodded at Dianne, who escorted him over to the cockpit door.

As he stepped into the cockpit, Bahn bowed low. "Your Majesty!"

"Rise, Bahn." He looked at Scott, John and Gordon. "I am told it would be helpful if I went with you now and prepared for flight."

"It would, Your Majesty," Scott said, inclining his head.

"Then, let us go." The king glanced around at the jungle. "I am very weary of this place."

"Over here, Your Majesty." John indicated one of the hoverbikes. As Bahn offered the king his help in climbing down from the cockpit, Scott said quietly to Gordon, "See if you can get Dom to help you with the bodies. I'll have John start preparations for Thunderbird Two to lift off. Then you come back in the Mobile Crane. Stay just ahead of Seven; that way there'll be some back up should you need it."

"F-A-B," Gordon said with a nod. He climbed back up into the cockpit, while Scott mounted his hoverbike. Bahn sat behind him and the king himself rode behind John. Gordon watched as the little party moved out, then he grabbed a bottle of water from the cooler, and poked his head into the medical cabin, looking to see if his partner was available.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:29:16 GMT
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 7/7/2006 8:08 PM

It was not long before everyone (including the bodies) was aboard Thunderbird Two, along with the equipment. As they headed toward Kuala Lumpur and the hospital that stood ready for their arrival, the king's secretary turned to his monarch, who was seated next to him. "Sir, may I have a word with you?"

"Of course, Pairat. What is it?"

"It is apparent that the world knows of our accident, and the press will be at the hospital when we arrive. I know you'll want to go with the queen to make sure she is well taken care of, but we should have a statement ready before we get there."

The king looked at the younger man, who was scratched, bruised and disheveled. He looked exhausted, but determined. "You are right, of course. And I suspect you already have something prepared. I see the laptop you brought with you." He smiled.

Pairat blushed, but said, "Yes, sir. If you would like to take a moment to read it over, so I can make any changes necessary..."

"Give me the laptop and I will look at it. There is nothing else I can do right now."

The secretary handed his portable computer to the king, who scanned what was on the screen, then went back and read it more carefully.

We are very grateful to the personnel of International Rescue for coming to our aid. It is not known why the controls and communications failed, causing the crash. We hope that an investigation will uncover the reasons in the near future.

Unfortunately, there were two fatalities: the pilot and co-pilot. Our sympathies go out to their families. They served us well and will be missed. They and the cabin crew are to be commended for preparing us for what happened. They did not panic, and instructed us as to what we needed to do. This, I believe, prevented any further fatalities.

The king looked up at Pairat. "You know the press will have questions."

"Sir, with your approval, I will field them. You will want to assure yourself of the queen's well-being."

"Once again, you have anticipated me and my desires. You have my permission to do so." He handed the laptop to Pairat, then leaned back and closed his eyes. He was silent for the rest of the trip.

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:30:03 GMT
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/7/2006 8:56 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 5:15 p.m., local time Kuala Lumpur, (9:15 p.m., Tracy Island)

"Thunderbird One, Thunderbird Five and base, from Thunderbird Two, preparing for departure from Kuala Lumpur. ETA, one hour, ten minutes." John's weary voice called into Alan's ear. It was one of the sweetest sounds he'd heard all day.

"Thunderbird Two, Thunderbird Five and base from Thunderbird One," Scott replied. "Stand down at 1715 hours, local time."

"Thunderbirds One, Two and Five, from base, F-A-B," Jeff said, sounding relieved.

"Thunderbirds One, Thunderbird Two and base from Thunderbird Five, F-A-B," Alan called. Then he turned back to Jeff and Brains, whose live feed pictures were making up two fourths of the screen on his computer. One quarter had Scott's picture; the mission commander was already airborne and had taken off both cap and visor, showing his disheveled and sweat-laden hair. The other quarter showed John, his Penelar shirt dark with sweat, in the cockpit of Two, a glaring Virgil seated behind and slightly to the left. To the left of Virgil was an arm, folded at the elbow, with a set of familiar fingers and a bit of short, dark red sleeve. Mom, making sure that Virgil doesn't try anything, Alan thought with a grin.

"Indy," Jeff called, bringing his son's attention full focus on the two people at base. "You have the times and coordinates for where you regained contact with Thunderbirds One and Two?"

"Yes, sir," Alan said confidently. "I've already downloaded them to Einstein. I think that between the two of us, we'll be able to map out the extent of that jamming field."

"I, uh, wish we had come up with a way to penetrate it," Brains said, pushing his glasses back. "That would have been most useful."

"From the readings I got, it was a modulating frequency, constantly and randomly changing," Alan replied, shaking his head. "It'd be difficult to punch through." He shrugged. "At least they were able to stay in contact with each other. And we'll have some coordinates for the local air controllers. They should be able to get planes to avoid the area to an extent."

"Good work, Indy, Einstein," Jeff said, a smile on his face. "Get something to eat, Indy, and prepare yourself for the briefing. I know that you were pretty frustrated with this whole rescue, but you'll want to hear what went on."

"F-A-B, Boss," Alan said. "I'll be ready."

"Good. Now to wait until they all get home." Jeff ran a hand through his hair, then leaned back in his chair. "Somehow, I think this will be the hardest wait of all."

Subject: Re: Trouble Under the Hood
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:30:26 GMT
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And with that we end Chapter Seven: Trouble Under The Hood!
