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Subject: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:35:48 GMT  
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From: Tikatu (Original Message) Sent: 7/7/2006 9:31 PM

As the end of July and the month of August are in sight, many comings and goings will force changes on the International Rescue crew. A new member will be considered, and an old one will come under fire from an unexpected threat, as enemies attempt to gain inroads to the family and its business. A momentous decision will be made, with far reaching consequences for both the present and the future. Friendships will deepen, and wounds - both emotional and physical - will heal. Life will seem to have settled into a comfortable groove... until a day arrives that will test International Rescue and the Tracy family to their limits.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:40:01 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 7/8/2006 11:17 AM

July 18, 11:30 PM; Tracy Island

"Does anyone have anything to add to this debriefing?" Jeff asked as it wound down. They were at the dining room table, having dinner. Those who had been on the rescue either said, "No", or shook their heads. Brandon, Elise and Kat had joined the group, wanting to know what had happened. They looked stunned to hear that the Hood had been involved.

"All right. Then we are done here. Finish your meal, then get some sleep." He got up and pushed his chair back up to the table. "Scott and Kat, will you come with me?"

The young mechanic looked startled, then apprehensive, but stood up and followed Jeff and his son out of the room. When they arrived in the lounge, Jeff said to Scott, "Please go and wait in the study. I want to talk to Kat first, in private."

Scott agreed and went into the other room, closing the door behind him. Jeff went over to his desk and sat down, not looking at her. Instead he turned on his computer and brought up a file. She moved to stand in front of him, and nervously waited.

He sat back a few minutes later and looked up at her. "Kat, tell me about the jet pack. I understand that it was the one Gordon 'altered'. According to the maintenance logs," he gestured to his monitor, "it was brought back and you did the repairs on it. As far as I can tell, it hasn't been used since, until this rescue. Is that correct?"

"I-I." She closed her mouth and swallowed hard. "Yes, it is."  
And did you test fly it?"

"I-um. . . Oh wait! Yes. Some time later, when Brains was there, I did take it up and brought it back down. It seemed to be working fine."

Jeff frowned, puzzled. "What did you have to do to fix it?"

Kat thought back. "Let's see; Gordon had attached a receiver to the control panel, so he could fly it using a remote control device. I removed the receiver, and made sure there were no loose wires."

"Anything else?"

There was a pause. "No, sir."

"I realize you had never worked on one prior to that day. Did you have the manual with you when you worked on it?"

"Yes, of course."

He sighed. "Kat, the maintenance of the vehicles and equipment are your area of expertise. You should have checked more thoroughly to make sure nothing else in the pack had been affected. This problem should never have happened."

"Now I realize that Brains has been working with you to some extent, but he has many other tasks on his plate. You are here to take over this part of the work from him. Am I to assume from this incident that you aren't up to the job?"

She was shocked. "No, sir. I can do it!"

"Then you must constantly keep in the back of your mind the fact that our equipment has to be in top repair at all times. This includes testing whatever you have repaired. The lives of everyone on a rescue can depend on it." He leaned forward. "Kat, Gordon could have been seriously injured. In fact, I'm having Dianne check him over. You remember that he hurt his back a few months ago, during that Tower Bridge rescue?" She nodded. "That was the second time. His first back injury was an extremely serious one. He has come back from both very well, but he is more vulnerable than usual because of it."

Kat felt shaky. She realized that Jeff was right; she hadn't been thorough, and she was responsible for what had happened. Jeff watched her, his stern expression never changing.

"Sir, I take full responsibility. It will never happen again."

"It had better not. I give only one warning. But I can't just overlook what happened; I haven't before now, and I must be consistent." He sat back, considering his options. Finally he said, "I am taking into account the probability that you had never worked on equipment of that type before, although I presume you had the manual with you at that time. Therefore I'm going to rectify that situation. Starting tomorrow, in addition to your already scheduled work, you will completely take apart that jet pack, repair it, put it back together, and test it. You will also fully check over and test the other packs, as well. And you will do this without anyone's help. I expect all the jet packs to be

fully functional by the end of the week. Today is Wednesday. You have until Saturday."

"Without any help? Does that include instruction manuals?"

"No, of course not. I meant that no other person will be allowed to assist you in any way. This way, you will be fully conversant with the function, mechanics and usage of the jet packs."

Kat was silent. She wanted to protest, to say it wasn't fair, that Gordon was partly responsible, but she knew that wasn't true. She was maintenance, not him. At last, she nodded. "I accept your punishment. And I won't shirk any other repairs I have scheduled."

"I'm glad to hear that. Now you may go."

Kat left the room, thankful that things hadn't been worse. She left the Villa and headed to her apartment.

Jeff sighed again, and shook his head. Too many things had gone wrong on this rescue for his liking, and he was thankful that it ended as well as it had. In fact, I'm surprised it did end so well, he thought. He called Scott and asked him to return to the lounge.

His eldest son walked in and stood in front of the desk, as Kat had, but in the military "at ease" posture. Jeff noticed and was inwardly amused, but didn't let it show. He closed the maintenance logs window and set the computer to record this session with his Field Commander.

"Scott," he began. "We were damned lucky things weren't worse than they could have been. What were you thinking, letting Callie go off on her own like that?"

"Sir, it seemed to me that I had no other choice, if I was going to get everything done in fastest possible time. But I told her she had to report in every five minutes, instead of the normal fifteen."

"That may have been the one thing that saved her -- and us." Jeff stood up and paced around the desk and into the room. He returned to Scott's side. "Can you imagine what would have happened had The Hood gotten any more information than he did? He might have even spirited Callie away to wherever he had his hideout! It's a good thing we injected those chips into everyone. I shudder to think what might have happened otherwise."

Scott remained silent. What could he say? He agreed with his father completely. He remained standing still, staring straight ahead.

Jeff looked at his son, feeling pride that he didn't argue or contradict his father's assessment of the situation. Finally, he relaxed somewhat and moved back to his desk, saying, "Sit down, son. You're starting to make me feel like a major dressing down a private."

Scott's posture eased, and he turned and went to the nearest chair. He smiled, but didn't respond. Jeff resumed his seat, leaning back and gazing at his son. "This is unacceptable. We have security in so many areas, but not when it comes to something like this. And it would be very naïve to think it won't happen again."

"I agree, sir. But what can we do. Too often we have to be in several places at the same time. Even I'm vulnerable, at Mobile Control, unless we're in a populated area and can have local security around."

"I know, son. But bringing everyone back safely is your responsibility. So I want you to come up with ideas to enhance security for all who go on a rescue, whether in a remote area or a populated one. I want a minimum of five suggestions. A minimum, mind you; I expect more. And I want it on my desk by ten tomorrow morning."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:41:26 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/8/2006 8:36 PM

July 19, 2068, 12:15 a.m., Tracy Island

Jeff tapped the last key on his report about the disciplinary actions, saved it, and put the computer on standby for later in the morning. He stood, yawning, and rolled his shoulders one by one to relieve the tension. Heading out through the study, he caught Gordon just opening the door to his room. The redhead yawned widely, barely covering his mouth with a hand, and followed it up with a weary, "G'night, Dad."

"Goodnight, Gordon. Sleep well."

"Oh, I plan to," Gordon mumbled as he stepped into his suite.

Glancing down the hall, Jeff saw Dianne waiting for him outside their rooms. She was leaning up against the wall, looking for all the world as if that wall was the only thing holding her up. He activated the door, and motioned for her to precede him. She smoothed one hand over his cheek as she stepped inside.

"So, how's Gordon?" he asked as they crossed the sitting room.

She pulled her dark red shirt over her head as they entered the bedroom. "Gordon? He's fine. No damage to his back."

"We're fortunate, then," Jeff replied, unbuttoning his shirt.

"Very." Dianne sat down to take off her boots. "I'll want to take another look at both Virgil and Callie in the morning. I don't expect to see any physical changes in Callie, but it wouldn't hurt to keep an eye on her for a little while. There's bound to be fallout over this. Hopefully I can convince Virgil to go easy on his leg while that bruise heals." She sighed as she looked at the boot in her hand. "This Penelar is a godsend. You need to give Tin-Tin a raise."

"I'll keep that in mind," Jeff said as he sat next to her on their bed, removing his shoes one by one, then standing to put them away in his closet.

While Dianne made her way into the bathroom for a quick shower, Jeff changed out of his pants and put on pajama bottoms. He entered the bathroom to wash his face and hands and brush his teeth, and so was on hand as Dianne came out of the shower. He gave her as wide a smile as his toothpaste-filled mouth would allow, and she wearily returned it as she toweled herself dry.

She wrapped herself in the towel, and joined him at the double sink to brush her own teeth. As he watched her, he said, "I was very worried today, Di. The near lack of communication was as frustrating as hell."

She glanced over at him, then spit out the contents of her mouth and rinsed. When she was done with that, she said, "It was just as frustrating to us, love. We missed hearing the encouragement that you give us; we missed the brainstorming that usually goes on between base and the rescue crew." She put her toothbrush in its place. "I hope we can find a way to keep that from happening again."

"Me, too," Jeff said, nodding. He smiled. "I think we're both too tired for any hanky-panky tonight."

Dianne huffed out a laugh. "Try me in the morning," she told him as she passed by, smoothing her hand over his cheek again. She walked over to her dresser and pulled out a clean nightie, slipped it on, then ran a brush through her damp hair. He came up behind her and put his arms around her, then when she turned, planted a soft kiss on her lips.

"Goodnight, Dianne."

She traced the outline of his lips with a finger, then kissed him back. "Goodnight, Jeff."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:52:38 GMT  
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 7/9/2006 8:11 PM

The relief Elise had felt upon seeing Virgil when he arrived back from the rescue had lifted a great deal of worry from her shoulders. However, she'd waited until the de-briefing was over before going to talk to him.

She knew he'd gone to his room, as the others had gone to theirs when they had come out of the dining room. She knocked quietly.

"Who is it?"

"It's Elise, are you up for a visit?"

The opening of the door and Virgil standing there smiling was her answer. "Come on in." He indicated with his arm.

Having never been in Virgil's suite, she was a little nervous and hesitant.

"I won't bite, I promise!" he said, picking up on Elise's nervousness. She smiled and walked in.

Compared to her apartment the suite was quite large. It was tastefully decorated, with comfy chairs and sofas, a big screen television and various other bits of simple but contemporary pieces of furniture. "I know you must be tired and in pain," she began, still a little nervous. "I just wanted to make sure you were okay. You gave us all quite a scare!"

Virgil smiled again "It wasn't planned, that's for sure!" He hobbled over to an overstuffed couch. "Here, come and sit down for a while." Virgil indicated an overstuffed chair and Elise plopped down in it.

She noticed the double sliding doors on the left of her, obviously leading to his bedroom. I wonder what that looks like! She mentally scolded herself for allowing her thoughts to wander that way. The man's injured for crying out loud, and all you can think about is his bedroom!

"You want something to drink?"

"Um, sorry; what?" she answered.

"Drink?" Virgil asked again, this time holding up his glass for emphasis.

"Oh, no, I'm good, but thanks." She then noticed his easel and paints in the corner near the balcony doors, and noticed other paintings on the walls. "Did you paint all these?"

"Yep!" he replied proudly.

"They're amazing!"

"Thanks, I enjoy them."

"You're quite the talented one of the bunch aren't you? You're not only a great pilot, but an artist and musician too," Elise stated, admiringly.

Virgil downplayed himself by answering, "Well, painting and music keep me busy. They are more hobbies than anything else. Besides, my brothers all have their own talents too."

"Yeah, I've heard. Let me see, there's an Olympic Medal winner, a race car driver, an author, and a Top Gun. Just your everyday, average family, huh?" They both laughed at her casual perspective of his brothers. Virgil started to sit down on his couch, wincing as he lifted his injured leg back onto it.

"So, how are you really feeling?"

"Not too bad; the bruise still hurts a lot, but I'll live." He grinned.

"You know, I probably should go. It's getting way too late," Elise said, starting to feel guilty for intruding when she knew he was dog-tired.

"It's okay, Elise; please stay," he gently pleaded.

"Okay, but you have to tell me what the heck happened out there today. All we could hear was static and broken communications. We had no idea what was going on. We heard yelling, then 'man down', but we had no idea who was hurt and what had happened. Your dad was driving poor Alan and Brains crazy!"

Virgil laughed, picturing his youngest brother and his father getting on each other's nerves.

"It's not funny!" Elise said, almost laughing herself.

"I know, I know. But I also know how Alan can be when he's under pressure from Dad."

"So, how did you get hurt?" she asked.

Virgil became more serious. "Saving Scott's rear end." He went on to explain how the tree limbs had fallen and he'd pushed Scott out of the way and was unable to get out of harms way fast enough.

Elise listened, inwardly admiring how these brothers looked out for each other the way they did. She knew Scott would have done the same thing in a heartbeat. Sure, the rest of the team, well, we'd do the same for each other, but we'll never have what these Tracys have got, she thought as Virgil continued telling her how Dianne started fussing over him and ordering him to stay put when he wanted to help. Elise smiled at Virgil's expressions as he talked. "Didn't like being told you couldn't fly huh?"

He glared at her, his emotions getting the better of him as he recounted the events of the day. "No! I didn't like being told. I could have helped more, I know I could have, but..."

She interrupted him. "But nothing, Virgil Tracy! You were given an order and you were being obstinate!"

"Oh, no... not me; you want obstinate, Scott's your man!" They both laughed at this, knowing full well how Scott could be.

"Well, I'm glad that your leg wasn't broken. It could've been a lot worse, you know."

"Yeah, I know. Our new uniforms are definitely worth it, that's for sure."

They continued to talk, feeling comfortable with each other. So comfortable in fact, that even though it was late, and he knew he should be in bed sleeping, Virgil decided to broach the subject of Elise's trip to New Hampshire. He'd honestly been quite worried about her, even though Dianne



and Scott had been with her; he knew the trauma of reliving it all over again would be difficult. It was only three days ago that she'd returned, but because of the rescue he hadn't had a chance to talk to her about it. He'd only gotten to talk to Scott briefly.

"Okay, honey, enough about me; how are you doing? Since you got back from New Hampshire?" Virgil noticed how she bristled slightly at the mention of the trip.

"Good, I guess." She looked away from him as she continued, "It's not exactly a vacation I want to remember."

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked so soon. Maybe if...."

Elise cut him off. "No! It's okay; it's not your fault. Besides I haven't really talked about it since I got back." She turned her eyes back to him and saw genuine compassion in his. She swallowed hard. "Reliving that awful night was the hardest thing I've ever done. Being up there, at the crash site, brought back memories I hadn't remembered at all until then. I remembered every sickening thud that chopper made as we went down and I was helpless to stop it."

Her gaze had shifted again, and Virgil knew she was back there, once more." She paused and then went on. "I'll never forget the cold as long as I live. The way your father looked... I thought he was ... " She swallowed again, choking back tears that had suddenly threatened to spill. "I thought he was dead. He looked awful."

Virgil saw how upset she was getting and how choked up her voice had become. He got up and went over to her, kneeling down on his good leg beside her.

Elise didn't notice he was there until she felt his hand softly squeezing hers. She looked at their hands, and then lifted her eyes to him. "I just didn't want to die alone Virgil. I didn't want to die alone," she half sobbed.

"I know, honey, I know. But you're not alone anymore."

Elise tried to smile and when she spoke again, it was almost a whisper. "I know I'm not. I had Scott and Dianne with me. They were wonderful. I know it was hard for them, too."

Still holding her hand, comforting her, Virgil said, "I wish I could have been there for you, too."

A bigger smile appeared on her face. "You were, Virgil; in spirit you were there. I had your letter with me the entire time. So, I had you and Scott and Dianne." As she calmed down, she realized Virgil was on one leg. "Shouldn't you be off that leg?"

"Oh, I'm fine. It's you I'm worried about."

Elise wiped her hands across her face and apologized for letting herself get upset. "I came here to cheer you up, and look at the mess I've become!" She stood and helped him up. "I think it's time for both of us to head for bed, especially you," she said.

"Yeah, I guess so. If I don't rest up soon, the wrath of Doctor Mom will be all over me!"



Elise chuckled at Virgil's description of Dianne. "Well, I'm outta here!"

As she started towards the door, Virgil stopped her, gently taking her arm. "Thanks for talking to me about it, I know it's wasn't easy."

"I'm glad I did. It helps to get it all out. Now if you promise me you won't get hurt on a rescue again, I promise I won't come down here and sob all over you again!"

He chuckled and held out both arms. "C'mere." She did and he gave her a hug. They parted and said goodnight to each other. Elise went back to her apartment, her mood a whole lot lighter than it had been.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafroe](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 01:58:52 GMT  
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 7/10/2006 2:20 PM

Tracy Island, Wednesday 18th July, midnight

Kat was feeling resentful as she headed to her apartment. She groaned to herself. As well as her usual work there was now the additional work on the jetpacks. I'll be hard pressed to complete the work by Saturday, she thought. Although she had repaired and tested the jetpack, she hadn't been thorough enough. I really thought that it would be okay. I removed the remote control device, and managed to fly it with no problem.

Entering her apartment, Kat picked up a cushion and hurled it across the room. It still seemed so unfair. Although the maintenance of the jetpacks, and the other equipment were her responsibility, she still felt a little of the blame lay with Gordon, for playing the practical joke on her in the first place.

Feeling worn out from the long day spent waiting for news of the rescue, and unhappy with the reprimand she had received from Mr Tracy, she got herself ready for bed.

But try as she might, sleep just wouldn't come. She thought back to that fateful day, when John had offered to show her how to use the jetpacks. She hadn't been with International Rescue very long and all this equipment was so new to her. When the jetpack had malfunctioned on me, I was absolutely terrified, she remembered. To Gordon it was just a huge joke, but it wasn't to me at the time. I thought I must have done something wrong.

Totally out of control, or so she thought, the jetpack had carried her across the island. Finally the straps had given way causing her to fall, as luck would have it, into the swimming pool, where Virgil had helped her out. John must have realised what had happened, because just as she was standing at the poolside, wringing the water from her overalls, the two brothers landed. Scott had

been furious with Gordon, telling him in no uncertain terms that Kat could have been seriously injured. Suddenly Kat's lips twitched. I guess it must have seemed amusing, me sailing over the island, waving to Elise and Nikki. But all the same what would have happened if I had been seriously hurt?

Kat tossed and turned. It's no good; I shall have to get myself something to help me sleep. And getting out of bed she went into her kitchen and made herself a hot milky drink.

Eventually the young mechanic fell asleep, but her sleep was full of dreams about repairing and flying jetpacks.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:01:38 GMT  
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 7/11/2006 8:14 PM

\*\*\*\*\*Thursday, July 19, 2068; 7:45 a.m. on Tracy Island\*\*\*\*\*

Callie finished her breakfast, cocoa-flavored cereal and a glass of orange juice. She had an uneasy sleep the night before, thinking less about the Hood and more about forgiving Kat. Oh, brother, I'd better get this out of my system before I go completely nuts!

After getting dressed in a casual t-shirt and denim jeans, she walked out of her apartment to find Kat.

Kat, too, had had an uneasy night, but for a very different reason. She didn't feel like eating, but knowing that if she didn't, she could have a problem later, she forced herself to have a sandwich spread with vegemite and a glass of orange juice. She was just about to leave, when her door chimed. "Who is it?" she called out.

"Hi, Kat, it's me, Callie."

Kat opened the door and, with a look of surprise on her face, said, "Hi, Callie."

"Listen, do you have a few minutes? I really need to talk to you."

"Please come in," Kat replied. Callie followed Kat into her lounge. Both young women sat down. Kat glanced at her with concerned look on her face. I wonder what she is going to say? With a sigh, Callie said, "I really need to get this off my chest. I've carried my anger long enough, and it's time I finally said...I forgive you."

"You do?" Kat sounded slightly relieved. "Does this mean that we are friends again?"

"Yes, but it's going to take a while for us to completely trust each other again. Things won't be

back to normal after only one conversation."

Kat nodded her head. "I understand, but at least we can work together without a strain on our teamwork. But Callie, what's changed your mind? It's not so long ago that we had that heated conversation." Kat began twisting her hands together.

"I usually can't forgive until I'm not upset anymore, and now I've calmed down enough to do so." Callie looked through the balcony doors. "But, my experience with the Hood that brought home to me how precious life is, and that it's too short to carry the anger."

"Oh, Callie," Kat said quietly, "your experience with the Hood must have been truly awful. I just don't know how I would have coped in a similar situation. I guess that it's situations like that which make people re-evaluate their lives. Thank you for forgiving me. I understand completely that this is only the start, and that it will be some time before we are good friends again."

Callie patted Kat's hand. "I'm glad you do understand." She remained calm as she added, "However, you should know that I can't just sit by and forget it happened. That wound is still deep and hard to heal."

"Oh, Callie," Kat said, "I realize just how much I hurt you; I let my own feelings get in the way. It shouldn't have happened. John had just declared he had feelings for me, and I feel the same about him. I just couldn't bear the thought of him leaving earlier than planned. It was very selfish of me; I can see that now, and I promise it will never happen again." She looked at her friend.

Callie said, "I hope you can keep your promise. I just don't want a repeat, because if it does happen again, I may not be so forgiving next time." She paused for a few seconds and then asked, "So, do you have anything planned for today?"

Kat sighed. "Oh, yes, quite a lot. After the debriefing, Mr. Tracy took Scott and myself into the lounge. He reprimanded me for the fact that the jetpack which Gordon had used was faulty. That was the jetpack that Gordon played that trick on me, when he hid a remote control in the equipment. At that time, although I took out the remote control and repaired it; I didn't test it very well. My punishment is to take that faulty jetpack to pieces, check each piece, reassemble it and thoroughly test it without any help. And then I have to check and test the other jetpacks by Saturday, as well as doing my other chores."

Callie shook her head. "You'll be really busy for the next few days, huh?"

"You can say that again," Kat replied. "But I really must go, Callie. It was good to clear the air between us, but the sooner I begin, the sooner I can finish. John intimated that he and I will be able to spend some time together before he leaves." She blushed slightly. "And I'm looking forward to that."

"I don't blame you one bit," Callie said with a slight giggle in her voice. "I'll let you get to work. Me, I think I'm going to find Kyrano. I need to ask him how to deal with the aftermath of a 'Hood attack'."

"I'm sure he'll be able to help you," Kat said, as she left her apartment. "I'll see you later." She

walked to the elevator to the monorail link-up in order to reach Thunderbird Two's hangar.

Callie left through the balcony doors of Kat's apartment and took the outer stairs down to her first floor apartment to gather her thoughts. She looked down at her right hand, which was shaking badly. What's with my nerves? I've got to hold myself together. I'm back on Tracy Island, and there's no Hood here. I need to find Kyrano, since he knows that creep better than anyone else around here. I hope he can help me deal with the aftermath and effects of those eyes.

\*\*\*\*\*Forgiveness by TracyFan4Ever and TawnyAngel22.\*\*\*\*\*

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:09:36 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/15/2006 9:05 PM

Wednesday, July 18, 2068, 4 p.m. (8 a.m., Thursday, July 18 on Tracy Island)

"All right, Doug. I understand. It's a good move for you and your family, but I'll miss you all. I know Dianne will want to know; are you going to tell her?" Lisa Parkhurst looked at her watch, and sighed. "Yes, it's tomorrow morning there. You might want to wait an hour or so; she'll be up and about by then." There was a pause, then she nodded. "I'll let you know what I decide before you and Angela leave. Yes, I promise." Another, shorter pause, then, "Talk to you later."

She terminated the call, and sighed again, shaking her head.

"Grandma?"

Startled, Lisa turned to see Cherie standing by her shoulder. "I overheard you talking to Uncle Doug. What's going on?"

Lisa put an arm around Cherie's waist, and looked up at her growing granddaughter. "Uncle Doug just called to tell me that he's getting a promotion."

"He is!" Cherie's eyes lit up. "That's great!"

"It is good news," Lisa conceded. "But there's some not-so-good news with it." She sighed heavily again. "To take advantage of the promotion, Uncle Doug, Aunt Angela, and Stephanie will have to move... to Indiana."

Cherie frowned. "Indiana? They're going to leave?"

"I'm afraid so, honey," Lisa said, nodding.

"But... but that's not fair!" the girl cried. "Can't he get a promotion and still stay here? I'll miss

Stephanie! It's not fair!"

"I know it's not, Cherry, but I remember how unfair Stephanie said it was when you and your brothers moved out to Tracy Island."

"This stinks!" Cherie said, extricating herself from her grandmother's grasp. "Can't Stephanie stay here to finish school? I know you have been talking with Mom and Dad about me staying... why can't she?"

"It's not my decision to make, sweetie," Lisa reminded her. "But... if your mother and father give you permission to stay with me for the next school year, I'll offer the same to Stephanie."

"Okay, Grandma." Cherie came back to give her grandmother a hug. "I hope Mom and Dad go for it."

"You're welcome, sweetheart. Now, go get your brothers and get ready for dinner. I'm sure they'll have a lot of washing up to do."

"Right."

Cherie walked off towards the back door, and Lisa watched her go. I don't know if I can handle two teenaged girls at my age; but for their sakes, I'll make the offer. But if Dianne and Jeff say no, then I won't mention it to Doug and Angela. Cherie is a calming influence on Stephanie, but Steph by herself... no, just no. She shook her head. Looking again at her watch, she got up. Time to fix dinner.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:14:15 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 7/16/2006 4:15 PM

After Callie left her apartment, Kat set off for Thunderbird Two's hangar. Her talk with Callie had to a certain extent cleared the air. There would still be coolness between them, but at least they could talk and work together. The young mechanic went into the pod to retrieve the faulty jetpack used on the rescue.

Fetching the manual, she opened it at the right page, and then set to the task of dismantling the jetpack. Looking at the complete jetpack, she began to lay the bits from the faulty piece of equipment out in some sort of order. After carefully checking each piece, she began to start slowly re-assemble the jetpack. However, she was having difficulty in getting it back together. Tears of frustration were blurring her sight and she began to feel dizzy and hot. Am I up to this? Come on Kat Williamson, it's not like you to give up, an inner voice seemed to be saying, Mr Tracy was right; it's your area of expertise. You can do it; you know you can.

While she worked, she began to remember how proud she had felt when she had been invited to be a member of International Rescue. She was delighted that she was part of such a famous organisation, and so happy that she and John were becoming close friends. Kat referred once more to the manual and the jetpack, and concentrating hard, managed to get everything back in place.

Picking up the equipment, she strapped it on, and mentally crossing her fingers, pressed the button to ascend. Slowly she rose above the floor of the hangar and travelled a short way, before turning the controls of the jetpack to descend. Landing on her feet, she again pushed the control button to ascend. This time the young mechanic flew around in circles and figure eights, making the equipment rise and hover, and then rise further, before finally descending again. Once back on the ground again and satisfied that the jetpack was fully functional, she returned it to the pod.

I'll check the mobile crane and then have a break before I work on a couple more jetpacks, she thought.

Written by Tawnyangel22

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:19:38 GMT  
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 7/17/2006 2:21 PM

Tracy Island, July 19th, 10:30 a.m.

The arrival on mail on Tracy Island always caused a buzz and today was no exception. The occupants of the island, family and team members alike congregated on the airstrip or mingled nearby awaiting the mail plane. Once it had landed and taxied to a halt, Scott, Brandon, Brains and Alan went to unload and sign for the bags and boxes.

Too impatient to wait until the mail was taken into the villa, everyone started to crowd around to get their own, most of which was usually the junk variety, but any letters from family and friends were always a welcomed bonus. After a few minutes of chaos, the crowd began to disperse and everyone went their different ways with their mail.

As usual, Virgil had waited patiently until nearly everyone was gone. His philosophy was that his mail had waited this long to get to him, so a few more minutes wouldn't make a difference. He hobbled over to Scott, who was cleaning up the empty canvas sacks the mail had come in. "Anything exciting for me?"

Scott looked up. "Right over there," he replied, nodding in the direction of the mail pile.

Virgil picked up his pile and thumbed through it: a few bills for art supplies, two magazines and a credit card bill - nothing exciting. "Need a hand?" he offered to Scott.

"Nah, I got it, thanks."

"Ok, see ya back at the house." Virgil turned and started back towards the villa. It was then that he noticed Elise slowly walking the same way. He caught up with her and noticed she didn't have any mail. "Didn't get any today?" he asked.

"Oh, hi, Virgil." She'd been miles away and hadn't noticed him beside her. "No, not today. But then again, I don't often get any anyway. I just like to watch the others get all silly when the mail plane arrives." She smiled but Virgil could tell it was a forced smile. They stopped when they reached the villa steps. "Well, I gotta load of laundry to do, I'll see ya later," Elise said.

"Lucky you! See ya later." Virgil smiled back. As he watched her go, an idea came to life that he was sure would put a real smile on her face.

From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 7/17/2006 2:31 PM

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:24:28 GMT  
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July 19th, Tracy Island, early afternoon.

With Virgil's leg injury forcing him to rest, Elise had readily agreed to work on some of Thunderbird Two's maintenance. Brains had called her, asking her to stop by Virgil's room and pick up the diagnostic work-ups, then drop them off at the lab on her way to Two's hangar. She'd called Virgil on her commlink and his door was open when she got there. He was busy painting out by the balcony.

"Hey!" Elise called out, entering the suite.

"Hey yourself! The print-outs are on the table."

"Got 'em." she answered, bending to pick up the documents from the coffee table.

Virgil called out as she turned to leave. "Thanks for working on the diagnostics; I appreciate it."

"No problem. The thing is, will that pampered pet of yours appreciate it? I'm sure she'll end up sulking all afternoon once she realizes it's me and not you working on her! See you later!"

Virgil chuckled as Elise walked out then returned to his painting.

She was on her way toward the elevator that connected the villa to the monorail when she almost knocked John over. "Oh! I'm sorry, John. I wasn't looking where I was going; are you okay?"



"Yeah, I'm fine," he replied, chuckling. "Heading to the hangar again?"

"Yep! The big green bug is calling." Elise waved the diagnostic print outs, indicating what work she was planning to do.

"Mind if I ride along? I've got some more work to do on Three."

"I don't mind at all," Elise answered.

They boarded the monorail in silence and sat down. Looking across at John, Elise noticed that he seemed happier than he had been a few days ago when they'd shared a ride on the monorail, going the same route they were now.

(Flashback)

He looks so miserable, Elise thought as they sat down. Maybe if I start some chit chat with him, it may lighten his mood. "Hey, John."

"Hi, Elise."

"It's been a while since we've got to chat. How are things going for you?" she asked.

John inhaled a deep breath. "Well, not too bad, I guess." His sullen expression gave away more than he was saying.

"Well, while I have the chance again, and you're here, I want to thank you for all that you did for me the night of the crash."

John looked surprised to hear the thanks, until he realized that Elise had just returned from New Hampshire. "You're more than welcome, you know that." He smiled softly.

Elise decided to be blunt. "Okay, spit it out! What's eating you?"

John hadn't expected such a direct question. "What makes you ask that?" he said cautiously.

Elise chuckled. "C'mon, I can tell by the miserable look on your face that something's up!"

He sighed. "Well, you asked, so here it is." John began to tell her how he and Kat had become close friends and had spent a lot of time together recently.

"You and Kat are an item?" Elise asked.

John had to laugh at the expression on her face. Apparently not everyone knew! "Yeah, I guess you could say we were heading that way."

"Were?"

John went on to tell Elise how he and Kat had stargazed and e-mailed and hung out together.

"That's really cool, John. I'm happy for you."

"I thought so too, until really recently" At her quizzical look, John proceeded to explain how he had offered to switch rotation with Callie so she could spend her birthday with her family. His dad had approved it and Callie had been thrilled with his kind offer. However, Kat was not impressed at all. "I tried to get her to understand, Elise, but she convinced herself that it was all Callie's doing. She all but flew off the handle at poor Callie!"

"Whoa! Back up. She did WHAT!" Elise could hardly believe what she heard.

John let out a miserable sigh and continued to tell Elise that he'd told Kat that he expected her to apologize to Callie, and that even though Kat did, she wasn't exactly tful to him again about it.

As John went on, Elise was having a hard time trying to picture Kat acting like a jealous wife. "John, Kat doesn't seem the possessive type, but if what you're telling me is how she's been acting lately, then you've got a big problem."

"I know, Elise. I mean, I'd like to pursue a relationship with her, but I feel like I'm caught between a rock and a hard place. I just don't know if I feel 'sure' about her. I want to, but if she acts out like this every time life throws a curve she doesn't like; well - I guess this whole thing has just gotten to me."

Elise sympathized with John and felt bad for her friend. "John, I think you should stop feeling like you are to blame. You have done nothing wrong. In fact, what you've done is a lot more than some men would do! I think Kat has been way out of line, and I don't blame Callie for feeling the way she does. I'm no relationship expert, trust me on that! But if you both want to take things further than they are, she's got to be honest with you. If you're doubting her now, how can you trust her further down the road?"

John thought carefully about Elise's words. She was right. Any doubts he and Kat had with each other had to be faced now, or there probably wouldn't be a tomorrow for them.

"Looks like my stop," Elise announced as she stood up and the car slowed to a halt. "I hope it all works out for both of you," she added as she exited the car.

"Thanks, Elise. Me, too." (End of flashback)

The car jolted slightly, bringing Elise back to the present.

"Hey, didn't we just do this the other day?" John asked, smiling.

"Déjà vu!" Elise giggled back then added, "You look more positive today than you did the other day. How are things now?"

"I feel better and I'm going to see how Kat's day was. I hope to get together with her tonight."

It was Elise's turn to smile. "That's good to hear, John." The friends then turned the conversation

to maintenance work until they reached Thunderbird Two's hangar and Elise departed.[/color]

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:25:41 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/17/2006 5:04 PM

Thursday, July 19, 2068, noon (8 p.m., Wednesday, July 18 in South Carolina)

"Hey, love," Jeff said as he held out Dianne's chair at the table for her. "You've been preoccupied today."

"Ah know," Dianne replied, as she sat down. "Ah've heard from both mah brother, Doug, and from mah mother today. Seems Doug's got himself a promotion."

"He did!" Jeff exclaimed with a pleased smile. "Good for him!"

"Yeah, it's good, but it's left owah mother with a dilemma. Y'see, he's got t' move t' Indiana foah the promotion." Dianne put her napkin in her lap and took a sip of juice. "She's not sure she wants t' stay in Greenville by herself."

"Hm. That is a dilemma," Jeff said thoughtfully.

Scott, who was listening in, asked, "Why doesn't she just move with him?"

"Greenville's been her home foah a long, long time, Scott. She's got friends, customers; it's got a lot o' history and memories," Dianne explained.

"Just like the Kansas farmhouse had for me," Emily piped up from further down the table. "It wasn't easy to pull up stakes and come here; I can attest to that."

"What do you think she'll do?" Tin-Tin asked, her pretty face carrying a concerned frown.

"Ah don' know," Dianne replied. "But part o' what she does depends on whether or not we let Cherie stay an' go t' school in Greenville." She turned to her husband. "If'n we say that Cherie can stay, then she'll offah th' same opportunity t' Stephanie. Othahwise, she won't mention it t' Doug. She can handle both girls together bettah than just Steph alone."

Jeff took in a deep breath and let it out slowly. "Looks like we're going to have to make a decision on Cherie and school pretty quickly, then." He shook his head. "I know Cherry would like to stay there with her friends and all, but... I'd miss her. And there's the security aspect..."

"Yes, Mr. Tracy," Brains said from where he sat beside Tin-Tin. "Did you get that message I forwarded from our security people about what happened in Florida?"

"I did," Jeff replied with a nod. "These reporters are getting craftier. And... I don't like the idea of her or her grandmother being alone. Not with the Hood out there, looking for us."

The table fell silent for a few moments, then Jeff turned to Dianne. "It really falls to you, love. What you say goes in this instance. If you don't want Cherie to stay, we'll suggest that perhaps Lisa come out to live here, where she'd be a huge help in so many ways. Otherwise, we'll make arrangements for the security. But we don't have much time to waste; school will start sooner than you think."

"Ah know," Dianne said. She took the salad he handed her and dished some out for herself. "Ah'll talk to mah mother again and work it out."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:27:20 GMT  
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 7/18/2006 7:17 PM

]\*\*\*\*\*Thursday, July 19, 2006; Tracy Island; 1:00 p.m.\*\*\*\*\*[/I]

Callie finished her lunch and was in the middle of cleaning up her table. Noticing a crumb fall to the floor, she picked it up and tossed it into the trash can. She saw her hand shaking again. "I've got about an hour before I meeting Doc for my appointment. What I need to do now is talk to Kyrano. I'll drive myself mad if I don't."

As she rode the monorail to the elevators, and all the way up to the Villa, Callie thought about what she might say to Kyrano. "Where might he be at this time of day?" she muttered to herself. "I'll try the kitchen first."

Kyrano had just finished his own lunch, and was preparing to run the auto-washer when he heard a hesitant footstep out in the dining room. Durian padded over to the door, looking up at it expectantly. Shaking his head, Kyrano picked up the cat, and opened the door to find Callie standing outside. "Come in, Miss Callie," he said with a gentle smile. "I have been expecting your visit."

"I figured you knew I was coming to see you," she said. "I've got to talk to you about the aftereffects of being hypnotized by the Hood. The more I try not to think about it, the more it scares me."

"Please, sit down," he said, motioning to the small table at which he usually ate. "I will prepare some herbal tea; it will relax you as we speak." He put the kettle on, and pulled out a canister with one of his own herbal blends, and began to prepare the tea for both of them. Callie sat where he had indicated, unsure of herself. Durian decided that she needed some attention, and began to wind his orange body between her ankles.

She took some comfort from Durian's fur. "You're a good cat, Aster--I mean, Durian. I keep forgetting." After receiving her tea from Kyrano, she took in a sip. "Mmm...this is good."

"I am glad you like it, Miss Callie." As he sat down next to her, he asked, "Please tell me, are you still thinking about your experience with my brother?"

She nodded. "Yes. I can't shake the memories of those eyes. I feel like I'm going nuts."

"I understand," he said softly. "I actually have not seen my brother's eyes when he uses his hypnotic powers, however, Tin-Tin and Mr. Brains have both told me of them. Their memories of their encounters were very unnerving, to say the least." He paused to sip his tea and consider what he might say next. "You should realize that what happened was not your fault. There was nothing you could do to stand against him. So do not blame yourself."

Callie shook her head. "I know, but it's not that easy. If Dom hadn't come to my rescue, I could've given all the information to the Hood. I could've easily compromised IR's security." She held her hand to her face, trying to fight off tears.

Kyrano patted her free hand. "Perhaps, or perhaps not. From what I understand, you were fighting as best you could against his influence. And Mr. Dominic did come to your rescue." He sighed lightly. "As I said before, this was not your fault. It was a near thing, true, but you are safe, and we will all be more on our guard in the future. You must do what you can to put it behind you, Miss Callie, and look ahead." He smiled a little. "He will be caught, never fear. If there is anything I know about my brother, it is that he is supremely overconfident. It will be his undoing."

Callie returned a light smile. "Maybe you're right, Kyrano. I may be just making myself sick with worry because of this one situation. I also know I can't get over this in a day, which is why I'm heading to see Doc at two. She wants to make sure I'm mentally and emotionally all right."

"Excellent, Miss Callie," he said, nodding. "There will be aftereffects, to be sure, but you cannot let them rule your life. This was a single frightening experience; I am sure you have had others in your life that you have dealt with and conquered." He paused to sip his tea. "You may seek me out if you need a listening ear. And it may be of help to you to speak to my daughter, or Mr. Brains, as their experiences parallel yours more closely than my own."

After taking another sip of her tea, she added, "I think I'll do that. I don't want to worry about this forever." As she stood up, Callie said, "Thank you for your help and advice, Kyrano. That and this herbal tea have been helpful to calming me down."

"You are very welcome, Miss Callie," he said, nodding and standing with her. "Again, if you need to talk about it, you may seek me out again."

She nodded at him, smiling a little, then turned and left the kitchen, walking with purpose toward her appointment with Dianne.

\*\*\*\*\*By TracyFan4Ever and Tikatu.\*\*\*\*\*

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:29:36 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/18/2006 9:00 PM

Thursday, July 19, 2068, 1:35 p.m. Tracy Island

Callie stepped cautiously into the infirmary, looking about for Dianne. She hadn't been there since getting her tracking chip implanted, and felt a little intimidated by the clean room with its empty beds.

"Dianne?" she called. "Uh, Dianne?"

"Callie!" Dianne came out of the passageway between the infirmary and the examination room. She was dressed in scrubs and clogs, her workday clothes. "You're early."

"Yeah. I, uh, took some time to speak to Kyrano," Callie said.

"Good. I'm working with Virgil at the moment," Dianne replied, smiling. "Why don't you wait in here?" She indicated a couple of chairs in her office. "I'll be with you in a few moments."

"Oh, sure." Callie stepped inside the office, and sat down. As she waited for Dianne, the images of her run-in with the Hood played over and over in her mind. She tried to remember what Kyrano had said about not blaming herself, but still, she felt guilty that she'd let him get to her in the first place. She fidgeted in her seat, looking at her watch, wondering how much longer Dianne would take.

Finally, Virgil limped out of the examination room. He gave Callie one of his gorgeous smiles and said, "How are you doing, Callie?"

"I'm... okay," she replied. "How's the leg?"

"I'll survive," Virgil said. He glanced back at Dianne, who was now behind him. "I have to obey Doctor Mom here, and stay off my leg, but I should be back to piloting within the week."

"If you behave yourself," Dianne said, shaking a finger at him.

"I'll behave; I promise." Virgil said, rolling his eyes. He kissed her on the cheek as he limped off, giving Callie a quick salute.

"I'll be right back," Dianne said, following Virgil as far as the sick room. It was only a few moments when she returned, and beckoned Callie to follow her. "Let me disinfect this quickly, then we'll have a look at you."

Her arms wrapped around herself, Callie watched as Dianne wiped down the examination scanner, first with a disinfectant cloth, then with a paper towel. She looked on as Dianne reset the scanner's computer.

"Okay," Dianne came back out from behind the computer console. She patted the examination bed. "Climb up here, and let's see what the scanner will tell us."

Callie did as she was told, but looked at Dianne with a frown. "Why are you doing this? I thought we'd be dealing with my emotional and mental state."

"We will," said Dianne as she pulled a sheet over Callie. "But I want to make sure there weren't any physical side effects either." She returned to the console. "This is the first time that we've dealt with a victim of the Hood so soon after this kind of attack. It's an opportunity to see if there are any lasting physical side effects." She smiled as she activated the scanner. "I'm sorry if it sounds like you're being a guinea pig..."

"Didn't you have the chance when Brains and Tin-Tin were attacked?" Callie asked.

Dianne shook her head. "No, that was before my time. And it was hours before Scott, Virgil and Gordon found them. When they did, Brains had been buried in the sand up to his neck in the heat for quite some time. Then it was a bit before they got back to base."

"Buried in the sand up to his neck? Poor Brains!"

"Yeah. The Hood used good old fashioned torture to get Brains to talk, but it didn't work." Dianne looked up at the screen. "And it didn't quite work with you, either."

Callie lay back and thought about that for a few moments as the scanner did its work. Finally, Dianne smiled, and downloaded the information to her computer. "Okay, Callie, we're done in here."

"Will I live, Doc?" Callie joked, trying to cheer herself up.

"Yes, you'll live," Dianne said. "You're doing well. A bit tired and on edge, as seen by your lactic acid levels, and the tension in your muscles, but that's to be expected after such a scary time. No difference in brain chemistry." She helped Callie off the table, and guided her into the office.

When the two women were settled into their chairs, Dianne said, "You told me you went to see Kyrano. What did he tell you?"

"That this was not my fault, and that there wasn't much I could have done against... him. That I should put it behind me, and move on." Callie shook her head. "I don't know that I can do that; at least, not right away."

"Kyrano's got it right; you're not at fault here, Callie, and you shouldn't think you are," Dianne said. "But you're right that getting over this won't happen overnight, either. I'm sure you'll have some nightmares, and times where you can't stop thinking about what happened. When those times come, as they will, come see me. If you find you're not getting the sleep you need, I can give you something to help, and we can talk about it. The fright of it will eventually fade; my job is to see that you get to that point in relatively good shape physically and emotionally."

"Do you think I'll need to take medications?" Callie asked, frowning. "I've never taken any kind of



medication for... mental problems."

Dianne smiled a little. "If necessary, you may have an anti-depressant for a short time. It all depends on how you handle this. But it wouldn't be permanent. Right now though, I'm talking more along the lines of sleep aids. If you're physically exhausted, then your emotional state will be negatively affected by that exhaustion. So, I want to make sure you get your rest."

"I see," Callie said. She looked down at her hands. "Will I be able to continue with my work?"

"I think so," Dianne said. "It'll help keep your mind off what happened. But if you need to have your workload cut back, I'll have a talk with John and Brains about it." Reaching out, she patted Callie on the knee. "We want to make sure you're dealing with this."

"And if I'm not?"

"We'll cross that bridge if we come to it," was the firm answer. "Now, I want you to find something to do for the rest of the day. Even if it's swabbing the decks of Thunderbird Three."

Callie snickered. "All right. I'll ask John what I can do to help out."

"And if he has nothing for you, go see Brains. I'm sure he can find something for to do." Dianne winked at her. "Doctor's orders."

"F-A-B, Doc." Callie rose from her seat. "Thanks for the talk. I'll be sure to tell you if things get rough."

"You do that," Dianne said.

Callie left the sick room feeling better. Instead of looking for John, I think I may head down to the lab and see what Brains and Tin-Tin have for me to do... and maybe arrange to talk to them about their experiences with the Hood.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:35:53 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 7/19/2006 11:29 AM

Thursday July 19th, 3.30pm , Tracy Island.

...I wonder...no. No, that wouldn't work. Hmm... Scott's pace was slow as he walked along the poolside. His mind was filled with ideas and concepts from his work on security issues. He had come up with far more than the five he had been required to put forward, and more were forming. He made a few notes on his PDA as his feet found the path down to the garden, and he tapped the stylus against his lips. There's so much room for improvement. The suggestions are endless.

The gravel crunched in a steady beat, and Scott called up another menu as the foliage became denser and he fell into shade.

Insect moans grew stronger, and the scent of jungle-floor fauna rose upwards. Scott's head remained bent over his PDA as the path wound towards the shore and he emerged into the sun again. His feet met paving as he came across the small viewing area, and he went towards one of the benches.

"Sot! Sot here, look!"

Scott glanced up to see Dominic and Joshua, surrounded by a plethora of coloured blocks, already sitting in the area.

"Oh, sorry for disturbing --"

"Sot! Come see! Come see!"

Joshua ran over, grabbed one of Scott's trouser legs and began to tug on it.

"Come see house!"

Scott grinned and tucked his PDA into his pocket, and allowed the child to guide him to a square of stacked blocks. Dominic, who was sitting cross-legged within a wobbly circle of blocks, nodded in greeting, and Joshua turned his round face upwards.

"Like house? Is my house!"

"It's great!" He said, and squatted down to take a closer look. "You're very talented," he said, and tipped the child a wink.

Joshua grinned and flopped down beside his blocks, and started gathering the stray ones together.

"How's tricks?" Dominic asked.

"My head's full of security problems and solutions," Scott said.

"Rather you than me, so," Dom said, "though I do have to tink of a new codename for meself."

"Any ideas yet?" Scott asked.

"No clue. I'm not very good at that sort of ting. Haven't much imagination, unlike this wee fella."

Scott chuckled.

"He sure loves his blocks."

Joshua pushed a pile over to Scott.

"Play too. Sot play wi' Jossa. Da no play. Sot play."

Scott glanced across at Dom, who shrugged.

"He made me a 'chair'," he said, motioning to the circle. "I guess that's enough."

Scott thought for a moment, and decided to indulge the child. I have time. He sat down and reached for the proffered blocks. Dominic rested his chin on his palm and watched his child with half-shut eyes. Joshua hummed to himself, repeating, "Sot" often, and occasionally swapping his blocks with Scott's. Scott placed a few into a pyramid to placate the kid; it worked well.

"You ever tink about havin' kids yourself?" Dominic asked.

"Well, I would like to some day," he said. "I need to find the right lady first, though," he added with a grin.

"Yeah... You'd best be careful on that front. They're not all angels, you know."

"Oh, I know that all right. Believe me."

"Sounds like a man who's been burned," Dom said, keeping his eyes on Joshua.

"Let's just say I know what it's like for something not to work out."

"Hmm."

Joshua started to build a tower, and very quickly it began to waver.

"Do you tink you should put any more blocks on there?" Dom asked.

"Yes! More bocks!"

Joshua stood on his tiptoes to add another block, and he squealed with delight as the whole thing collapsed, sending bouncing bricks in all directions.

"All fall down! Fall down, fall down!"

"I wouldn't recommend recruiting Josh into IR when he's older," Dom said. "He likes to destroy things, rather than save them."

Scott chuckled.

"Don't all kids?"

Scott watched as Joshua set about collecting the scattered remains of his tower. I would like kids one day, he thought. Though in this job, there's not much scope for relationships. Not for me, anyway. But who knows what the future will bring?

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:38:15 GMT  
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 7/19/2006 1:50 PM

Tracy Island, July 19th -- Afternoon

Just as she was about to start checking the mobile crane, her communicator watch bleeped and John's face came into view when she answered. "Hi Kat. How about we meet after you have finished your work today and spend some time together?"

"I don't think I can John; it may be late by the time I finish. You see, Mr Tracy has reprimanded me for not thoroughly testing the jetpack that Gordon used to play that trick. He said that the maintenance of the vehicles and equipment is my responsibility, and that the lives of everyone depend on keeping the equipment in top repair at all times. As punishment, he told me to take apart the faulty jetpack, check and rebuild it and test it thoroughly, which I have just done. And as well as my usual chores, I have to check and test all the other jetpacks by Saturday."

"I see," John said.

Kat went on to explain. "After Gordon played that trick on me, I removed the remote control he used, and repaired and tested the jetpack. It certainly flew okay, and I assumed that it was fully functional. But sadly it wasn't."

John could sense the resentment in her voice. "Kat," he said, "Dad is perfectly correct in what he said. We do rely on Brains, and now you, to make sure that our equipment is reliable."

"I know, John, and I will always ensure that everything I repair or check will be thoroughly tested. It's completely my fault; I didn't know enough about the jetpacks and should have asked Brains to help me."

"Looks like you're going to be busy. When you've finished, give me a call. We'll go for a walk on the beach, and you can tell me how your day went."

It was very late by the time that Kat had finished checking the crane and two more jetpacks. She deliberated whether or not she should call John. But, having been on her own all day, she wanted some company.

Switching on her communicator, she was pleased when his face appeared on the screen short while later.

"John, I've finished for today. Is it too late to go for a walk?"

"No, I'll call for you at your apartment in, say half an hour. Will that give you time to clean up?"

"Yes," Kat replied. "I'll see you later, John."

Feeling happier, she headed back to her apartment.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:41:40 GMT  
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 7/19/2006 1:54 PM

Tracy Island -- Thursday July 19th, early evening --

Kat had just showered and changed when her doorbell chimed.

"Who is it?"

"It's me, John."

She opened the door. "Hi, John, come on in. Would you mind if we didn't go for a walk? I'm rather hungry, so I wondered if I cooked a meal, you'd care to join me."

"I'd like that very much," John replied.

"It'll only be a quick meal cooked in my wok."

Grinning at her, he remarked, "Perhaps I should warn the family to get ready with the fire extinguishers."

Kat rolled her eyes at him. "Gosh! I'll never live that down will I? Actually, I have become quite adept at wok cooking. Maybe I could teach you to use it as well."

"Oh, I'm not sure about that," he replied, "I don't get much time to cook while I'm here at base, and there's really no place for a wok on Thunderbird Five. I'll just enjoy your cooking."

Kat cooked a quick stir-fry using vegetables, bean sprouts, herbs and a dash of Soya sauce.

They sat down to eat. Kat watched as John looked at his plate. "I hope everything is okay." She sounded a little worried.

John began to eat. "It's fine. In fact it's quite tasty," he added, "although I have to admit that I haven't had truly vegetarian food before."

Kat looked relieved. She hadn't been too sure whether John would like the meal or not.

After they had finished, John helped her clear up, and then sat down on her sofa, his long legs, stretched out. Kat made them both some coffee and joined him, curling her legs underneath her.

"So, how did your day go?" he asked

"It went fairly well," Kat replied. "At least I know my way around a jetpack. I also checked over the mobile crane. But I haven't forgiven Gordon; I'll find some way to get him back."

John laughed. "I wish you the best of luck. It's not often he's caught out."

"I've been thinking about poor Callie. To think that that monster tried to get information out of her, she must have been quite traumatised."

He nodded in agreement. "Yes; thank goodness Dom arrived just in time."

"So that person who stole the hoverbike in the tunnel was the Hood. I think I had a lucky escape."

"Yes, I think you did, Kat," John replied.

Suddenly Kat tried to stifle a yawn.

He noticed. "Hey you must be very tired; you've had a long day. I'll head back to the villa, and let you get some rest."

"I'm sorry John; that must seem rude of me."

"Not at all. Thanks for the lovely meal. How about we spend some time together this weekend? We could watch a movie in the theatre, and maybe I can reciprocate by cooking you a meal."

"I'd like that very much, thank you," she replied.

As he left the apartment, he said, "Goodnight Kat, sleep well."

"Goodnight John."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 02:51:35 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 7/20/2006 3:25 PM

Friday, July 20; 9 PM; Silver Spring (1 PM the next day on Tracy Island)

Lena stared at the computer screen in front of her. I know the answer is in front of me, but I can't

see it. Why? She stood up and began pacing around, trying to break through the block that kept her from completing the challenge she'd accepted from Brains.

After the Tracys were well on the way to recovering from the food poisoning, and she'd rested, Brains had allowed her to go down to the lab. He'd showed her a few of the projects he was working on, one of them being a way to upgrade the security of the communications for International Rescue.

"Right now, I've hit a stumbling block. I need programs that will scramble and unscramble transmissions at both ends, but won't allow any unauthorized person to get anything but static, or gibberish."

"What's de problem?"

"The transmission won't unscramble properly, unless it does so before it reaches the other end. It ends up with only every fifth word getting through -- if I'm lucky. Can you help?"

She'd looked at his program. Something there wasn't quite right, but she hadn't been able to put her finger on it. She'd straightened up and turned to him. "I'd like to try. But I don't know dat I could do it right now. So much has happened dat I tink I wouldn't be able to concentrate."

He'd put his hands on her shoulders and squeezed them gently, but comfortingly. "I understand. It can wait a while. We haven't had any compromise of our system, yet. But it's only a matter of time. So I tell you what; I'll send everything I have to your home computer. When you're ready, take a look at it and see if you can come up with a solution. How would that work? Are you up to the challenge?"

She'd smiled and replied, "Dat would be fine. Tank you, Brains. I may not be up to it yet, but I will be, as soon as I can take care of a few tings. And I'll keep in touch to let you know how I'm doing."

It had taken time for her to start working on it. Even after her meeting with her family, it had been several days before she was relaxed enough to concentrate on something as complex as this program. So although she hadn't been working on it very long, she was frustrated that she hadn't made any progress.

She thought back to that day in his lab, and remembered how proud he was of the new "heads-up" program he and Tin-Tin had come up with, so the rescuers in the field could talk to each other and still have their hands free to continue doing their job. Suddenly she looked at the computer screen again. Dat's it! He didn't take dem into account when he worked on dis program. Dey must have different specs, and dere's probably a basic incompatibility wit dis programming.

Knowing she needed more information from Brains, she emailed him.

I've started working on the upgrade of the communications program you sent me. I couldn't figure out why it wasn't working, until I remembered the day you finally let me go to your lab. I believe the problem is an incompatibility between this program and the way your new "hands free" transmitters are configured. Would you please send me the specs on them, so I can confirm my theory?



She finished with a personal note, and sent it. Then she sighed and, after saving what she'd done, turned off her computer and, making her usual checks, left the room.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 13:40:14 GMT  
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 7/22/2006 1:11 PM

July 21st, Tracy Island Lab.

As Tin-Tin entered the lab, she found Brains pacing back and forth mumbling to himself about specs and thermodynamics.

"Brains! You'll wear the floor out if you keep moving like that!" Tin-Tin laughed as she spoke.

At the sound of her voice, Brains looked up and half smiled but kept walking. He had so much on his mind that he was starting to muddle things. He needed to be certain that all the written material he wished to take with him was in order, and had spent the last few hours at his computer making sure everything was airtight, so to say. Yet, he still wasn't satisfied. These conventions made him much more nervous than usual, and being the perfectionist that he was, he had to have everything 'just so'.

"Oh, Tin-Tin, I, er, I didn't hear you come in. I'm sorry. I was just making sure that all the data I need for the conference is, um, secure. After the recent problems we've encountered with viruses, I need to be 110% certain that no one can hack into any of my files, especially as I'm sure I'll be adding to them while I'm there."

Tin-Tin's smile faded a little as she remembered that the e-mail she'd opened from Giles had set off a series of problematic events culminating in Lena's kidnapping. Although not directly responsible in any way, she still felt guilty and ashamed that she'd let someone like Giles Hightower influence her. "Yes, of course, Brains. I understand."

Brains noticed her change in demeanor and changed the subject a little. "While you're here, Tin-Tin, would you mind double checking my flight reservation and confirmation at the hotel?"

Tin-Tin brightened again. "Gladly!" she answered and sat down at her computer. "All right, Brains, you're all set. Once you leave the island and arrive in Sydney, you'll connect to Qantas Flight 900, First Class all the way to Paris. Once you arrive, the limo Mr. Tracy insisted on will be there to take you to the hotel." A question crossed her mind as she was reading out loud. "Brains, maybe you could ask Lady Penelope and Parker meet you in Paris at some point. You know, for extra security? After all, Penelope is very familiar with the city and Parker knows his way around. I was just thinking how extra security could have helped when Lena was kidnapped."

Brains stopped walking and came over to Tin-Tin. "I, er, I don't think that's going to be possible,

Tin-Tin, the, um, arrangements are very specific. I'm sure that if she were needed, she would be there, possibly incognito. Mr. Tracy may have even contacted our agent in Paris for assistance."

Tin-Tin smiled at his logical train of thought. He always seemed to be prepared for every possible scenario. She liked that about him. That, and many other things, like his genuine enjoyment of her company when they'd spent downtime together. The walk and picnic they'd had on the beach a while ago had been a very pleasant afternoon. She couldn't recall such a relaxed afternoon like that with Alan, at least not towards the end of their relationship.

"Don't worry about me, Tin-Tin, I will be back here before you know it!" Brains added.

She smiled at his attempt at humor and rose from her seat. "Would you like some help packing the rest of your things?" she asked.

Brains was quite taken aback by her offer. He was so used to doing things for himself that he hadn't given thought to anyone ever paying this much attention to him. He stuttered a little as he answered, causing Tin-Tin to giggle softly. "Um, y-yes, if you'd, um, like."

"Yes, Brains! I would very much 'like'." They both chuckled as they left the lab.

I'm really going to miss him, Tin-Tin thought as they walked along together.

I think I may really miss her, Brains thought to himself as Tin-Tin happily walked beside him.

"Brains?"

"Yes, Tin-Tin?"

"You will be extra careful when you're in Paris, won't you?"

"Yes, I will. I promise," Brains assured her, finding that he liked her concern for him. "Now, to find the suitcases I need!" he said as they entered his suite to begin packing.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 13:50:47 GMT  
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 7/24/2006 3:49 AM

Tracy Island -- Saturday, July 21st -- 5.30pm

It had been a long day. Kat had finally finished testing all the jetpacks as well as her other jobs and was now looking forward to having a shower. John had arranged to meet her after she finished work. She had just put the tools away and was about to wash her hands, when she heard John's voice.

"Hi Kat. How's it going? Are you finished?"

"Hi, John, I'm just about ready," Kat called back.

John came over to her and smiled at the young mechanic. Looking at her, he chuckled. "Looks like you've had a busy day."

As soon as Kat was ready, the couple headed back towards the Cliff House. She headed for the shower calling over her shoulder, "There's some fruit juice in the fridge, could you pour us both a drink? I won't be long. The glasses are in the small cupboard above the fridge."

John found the carton and pouring two glasses, sat down to wait for her. It wasn't long before she came back into the lounge looking clean, dressed in jeans and a sweater.

"Do you have any plans for this evening?" she asked.

"I thought maybe we could watch a movie in the theatre," John suggested.

"Sounds good," Kat remarked, "but I must have something to eat first; I'll just fix myself a sandwich. Can I make you one?"

John declined the offer, saying that he had recently eaten. When she finished, they walked back to the villa and down to the cinema room. They decided on a movie and John placed the DVD in the machine. Handing her a box of popcorn he brought along, sat down beside her to enjoy the film. Kat glanced sideways at him; he was watching the film intently. He was so good looking and they were becoming such good friends. It was pleasant, just sitting there beside him in the darkened room.

After the film had finished, John asked if she would like a snack.

"Yes, please," she answered.

Leaving the theatre they made their way to the kitchen, where John began preparing a light meal. "I'm afraid it's only a cheese salad," he said, "followed by fresh fruit."

"It looks wonderful," she remarked. "Besides, I don't want anything too heavy at this time of night."

John carried the plates into the dining room, followed by Kat who brought the glasses and a bottle of wine.

"Bon appetite."

"Merci," she replied.

"So, you speak French," he said.

"Oui. I learnt French and German at school. I did start Spanish, but somehow I neither had the

time or the patience to continue."

"Would you like me to teach you?"

"Oh would you? Yes please," Kat replied.

"I can be a hard task master," John said laughing at her. "I'm very thorough."

"Can we start now?" she asked.

John chuckled. "No, not tonight. We'll start the lessons another day; starting with the basics."

"Thanks John," she replied, "I'll look forward to that."

They continued talking about International Rescue, and their respective families, until Kat said, "It's very late, John. I have to go; thanks for a lovely meal."

"You're welcome, Kat."

John walked her back to her apartment. On the way down in the elevator, he began thinking, and then with a smile headed back to the villa.

Edited by Lillehafrue

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 13:53:30 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/24/2006 11:23 AM

Saturday, July 21, 2068, 7:30 p.m., England (7:30 a.m. Sunday, July 22 on Tracy Island)

"Is everything in order?"

"Yes, sister dear," Giles said in a desultory tone. "Mr. Hackenbacker will be arriving at the airport in Paris tomorrow. Our taxi driver will be there to pick him up."

"Are you sure that Tracy hasn't made any other arrangements?" Desdemona asked, giving her brother a dirty look.

"No, of course I'm not sure!" Giles snapped back. "It's not as if I have any contacts at Tracy Industries. Just the one at the conference and at the airline. He's flying from Sydney, first class." He sighed. "It's safe to assume that he'll take a taxi to the conference hotel, just as the others will."

"Nothing is 'safe to assume' when it comes to Tracy and his people, Giles." Jacques turned from the window of his office. "I hope you have other plans in hand to capture this Hiram Hackenbacker should he slip through your fingers at the airport."

"Of course I do," Giles retorted. He took off his glasses to polish them with a handkerchief. "Are you keeping an eye on that Lady Penelope? I am certain that she had something to do with our losing Mrs. Matumbo."

Desdemona snorted a laugh and shook her head, her golden mane of hair swaying. She pushed it back out of the way. "Just because the woman humiliated you in a public place doesn't mean she's some sort of... secret agent." She lit a cigarette, took a drag, and blew the smoke out. "Really, Giles, you're obsessed with the woman."

Before Giles could sputter out a rebuttal, Jacques held up a hand. "I've had the woman thoroughly checked out, Giles. She's into good works and attending the events on the social calendar. Yes, she is a good friend of the Tracy family, and perhaps was more to old man Tracy at one time. But there's nothing in her background to suggest she is any more than what she appears: a rich social butterfly."

Giles subsided, grumbling. Desdemona smiled at his discomfiture, and stood up, grinding out her cigarette in one of the room's crystal ashtrays. "Well, boys, if Giles has everything well in hand, I'll be heading out." She paused at the door. "I'm looking forward to meeting this Hiram Hackenbacker."

"Will you do better with him than you did with Mrs. Matumbo?" Giles sneered.

"Oh, yes," his sister replied, dropping her voice to a breathy, sultry tone. "A man like him won't be able to resist me."

She left, and Giles rose. He put his glasses back on. "I am also heading home. I'll be ready to leave for Paris in the morning."

"You had better pull this off, Giles," Jacques warned. "I want this man. He's the key to all of Tracy's secrets."

"And you shall have him," Giles replied. He left the room, and there was silence for a few moments. Then Jacques picked up his phone.

"The car, Jacobs. I am going to the club."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 13:54:15 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/24/2006 2:01 PM

Sunday, July 22, 2068, 11:30 a.m., local time, Sydney. (1:30 p.m. Tracy Island)

Brains settled back into his first-class seat and pulled out his PDA. He was on his way to Paris, to a conference where, for once, he was going to do far more listening and learning than teaching. He looked over his itinerary for the next few days, but didn't really see what was on the tiny screen. All he could think about was his last few moments with Tin-Tin at the Sydney airport.

She and Kyrano had been deputized to fly him to his departure point. Kyrano needed to get some groceries, especially in lieu of the children's imminent homecoming and Sydney was a prime place to get in some shopping. Before the pair went off to tend to Kyrano's list, they said their goodbyes at the airport, just before Brains stepped through the security checkpoint.

"I... will miss you," Tin-Tin had said shyly. "Remember your promise."

"I will," Brains had replied, smiling. He had taken her hand and squeezed it gently, and she had given him a small, chaste kiss on the cheek before turning to join her father. The kiss had made him feel warm all over, and the memory of it made him sigh, much as he'd sighed as he'd watched her leave.

He shook his head to clear it, and turned his PDA over to his "to-do" list. He checked off Lena's name; he'd emailed her the specs for the HUD and earphones. Don't know why I didn't think of that, he thought, shaking his head again. But it feels good to leave the project in hands as capable as my own. Looking over the list again, he checked off Kat's name, too. He'd left her with a data pad that had a list of chores above and beyond her normal ones so she'd keep busy while he was gone. Tin-Tin had a similar list, and there were several things marked for Callie's attention as well. I have to admit, it feels nice to get out from under the workload for a while. Thunderbird Eight will be claiming more and more of my time in the near future, and a breather before plunging wholeheartedly into that design will help me focus on it better.

An attendant came to his seat, smiling widely. "Sir," he asked, "can I get you a drink?"

Brains smiled back and nodded. "A glass of red wine, please."

"Very good, sir." As the attendant went to fetch his drink, Brains suddenly turned off his PDA, and slipped it back into his briefcase. No more work, he thought. Treat this as downtime before the conference, and whatever Paris may hold.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 13:57:01 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/24/2006 2:40 PM

Saturday, July 21, 2068, 11:15 p.m., local time, Greenville, SC (Sunday, July 22, 3:15 p.m. Tracy Island)

"So, how was th' flight?" Lisa asked her daughter. She had met Dianne and John at the jetport, and they were now en route to her house.

"Long, as usual," Dianne said with a sigh. She glanced back to see her daughter and three of her sons riding in the van, the youngest two half asleep already, and turned back to her mother with a puzzled frown.

"Why'd you bring the kids?" she asked. "Cherry could have waited at home with the boys; she's old enough."

Lisa steadfastly looked to the road, and paid attention to her driving, and there was a long silence between mother and daughter.

"Ma?" Dianne prodded.

Lisa sighed. "Theyah's been a... an incident," she said, not looking at Dianne.

"What kind of incident?"

John, sitting behind Dianne, perked up his ears and leaned forward a little.

"A sort of... security incident."

"Ma," Dianne's tone was now warning. "What happened?"

Her mother seemed to deflate a little. "Garrett."

Dianne's eyes widened in disbelief. "He's heah?!" Lisa nodded, and Dianne glanced away, stunned.

John took the opportunity to ask a question. "Who's Garrett?"

Almost simultaneously, Lisa said, "Mah ex-husband," and Dianne answered, "My fathah."

"Your father?" John echoed. "That would make him my... step-grandfather... sort of."

"If'n mah mothah wasn't divorced from him, probably," Dianne said sourly. She turned back to her mother. "What's he doin' heah?"

Lisa sighed again. "It seems that he heard 'bout yoah marriage, and is tryin' t' insert himself back into owah lives. He started with Doug, comin' around, sayin' he wanted t' make up foah what he did, be a 'real' grandfathah t' Stephanie."

"Ah hope Dougie threw him out on his ear!" Dianne said fervently.

Lisa shook her head, and glanced at her daughter, her expression a plea for understanding. "No, he didn't." Before Dianne could say a thing, she went on, "Doug was very young back then, Di. He doesn't remember what happened the way that you do. He doesn't see anythin' wrong in his



fathah makin' amends."

"Ah guess Ah'll have t' have a little talk with him. Remind him of owah family history," Dianne growled, folding her arms belligerently. She took a deep breath to calm herself, then asked, "Did he see... the kids?"

Her mother looked back out at the road again. They were getting close to home. "Yes, unfortunately. He's been watching me, it seems, and when Ah went out to the store with the kids, he came up t' us. He greeted me, then asked if'n the kids were yoahs. Wanted me t' introduce him. Ah tole him t' get lost."

"What did the kids do?"

This question brought out a snorted laugh. "Alex gave him his patented, 'you are a bug' look. Tyler just looked confused, but Cherry asked me if'n Ah wanted security. Ah said, yes, and she called them. Simone showed up, draggin' a store manager along foah good measure, and while she was politely arguing her point 'bout the kids and theyah privacy, we made good our escape. With the groceries, Ah might add."

Dianne relaxed a bit. "Sounds like you handled it well."

"Ah suppose so." Lisa pulled into her driveway, and took the car all the way down to the back door, an unusual move for her. "The kids were full o' questions when we finally got into the van. They wanted t' know who that man was, and why he stopped us in the store. Ah tole them a little; you'll have to tell them more."

"Ah will, in the morning," Dianne said. "Did he follow you home or anything?"

The lights came on in the van as John opened the side door and stepped out to stretch. Cherry stirred; she'd been listening in on the conversation, but didn't want her mother to know that just yet. Reaching behind her, she shook Alex's knee and then Tyler's. "Wake up, guys. We're home."

"John, could you get Tyler in the house? Ah don't think he's going t' wake up," Dianne asked her stepson with a strained smile.

"Sure, Mom," he replied.

Lisa handed her keys to Cherie. "Go and open the door foah your brothers and turn the lights on so John can see where he's going."

"Yes, ma'am," Cherry said as she took the key ring and climbed out of the car. Alex followed her, drooping and yawning, and John brought up the rear, practically carrying a zoned-out Tyler. When the children and John were safely inside, Lisa put a hand on Dianne's arm.

"After we got home from the store, he called me."

Dianne frowned. "How'd he do that? Yoah number is unlisted."

"He talked Doug into giving it t' him, or at least, that's what he said," Lisa explained. "He asked when his daughter and new son-in-law were goin' to put in an appearance."

"Hmm." Dianne said thoughtfully. "Sounds to me like he's got an eye on Jeff." She gave her mother a piercing look. "Do you think he's sincere in this 'making amends' business?"

Lisa shook her head. "Ah don't know, and Ah don't want t' know. Ah washed him from mah life years ago and Ah'm not lettin' him back in. Not now, not evah."

Dianne nodded. "Ah understand. And it makes mah decision about Cherie's schooling a whole lot easier t' make. There's no way Ah'm leaving her heah; not while he's hanging around."

"Ah thought that'd be yoah decision," Lisa said. "Ah've already got mah things packed t' visit the island. Ah wasn't going to, but this... encounter has changed mah mind."

"You know you're welcome, Mom, always," Dianne said with a small smile. She glanced up. "Here's John. We'd better grab the overnight bags and get inside." She paused. "Thanks foah taking such good care of my kids. Ah hope you realize that you're not the problem heah; he is."

"Ah know," Lisa replied, nodding. "We can talk more about this in the morning."

"Right," Dianne said, opening her door. And I can call Jeff and give him my decision regarding our daughter.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafroe](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 13:57:47 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 7/24/2006 5:19 PM

Sunday, July 22; 3:30 PM; Lena's home (9:30 AM Monday on Tracy Island)

Lena was in her home office trying to work the specs of the heads up display into the security program. She had gotten only so far, and kept running into walls. She sat back and closed her eyes. Everyting is becoming a blur. I tink I'd better quit for de day. Dis keeps getting more and more complicated. It's one of de most difficult challenges I've ever had. Good ting I have time to figure it out. Maybe when Brains gets here, I'll be further along.

She opened her eyes and looked at the screen once again. "I'm not going to let you defeat me. I'll figure out how to integrate de specs into de program, no matter how long I have to work on it. And I'll get it to work for data as well. But I'm not going to do it today. So," and she reached out to save her work, then shut down her computer, "I'm going to put you out of my mind and enjoy de rest of de weekend."

She stood up and stretched, then did her checks of the outlets in the room. As she left, and just

before she closed the door, she said, "I've got a murder mystery waiting for me to finish, but I tink I'll make some tea first."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:04:55 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/25/2006 12:06 PM

Monday, July 23, 2068, 10 a.m., Tracy Island

Dianne let out a quiet sigh as John brought Tracy One in for a smooth landing. It had again been a long flight, with a lot of talking done along the way.

They'd left Greenville around nine, with Dianne in the cockpit. John napped in the back for a couple of hours, waking just short of L.A., where they had a quick pit stop and refueling. Then Dianne moved to the back, and John flew the rest of the journey.

She watched her kids as they read or played with their vid games, and wondered how to explain the situation with Garrett. There hadn't been too many questions in the general rush to pack up and leave, but she expected some now. I think I'd better broach the subject now, she thought. Might save a lot of questions coming at awkward times in the next week or so.

"Kids?"

The three young ones looked up at their mother, who put on a pained smile. "Grandma told me about you meeting up with a man in the grocery store..."

"You mean that guy who got her all mad?" Tyler asked. He saved his game and put it aside, sensing that his mother wanted to talk about the incident.

"Yeah, him," Dianne replied, nodding. "I want to explain a few things about him..."

"He's our grandpa, isn't he?" Cherie piped up, her tone accusatory. When Dianne gave her a questioning glance, she added, "I overheard you talking last night."

"Is he really our grandpa?" Alex asked.

Dianne glanced at her mother, who nodded slightly, indicating her support. With a sigh, Dianne said, "Yes. He is. He's my father, so that makes him your biological grandfather."

"Why are you making the distinction?" Alex asked, frowning. "It's like when you talk about Papa and Nana."

"Your Papa and Nana Koch are far more grandparents to you than Garrett -- that's his name -- will

ever be," Dianne said, her tone turning sharp. Then she relented a little and smiled. "Kids, Garrett hasn't been a father to me, or to your uncles, for a long, long time. He...." She foundered and glanced at her mother.

Lisa nodded. "When I was far younger and more naïve than I should have been," she began, "I married Garrett. We had three beautiful children together. But Garrett had a problem; he liked to drink alcohol. When he got drunk, he was mean and violent, but when he was sober, he was sweet and caring." Lisa paused and took a deep, shaky breath. "The problem was, the more he drank, the more he wanted to drink, until finally, that was all he did. He became an alcoholic, but he wouldn't admit that he was one."

There was a long silence as Lisa looked down at her hands and tried to compose herself. Finally, she raised her eyes to gaze at her grandchildren. "When he was drunk, he would hit me, and tell me all sorts of lies about myself. Because I loved him, I believed him and soon became very depressed."

"Why didn't you tell the police, Grammy?" Tyler asked, his eyes wide.

"Because I thought he was right. He said I deserved to be hit because I was a bad person... and I believed him," Lisa said softly. "But one night when he came home drunk, and started to hit me, your mother woke up." The children glanced over at their mother, who sat silently watching Lisa, a world of sadness in her eyes. "She came out to the kitchen, and started yelling at him to leave me alone. That's when... oh, God..." The last two words came out like a sob.

Dianne picked up the tale. "That's when he started hitting me. He hit me hard enough and long enough to put me in the hospital." She glanced at Tyler. "I was only nine at the time -- a little younger than our Tyler here."

The children's mouths had dropped open at this, and their eyes had widened in shock. After a moment, Alex's face had an angry scowl, while Tyler got up and went to his mother, putting an arm around her shoulders and saying, "It's okay, Mom."

"What happened then?" Cherie asked quietly.

Lisa spoke again. "He made me so angry when he did that. Maybe I deserved to be beaten and screamed at, but your mother didn't. So, for the first time, I told the police what was going on, and filed charges against him. Then, I called your great-uncle Drew, who was living in Myrtle Beach at the time, and he came down to watch your mother and your uncles while I went to the court house and asked for a restraining order. I also found a lawyer, and filed for divorce." She sat up more now, straighter, as if she had regained her pride. "Garrett heard about all this, and disappeared. For two years I looked for him to finalize the divorce, and to see that he was jailed for what he did. It was hard; I worked two jobs to make ends meet, and your great-uncle helped me, too. Finally, we found him, and he was arrested for beating your mother. The divorce became final, and I was free to raise my children in a house where there was no fear."

There was a long silence, then Alex asked, "How come he showed up at the grocery store?"

The two women glanced at each other, and Lisa spoke, "It seems he's been watching me. I don't

know how, but meeting him in the store was no coincidence."

"He heard about my getting married to Jeff," Dianne added. "I think that's the reason he's popped up so all of a sudden."

"He started with your uncle Doug," Lisa said. "Trying to make amends with him first, and getting information at the same time... like my unlisted phone number."

"So... what's he going to do now?" Cherie asked, looking from mother to grandmother and back. "I mean, he's not married to you anymore, Grammy. He can't hurt you anymore."

"I think he may be looking for money, Cherry," Dianne said quietly. "He thinks he'll get it from your dad."

"But... what if he's really trying to say he's sorry?" Tyler asked, a puzzled look on his face. He had taken his seat again, and was leaning forward to listen better. "I mean, you're always telling us we need to forgive..."

"If he were really sorry, Ty, then why didn't he come and do this when your birth dad was alive?" Dianne asked. "Why did he choose to come now, when you kids were visiting your grandmother?" She shook her head. "I don't trust him. I probably never will. As far as forgiveness is concerned..." She took a deep breath, "Let's just say that it'll take more than a few words for me to believe that he's really sorry for what he did. That and respecting both your grandmother's privacy and our own."

Cherie sat up straighter, looking alarmed. "What does this mean for school? Does this mean that I won't be able to stay with Grammy and go to school with my friends?"

Dianne sighed. "As long as he is hanging around Grammy's house, yes, that's what it means. I don't want him near you, any of you."

"That's not fair!" Cherie shouted. "I mean, Grammy can get another restraining order, can't she? Then he'll have to stay away!"

"For me to get another restraining order, Cherry, I have to prove that he's stalking me, or he's hurting me," Lisa explained. "And a restraining order for me doesn't necessarily translate to one for you when you're away from the house without me. You have to have a very good reason to ask for one, sweetie, and I don't intend to let him get close enough to have that reason."

There was a lot of crying, pleading, and pouting from Cherie from that point on, until Dianne put her foot down and said the discussion was over. Then the teenager sat silently pouting, her arms folded belligerently. The other two children asked a few more questions, mostly about their uncle Doug. Finally, Dianne went back into the cockpit as they got close to the island.

Now they had taxied into the hangar, the cool darkness of the caverns enveloping them. Cherie was the first one out of the plane. Scott stood waiting to greet her; she didn't even say hello as she went stomping off in the direction of the lifts.

"What's wrong with her?" he asked Lisa, as she stepped out of the plane.

"I'll tell you later," Lisa promised.

Jeff frowned as he watched his daughter stomp off, then called in his 'I-will-not-be-disobeyed' voice, "Come back here, young lady, and help unload your luggage." Cherie stopped mid-stride, let her arms and shoulders swing down, stomped a foot, and returned, not speaking to anyone as she grabbed two bags and headed off to the lifts once more.

Kyrano watched the interchange, and frowned, a concerned expression. He took Lisa into his arms, and said, "Welcome back, dear one."

She laid her head on his shoulder and said quietly, "I have a lot to tell you."

Jeff greeted his tired sons, and helped Dianne down from the cockpit. "What's with Cherie?" he asked.

"Ah made mah decision, and she's none too happy with it," Dianne explained as her eyes followed the girl. She glanced back up at her husband and smiled slightly. "Theyah's a lot t' discuss and explain. Later, though, when we're all feelin' a bit more rested."

"Okay, love. Later."

With that, the crew moved to finish unloading the cargo hold and went on up to the villa.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:05:49 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/25/2006 3:19 PM

Monday, July 23, 2068, 11:30 a.m., Tracy Island

Dianne was taking a nap. The boys were in the games room, probably whipping their older brothers at pinball. Lisa and Kyrano were in the kitchen with Emily, preparing lunch, and Cherie had headed off down the beach.

Most likely having an adolescent pity-party, Jeff observed sourly. Just like Alan used to.

He was at his desk, looking over the resumés and applications he'd received from Human Resources for the "family pilot" position -- otherwise known as "Christopher's replacement". All the ones that had been sent on were stellar, but most of them -- like the first batch -- were mavericks, people dissatisfied with what they were doing and hoping for what might promise to be a more exciting career move.

The helijet crash didn't help, Jeff grouched. Now they all think they can be heroes. They think I've fired my personal pilot... whoever I choose will get quite a shock to know that Elise is still on board, and can fly both One and Two.

Scott sat on the sofa, helping his father by sorting through the pile of data pads. He knew that, though his father's decision would be made independent of his own conclusions, his point of view would be considered with due weight. Right now, the list of pilots that he deemed unworthy was growing, and the pile of actual possible candidates was small. Very small.

He picked up another one, and began to peruse it. Hmm. Former Navy pilot -- can't hold that against her -- Blue Angels? That's impressive. He read a little farther, then glanced up at Jeff. "Uh, Dad? Have you seen this one yet?"

"Which one?"

Scott got up and handed the data pad to his father. "Take a look under experience."

Being thorough, Jeff read down through the application, making small thinking noises as he did. Finally, he looked up at Scott. "You think she's a possible?"

"With that organ donor business, yeah. I do."

"And she's female, which is something Dianne requested."

"Mom requested a woman?" Scott's eyebrows went up in amusement.

"Yes. A result of that sandstorm rescue," Jeff said wryly. He turned to his computer. "All right. I'll notify Human Resources, and email this woman to set up an interview. Hopefully, she's right for the job." He adjusted his reading glasses. "Heather Kennedy... now why does that sound familiar?"

"The historic politicians?" Scott asked.

Jeff shook his head. "No, something more recent..." He shrugged. "Well, whatever it is, we'll find out if the lady responds to the invitation." He looked up at Scott. "Make sure we have a second and third choice, though."

"Right," Scott said, going back to the couch and taking up the next data pad.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:13:03 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/27/2006 6:34 PM



Sunday, July 22, 2068, 10:30 p.m., England (Monday, July 23, 9:30 a.m. Tracy Island)

Giles Hightower poured himself two fingers of Scotch. He paced back and forth in his quarters as he sipped it, frustrated beyond measure.

He'd gotten a report from his contacts in Paris. Hiram Hackenbacker had gone through customs and checked into his hotel without incident. He had eaten in the hotel's dining room with friends and had retired to his room where - Giles supposed - he was sleeping the sleep of the innocent and jet-lagged. No one had gotten close to him, and no one who was watching him had found any opportunity to do so.

They'd better pick up the pace when I get there, he thought. I have to bring this man back to Jacques!

He eased himself into one of his chairs, and finished his drink. Tomorrow. There should be plenty of opportunity tomorrow.

10:30 p.m., same day, Foxleyheath

"Beg pardon, milady." Parker approached his employer after having seen her dinner party to their cars.

"Yes, Parker? What is it?" Penelope was very tired. She had been playing the bright, effervescent hostess to a group of possible investors for the cancer research station that Jeff was planning on helping out. The more private donations, the better, she thought, and had gathered a group to have dinner, idle chat, and a word in each person's ear about this venture. She hoped to hear from half of them, but began to fear that she would have to hold a much more gala, formal affair as a means of raising funds. She did wish Jeff could have been at the dinner; his presence would have carried more weight than hers, but with his children coming home... A necessary thing, I suppose. But after all these months, I have yet to fully acclimate to the change.

"Ay've 'ad a word wiv our agent in Paris, milady," Parker replied. "He reports that Mr. Brains 'as arrived safely, and is checked into 'is 'otel."

"Very good, Parker," Penelope said, smiling softly. She rose, her stylish frock glittering in the light of the fireplace.

"There's more, Milady."

"More?" Penelope stopped, her face showing a brief touch of confusion, then it cleared. "What other news?"

"Well, Milady, it seems that someone other than our own bloke is watchin' Mr. Brains. 'E's seen two or three people, gents and ladies, 'angin' around an' followin' 'im."

"Hm." Penelope put her chin in her hand, forefinger up and cradling a cheek. "I wonder who is so interested in our Hiram this time?" She thought for a moment, then said, "Parker, I believe I need to make a little visit to my dear François. While we're there, I'll take a little side trip to visit with



Hiram... and see if I can determine whose interest Brains has piqued this time."

"Very good, Milady. At wot tayme should Ay 'ave the Rolls ready?"

"At ten, Parker. We should be in Paris in plenty of time to have dinner with the dear boy." She hid a small yawn behind a discreet hand. "But now, I need my rest. Good night, Parker. See to the alarm system."

"Yus, Milady. Goodnight, Milady."

Penelope climbed the stair in her ancestral manor, heading for her own boudoir and bedroom. This comes relatively soon after Mrs. Matumbo's kidnapping. Perhaps the Hightowers have decided that Brains would be a more rewarding target. I shall soon see for myself.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:19:01 GMT  
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 7/28/2006 5:20 PM

Tracy Island, Monday July 23rd , 2:30p.m.

It was raining the next time the mail plane came in. Virgil, Tin-Tin and Nikki, all clad in raincoats went out to get the precious cargo. It had only been two days since the last arrival of mail, but Brains had more important packages arriving for various projects, so the plane had made a run back to the island. There were only a handful of bills and letters this time.

Tin-Tin and Virgil arrived back in the lounge where Jeff was working at his desk and Gordon, Scott, Elise and Kat were in the middle of a card game. Due to utter boredom, the girls had agreed to the game only to please Gordon, who'd cornered them in the workout room of their apartment complex, begging them to play.

"Mail Call!" Virgil announced as he walked slowly towards his father's desk.

"This is all yours, Dad." Virgil plunked down a stack in front of Jeff, who looked up above his reading glasses, and said, "Thanks, son," with a small smile.

"Now, who is left? Tin-Tin, you've already got yours," Virgil said to no one in particular, as Tin-Tin was already engrossed in her fashion magazine.

The four card players looked at Virgil, who was now hobbling over to them. "Gords, a fishy magazine for you!" he announced, as he threw it at the redhead.

"It's the World Aquatic Marine Dige..."

"Yeah, whatever!" Virgil cut him off humorously.

"NOT a FISHY magazine!" Gordon added. Kat grinned and Scott and Elise laughed at poor Gordon. "Dad? Tell Virg to quit picking on me!" He pleaded. Jeff looked up, merely shook his head in amusement and went back to his work.

"Nothing for you this time, Scott." Virgil continued, still ignoring Gordon. "Oh, there's a letter here for you, Kat, looks like it's from Lady Penelope."

"Oh! Wow, I wasn't expecting anything!" replied Kat, taking the envelope from Virgil.

"And this one is for you, Elise." He handed an envelope towards her. She'd still been laughing at Gordon and was caught by surprise. She looked up, like a deer caught in headlamps.

"Me? Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm sure. It says Elise Collins, right here on the envelope!"

Elise took it, and examined it. She didn't recognize the writing, and who would be writing to her anyway? She stood up and walked over to an empty chair to open it.

Virgil seated himself at his piano and pretended to mess about with music sheets, all the while watching Elise. She opened the letter slowly, fearing some sort of bad news. It was far from it. Neatly written in what she now recognized as Virgil's handwriting, from his caring note he'd sent her a while back, was this...

I couldn't help but notice how sad you seemed the other day when you didn't get any mail. I know how lonely life can be out here sometimes, but I want you to know, you've always got me to unload on, go flying with or just hang out with! Smile, you have a beautiful one! Let me know if you want me to send you any more mail, that way you too can get "all silly" when the plane arrives! Your pen pal, Virgil!"

Below, he had drawn the most ridiculous looking cartoon smiley face, and Elise started laughing. Virgil always seemed to know just what she needed and when she needed it. She looked over to him; he had a smug, knowing smile on his face.

She mouthed, "Thank you!" and he mouthed back, "You're welcome!" and followed it with what Elise thought was a very seductive wink.

"Good news?" Tin-Tin asked Elise.

"Oh yeah! You could say that," Elise replied as she went back to her card game.

Virgil, still smiling, sat back and folded his arms. She hadn't even noticed that the envelope wasn't stamped or postmarked. He'd merely slipped it in when he was getting the mail, but he was very glad he'd made her smile.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:21:57 GMT  
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 7/28/2006 9:21 PM

Sunday July 22, 2068 El Dorado, Kansas 6:30pm

Sitting at her favorite chair with a bucket of fried chicken on a table next to her, Heather studied the tri-screen with the weather patterns on one side and the broadband Internet through Tracy Industries on the bottom right, while Amy, a younger version of her mother, sat looking back at Heather on the top right. She sighed with relief as the A/C cranked cold air all through the house.

"Hi, Heather! How are you?"

"Pretty good. Pretty beat. Just got home. Putting up my feet." Heather wiggled her toes at the screen. "How's everybody doing?"

"Mom's upset. Dad's reading--"

"I just know I'm going to regret asking this, but why is she upset?"

"Mom applied at her club and she was turned down yet again."

"Which one?"

"Oh, the Daughters of the Revolution Society."

"Oh no! She'll be moody for the next two weeks solid. Why doesn't she give up? Her credentials aren't enough evidence to list our family with them," Heather commented as she scrolled through her email. "Oh, nuts! I was outbid on eBay again!"

"What do you have to do that for? You could afford anything you want."

Scrolling down further, Heather saw an advertisement from Tracy Industries. "No, I do not wish to add myself on your mailing list! I'm on your payroll already!" With a touch of a button, the offending ad disappeared into cyberspace.

"Oh, I know I could, but it's so much fun to just jump in on the auctions. I get a feeling of satisfaction when I beat out somebody on here. I'm bidding on a beautiful emerald cut diamond ring with tiny perfect diamonds surrounding it. It's gorgeous!"

Amy shook her head. "How do you know it's authentic?"

"Because I made a personal call to the owner, then made a call to the store he bought it at, and had it verified. That's how I know. I had the verification mailed to me. It's gonna be mine!"

Scrolling further down on her email listing, Heather found another Tracy Industries email and opened it. She glanced over the headings and then read the body of the electronic missive.

"Dear Ms. Kennedy,

Your application for the position of Family Pilot has been accepted. Please call my office at the following number between the hours of 3:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. CDT to schedule an interview. I look forward to meeting with you in person and discussing the position.

Sincerely,

Jeff Tracy"

"Yeeehah!" Heather yelled for joy. "I'm going to meet the first astronaut to return to the moon! Yippee!"

Amy groaned as she covered her ears. "Mother is going to just--freak!"

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:24:59 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 7/28/2006 9:25 PM

Monday, July 23, 2068, 1:30 p.m., Paris, France (Monday, July 23, 11:30 p.m., Tracy Island)

The conference was very interesting so far. Brains had met up with several different friends, having dinner with them the night before it started. He was looking forward to more seminars, and his panel discussion later that afternoon. Right now, he was heading out to a local technical university for a demonstration of a new method for generating an anti-gravity field.

If it's more powerful than what we are already using, and could be adapted for field use, it could have multiple applications, he thought. Especially in debris removal. We still don't have an effective method to remove large piles or pieces of debris without disturbing what is beneath them. An anti-gravity ray, or perhaps a lifting device, like Thunderbird Two's grabs, that can be positioned using AG, would be a boon to our operations.

He was deep in thought all the way down in the elevator, humming absently under his breath, which gained him a few strange glances from his fellow passengers. One of those people, however, was interested in him from a different perspective. She had been discreetly following him most of the day so far, and was reporting every so often on where he was and where he seemed to be heading.

As he left the elevator, she lifted a phone to her ear and said, in French, "He is heading for the main doors. We need that cab up here, now."

So it was that when the doorman of the hotel where Brains was staying called a taxi for the

engineer, a particular car pulled up, one that had been especially prepared for him. Another man waited nearby, smoking a cigarette, ready to climb in after their target and prevent him from climbing out again.

The doorman opened the taxi door for Brains, who smiled and gave him a small salute. He received a touch of the cap in return as he slid into the back seat. But just before the cab could move, Brains saw someone he hadn't expected.

"Oh my!" he said aloud to himself. "Professor Borrender!" He moved over to the other side of the taxi cab and slid right out the door, waving and calling -- just as the taxi driver's accomplice slid in, and an impatient doorman waved them on.

Brains's stalker watched in stunned amazement as the engineer met up with the older man and the two of them got into a taxi together. She shook her head slowly. "Monsieur Hightower is waiting for this man," she muttered. "He will not be best pleased about this development."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:26:40 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 8/1/2006 4:44 PM

Eight inquisitive eyes blinked against the light as young Blacktuft the Spider appeared at the edge of the jungle. He crept out of the shadow of the foliage and onto the rolling mountains of sand with tentative steps. He had never been this far out before. The older spiders always warned against venturing beyond the jungle's edge. There's no need for us spiders to go out there, cranky old Sevenleg would say. We have all we need here, and you don't know the dangers that lie beyond our borders. Blacktuft rolled his eyes and took a more confident step out into the sunlight. Bah! What did they know? There was nothing to be afraid of. Water? Who cared? He was a tarantula; nothing frightened him! That was what he would tell his friends when he got back, anyway. The water, however, was many spidermiles away, and Blacktuft's hair stood on edge looking at it. As far as Leggy and Squint would know, he had strode right up to it, and even touched it! They would never know the difference.

Blacktuft trundled across the dunes with some discomfort. He squinted against the sunlight, still strong in the winter, and began to think that perhaps his excursion hadn't been such a good idea. He turned to look over his steps, and twitched when he realized just how far he had come. Perhaps I should go back... I'll just embellish a little more than I thought I'd have to. He turned back around to take one last glance at the ocean, when something caught his eye, something very large and pale. Is that...yes! I must investigate! This opportunity cannot be missed! He scurried closer, stopped for a better look, and blinked a few times before darting on further. This would be far better than a water story: a human!

The creature was lying on the sand, very still, and most certainly hadn't noticed him. Blacktuft trundled forwards, and slowly lifted one leg up to touch the human, and gently pressed into its

flesh. It was fairly soft, but the young spider was certain it could take his weight. Very carefully, Blacktuft climbed onto this strange creature, his body trembling, and tremendous pride built up inside him. I am the best EVER! he thought. But his joy was shattered as a heavy, slack hand suddenly batted at him, and he leapt backwards. This is the end! Why am I so stupid? This is the end!

\*\*\*

Dominic brought one hand up to swat at whatever it was that was on him. He had been enjoying a quiet rest on the sand, allowing the sounds of the ocean to wash away the tension of the day (most of which originated from a certain small blond terror), and had found that dozing under the pleasantly warm sun was a marvellous habit to get into. I just wish it hadn't been interrupted, he thought. Stupid... wait - There. Was. Something on him. Dom's head shot up, and he was met with eight-eyed, eight-legged creature sitting atop his chest. Everything stopped. He couldn't move, and he couldn't breathe. Nothing existed except himself and the monstrosity staring back at him. When his heart began to beat again, he did the only thing he could think of:

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAH!"

\*\*\*

Scott watched as Tyler and Alex bolted up the beach, and shook his head. He had never thought that the island could get more boisterous than it already was. Then his littlest siblings had arrived in their lives, and suddenly he appreciated the slight calm his biological brothers sustained. Saying that, he wouldn't give up his youngest brothers and only sister for the world. He had made it a point to spend some quality time with them when they had returned from the mainland, and so he found himself strolling along the beach in the wake of Alex and Tyler's races, pointing out that he couldn't possibly know who had won, as he was so far behind. Alex soon took to simply chasing Tyler instead, and their jubilant yells reverberated over the dunes. Scott stopped dead as another voice rose suddenly in an anguished scream. The boys stilled as well, and all three glanced around to locate the source of the trouble.

"Over here!" Alex shouted, and disappeared around an outcrop of rocks, followed by Tyler.

Scott followed their lead, and rounded the corner to find a deathly pale Dominic lying perfectly still on the sand, his eyes fixed on the large, black tarantula sitting on his chest. The look on Scott's face must have said it all, as Alex fixed him with a confident gaze and shook his head.

"It's not venomous," he said. "It's one of the more common indigenous species." His words belied his age. "And it looks pretty young. It's harmless."

"We need to get it off --" Scott's words were cut off as Tyler suddenly leapt forward, waving his arms.

"Get off!" he yelled.

The spider, which had been undeterred by Dominic's bellow, darted off in an instant. While the method was efficient in ridding Dominic of the spider, unfortunately it also snapped him from his

stupor, and the man leapt into the air and then scrambled backwards onto the rocks his eyes frantically searching for another eight-legged assailant.

"Where did it go? Where did it go?! I can't see it! Is it on me? Is it dead? Where is it?"

Scott became acutely concerned that the Irishman might actually have a heart attack. That's a strong phobia.

"Dom, calm down!" He said. "It's gone! You're, uh, safe now."

Dominic seemed thoroughly unconvinced, and the three brothers shared a helpless and bewildered look. After a little more coaxing, however, Dominic slid down off the rocks, his eyes still darting around, before he stared straight into Scott's face.

"I'm leaving. I can be packed in an hour. Spiders. Tarantulas. Huge. Tarantulas. On me. This was not part of the job description. Tarantulas..."

\*\*\*

Blacktuft watched as the largest of the new humans grasped the first one's arm and turned him around to head back up the beach. The smaller two walked away in their wake. Clearly the smaller they are, the more dangerous they are, he thought. He watched as they disappeared from sight, before turning and heading back across the beach on unsteady legs. The jungle had never looked so welcoming. What a story I have to tell! And I don't even have to make it up! [/color]

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:28:33 GMT  
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 8/2/2006 7:27 PM

\*\*\*Tuesday, July 24; Paris, France; 8:45 a.m. (6:45 p.m. on Tracy Island)\*\*\*

Lady Penelope and Parker sat in the posh penthouse suite of a luxurious downtown Paris hotel to discuss their plans for the day.

"Thank goodness the h'air conditioning 'asn't let up, 'specially with this 'eat wave," said Parker as he turned the thermostat to a more comfortable setting for both of them.

"Yes," Penelope said. "I can't believe how hot it is both here and back in London. The paper did say Europe was experiencing one of the worst heat waves in decades."

Suddenly, just as she was ready to discuss their plans for the day, the power, including the air conditioning, went out. "Oh, dear, what's happened?" she asked.

"Must be a rolling blackout," answered Parker. "I did read there could be those 'ere in Paris today h'and tomorrow."

Already starting to sweat from the oppressive heat and humidity, she took the hand fan from her purse. "Parker, do you have my satellite phone?"

"Yes, M'Lady. Fully charged for use."

"Thank you." As he handed her the phone, she said, "I need to make two calls. The first will be to François to schedule an appointment and view his autumn line. That will be the cover excuse for our being in Paris when we meet with Brains for lunch."

"But Mr. Brains doesn't know we're 'ere." He shrugged, wondering how they were going to fool Brains.

Penny looked straight at him. "Parker, we all have satellite phones at our disposal. Brains never goes anywhere without his. I doubt he'll mind if I meet him for lunch...depending on where the power has not gone out."

"H'is there anything you need me to do while you have lunch?"

"Yes, there is, Parker. I want you to check with your contacts here and determine in which hotel Brains is staying. If he plans to have dinner at the same hotel, we must be there to watch him. I know other people are after our resident genius." She started dialing François's number, hoping to reach his cell phone. "I certainly hope he hasn't lost power at his residence."

\*\*\*\*\*12:30 p.m.; La Chocolét café (Same day, 10:30 p.m. on Tracy Island)\*\*\*\*\*

Brains sat quietly at a table on the inside of the café, himself already sweating from the heat wave. "I wasn't quite prepared for this heat." He started on his fourth glass of ice water to try to cool himself down.

Lady Penelope used her pink parasol to protect herself from the sun's beating. Upon entering the establishment, she folded up the umbrella and started looking for Brains.

He suffered a brain freeze from drinking too much cold water too quickly. When he saw Lady Penelope approaching, he did a quick wave and then held his head.

Walking up to the table, she said, "My dear boy, are you all right?"

"I'm okay, Lady Penelope. I'm just trying to keep myself cool. Unfortunately, I've been taking my cold water in too fast."

She sat down next to him. "So, Brains, how goes the conference so far?"

"It's been great. I've been picking up a lot of useful information and possible ideas for the... company." After taking a bite of his salad, he asked, "What about you, Lady Penelope? What brings you here to Paris?"



With a smile she answered, "I find that my wardrobe is getting terribly passé, so I am here to see what François has available to liven it up."

Rubbing his chin, he said, "François... why does that name sound familiar?"

"He hosted the fashion show on the new jet liner you created."

"Oh, yeah," he said with a nod. "Now I remember him. Good luck finding some seasonable fashions."

"Thank you." She took a bite of her garden salad and said, "Do you have plans for this evening?"

"Actually, yes, I do," he answered, then taking a sip of his water. "Professor Borrender has invited me to dinner."

"That's good. I'm sure you both will have many scientific ideas to discuss."

"I agree. It'll be good to see him again." Brains looked at his watch. "Oh, my. The next part of the conference is in less than 30 minutes. It's supposed to be a discussion of the advancements of aerodynamics in the 21st century. I really can't miss this."

He whispered to her, "I need to get some sort of improvement made for Thunderbird Two."

Penelope giggled at the comment. "Of course. Why don't you go ahead. I'll pay for the lunch."

"Oh, no, Lady Penelope, I--"

"Please, I insist. You go on to the next part of the conference."

Brains knew he couldn't win against her. "All right, if you say so. I'll see you later."

When she finished her meal and paid for it - leaving a hefty tip - she walked outside, parasol fully open. She saw Parker standing at the street corner.

"Well, Parker, I have some information. Brains will be having dinner tonight with Professor Borrender. Did you learn where he is currently staying?"

"Yes, M'Lady. He's staying at La Calais, about four miles north of here. 'Nother source told me 'e'll be 'aving dinner there as well."

She nodded. "Very well, Parker. Let us return to our hotel and prepare to keep an eye on him at dinner this evening."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is

From: Tikatu Sent: 8/5/2006 7:39 PM

Tuesday, July 24, 2068, 8:15 p.m., Paris, France (6:15 a.m., Wednesday, July 25 on Tracy Island)

Brains had dinner at The Calais that night, meeting Professor Borrender in the lobby and escorting him to the hotel's restaurant. The talk at first was personal, each catching up with the other's life, then -- as the meal came - the two men began to talk more earnestly.

Behind Brains, at a table where the occupants could see their target yet hopefully not be noticed, a young woman with dark brown hair and attractive spectacles sat with an older man, his curly black hair shot through with the occasional silver strand. They were speaking French, and had ordered wine to drink.

"The wine is excellent, Jean-Claude, though I would much prefer my usual Pernod," the woman said quietly to her companion, her accent perfect. She glanced at the table. "Do you think they will dare strike while he is with someone?"

"I do not know," Jean-Claude replied with a sigh. He toyed with his goblet. "Is your chauffeur in place?"

"Yes," she replied, taking a sip of her drink. "He is watching the bar to see that nothing untoward is added to the drinks on that end."

"But if something is added to the food?" Jean-Claude asked. "What do we do then?"

"We must let our actions be guided by circumstances," she responded. She glanced at Brains and his companion out of the corner of one eye. "They seem to be enjoying themselves."

Indeed, Brains seemed far more animated than she'd seen him for a while. He seemed to be telling Professor Borrender a funny tale, one that had the older man laughing... discreetly, of course.

Suddenly, a slight beeping in her handbag caught her attention. Jean-Claude looked at her with a puzzled expression as she picked up her bag and pulled out her powder compact and lipstick. She opened the compact, hating it that people thought she was primping at the table, but remembering that she wasn't Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward at that moment, but a French woman, and one with rather poor taste at that. Opening the compact, she used her lipstick to send a silent, coded signal to Parker. "What news?"

"Summat's 'appening, Milady." Parker's voice sounded in her ears via her earrings. "One o' the waiter blokes was takin' a pair o' drinks out. Ay 'eard the number 'vent-doo'" - Penelope quickly translated that mangled pronunciation to "Vingt-deux"... twenty-two. - "which is Mr. Brains's table. He was stopped by a man 'oo asked 'im a question an' Ay'm sure Ay saw the lady wiv 'im drop summat inter one o' the drinks."

Penelope nodded slowly, her signal that she'd received the message, then she closed the compact and put away both it and the lipstick. She motioned her head in the direction of the waiter, who was coming up on the scientists' table. He had two drinks on a tray -- one was a bottle of fine German lager, meant for Dr. Borrender, and the other was a martini, a drink that surprised Penelope as she saw it placed by Brains's plate. The older man looked up and thanked the waiter verbally as his beer was poured for him, while Brains gave the server a bare nod, continuing, single-minded, with his story.

The waiter left, and Penelope kept her eye on Brains without really seeming to do so, while bringing her companion up to speed.

"What do we do?" Jean-Claude murmured. "If we make a disturbance, the enemy will know we are here."

"We will have to wait and see what happens," Penny said softly. "If he drinks it, the effects should not take long to become evident, and we can step in then."

However, Brains took care of the matter himself, unawares. His story was reaching a climax, it seemed, and as it did, he flung out both arms... and knocked his martini to the floor, breaking the glass.

The crash brought the attention of the whole room to the scholarly pair, and conversation stilled as Brains, red-faced, began to pick up the larger pieces of glass. The waiter returned, bringing a dustpan to collect the shards, waving aside Brains's proffered help, and accepting with a smile the scientist's abject apologies. Conversation began to pick up again, as people realized there was really nothing to see, and Professor Borrender had a quick word with the waiter before he left. The server nodded, and returned moments later with two more bottles of beer and one glass; a refill for the professor, and a new, tamper proof drink for his younger companion.

"That was a close one," Penelope breathed, suddenly relaxing. "I doubt very much that our mysterious adversaries will try that trick again... at least, not this evening."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:37:49 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/13/2006 5:33 PM

Tuesday, July 24, El Dorado, Kansas; 3:00 p.m. (8 a.m., Wednesday, July 25 on Tracy Island)

Tuesday afternoon, Heather stepped into her bedroom. The clock on her bureau near her quilt covered bed read 2:49 p.m. She stood in front of her vanity mirror and ran a brush through her hair. She'd heard all kinds of stories about Jeff Tracy from the mythological to the mundane. "Just remember," she told herself. "He's your boss. Plain and simple. He's probably so busy, he's only got time for a short vidphone meeting. He's looking for a simple pilot, and that's what you are."

Above the headboard of her double standard hung a picture of Jeff dressed in his astronaut's flight suit, holding his helmet in one arm, waving with the other. An excited smile crossed her face. "Well, it's now or never!" she said as she straightened her clothes and hurried back into the living room. Tapping the console on her chair, she brought up the vidphone and dialed the number the much acclaimed astronaut had sent her.

An elegant woman with dark brown hair set in a beautiful French twist, soft brown eyes, and a rather hawkish looking nose appeared on the screen. "This is Jeanette Shapiro speaking for Tracy Industries. How may I help you?"

"My name is Heather Kennedy. I'm a test pilot for Tracy Industries in Wichita, Kansas, and I would like to speak with Jeff Tracy, please. I'm inquiring about the Personal Pilot position, and he asked me to call."

"Just one moment, Miss Kennedy, and I will see if he is available."

While Heather waited for Jeff to answer her call, an elderly rattlesnake dared to poke the pits of its nose past the gates of the house. From the vibrations it felt, it sensed the presence of a field mouse skittering through the jungle of prairie grasses. Shifting its body side to side, the reptile continued its journey across the expansive lawn, looking for its chance to make a kill. Ordinarily, the rattler avoided anywhere humans existed, but its hunting ranges had become smaller and smaller and extreme hunger forced it to encroach upon a human's territory. Determined to catch the mouse, the diamondback crawled closer and closer to its target.

"This is Jeff Tracy speaking. Hello, Miss Kennedy! How are you?"

With some success, Heather controlled her urge to sigh and answered with a confident, "I'm fine, sir. And you?"

"I'm doing well in spite of all the work I have to do. How's the weather?"

"Well, it's been awfully quiet, Mr. Tracy. We haven't had any wild weather in quite awhile. It's my opinion that the longer it takes for rain to come, the bigger the boom when it arrives. We're due, and I'm actually looking forward to it. Well, I know you're a busy man, Mr. Tracy, so I've called as per your instructions."

Jeff appreciated the fact that she wanted to get straight to business. "Okay, Miss Kennedy. I want to say first that I am impressed with your credentials. I would like to set up a time for you to come visit my home to discuss what it is I would like you to do for me, should I accept you as my personal pilot. How would the 27th be? I'll have someone pick you up, and fly you to my home. You'll stay for the weekend as my guest."

"That sounds just fine, Mr. Tracy. I can use a small vacation, but I could just fly myself there. Your family homestead is somewhere near Topeka, isn't it?"

"We're a little bit further out than that."

As he studied her image on the vidscreen, Jeff could almost hear the wheels in her head turning underneath the luxuriant auburn hair. Gordon might find himself either jealous or a comrade for life. Her green eyes seemed to have a way of capturing him in her gaze and holding him fast with her confidence. "Okay, Heather. I'm going to be sending two pilots: my eldest son, Scott, and my assistant head engineer, Tin-Tin Kyrano, to pick you up on the 27th at 9 am. Will that work for you?"

"That would be fine, sir." Heather agreed, already planning on taking her photo of Jeff Tracy to have signed. "I'll be waiting...where shall I meet the plane?"

"You'll be picked up at the testing grounds."

"I'll be there, Mr. Tracy."

"I'll see you then. Good day, Miss Kennedy."

As she talked with her employer, the rattlesnake coiled itself up, buzzing his tail in warning, disturbing a firefly from its perch in the grass. With careful aim, the rattler snapped out with venom dripping fangs. Sensing danger nearby, the field mouse leapt nimbly out of the way and onto Heather's porch. Angry at missing its dinner, the diamondback uncoiled its body and raced after the little rodent.

As soon as her connection for Jeff Tracy broke, another call came in. She tapped the keys and a picture of her brother appeared. "Hi, Feather!"

"Hi, Donny! I love you! How are you, honey?"

Donny peered into the camera and the picture of her living room. "There's a lightning bug in your living room!"

Looking around, Heather saw a bug flying across the screen and a moment later, she saw a tiny flash. A few seconds later it flashed again. "Hang on, Donny. I'll put him back outside."

"Why?"

Ignoring the question, Heather followed the bug until she caught it in her hands, and walked to the doorway to her garage. "Good thing I got done talking to Mr. Tracy, or I would have had to explain that I had a flasher in the house!" The bug continued to blink on and off. "Trouble is, you'd be wasting a lot of energy, because there aren't any lady fireflies to attract. Here..." Opening her hands in the open garage, she allowed the firefly its freedom.

As Heather turned to go back in, she heard a buzzing sound that chilled her spine. The sound caused her to look toward the porch and she spotted the western diamondback rattler. With her heart banging hard in her chest, Heather raced back into the house, and past the camera to a hall closet.

"Feather! Whatcha doin' now?"

"I've got a cotton pickin' rattler on the porch!" she yelled out towards the mike when she stepped out again with her favorite service revolver.

She could hear Donny calling for her mother. "Mother!"

Heather took a moment to look into the vidphone camera. "No, Donny! Don't tell her--!"

"Mom! Heather's getting her gun out! She's gonna shoot a rattlesnake!!"

From the video connection, Heather could hear a distant scream. Taking the safety off the her favorite service revolver, Heather groaned. "That's all I need. That trip to Mr. Tracy's can't come soon enough!"

"Mom's calling Aunt Jenny!"

With her mind only on her target, Heather raced back out through the garage and saw the rattlesnake strike out again and continue wiggling its body further up on the porch.

Meanwhile, her aunt received a phone call. Serving a pot of tea to her neighbor, Mitzi, Jenny walked over the vidphone and tapped an acceptance code. She didn't even have time to give a proper greeting when her younger sister wailed, "Jenny Lynne! You've got to call Heather and stop her!"

"Oh Martha! Calm down. What's going on now?"

Pouring a cup from the bone china tea pot, Mitzi rolled her eyes at Jenny's high society sister.

"Donny said she was about to shoot a rattlesnake!"

Hearing this, Jenny's eyes went wide with delight. "She is?! Lord have mercy! Come on, Mitzi!"

With a broad smile, Mitzi set her cup down and followed Jenny to the window. She liked Jenny's niece, Heather. The girl had all the spunk of Annie Oakley, and excitement out on the prairies was at a premium.

"Jenny! Are you listening to me?!" Martha called out fruitlessly.

Grabbing two sets of binoculars off the refrigerator, Jenny handed them to Mitzi and hurried to the kitchen window. Touching a button, the window slid open. "Here! Give me those electronic binoculars!" Mitzi obeyed and together the two women peered out the window excitedly.

"There it is, Mitzi! And there's Heather!"

"Oh my! It's huge! Big ol' rattler!" breathed Mitzi. "This is so exciting!"

The rattler was about to crawl after the field mouse when Heather came out with her gun armed. "You're not going anywhere!" Picking up a rock, she tossed it up in the air high enough to land right on the snake's tail. Startled, the rattler turned around to see a human in its territory. Coiling its body, the rattler gave a hard angry buzz with its tail. Heather bent down, sighted down the

barrel and fired twice. The first bullet nailed the snake's underbelly and the second bullet tore through the head.

Once the snake fell back, Heather walked over to check out her handiwork. Kicking the carcass, she thought about what to do about dinner.

first contact by AmandaTracyandFred

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:40:48 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/14/2006 11:04 AM

Wednesday, July 25, 2068, 9:30 a.m., Tracy Island

Jeff looked up as Dianne came into the lounge, a tray with cups, saucers and an insulated carafe in her hands. "This is a pleasant surprise," he said, smiling.

"I thought you might appreciate it," she replied, as she set it on a table. She fixed a cup of coffee for her husband, and brought it over to the desk. "How did that phone call go?"

"Very well," he replied as he took cup and saucer from her and set them down on the desk top. I'm making arrangements for Tin-Tin and Scott to pick Ms. Kennedy up. They'll arrive in Kansas early in the morning of the 27th, so I've got the caretakers of the farmhouse on notice. They'll be able to get a few hours of sleep before returning."

"By this time, Scott must feel like a commercial pilot with all the ferrying around he's had to do," Dianne said as she fixed her own cup.

"True. I bet he never thought that he'd be reduced to being a flying taxi driver." Jeff took a sip of his coffee and watched as his wife sat down in the chair closest to the desk. "What's up, lady?"

"Am Ah that obvious?" she asked with a sigh.

"To me, yes. To your mother and mine, yes," Jeff admitted. "This is about your fa... this is about Garrett, isn't it?"

"Yes," she said, looking away. She sipped her coffee, then gazed back at her husband. "Ah... Ah don't know what to do heah. Ah suspect he's lookin' foah money, but..."

"But you're not sure," Jeff said, completing her sentence.

"Rahte," she replied, her voice dropping in volume. "An'... an' if'n he's sincere about makin' amends, Ah don't know what to do theah eithah." She sipped her coffee again, put her cup down,



then sighed again. "Ah've hated him for so long..."

Jeff gave her a look of sympathy. "If it helps any, I've already got our security department looking into his finances, and seeing if there's a possible motive for him turning up now of all times." He sipped his own coffee and added, "I've also spoken to your mother about changing her phone number again, and possibly even moving." He shook his head. "She doesn't want to move north with Doug, nor do I think she should. But Jared's a possibility..."

"So is here," Dianne stated flatly.

"Yes, I've made the offer," he assured her. "I've also suggested moving out near Drew if necessary."

"Ah'd feel better if she was here," she said.

"So would Kyrano," Jeff admitted. He blew out a soft breathy sigh. "We should hear soon about what Garrett's been doing."

"An' what if he's legit? What if he's really tryin' to make amends? Then what?"

"I don't know, love." Jeff set down his cup, and went to sit down by his wife. "I think you should consider forgiving him. In the long run, it'll be better for you if you can let it go. Just because you've forgiven him doesn't mean you have to have a relationship with him. You can still walk away, but without the bitterness."

"If he's sincere," Dianne said stubbornly.

"Even if he isn't," Jeff amended. He held her gaze until she looked down, and sighed.

"Ah'll try," was all she would promise. "Do you think he might try to pull a 'grandparent's rights' thing with the kids?" she asked, leaning toward him.

He put an arm around her. "I don't know, but if he does, I'll step in. He really couldn't get anywhere; he's never been a part of their lives, or yours, but there's also the fact that they're my children now. And I'll do my dead-level best to protect them." He smiled and drew her close. "He wouldn't stand a chance against our legal team."

Dianne smiled, then turned serious again. "If'n Dougie gives him owah private phone number, Ah'll string him up by his toes!"

"I'll help you," Jeff said. "He knows better than that... I hope."

They were quiet for a moment, then she asked, "When do you expect to hear from the security people?"

"I set a deadline of next Monday. I know it doesn't give them much time, but they're putting their best people on this and should find enough to give us an idea of his motives."



"All right." Her drawl was dying down, a sound that Jeff welcomed this time. He held her a little longer, then kissed her on the lips. "No rest for the weary, I'm afraid," he said as he stood. He drew her to her feet and held her close once more, then kissed her again. "I've got to get back to work."

"I know. I have things to do, too," she admitted softly, stroking the side of his face. "Do you think people would be upset if we didn't turn up for lunch?"

He smiled. "I think you have a date, love."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:48:41 GMT  
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 8/14/2006 11:17 AM

Tracy Island -- July 25th 2068 -- early afternoon

Tin-Tin had agreed to teach Kat to learn to fly. Now the Malaysian girl was waiting in the hangar for the young mechanic. She could hear hurrying footsteps and Kat, breathless from running, came into view.

"Hi, Tin-Tin. Sorry I'm a little late. Brains and I were so engrossed in working on the Laser Cutter vehicle that we simply forgot the time."

Tin-Tin smiled. "That's okay, Kat. I know it's easy to lose track of time when you get involved in something. I haven't been waiting long, anyway."

Asking her to follow, Tin-Tin led the way to the Ladybird. On the way, she said, "I understand that you are familiar with the plane."

"Oh yes," came the eager reply. "This was the first vehicle that I worked on when I came to the Island."

Kat clambered up the retractable ladder behind Tin-Tin and sat in the co-pilot's seat. Tin-Tin asked her to name the controls as a refresher. Kat did so and looked at her teacher for confirmation.

"Actually Kat, you've missed one thing; though strictly not a control as such, you didn't mention the clock," she said, smiling at the young mechanic. "But apart from that you remembered very well. Now," the older girl continued, "I understand you didn't do too well in the simulator."

"Actually on my very first lesson with Scott, I managed to crash the plane on landing. I've gradually got better, but I'm still nervous."

"I think then for a few lessons, I'll take off from Tracy Island, and once we are airborne, you can take over the controls, handing them back to me so that I can land the plane. I want you to watch me and listen carefully to what I tell you during both taking off and landing, so that when the time is right, you can start to take off."

She called for clearance. Virgil's voice was heard over the radio. "Clear for take off. Have a good lesson."

The plane taxied to the end of the runway, then Tin-Tin began to build up speed before releasing the brake. The plane gathered speed down the runway, until it was going fast enough to get airborne. All the time, Tin-Tin was talking to Kat, explaining what she was doing and why.

Kat watched and listened to her every move intently. Will I be able to do this? she thought to herself. Of course you will, an inner voice seemed to say.

"Okay, Kat. It's all yours. Now just relax and take things easy."

The young mechanic took control of the plane. Carefully she began to work the controls.

"Hold her steady, Kat, don't push the levers too hard, just relax."

Kat flew in a large circle over Tracy Island, and a little out to sea, before handing back the controls to Tin-Tin, so that she could land.

Once back on the runway, Tin-Tin glanced at her trainee. "Now, before I take the plane up again, I want you to tell me the sequence I followed."

Kat went through the sequence of steps. "That was accurate; you didn't miss anything," Tin-Tin told her.

The same procedure as before was followed, and again Kat took over once they were airborne. This time the young mechanic felt a little more confident. She couldn't believe that she was actually in charge of a jet for the first time.

"Good," Tin-Tin remarked, "you're relaxing at last. Now take a wider sweep over the island, and a little farther out to sea. You're doing fine."

Looking at the vast expanse of ocean below her, Kat noticed the water was a lighter shade in patches, due to reefs lying just under the surface. She noticed that a few small rugged atolls broke the surface of the ocean, causing the water around them to appear like white foam. In the far distance, the ocean and horizon seemed to blend together. This is wonderful, she thought as she felt the exhilaration and feeling of freedom. I really want to get my licence. I shall feel a complete member of International Rescue, when I can fly on my own. A little turbulence made her momentarily panic, but with Tin-Tin's calming words, she was able to compensate, a feeling that pleased her.

When they landed again, Tin-Tin said, "I think that's enough for one lesson. I'll give you more lessons, just doing the same as today. "When I think you're ready, we'll start working on take offs." When you are fully conversant with that, then we'll start circuits and bumps."

"Circuits and bumps?" Kat queried.

Tin-Tin said. "That's the term for taking off, circling and landing. You will have to do that over and over, until I'm confident that you've fully mastered every aspect of flying."

"Can I try that in the simulator for extra practice?" Kat queried.

"Yes, you should have more lessons in the simulator. I'll have a word with Scott about scheduling more time for that purpose."

Kat thanked Tin-Tin for her lesson, and headed back to her apartment.

She couldn't get over the feeling of elation of actually flying the jet. Wow! That was amazing! I'm going to tell Mum and Dad I'm learning to fly; they'll be absolutely astounded.

Back in her apartment, she opened the patio door and standing on the balcony, looked up at the sky. To think that I was up there flying, being in control of the Ladybird. Going back inside, she began to fix herself a snack before sitting down at her computer.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:52:48 GMT  
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 8/14/2006 11:24 AM

Tracy Island -- July 25th -- early evening

Taking a bite of her sandwich, Kat opened up her emails. There was one from her brother in Washington.

Dear Kat

Hope you are well, and not working too hard. I see from the news that tornadoes are forecast in the Gulf of Mexico. I hope that they don't head for Kansas, although I would think that Mr Tracy has storm shelters.

Anyway the main reason for writing to you, is that Suzi's three months pregnant. We don't know the sex, but we are not expecting twins this time. Of course Estelle wants a sister and Jake wants a brother. I don't know whether Suzi will be able to attend Andrew and Melanie's wedding in November. But I'll be there with the twins, because that is all that Estelle keeps talking about, being a bridesmaid. Melanie has sent us the material and a pattern for the dress. I expect that she'll send you the same. Hope you can get someone to help you. As I recall you were never very good with a needle. Mum and Dad are fine, although Mum was remarking only the other day, she hadn't heard from you recently.

Anyway that's all for now.

Love

Tim, Suzi, Estelle and Jake

Although Kat was delighted at the news, reading the email did make her feel a little homesick.

Dear Tim

I was so delighted at your news. I can't wait to be an aunt again. It'll be a shame if Suzi won't be able to attend the wedding, but I can completely understand.

Life is not too busy in Kansas, but it is hot. We are experiencing thunderstorms almost daily. We have heard about the tornadoes, but so far we have been lucky, as they seem to miss us.

I am just about to email Mum and Dad. I have the most amazing news. I'm actually learning to fly. Hopefully when I get my pilot's licence, I shall be able to visit you in Washington some time.

Well that's all for now.

Love

Kat

She smiled as she pressed "SEND".

Dear Mum and Dad

I have just received the news from Tim. I'm so delighted. Though this time either Estelle or Jake won't get what they wish for.

I'm sorry I've not been in touch recently, but I have been very busy. However, guess what! No, you'll never guess. I'm learning to fly; how cool is that! Mr Tracy wants all his employees to get their pilot's licence. I had my first lesson in an actual plane this morning. Although I have had lots of lessons in a simulator, flying the real thing is a little daunting. But my instructor seemed pleased with me.

I have been cooking in the wok which Lil, Lady Penelope's cook, gave me when I left. I cooked a vegetarian meal for John the other day. I was a little nervous, wondering whether he'd like it, but he seemed to enjoy it. Now Mum, don't get too excited, but John, who is one of Mr Tracy's sons, and I are becoming close friends. We spend time together on the weekends and sometimes in the evenings. He studies the stars, and has lent me a telescope, so I can watch them as well.

Tim mentioned tornadoes, but so far none have come close to us here in Kansas.

Well I think that's all for now.

Lots of love

Kat

Happy with what she had written, she again pressed "SEND". Finishing her snack, she decided to have a workout in the gym.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 14:55:45 GMT  
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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 8/14/2006 1:28 PM

London, England, 25 July, 2068, 2:30 p.m., (Tracy Island, 26 July, 2068, 2:30am)

During the car ride from the airport to her parent's house, Nikki found herself surprisingly quiet.

"What's happened to you?" James, Nikki's younger brother, asked.

Nikki frowned. "What do you mean?"

"Usually you have a lot to say, trust me." He grinned. "I thought you'd be revealing all about your new life and home away from England."

Nikki wondered how she could dodge his statement. It didn't take long for her to remember something from their past. "I mostly work. Do you really want to hear about that? Because, seriously, you were never really all there when I spoke about working at the hospital."

"Good point."

Nikki looked in the small bag she had resting on her lap.

"Forgotten something?"

"No." Nikki pulled out a filled and sealed envelope and smiled as she thought back to when she received it.

Flashback

Nikki glanced away from her lunch as she heard her door buzzer. Standing up, she put her fork down and answered the door. She was surprised to see Alan standing on the other side.

"Hey."

"Hey yourself." Nikki looked somewhat surprised to see him. "I thought you'd be busy getting your belongings ready for your departure."

"I was; I still am. I just wanted to give you this before I forget." Alan handed the envelope to Nikki, who was about to open it. "Don't open it now. You have to wait."

"Wait?" Nikki smiled. "Wait until when?"

"Your birthday. I won't be here when it happens or before you go back to England, so I'm giving you this now."

"Thanks. But now I'm going to be wondering, between now and then, what's in here."

"Ok, fine. I'll tell you. Since you're going to be visiting all your friends, I thought I'd give you autographed pictures of me to give to them."

This caused Nikki to laugh. "I'm sure they'll be impressed."

End Flashback

James peered at the envelope before looking back at the road ahead. "So what's in there?"

"I have no idea. But I look forward to finding out."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:01:27 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/14/2006 5:42 PM

Wednesday, July 25, 6:30 p.m., Paris, France (Thursday, July 26, 4:30 a.m., Tracy Island)

"You people are total incompetents!" Giles Hightower hissed. "You've tried and tried to capture this Hiram Hackenbacker, and nothing has worked! Nothing!"

Celeste, the woman who was in charge of the operation looked definitely uncomfortable. "But Monsieur Hightower," she said. "We will get him. There are three more days to the conference. In fact, this evening we have planned to remove him from his room."

"Then I shall expect to see him here soon afterwards," Giles retorted. "Don't fail me, Celeste, or believe me, you will have earned my extreme displeasure."

XXXX

Brains untied his bow tie and tossed it on his bed. It had been a long, hot day, and all he wanted was a cool bath, something to eat, and a good sleep. It was intention to get exactly that, and he had announced it to his fellow panelists after the final session. He began to draw the bath, and while it filled, he looked at the menu, trying to figure out what to order.

Meanwhile, Celeste and her helper - the man who was supposed to get into the taxi with Brains -- had commandeered a room service cart with someone's dinner order on it -- and the uniform of the unconscious waiter who was to deliver it. The man put the uniform on as they took the elevator up to Brains's floor, while Celeste secreted herself on the the lower shelf of the cart, concealed by the linen table cloth.

The phone in Brains's room rang, and he picked up the receiver. "Hello? Someone turned in what? My wallet?" He patted his back pocket, and found his it empty. He sighed. "I'll be right down."

He went into the bathroom to turn off the water and drain the tub, then headed for the door. Just as the false waiter was going to press the buzzer to Brains's room, the door slid open, activated from the inside. "Pardonnez-moi," Brains murmured, as the cart was pushed inside his room... and he stepped out.

The false waiter looked around frantically as the door closed between him and his quarry. "Celeste!" he cried. "The man... he's gone!"

"Idiot!" she said sharply. "Go after him!"

Her compatriot opened the door and looked down the hall, just in time to see Brains enter the elevator, and the door closing behind the engineer. He hurried to the elevator, Celeste in pursuit, and punched the button to call the other car to their floor, all the while keeping an eye on where Brains might be heading.

"The lobby," Celeste said as she pushed her compatriot into the car. There were people already aboard, and those passengers regarded the false waiter and Celeste with wary expressions. The car stopped at least twice to pick up more passengers before they got to the lobby. When the duo came out, they saw Brains step into the car going up, surrounded by a small group of other hotel elevator riders. Not only that, but the sirens of both an ambulance, and the local gendarmes, could be heard outside.

Celeste drew her companion aside into a secluded nook. "They may have found the waiter!" she whispered. "Quickly! Take off the uniform shirt and let's get away!"

"But... Monsieur Hightower!"

"We will try again tomorrow!" she said. "Now we must go!"

Brains got off the elevator on his floor, his wallet in hand. Good thing it was one of my fellow panelists who found my wallet, and that she knew I was staying here. I'll have to be sure to thank her when I see her again.

He used his card to get into his room and stopped short at the sight of a room service cart sitting just inside the doorway. "Did I order this?" he murmured to himself. "I don't remember ordering..." Reaching out, he drew the cover off of the tray. "Mmmm. A roast beef sandwich and a cold beer" Picking up the plate and bottle, he took them over to the suite's table, and set them down. "Even if

I didn't order it, I might as well have. It's exactly what I need." With a contented sigh, he sat down to eat.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:04:55 GMT  
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 8/14/2006 5:46 PM

\*\*\*\*\*Thursday, July 26, 2068; Tracy Island; 3:00 a.m.\*\*\*\*\*

Callie found herself in a dense jungle filled with lush vegetation. It was vaguely familiar to her, like the jungle where she had encountered the Hood. She looked down to see what she was wearing. It was her IR uniform, but she didn't think this was strange. All around her were the cries of the jungle birds and the buzzing of insects in the humid air. She felt calm. Then, she heard a rustling nearby, the rustling coming with voices.

Jeff yelled, "Have any of you found her?"

"No," said Alan, "no one's seen her yet."

The way their voices sounded, she believed they wanted to find her safe.

"We need to find her," demanded an angry Scott. "We have to punish her!"

Brandon said, "Yeah, she almost gave away everything! We'll teach her a lesson!"

With a gasp, Callie knew everyone in International Rescue was after her. "I've got to get out of here..." Running for her life through the jungle, her feet sloshing through the bushes made enough noise to alert the others.

John yelled, "She's gone that way!"

"We have to get her back here!" shouted Jeff. "She must be punished for almost destroying International Rescue!"

She kept running while dodging trees and frantically swatting swarms of midges with her hands. Occasionally, she would look back, hearing the now-vague shouts of her pursuers over her own heavy breathing. During one of those times, she tripped over some thick vines and fell down, scraping her right knee against the Penelar material.

As she started to get up, someone said, "Hold it, right theah."

Callie looked up, only to see Dianne holding a gun on her. "Doc? What are you doing? I--" She gasped when she noticed Dianne's eyes glowing in yellow. "Your...your eyes..." Shaking her head,



she tried desperately to stand up.

Firing a warning shot, Dianne angrily said, "Ah said don't move! Y'all can come ovah heah, Ah've got 'er."

Everyone ran to where Dianne and Callie were. "Good work, my love," said Jeff with a snicker in his voice. "This will make things much easier for us."

"Easier? What do you mean?" Callie asked frantically.

His eyes glowing in yellow, he answered, "Because you almost compromised our security, we have to...eliminate you...now!"

The others, eyes also glowing in yellow, took their guns from their holsters and had them all pointing at Callie.

"No...stop, please," she pleaded. "It's not my fault."

"Oh, yes, it is," Jeff whispered angrily. "Time to die, Miss Spencer!"

As they all pulled the triggers on their guns...

Callie awakened with a jolt and screamed, "NO!" Her heart beating fast, she was sweating and shaking badly. Looking at her surroundings, she realized she wasn't in the jungle but in her apartment. Her breathing returning to normal, she took some deeper breaths. "It was that dream again, only worse than ever! The guns...all pointing at me. And the eyes. They never turned yellow like that before..."

She got off her bed and checked to see if her scream had awakened anyone. Not hearing any knocks at her door, she said, "Good. At least nobody heard me."

Afraid to go back to sleep, she poured herself a glass of milk and heated it in the microwave. When it was warm, she sipped it, trying to control her shaking hands as she thought about the dream.

"Why is this happening to me?" she asked herself. "Perhaps I should--no." She shook her head violently. "I can't allow this to get to me." With a sigh, she added, "Oh, what am I thinking? What I'm letting this do is affecting IR's operation. I really need to get some help."

After finishing her milk, she went back to her room and noticed how damp her sheets were. "Can't go back to sleep like this." She changed the sheets to a fresh batch and soon climbed back into bed. Despite a little tossing and turning, she finally managed to get herself back to sleep.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:11:36 GMT  
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 8/17/2006 6:26 PM

\*\*\*\*\*Thursday, July 26, 2068; Tracy Island; approximately 9:00 a.m.\*\*\*\*\*

Callie was supposed to help John restock supplies for Thunderbird Three, but she contacted him and said she had to visit Dianne.

John noticed the pallid look on her face. "Callie, are you all right?"

"Huh? No, I'm not, John," she said with a yawn. "I've been having nightmares."

Looking at her, he asked, "Is there anything I can do to help?"

With a wan smile she said, "Not really. I'm hoping that Dr. Tracy can." She added hesitantly, "About the restocking..."

"Don't worry about it," John said. "We still have a couple of days."

"F-A-B." She took the monorail and lift into the villa, placing her just down the hall from the infirmary.

Callie stood outside the infirmary but hesitated with her hand shaking again in nervousness. Should I really go through with this? I don't want Mr. Tracy to think I've gone crazy. No, I need to do this. If I don't get help now, I could seriously cause problems for IR. She hoped Dianne was in her office.

Dominic, holding little Joshua in his arms, walked by the infirmary and noticed Callie there. He backed up and said, "Hello, Callie. Are you looking for Dr. Tracy?"

"Yeah, I am. I really need to talk to her." A disappointed look crossed her face. "She's not here right now?"

"No, and I'm not sure where she is at the moment. Can you wait about 10 minutes?"

She nodded. "I can do that."

"All right. I'll see you later."

"Dom, wait," she said, holding his shoulder.

"What is it, Callie?"

"I just wanted to say...thank you, for saving me from the Hood."

With a light smile he said, "You're welcome, Callie. I'm just glad you're all right." He walked away from her and said, "Come on, little one, we have some play with Cherie today."

"Play! Play!" Joshua exclaimed.

Callie sat quietly in the chair just outside Dianne's office. One image she still couldn't clear from her mind was Doc pointing a gun and firing the warning shot at her. "It was just a dream...a bad one, but only a dream." Unfortunately, that image kept playing itself over and over again. "No, stop...it's not real...it's not real...it's not real!"

She felt a hand holding her shoulder, which caused her to jump up and get into a defensive position.

"Whoa, Callie, easy," said Dianne. "It's only me. Dom passed by and said you wanted to see me." Looking at Callie's facial features, she became worried. "My goodness, you look like you haven't had any sleep in days."

"It's a...recurring nightmare, Doc. I haven't been able to sleep much the past few nights, and last night was the worst of it."

Dianne motioned for her to enter the office and take a seat. "Now tell me, Callie, what's happened in your nightmares?"

"I keep seeing the Hood's glowing yellow eyes...except last night, everyone, including you and Mr. Tracy, had glowing yellow eyes. And then you all..."

"We all did what, Callie? Please tell me."

Tears welled up in her eyes. "You all shot me for compromising IR's security."

Dianne stood up from behind her desk and sat next to Callie, rubbing her shoulder for comfort. "Callie, listen to me. It's not your fault for what happened. The Hood caught you when you were most vulnerable. It could've happened to any of us." With a sigh she added, "I'm going to give you some sleeping pills which should help you during the night. If you do continue to have nightmares, though, please come to me immediately. Don't wait for so long to get help."

"I thought I could handle this on my own," said Callie in tears. "I didn't want anyone to think I was weak."

Dianne gave her some tissues to dry her eyes. "Sugah, you are not weak. It's foolish to try to solve this on your own. Your health is more important than anything around here, and I don't want you to go on like this mentally or physically, especially since your birthday's coming up." She gave Callie a week's worth of sleeping pills. "Here you go. I want you to take one every night just before you go to sleep. However, because of this, I wouldn't advise you going next week on Thunderbird Three for the changeover. I'll let John know about this immediately."

"Okay, Doc. I should've come to you sooner about my nightmares."

Dianne smiled. "Hey, you got to it before it was too late. Just remember, you have nothing to be ashamed about. If you want to blame anyone, blame the Hood. I do want to see you again in a week, pending any rescue missions."

"I understand, Doc." Callie stood up.

"Now, why don't you go relax for the rest of the day."

"I think I'll do that. Thanks." She walked out the door of the office and the infirmary.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:42:45 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/18/2006 10:12 PM

Thursday, July 26, 2068, noon, local time, Paris (10 p.m., July 26, Tracy Island)

Giles Hightower paced back and forth in his suite, grumbling in a low tone. He rounded on Celeste, who stood at attention. "How much longer is the conference?"

"Today and tomorrow, monsieur," she said promptly.

"I have never known a man so... so... charmed in all my life. You say he's been oblivious to your attempts?" Giles stopped long enough to give her a sharp, scowling look.

"Oui, monsieur. We have not been able to trap him, but he seems unaware that we are trying to do so."

"Well, hopefully our absent-minded professor will remain oblivious," Giles said. He waved a hand in dismissal. "You may try again. But your fee for this caper has already been cut in half. If you cannot detain him today, then it will be cut in half again. And, if you cannot bring him to me at all, then you will not get paid one Euro. And you will find many doors closed to you which were open before." He took hold of her arm before she could leave. "Do you understand me?"

She glanced at his hand, then looked him in the eye. "Oui, monsieur. Je te comprends," she said, a trace of haughtiness in her voice. Giles removed his hand, and she stalked out.

4:30 p.m. (2:30 a.m., Friday, July 27 at Tracy Island)

Lady Penelope was sitting in the lobby of the conference center, dressed in her long, dark wig, and reading a gossip magazine. She was waiting for reports from both Jean-Claude and Parker, both of whom were also incognito. Brains was in a lecture at the moment, and seemed safe enough there. The three agents had been shadowing him since Brains's dinner with Professor Borrender. They were the ones who had found the half-dressed waiter, put two and two together, and called the police. Penelope in particular was relieved to find that her self-appointed charge had managed to confound the machinations of those seeking to capture him. His luck cannot last

forever, though, she thought as her eyes glanced about the room behind her dark glasses. I do hope we can discover who is behind this effort.

Parker's voice crackled in her ear. "Milady, Ay fink Ay see the bloke 'oo was at the table the other night. The one 'oo distracted the waiter. He's 'eaded down one of these side hallways."

"Good work, Parker," she said softly, the boom mike of her communicator looking much like the wireless connection to a satellite phone. "Anything else suspicious?"

"No, Milady, not as yet."

"Remain vigilant, Parker. We must keep Brains out of the clutches of... whoever this is."

"Right, Milady."

Jean-Claude came up. He commandeered a chair whose back was to Lady Penelope's chosen seat, but off to one side, so that he was sitting behind her, yet could speak with her. He laid the briefcase he carried on the seat directly behind her so he would be turned in the proper direction.

"Any news?" she asked.

"Oui. It seems that a small group of known mercenaries have been hired by someone who is very interested in our Monsieur Hackenbacker. No one seems to know just who has hired them, but the impression is given that whoever they are, they are English."

"Oh, dear," Penelope murmured. "If they are English, then I may know who is behind this. The problem will be proving it, of course."

"Of course."

In the meantime, the lecture Brains was listening had wrapped up. He had been busy taking notes, and now was going over them as he prepared to leave the hall. The speaker had discussed artificial intelligence, and some new developments in maintaining such an AI once one has been created. I wish Lena could have heard some of this, Brains thought briefly. I think she'd have found it fascinating. I'll want to be sure to pursue a correspondence with this lady; she seems very knowledgeable.

As he left the room, he kept checking the information he had typed into his PDA, fascinated by the discussion and mentally coming up with questions he wanted to ask the speaker, then putting them into his data assistant. As a result, he was walking on autopilot, and when he came to a part of the hallway sectioned off by a velvet rope, he turned from it without thinking and walked down into a less-traveled part of the conference center.

"Milady!" Parker whispered as he saw the scientist heading away from the lobby. "Mr. Brains is walkin' down the 'allway where I saw that bloke go. Shall Ay go after 'im?"

"Yes, Parker, but be discreet," Penelope said. "Watch him and intervene only when there is danger."

"Yes, Milady."

Penelope turned to Jean-Claude. "We may have a problem. Come with me." She got up and went off in the direction that Parker had indicated, and a moment later, Jean-Claude closed up his attaché case and casually followed her.

Near the rope barrier, a half-concealed Celeste signaled to her compatriots through an earbud communicator. "He is coming your way." She got a quick, quiet reply, then stood by to wait. She was not best pleased to see a stout, older man with a prodigious proboscis stride down the hallway, nor was she happy about the brunette who followed, idly primping in her compact mirror. When a businessman with dark, curly hair and an attaché case bustled down the hall, she knew something was up.

"Luc, there are three people heading your way. You must capture him now."

Luc and his companion, the fake waiter from the night before, were counting the seconds. They could hear their mark's footsteps as he came towards them, towards the slightly open door to the stairs where they were pretending to be painters.

When he was close enough, Luc would back out with the ladder in hand, stopping the man while dumping a specially prepared and very slick bucket of paint on the floor. He would slip and slide on it; they would grab their target and "escort" him down the steps to the parking garage, where their van waited. Right now though, all they had to go on was the sound of his approaching footsteps.

The steps quickened, and Luc nodded to his compatriot. They stepped out into the hallway, and knocked the paint on the floor as planned, but, to their great surprise and consternation, it wasn't their mark who slipped on the wet stuff.

" 'Ey! Wot's goin' on 'ere!" the portly man with the big nose said as he fell to the floor, his tweeds getting covered by the white goo. The two false painters glanced at each other, and dropped the ladder with a loud clanking sound, turning to flee.

"Arrêtez-vous!" came a female voice. Luc glanced back to find a pretty brunette leveling a gun at him. He put his hands slowly up in the air, as his friend, who was a bit faster on his feet, made good his escape.

"Monsieur?" The woman addressed a man who had come up beside her. She indicated the fallen Englishman with a nod of her head. "S'il-vous plait?"

The businessman helped the Englishman to his feet, and the young woman advanced on Luc. "Now, monsieur, tell me why you were lying in wait for Monsieur Hackenbacker?"

Back near the lobby, Celeste was stunned to see her mark come walking past her, unharmed and muttering to himself. "I must have left it in the lecture hall," he said, snapping his fingers. He didn't notice her, hurrying off instead toward the room he had just exited.

"What happened here?" she asked herself as she stepped out of concealment to peer down the hallway. She couldn't see what was going on; the hall took a sharp, ninety degree bend. Making sure no one was following her, she stepped quickly down to the corner, and peered around. She was not surprised to see the three people she had watched follow her target talking with Luc.

She was startled to see that the brunette carried a gun. "I had better make myself scarce," she whispered to herself. "I will not be the one to report back to Monsieur Hightower, though. If he wants this man so badly, he can try to catch him on his own!" Penny smiled slightly as Jean-Claude interrogated the culprit.

She had been both relieved and highly amused to see Brains double back along the corridor, muttering something under his breath, completely oblivious to her presence. She had signaled Parker to keep going, basically impersonating Brains for those lying in wait for him. Now that we have this man, perhaps we can get some confirmation on who is really behind all this.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:45:56 GMT  
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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 8/19/2006 6:10 AM

London, England, 26 July, 2068, 5:45 p.m., (Tracy Island, 27 July, 2068, 5:45am)

Nikki sat on the stool in her mother's kitchen watching her mum preparing dinner. She had offered to help, but her mother wouldn't hear any of it.

Sandra beamed. "I'm really glad you came home for your birthday."

"Me too. It was good to see all my friends and of course, my family. I missed you all."

"And here was me thinking that your work and social life would lead into you forgetting all about us."

"Ha, ha, very funny. Like I could ever forget everyone, especially you who gave me life. Err what's your name again?" Nikki joked.

"I'm having second thoughts about cooking this dinner now," Sandra stopped her work and narrowed her eyes playfully before continuing with what she was doing.

"So how's the job going?"

"Same old, same old. You know the story. Go to work, help people, go home," Since she was still nursing while on rescues, she felt that she wasn't really lying to her mother. Nikki rubbed her fingers on her left hand. "Mum, seriously, can I do something to help? I hate not helping out."

Sandra picked up a small knife and a bag of potatoes and placed them in front of her daughter. "You can peel these."

"Alright," As Nikki peeled, she slowly became lost in thought. "Mum, remember Ben?"

"Of course," Sandra looked up to see what Nikki's facial expression was like. After they broke up, she never really spoke about Ben. She looked back down at what she was doing. "Why?"

"I saw him earlier when I went to the shops to pick up a few things for you."

"Oh, right. How is he?"

"He's alright. It was weird seeing him after all this time."

"I'm sure it was."

"He's engaged."

Sandra paused and raised her eyebrows. "Really? He didn't really seem like the type."

"Mum, it's been three years; naturally he's going to change." Nikki sighed. "I miss him a bit, you know. It was so easy to talk to Alan."

"Alan?"

"Hmm?"

"You said Alan."

"I did? Oh, sorry I meant to say Ben," Nikki bit her bottom lip. 'Why did I say Alan?' she thought.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:49:24 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/19/2006 9:47 PM

July 26th 2068 8:00 p.m. El Dorado, Kansas / July 27, 2068 1 p.m. Tracy Island

When a very tired Heather finally walked into to her home finally that evening with a fat purse earned from someone who thought he knew how to play poker, she noticed a large parcel sitting on the kitchen table. It was wrapped in white paper and had the gold lettering of a high priced department store called Hadley's. "Hmmm," she mused with a smile. "I know I haven't ordered anything and I don't have a boyfriend who'd be sending me gifts. Aunt Jenny must have brought it inside."



Sitting down at the table, she tore off the white wrapping. The air around the parcel smelled of a rich, warm fragrance. Lifting the lid off of the box, she smiled. Inside the box was a large 10 ounce bottle of her favorite perfume along with a bar of soap, body wash, a bottle of body lotion with the same scent. Included was a gift card. "Dad!" Eager to use the items, she took them to the bathroom and started the shower.

At 8:24 p.m. she walked out in a cloud of fragrance and dressed in a set of silk lounge clothes covered with a simple bathrobe. She sat down in her easy chair and answered the vidphone call with a smile. "This is Heather. Go ahead, Father."

One of the many things Heather liked about James Kennedy was his ability to ignore the normal pace of men's fashion by keeping his hair in a long ponytail. Once, when she asked about it, he said that the general public's idea of an award winning conceptual architect was to dress a bit radically. The sides of his hair were graying, she noticed.

"Hello, sweetheart. How are you doing?" Jim asked with a delighted smile.

"Doing pretty well," she answered with a smile. She always hoped that she could find a man just like him.

"Did you receive a box from Hadley's?"

"Yes! I just love it! It will last me half of forever." Heather laughed.

"Wonderful! I was with your mother in the store and passed by the perfume counter. I hoped you'd like it. She said that was your favorite perfume."

"Yes, it is. Thank you very much, but what's the occasion?"

James looked at her sympathetically as he spoke, "I know that you work every day of your life with men for the most part. You do everything you can to work in their environment, so I wanted to do something that reminded you that you're still a young woman."

"Mom told you about my shooting a rattlesnake, right?"

"Every little detail as quoted from Jenny. Are you all right?" he asked, his forehead wrinkled with concern.

"Oh, I'm fine. Can't say much for the rattler. It was a Western Diamondback rattler and those are rather rare for southern Kansas. I figured it wandered from its normal habitats, looking for dinner. Changing the subject here, Dad, do you know anything about Jeff Tracy? Other than the usual press release stuff?"

Jim scratched his ear as he thought aloud about her question. "Not really, honey. He and I were on the board to save the September 11th memorial. I remember having lunch with him a couple times, and he told me a little bit about his family. Pretty proud of his sons, he was. Why?"

"Hmm. Well, I have an interview with him at his home. I suggested that I fly there myself because I assumed it was somewhere near Topeka. That's what the scuttlebutt is at the testing grounds. He told me that he was a bit further out than that. Do you know where he lives exactly?" she asked, tightening her robe.

"No idea. When we were sitting on the board, he said he had an apartment somewhere in town. That's all I know."

"He said he was going to send two pilots, Scott Tracy and his head engineering assistant, Tin-Tin Kyrano."

"Two pilots and didn't say where you were being taken?"

The way Jim said it made them both pause. "Look, honey, are you sure you want to go through with this? What about the testing grounds? Won't being a personal pilot to Jeff Tracy, when he has several pilots already, be a bit tame for what you're used to?"

Her response caused him to bend over laughing. "Oh, Dad," she groaned. "There're so many younger up-and-coming pilots that I just feel like I'm getting... old..." She had to wait until her father came up for air. "All right, Dad! Give me a break!"

"Ha ha ha!" he gasped. "You're not old enough to feel old! I'd say of all my kids, you're the one who's put the gray in my hair!"

"DAD!" she whined as he rolled his eyes at her.

"Ha ha ha! Baby, you won't know what old is until you have kids of your own. Okay, I'm done teasing you. So, what are you going to do then? Are you going to go through with this?"

Heather sat back in her chair while rubbing her chin. "Yes. I'll go through with this and then let you know what happens after that."

"How long are you going to be gone?" he asked.

"I leave on the 27th and I'm to stay as his guest for the weekend. I'll be back by Monday."

"I see. Okay. I'll be waiting to hear from you," Jim said with seriousness. "Be careful, sweetheart. I love you."

"I love you, too. Goodnight. Give my love to mother," she said before breaking the connection.

As soon as the monitor reverted back to its whole screen of the 24-hour weather channel, Heather went to the kitchen to get herself a glass of milk and a large wedge of pecan pie. Setting them down on the kitchen table, she went to poke around the drawer of silverware to find a fork. It was when she sat down to eat, she became aware of the silence around her. Outside, crickets chirped their mating calls and there was a rumble of thunder in the distance. Other than that, all was quiet out on the prairies. Through the open windows, she could see arcs of lightning flashing across the sky.

--a father-daughter moment from AmandaTracyandFred

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:52:46 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/21/2006 12:40 PM

Friday, July 27, 2068, 8:30 a.m., local time, near Wichita, Kansas (1:30 a.m., Saturday, July 28 on Tracy Island)

"So, what do you think she'll be like?" Scott asked Tin-Tin as they drove from the farmhouse to the testing grounds.

"I don't have a clue," Tin-Tin replied, adjusting the scarf that held her hair in place. "Hopefully, she'll be what we need."

They'd gotten in around midnight local time, and had spent the night in the old Tracy farmhouse. The caretaker, Marion, had made sure that everything was ready for them, and had shown up that morning to make breakfast for the pair. Tin-Tin had been quite taken with the old house.

"Yeah, it's been in our family for generations," Scott had told her. "When Mom died, we came out here to live for a while so Grandma could take care of us while Dad worked on building the business. It was good for Grandma, too, as Gramps had died a year or so before Mom of heart failure." He had sighed. "I wish he could have been around, too, but maybe it was for the best that he wasn't. Dad and he often butted heads."

Now they were driving the family's convertible BMW to the air strip, where they would pick up one Heather Kennedy, pilot and candidate for a spot on the International Rescue team... though she didn't know that part just yet.

"I'll do the preflight checks while you look for our passenger," Scott suggested when they arrived at the hangar.

"How do you want to handle seating arrangements?" Tin-Tin asked. "I mean, it's rather rude to make her sit back in the cabin by herself."

"I suppose she could fly shotgun for a while," Scott suggested. "I would like the chance to talk with her. Besides, you did the lion's share of the flying yesterday. Tell you what: you fly co-pilot as far as L.A. and I'll call her up to the flight deck after that and give you a rest."

"Sounds like a plan," Tin-Tin said. "That way she's only alone for an hour or so." She removed the scarf and combed through her hair with her fingers. "I'll go find her now."

Heather was standing in the ready room, an overnight bag and a garment bag at her side. She was dressed in a stylish navy blue skirt suit. As close as I can get to my Navy uniform without wearing it, had been her thought. She looked up as a pretty Asian girl walked in, looking around. As the girl noticed Heather, she held out her hand.

"Heather Kennedy?"

"Yes, that's me." She took the proffered hand and shook it as the girl said, "I'm Tin-Tin Kyrano, and I'm here to take you to Mr. Tracy's home."

"It's nice to meet you," Heather said, smiling.

"And to meet you," Tin-Tin replied. She liked what she saw of the young lady so far. Designer suit, hair in a twist, all neat and professional looking. I think Mr. Tracy will be impressed. I'm sure that Scott will be, too. "Mr. Tracy's son, Scott, is doing the preflights now. Won't you come with me? We can get your baggage stowed and get settled for take off."

"All right," Heather said. Tin-Tin reached down to pick up Heather's garment bag, allowing Heather to take the other case. Together they walked out to the plane.

"Scott?"

Heather's eyebrow went up as she saw the young man glance their way. So, that's Scott Tracy, she mused. He certainly looks like his father!

Scott came over to the two women, flashing his famous Tracy smile. Tin-Tin made the introductions. "Scott, this is Heather Kennedy, our passenger for today. Heather, meet Scott Tracy."

Scott offered his hand. "Nice to meet you, Ms. Kennedy." The security photos didn't do her justice, but then, they never do.

"Likewise, Mr. Tracy," she replied, shaking his hand.

He put up a finger, and shook his head. "Ah-ah," he said. "Mr. Tracy is my father. Please call me Scott."

"All right, Scott. Then you can call me Heather."

The introductions made, Scott offered to put Heather's bags in the cargo hold, while Tin-Tin ushered her into the luxurious cabin. "Nice plane," Heather commented. "How fast does she go?"

Tin-Tin laughed. "Tracy One can fly as fast as Mach 2, though we'll probably be keeping our speed around Mach 1.5."

"Ah, I see." Heather tried not to sound disappointed. Now I really wish I'd taken my plane. But... Mach 1.5 for a quick hop to Topeka? That doesn't make any sense. Maybe Dad was right to be concerned! Well, you'll never get it clarified unless you ask. "Uh, forgive me for asking, but isn't

Mach 1.5 a little fast for a quick hop to Topeka?"

"We're not going to Topeka," Scott said as he climbed aboard and headed for the cockpit.

"Contrary to popular belief, we don't live in Kansas at all anymore. We have a farmhouse here, and stay there when we're in the area, but our real home is in the South Pacific."

"Really?" Heather said, her tone thoughtful -- and hiding how stunned she was at the information. "How fascinating."

"If you'll excuse me, Heather, I'm going to fly co-pilot for Scott until we reach L.A.," Tin-Tin said apologetically. "Then we'll have a stretch, and a quick topping off of the tanks before the longer leg of the journey."

"Oh, sure," Heather said, nodding slightly. "That's fine."

Tin-Tin smiled and nodded, then followed Scott into the cockpit. Heather looked around the luxurious cabin and sighed. She glanced down at her clothes, and shook her head. "I hope I don't look too rumpled when we reach our destination."

In Los Angeles, Heather was a bit surprised to be invited to sit in the cockpit with Scott. "Tin-Tin did a lot of the flying yesterday," he explained as she took the co-pilot's position and slipped the headphones on. "I thought it wise that she take a break and rest on this part of the flight."

"Sounds like a wise precaution," Heather ventured. She paused, then asked, "So, where in the South Pacific do you live? Micronesia? New Zealand? Malaysia? Borneo?"

Scott grinned, and she couldn't help but notice again his resemblance to his father. "None of the above," he said. "We live on an island all our own."

Heather gaped. "You have your own private island?"

He nodded. "Yep. And we value our privacy very highly, so I'd appreciate it if you didn't spread that around. We like to keep people guessing about where we live."

"I... I guess you do," she murmured. There's such a thing as liking your privacy, but that's just ridiculous!

The flight took roughly 6 hours, and during that time, Scott asked her a lot of questions. About her time in the Navy and why she enlisted, about her current job at Tracy Industries and what she liked about it, about her plane... always a topic to open up the floodgates of conversation. She got in a few questions of her own, too, mostly about his father and the family, but when she tried to probe deeper into the privacy question, Scott got cagey, repeating what he'd said before, and mentioning the trouble they had with reporters. She also asked why Jeff was hiring a new personal pilot again so soon, a question that twisted Scott's handsome face into a slight scowl.

"First off, my father's personal pilot, Elise Collins, is still on staff, despite the accident in New Hampshire. The position you've applied for is for a family pilot, someone who can fly my grandma to the store if necessary, or my younger siblings places that they need to go when no one else is

available. The, uh, gentleman who had that position before found it to be not to his liking, and quit." Which is perfectly true; Christopher quit before he could be fired.

Heather frowned. "Sounds like a rather boring job," she commented.

Scott smiled, a small, secretive smile. "Believe me," he said. "You'll find the job far, far from boring."

Now they were coming in for a landing. Heather looked down to see the tiny spot of green, a spot that became larger with every circle Scott made. It looks lush, she thought to herself. A butterfly began to wave its wings inside her; she was now moments away from meeting a lifelong hero!

"Sorry you had to come during the winter," Scott was saying nonchalantly. "But our pool is heated, and the temperature can get up to one suitable for sunbathing... if you're into that kind of thing."

"Uh huh," was all that Heather could say.

They were on their final approach. "This is Tracy One, calling Tracy Island. Requesting permission to land."

A deep, rich voice replied, "Permission granted, Tracy One, and welcome home."

Scott brought the plane in for a perfect landing on the short runway, and Heather couldn't help but admire his skill. The butterfly was joined by a couple more as he slowed the plane to a stop under the shadow of a tall cliff. She craned her neck, trying to keep the odd thing that jutted out from the cliff in sight. Is that a... building?

At last, the plane halted, and Scott powered down the engines to a standby mode. "I'll be taking her into the hangar in a few minutes," he explained, motioning toward the metal door that stood before them.

"You put your planes inside there?" she asked, incredulous.

He nodded. "Yeah. The whole island is honeycombed with lava caves and tubes. It's a matter of using what nature provided." Glancing to one side, he said, grinning, "Here comes your welcoming committee. I'd better get your luggage."

Heather took a deep breath as she noticed the little car coming down a steep, switchback trail. Suddenly, she wanted to look her best, and instead of climbing out of the cockpit, as would be her usual exit, she went back into the cabin, and grabbed her purse.

"Just want to freshen up a little," she explained, quite unnecessarily, to Tin-Tin. The Malaysian girl just smiled.

The butterflies were flapping at full force now as the door to the cabin opened and the gangway steps extended. Heather took a deep breath, and stepped out into the shade from the cliffside. Scott was there to guide her down safely.

Another quick adjustment and smoothing of her skirt, and suddenly, the little cart was there, and so was he. Her personal hero (aside from her own father). He stepped out of the cart and came over to where she stood. His smile, his dimples, his blue eyes, the way he carried himself... he was exactly how she had pictured him to be. He extended his hand and said, "I'm Jeff Tracy. Welcome to Tracy Island."

The butterflies vanished with a poof as she took his hand confidently and said, "I'm Heather Kennedy, and may I say, sir, it's an honor to meet you."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:54:31 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/21/2006 6:37 PM

Friday, July 27, 2068, 5:30 p.m., local time, Paris (Saturday, July 28, 3:30 a.m., Tracy Island)

Giles Hightower drummed his fingers impatiently on the leather seat of his limousine. He was waiting for his target to leave the hotel, at which point his driver would ease up to the curb and he himself would make Professor Hackenbacker an offer he couldn't really refuse.

He ground his teeth in frustration that, as in the case of Mrs. Matumbo, he had to take a hand in this venture himself. When Celeste and her cronies had failed to bring the Professor to him the evening before, he had been livid. He had called Celeste several times over the course of the evening, until at long last, she answered her phone.

"Where is he?" Giles had asked curtly, trying to keep his rising temper in check.

"I do not have him," Celeste had said haughtily.

"Why not? Don't tell me you and your bungling cohorts can't abduct a single man?" he'd said snidely.

Celeste had scowled. "That 'single man' has the luck of the devil himself," she had told him. "Not only that, but he is under someone's protection."

"Whose?" he has asked sharply.

"I do not know. But if you want Monsieur Hackenbacker, you will have to capture him yourself!" And with that she had abruptly hung up.

"Capture him myself," Giles had muttered. "I should have done this in the first place." He had gone back to his contacts in the airlines and at the hotel, who had told him that Hiram Hackenbacker had an afternoon commercial flight to Baltimore Washington International Airport. Baltimore Washington? Perhaps a visit to Mrs. Matumbo? Or perhaps some other business in that area? No



matter. I know when his flight leaves and will be waiting for him to leave the hotel.

And that's why he was there, waiting impatiently for Hackenbacker to show his bespectacled face. He poured himself a glass of chilled wine, and sipped it as he waited.

Finally, the gentleman himself appeared, followed by a porter who carried his luggage. Giles picked up the interior phone and said one word: "Allez." (Go.) The limousine eased out of its space, and began to edge its way up to the curb.

However, the ride came to a wine-spillingly abrupt halt. Giles swore, long and loud, as his drink splattered all over his designer suit. He picked up the phone again and spat, "Quel est le problème?" (What's the problem?)

The driver replied quickly, "Il y a une voiture..." (There is a car....)

Giles glanced out the window and gaped at what he saw. An absurdly pink, custom-built Rolls Royce had pulled up to the curb. A middle-aged man with a formidable proboscis and an understated livery was putting Hackenbacker's luggage into the boot of the car, while Hackenbacker himself climbed in to sit next to a somewhat familiar looking blonde. Giles squinted, then his eyes widened. "Creighton-Ward? What the bloody hell is she doing here?"

It was obvious from what Giles could see of their interaction that the two were old friends, or at least well-acquainted. The chauffeur -- who Giles now recognized as Aloysius Parker, a man he had thought about recruiting - finished putting the luggage into the car, then got in and drove the strange car away from the curb. Giles picked up the phone again. "Conduisez à De Gaulle." (Drive to De Gaulle.) He realized that he had an advantage; he knew where Hackenbacker's flight was departing from. If he could only get there first....

His driver was very good and knew the city better than Lady Penelope's chauffeur did. They arrived at the international departure terminal well before the pink Rolls did. On the way, Giles tried to think up a good plan for waylaying his target. He knew he couldn't use a weapon inside; everyone had to pass through security checkpoints just to enter the terminals nowadays. Actually, when it came down to it, he probably wouldn't be able to approach Hackenbacker at all; Lady Penelope would most likely accompany the scientist to the terminal and would recognize him. No, he had to do something else.

"Pierre," he called to his chauffeur. He had come up with a plan. FAB-1 pulled up in front of the departure terminal and Parker got out, flagging down a skycap to help with Brains's luggage. Brains and Penelope both got out and entered the terminal.

"It sure was nice of you to bring me to the airport," Brains said, smiling at his companion.

Penelope waved a gloved, perfumed hand. "I assure you, dear boy, it was my pleasure. I wish we could have had more time together here in Paris; I so miss the Tracys these days. But they, and I, are very busy, as were you during this week of seminars. Did you learn of any new technologies that would be of use in the Tracy's family business?"

Brains nodded. "Yes, I believe so. There were several presentations of interest and I plan on



following them up by corresponding with the people involved."

There was a lull in the conversation as they passed through the scanners at the security checkpoint. Then, Brains began to expound on some of the interesting things he had learned during the week. Penelope listened, but with only one ear. The other one was intently listening to a message that came through her earring.

" 'E's 'ere, milady. Just as you thought."

She glanced towards Parker for a moment, and nodded briefly. Then she turned her full attention back to Brains, secure in the knowledge that her chauffeur and his accomplice, Jean-Claude, were in full charge of the situation.

"Now," Giles said, in French to his chauffeur, who had changed his livery for a skycap's uniform, borrowed from an unfortunate gentleman who lay senseless in a nearby closet, "you have your instructions. You are to tell Mr. Hackenbacker that there is an urgent phone call for him and offer to guide him to the office where he may take the call. In the meantime, I will distract Lady Penelope's attention." He handed a small plastic vial to the chauffeur. "Wave this beneath his nose, but don't breathe any in yourself. It won't knock him out, but it will daze him enough that we can remove him from the terminal, claiming that he is drunk. Do you understand?"

The chauffeur nodded. Giles looked at his watch. "Very well. I will go in search of Lady Penelope."

He adjusted his tie, and strode out of the alcove where he and his compatriot had been planning. But before he took more than a step or two toward the main concourse, a strong hand closed over his wrist, and as he looked up, a puff of powder hit his face, especially his eyes. He let out a cry, breathing some of the stuff in while trying to rub it out of his eyes. The room began to swim, and he staggered, trying to get away from the two men who had come silently up and had lain in wait for the two men. The last thing Giles saw before he slumped to the ground was the weathered face and cheeky grin of Lady Penelope's chauffeur.

Parker put the cap back on Her Ladyship's lipstick tube, then turned to Jean-Claude, who had wrested the plastic vial from Giles's companion and waved it under the false skycap's nose, just as Giles had instructed. The two of them had stayed just out of sight and had been listening intently to the plan that the Brit had concocted. Now the French chauffeur was staggering, stunned by the contents of the vial, which Jean-Claude promptly stoppered.

" 'And that over 'ere," Parker said, holding out a hand. "Milady will be very interested in the contents o' this."

"Oui, I am sure she will," Jean-Claude agreed, handing the vial to Parker. He eased the now-dazed fake skycap down to sit on the floor, propped against the wall. "What shall we do about these two?"

"Ay fink Milady would have a word about that," Parker said. "Ay'll tell 'er." He raised his wrist to his mouth. "Milady, we've caught the blokes. We're waitin' to know what ye want us t'do wiv 'em."

Lady Penelope heard the message, but couldn't respond. Brains was still going on and on about

the conference and it was only when they came to the second security checkpoint, the one for boarding passengers, that she was able to stem the tide.

"It all sounds terribly fascinating, Hiram," she said brightly. "But here we are at the departure checkpoint and sadly we must part. Please give my regards to Lena Matumbo when you see her and to Jeff and Dianne and Tin-Tin when you reach the island, there's a dear."

"Of course, Lady Penelope." Brains replied, smiling. "Thank you again for all you've done."

"You're quite welcome, Brains, quite welcome. Have a good flight, now." She leaned over and gave him a chaste peck on the cheek. "Adieu, my friend."

"Goodbye, Lady Penelope," he replied as he entered the line for the checkpoint. She turned to walk away, waving a little as she did, then once out of Brains's line of vision, she opened her purse and took out her compact. "Parker," she said quietly. "Have Jean-Claude tell the security people where to find our miscreants. Then bring the Rolls around. It's time we went home."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:57:01 GMT  
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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 8/23/2006 1:00 PM

London, England, 27 July, 2068, 8:50 p.m., (Tracy Island, 28 July, 2068, 8:50am)

On the afternoon of her birthday, Nikki went out to lunch with her closest friends, and shopping until her money for the day was completely gone. Once the shops began to close, she bid farewell to some of her friends and spent a few hours round house of her closest friend, Emma Taylor. The two spent the time catching up on things that couldn't be discussed around the others and looking over what they bought.

Emma put the last of her new items away. "Now if you excuse me, I've got to get ready."

"For what?" Nikki asked absent minded. She looked up at her companion only to see her staring back at her with a raised eyebrow. It didn't take long for things to click in Nikki's mind. "Oh yeah, your brother's restaurant. I've gotcha now."

"Thank goodness for that. I thought you were losing your mind." Emma grinned. "You know, with getting older and everything."

"Hey!" Nikki paused. "You know I take great pleasure in knowing that you were born before me. So any grey hair growing, would happen to you first. In fact, you may want to check the mirror."

Nikki convened to the living room while Emma showered and changed into something more decent for the occasion. It didn't take long for Emma to get ready and for the two to pile the

birthday girl's shopping into the boot. They then headed to Nikki's mother's house so she could get ready herself and to pick up the rest of the family.

Emma pulled her car up on the cul-de-sac street where Nikki was staying for the duration of her birthday holiday, round her mother's house.

Nikki stared out at the street lamp illuminated road. "It's packed tonight. Where did all these cars come from?"

"They could belong to the people who live down here."

"I doubt it. Anyway, it wasn't this packed before I left and it wasn't like this yesterday."

"I guess they all went out today and bought cars," Emma joked, causing Nikki to laugh. "Now come on and get your keys ready; I'm dying to use the loo."

"Hmm, makes me want to take my time in finding these keys."

"Nicole."

"Ok, ok. I've got them." The two friends walked up the path towards Nikki's house and opened the door.

Nikki was the first one to walk into the darkened house. Immediately she turned on the lights.

"Surprise!" everyone yelled.

Nikki eyes widened as she shouted, "What the h...?" She was about to run out the door again after nearly jumping out of her skin. The only things stopping her were her realisation of what was going on and Emma blocking her way with a hand on her own hip.

A smile graced Emma's lips before she laughed. The two friends loved to trick each other and Emma just got one up on Nikki. "Another point to me," she whispered as the guests made their way forward and began crowding the nurse to wish her a happy birthday.

Nikki greeted everyone and stopped in front of her mother. "You organised a surprise party?"

"Well, I thought it would be nice. This way you can catch up with everyone before you leave again."

"It was nice. I mean, this is nice. Thanks, Mum." Nikki hugged her mother. She smirked before giving her mother a sly look. "Even though I knew something was going on."

"Oh please," Sandra answered, shaking her head and giving her daughter a light shove in her friend's direction.

Nikki continued to greet the rest of her friends and even recognised some of them as the ones she had spent the afternoon shopping with. Looking at everyone there, she knew she would enjoy

every minute of the celebration.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:59:48 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 8/23/2006 3:00 PM

Friday, July 27; 1:15 PM; BWI Airport (5:15 AM July 28 on Tracy Island)

Lena stood in the waiting area, watching for Brains to come from the arrival gate. When he'd answered her email, requesting the specs to the heads up display, he'd told her about his trip to Paris. She immediately wrote back and suggested that he return to Tracy Island via Maryland and spend a weekend with her, checking out what she'd come up with. He agreed and sent her a revised itinerary a few hours later.

She thought back to last Sunday.

She'd been in her home office trying to work the specs of the heads up display into the security program. She had gotten only so far, and kept running into walls. She finally sat back and closed her eyes. Everything is becoming a blur. I tink I'd better quit for de day. Dis keeps getting more and more complicated. It's one of de most difficult challenges I've ever had. Good ting I have time to figure it out. Maybe when Brains gets here, I'll be further along.

She'd opened her eyes and looked at the screen once again. "I'm not going to let you defeat me. I'll figure out how to integrate de specs into de program, no matter how long I have to work on it. And I'll get it to work for data as well. But I'm not going to do it today. So," and she reached out to save her work, then shut down her computer, "I'm going to put you out of my mind and enjoy de rest of de weekend."

She'd stood up and stretched, then did her checks of the outlets in the room. As she left, and just before she closed the door, she said, "I've got a murder mystery waiting for me to finish, but I tink I'll make some tea first."

Returning to the present, she checked the board again and saw that the plane had arrived ten minutes previously. She was amused -- but not surprised -- that he hadn't shown up yet. He probably kept checking to see if he'd forgotten anything, or de attendants called him back to get someting he did forget.

She soon saw him pass the security checkpoint area, juggling his cell phone, his laptop and his carry on bag. Chuckling silently to herself, she moved forward to meet him.

"Hiram Hackenbacker, welcome to Maryland."

He looked up when she spoke and, pushing his glasses back up his nose, grinned at her. "Hello,

Lena. You look well, much better than the last time I saw you."

She smiled back at him, grabbing his carry on as it slipped from his shoulder, and swinging it onto her own. They hugged, then she turned him in the direction of the baggage claim area. "How was your trip?" she asked as they walked.

"Fine. The conference went well, the plane trips to and from Paris were smooth, and I have a lot of notes to go over."

"I bet you do. Did you eat on the plane?"

"Eat?" Just then they both heard a rumbling noise coming from the general area of his abdomen. He looked slightly embarrassed, then they both laughed.

"I'll take dat as a 'no'," she said. "And since it's past my lunchtime, after we get your bags, we'll stop and have someting to eat before we go to de office."

Brains agreed, and they were soon in her car, heading to Washington D.C. They stopped for lunch at a small cafe type place she knew about. They chatted and she made sure he ate everything he ordered, saying, "You look like you've forgotten to eat a few meals, young man." An hour later they were at Tracy Industries and heading toward her office.

As they stepped off the elevator, they heard a booming voice say, "Mrs. Matumbo."

She rolled her eyes at Brains, then they turned to see a fairly large man heading toward them. "Yes, Mr. Wilson. What can I do for you?"

"I tried to see you over two hours ago, and they said you had gone out for an extended period of time. What do you mean by taking company time for personal business?"

"I went to de airport to pick up--"

"And that's another thing. How many times must I tell you the word is 'the', not 'de'?"

"I find her way of speaking charming," Brains piped up, a defiant look in his eyes.

Mr. Wilson looked startled to find someone else was there. He looked the other man over, dismissing him as someone unworthy of his time, then turned back to Lena. "I must tell you, Mrs. Matumbo, this blatant misuse of company time will not be tolerated. I don't care who the person is you went to see, you should--"

"Mr. Wilson, dis is Hiram Hackenbacker. Hiram, dis is Don Wilson, one of de vice presidents here."

"As for your sudden absences like the one a little over a month ago, I don't think...." There was a pause as her words suddenly registered. "Who?"

"Hiram Hackenbacker."

Wilson turned white, then several shades of red. "You are Hiram Hackenbacker?"

"Yes, I am." Brains's face was solemn, but the look in his eyes showed that he was enjoying Wilson's discomfiture -- a lot.

Wilson looked back at Lena, who nodded at him. He hemmed, hawed and harrumphed, then finally said, "Well then, carry on." Then he turned and walked away, faster than she had ever seen him move.

A moment later, she heard a quiet chuckling and looked at Brains. He said, "I hope there aren't many like him around. How do you put up with him?"

"He's irritating, loud and pompous, but harmless. And he's good at what he does. He isn't around here dat much, fortunately. I avoid him as much as I can when he is. Well, let's get to my office."

They entered the I&M work area, where she introduced him to her staff, telling them that she and "Hiram" would be working in her office, but she would be available to them, if necessary. Five minutes later, she was showing him what she'd come up with so far.

"So the specs for the 'heads up display' was the missing piece of the puzzle."

"Yes. I'm still working on integrating it into the program. I haven't been working on it here, so I put what I've done on a disc, for us to be able to work on it in my office dis afternoon. But I have to say it's one of de most complicated programs I've come across."

"The heads-up display or the security program?"

She glanced at him with a mischievous twinkle in her eye. "Yes."

He laughed. "Well, let's see what we can do if we put our heads together."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 16:01:11 GMT  
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 8/24/2006 9:17 PM

[color=orangered]July 28, 2068 11:00 a.m. Tracy Island[/font]

In the cart, Heather was given the seat of honor and as they drove, she tried to look at everything at once. Crashing waves of the sea caused her to look out towards the wide, rolling ocean as Jeff drove them to the compound. The fresh, sea air seemed to revive her from the unexpectedly long trip.

As she settled on looking ahead at the massive bi-level building, she began to chuckle, catching everyone's attention. "Mr. Tracy, you were definitely right."

"I was? Oh good. Right about what?" he asked as they neared the swimming pool.

"Well, you did say that your home was a little further out than Topeka." Heather spoke wryly.

When they stopped, Jeff made a grab for Heather's luggage, but his reach was ill-timed as Scott had beaten him to it. Scott was already into the house with Heather's luggage. Leading the women into the Villa, Jeff issued instructions. "Now, Tin-Tin will lead you to the guest room. I'll leave it up to you if you'd like to have your interview now or after you rest? I know that you have to be a bit tired with jet lag and the length of the trip."

"Let's take care of business first."

"To business it is. Soon as you're settled, meet me in my office," agreed Jeff, pleased with her choice.

A few minutes later, Tin-Tin led her into lounge, whispering to the possible new recruit, "Don't worry. He won't bite!" The Malaysian girl's words had Heather laughing as she sat down across from Jeff and next to Scott.

"I heard that!" Jeff groused good naturedly. "Okay. Now to business. I have to say I'm very impressed with your credentials, Miss Kennedy. Tell me something about some of the aircraft you've flown."

"I have flown short Stealths. You probably know them as the miniatures of the old Stealth bombers. I've had several hours piloting the Dogstar, which has a vertical takeoff ability. I've landed that on the aircraft carrier the Nimitz IV. I've flown a couple of early 20th century Hueys and I was accepted to fly Blue Angel number 5 on the demonstration acrobatic flight team."

"The F/A 25 Hornet?" asked Scott with delight.

Warming to her subject, Heather nodded. "That is a lovely jet aircraft. If you were going to dogfight with a craft like that, it would make for an elegant dance. Its maneuverability is wonderful!"

"And you've been testing out our new planes at the plant as well. How's the latest model on the X-Star III?"

"It's coming along beautifully, Mr. Tracy. All they need to do is adjust the weight on the left wing struts and she should be good to go. She's fuel efficient, too."

Shifting the papers, Jeff studied them for a moment before asking her, "You have your own private jet housed on the training grounds. A Jet Star?"

"Yes, I do," she responded.

"And you use this for making emergency flights?"



"Yes. I modified the plane to be able to carry any kind of donor tissue. All the paramedics have to do is slide the box into a special harness and if needed, there's a separate generator for power to keep the boxes cold. After that, I get into the air and get to the hospital."

"How did you come up with the idea?" Jeff asked, wondering if she got the idea from the news stories about International Rescue.

"The idea came from when I was getting my flying lesson in Virginia and my teacher had a seizure in the air. I took him directly to the nearest airport where they had a medical team waiting. I happened to overhear someone on the team remark to his buddy that they could use something like a volunteer organ donor pilot. So, when I got out of the Navy and ended up working as a test pilot for Tracy Industries, I talked Dad into helping me finance the Jet Star, and then set it up for donor flights and anything else they might need me for."

"That's the how. Now why did you set this up?"

"Once I made a delivery to a hospital. It was a kidney and the mother of the young man that it was going to insisted on talking to me. She gave me the biggest hug, soaking my shirt with her tears. That's why."

"How many babies are named after you?" asked Scott suddenly.  
Laughing, Heather raised up one finger.

"Okay, now tell me something about your family," encouraged Jeff, genuinely interested.

"My parents are James and Martha Kennedy. Dad's an architect in Virginia. He sat on the board with you for saving the September 11 memorial."

"Jim is your father? Wears a ponytail?" inquired Jeff.

"That's Dad," said Heather.

"Good man. And your mother?"

"She's very active in high society. I also have a brother, Donald, and a sister, Amy."

"Do you have a significant other? Boyfriend? Husband?"

"No, sir. I've never had the time."

"What do you do for fun?" Jeff's question caused her to smile.

"Shop on eBay, and I play a mean game of poker."

Jeff looked directly into her eyes and she didn't flinch an inch. "Maybe if there's time, I'll set up a game. I think that's all the questions I have for right now. Is there anything you'd like to ask me before we conclude?"



"Yes," Heather answered. "I'm curious to know why you wanted to know about the more technical aspects of my skills and the donor flights? Flying someone to the mainland and back requires only general piloting skills."

"Whenever I hire someone, I like to know everything they can do so that I can use their abilities to the fullest measure. You might say I like to get my money's worth. That's why I'm where I am." He stretched in his chair, gathered the sheets on his desk together and tamped them down a couple times. Standing up, he replied, "Okay, why don't we break for lunch?"

Graciously, Scott helped Heather out of her chair. "I'll take you to the dining room where you can meet the rest of the family. Be warned. It's noisy!"

"Can't be any worse than a base mess hall." Heather laughed as she thought to herself, That was the strangest interview I've ever had! I heard Jeff Tracy was rather odd. I wonder if it had anything to do with the time he spent on the moon?

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 16:05:01 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/24/2006 11:39 PM

July 28, 2068, 1:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff rose from the luncheon table, putting his napkin down by his plate. "Delicious as always, Kyrano," he said. Glancing down at his first born, he caught Scott's eye, and told him, "In my office, please, Scott."

"Yes, sir," Scott replied smartly, finishing up his iced tea.

Jeff leaned over and gave Dianne a kiss. "See you later, love." Then he called, "Miss Kennedy, if I could please see you in my office again around three?"

"Certainly, Mr. Tracy," Heather said graciously. He and Scott took their leave and suddenly, Heather saw herself in a room full of strangers. Having witnessed Jeff's exchanges with both wife and son, she excused herself to go her room. They must be used to flying back and forth across the international dateline. I don't know about Scott or Tin-Tin but I'm pooped.

Feeling wiped out, Heather accepted one more glass of iced tea and then made her way down to her room.

"What do you think, Scott? Will she fill the bill?" Jeff asked his son on their adjournment to the office.

"I think so," Scott said. "She has the kind of selfless dedication that we require and a innovative

spirit, too. She seems like someone who is good at making decisions, which is something that we need at Mobile Control. Not to mention the flying skills... even if she was Navy."

Jeff chuckled and wagged his finger at his son. "No getting into squabbles over which branch of the service is better, now, son. A pilot is a pilot."

"Oh?" Scott replied with a grin. "Try telling that to Gordon when he finds out she's Navy. You know how much more superior he thinks WASP is."

"I can see I'll have to cut him off at the pass about that," Jeff said with a sigh. He looked over at Scott and added, "So, we offer her the job, and introduce her to the covert part of it. I think we can trust her to keep it quiet should she decide against taking it. But, if I've read our Miss Kennedy right, she'll take the challenge."

When she reached her room, Heather searched for an alarm clock, while she kicked off her heels. She found the clock sitting close to her bed. As soon as she was dressed in day clothes, she walked over to set it for three o'clock and then crawled upon the bed dropping fast to sleep.

At three p.m., Scott waited anxiously for Heather's return. He was excited to be showing off his girl, even to someone who would be taking charge of her, too. I learned how to share One with Elise, and with Christopher. I can share her with Heather... should she take the job. I just hope she treats my girl right, that's all.

He glanced over at Jeff, who was reading an email, and frowning. "Something wrong, Dad?" Scott asked.

"Possibly. I'll tell you later," Jeff replied. He made a motion with his head toward the grillwork door between the study and the lounge, directing Scott's attention in that direction. Then he rose to his feet. "Come on in, Miss Kennedy."

When she walked in, she noticed the troubled look that vanished as if it had never been. "Hi Scott, Mr. Tracy."

"Please sit down, Miss Kennedy." Jeff indicated the seat she'd had before, then moved around to take his place behind his desk. Once everyone was settled, he began. "First off, let me tell you that I've been very impressed with your credentials and your experience, especially with your initiative in starting up an organ donor service on your own. As a result, I'm offering you the job of family pilot to the Tracy family." He held up his hand to forestall any reaction on her part.

Why do I feel there is a 'but' to all this? Heather wondered.

"But," he continued, "before you decide whether or not to take the job, you should know the whole picture. There's a component of this job that we've kept under wraps, and we must have your solemn promise that what we are about to show you stays a secret, whether you take the job or not."

Jeff's words caused Heather to think of all kinds of fanciful things. Good grief! What if it's something illegal? He's so overly wealthy, it could be anything? Do I really want to know what this

is all about? she wondered to herself.

Jeff saw one feathered eyebrow climb up her forehead as she took in what he told her. "I'm sure this sounds strange to you, Miss Kennedy, but believe me, when you see what we are about to show you, you will understand our desire for secrecy," Jeff said. "Do I have your word you will keep our secret?"

Heather didn't know Jeff personally. He was simply her boss from a distance. She only dealt with the men Jeff put in charge at the testing grounds. Now she had met him and seen the way he acted towards his family. Very little to go on. "Yes, I'll keep your secret," Heather agreed. Let's hope I don't end up regretting this.

Jeff nodded toward his son. "Scott?"

Scott smiled and stood, indicating that Heather should do the same. "Come with me. Let me show you my favorite aircraft." He moved over to the wall to stand between a pair of light sconces. Reaching up, he fingered buttons on the struts that held them to the wall, and suddenly, the wall swung around and he was gone!

Heather's mouth dropped open slightly. What in the world have I gotten myself into? she thought to herself. Game to try anything at least once, Heather repeated Scott's movements and felt herself being whisked into a cavern. She felt someone holding onto her as her eyes adapted to the change in light. "Careful," she heard Scott say. "That first step is a whooper."

The wall swung around again, and Jeff joined the pair in the cavernous room. Scott nodded an acknowledgment to him, then turned back to Heather. "Miss Kennedy... Heather... meet my girl. Meet Thunderbird One."

"Thunderbird One?" she echoed. She read nearly every story about the secret organization. Theories abounded about where it was located; everyone knew that all anyone had to do to receive their help was simply to call on any frequency and, somewhere, someone would hear and pass the information on. Now, she was being given the opportunity to know about them.

"I don't know what to say," Heather finally said. "Now I know why you need a family pilot. To leave you free to rescue people."

Jeff chuckled. "It's more than that, Miss Kennedy. We need more personnel, more... pilots, to help us rescue people. We're not only offering you a job as family pilot. We're offering you a chance to join us. To be a part of International Rescue."

"To be a part of it?" Heather said confused. "Anyone would jump at the chance, Mr. Tracy, but exactly what did you have in mind for me to do if not to be a family pilot?"

"Heather, being a family pilot for us is more like a... a cover," Scott explained. "One that lets you work for International Rescue, and have a reason for living here on our island, our base. You'd do some flying family members around, yes, but it would seem pretty odd for you to be out here without any particular purpose that you could tell your family." He waved an arm in the direction of Thunderbird One. "I need a back up pilot for this baby." Grinning, he came close to give her a

conspiratorial wink and ask, "How would you like to fly the fastest plane on the planet?"

Heather stared at him for a moment. "Hold it. You mean to tell me that I'm going to be flying Thunderbird 1?" Scott nodded at her. She thought hard about it, and then asked, "How fast does she go?"

"Mach 20," he replied promptly.

Common sense told her to carefully consider all the ramifications that joining such a prestigious organization required, while trying to imagine what flying Mach 20 had to feel like.

"And you want me," she spoke in what sounded like a little girl. "But why did you decide on me? I'm not exactly the most top notch flier there is."

"Your piloting skills are more than sufficient for the challenge, Miss Kennedy," Jeff said. "But it was the organ donor flights, and the fact that you had the initiative to set this up yourself that was the bigger recommendation to us." He smiled. "What I told you was true; I do look for ways to use my people to their fullest potential."

Scott looked at her and saw the indecision on her face. "Don't give us your answer right away, Heather. Take some time to think about it, really look it over from all sides." He sighed lightly. "This isn't an easy life to lead. There's a lot of stress involved, and a lot of lying, even to people you love, in order to keep the organization secure. So take your time before deciding."

"All right, Mr. Tracy. I'll think it through, and promise to keep your secret. When do you need my answer?"

"In a week, if possible," Jeff said. "And we appreciate your discretion."

Following them out of Thunderbird One's chambers, Heather wandered out onto the deck that encircled the home. Can I really do this? How can anyone fly at Mach 20? That's so much stress on the body, but how can I pass this up?

Scott and Jeff exchanged glances as they watched her walk out on the balcony. "Do you think she'll accept?" Scott asked.

"I don't know," Jeff replied. "But I hope she does."

--a challenge to Heather, by AmandaTracy and Tikatu

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 16:08:23 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 8/25/2006 12:41 PM

Saturday July 28, late afternoon, Tracy Island

It had been four days since The Incident on the beach. Dominic had, at last, gotten a decent night's rest, and was feeling marginally better. His face still went beetroot-red at the memory of the event, and he cringed every time he did. He also felt like he was going to throw up every time he thought about the creeping, hairy, disgusting creature that had been on him. He stilled for a moment and swallowed. Urgh. No matter how hard he tried not to, in the presence of eight-legged monsters his insides tried to crawl outside -- or escape via projectile vomiting, he thought with a shudder -- and it was very, very embarrassing. Thus far he had managed to avoid Scott and the kids (Kids! I was more afraid than the kids!), but it wasn't long before his luck ran out. Though, knowing that Kyrano's garden was something of a favourite spot for the eldest Tracy sibling, Dom realized in retrospect that it wasn't such a good place to try to avoid him. He hadn't been in the foliage too long, Joshua in tow, before he bumped into not only Scott, but Alex as well. Someone up there doesn't like me today...

"All right lads?" He said pleasantly, hoping that his face wasn't going as red as it felt.

"Hi, Dominic," Scott said. "Recovered since Wednesday?"

Now Dominic was sure that his face was red, and he shook his head slightly to try and cover his face with his hair.

"Hmm? Oh, yes, thanks." Man, I sound pathetic. "Haven't thought about it since." Liar.

"You know, you weren't in any danger," Alex said earnestly. "It wasn't poisonous, and it was quite young, too. It was weird to see one out in the day. It was actually quite cool."

Dominic turned his eyes on Alex, and his mouth thinned.

"I wouldn't be so sure," he said. That kid has some warped priorities...

For a moment, Dom thought Alex looked slightly hurt by the comment, but it passed so quickly that he decided he was making it up. Paranoid about other things now too, apparently.

"And I wouldn't be so sure to question what Alex says," Scott commented. "He knows his stuff."

"Yeah. There are a lot of tarantulas on the island," Alex said, folding his arms. "There's probably a bunch of them living in this garden, too."

The hairs on the back of Dom's neck stood on end, and his body steeled itself against an impending onslaught of furry terrors. He swallowed, his throat feeling suddenly arid, and reached down for his son's hand.

"Come on, Jak," he said. "Time to go. See you around, lads."

Dominic beat a rapid retreat back to his apartment, Joshua complaining all the way.

"Sorry, wee man, but Daddy just can't face another spider this decade..."

Back in the garden, Scott cast a sidelong glance at Alex.

"That was... tactful," he said. But deserved. Where does he get off thinking Alex doesn't know what he's talking about? The kid's a natural at this sort of thing! Man...

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 20:27:34 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/25/2006 9:28 PM

Saturday, August 28, 4:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Tyler knocked on John's door, then entered at his brother's loud, "Come in!" He found his favorite brother busily picking up books from the end tables in his sitting room and filing them where they belonged on the shelves.

"Hey, Ty!" John said with a grin. "What brings you here?" He moved over to his writing corner, and picked up the latest revisions to his book, tamping the galley proofs down and tucking them into a file drawer.

"I wanted you to come play pinball with me," Tyler said as he watched his brother. He frowned, puzzled. "How come you're cleaning up?"

John stopped long enough to run a hand through his hair, and look at Tyler apologetically. "I'm sorry, Ty, but I can't play pinball with you tonight. I've got an appointment with Kat to teach her some Spanish." He gave a distracted wave to the room in general. "That's why I'm cleaning up. Can't have all the clutter around, y'know."

Tyler looked startled for a moment, then asked, "How come you're teaching her Spanish?"

"Because I know it and she wants to learn."

"Huh." Tyler thought this over for a minute. "How come you have to teach her tonight? Why can't you teach her some other time?"

John, who had gone back to straightening up, stopped once again. "Listen, Ty. In a few days I'll be going back up to Thunderbird Five. I don't have a whole lot of time left to start these lessons, or to spend time with her. So, tonight's the night, my man."

"But, I won't have too much more time with you either," Ty whined. "You'll be away for a whole month again!"

John sighed. "I know, Ty, and I'm sorry. But I've had this set up with Kat for a few days now, and it's important to me."

"Pleeeeeeease?" the boy pleaded.

John smiled at his little brother, trying to make him understand. "I'm sorry, Ty, but not tonight. I'll see what I can do about playing with you tomorrow, okay?"

"Hmph. I guess so," Tyler groused.

"Now, please let me finish what I was doing," John asked. "Unless you'd like to help...?"

"No. I don't want to help." Tyler turned to leave but as he reached the door, he stopped and looked at John. "Promise me we'll play tomorrow?"

John shook his head with another sigh. "I'll see what I can do. That's all I can promise."

Tyler turned away again, his shoulders slumped. He kicked the carpet as the door hissed open and he left the room. His brother watched him go, shaking his head for a moment and sighing a third time. Then he turned back to what he was doing.

Outside, Tyler glanced back at John's door and snorted. "Hmph! I knew this was coming. I knew he'd get all kissy-face with Kat and wouldn't have time for me." He put his hands in the pockets of his jeans as he walked toward his own room, head down, a scowl on his face. I don't like it. And I don't like her, either. She's taking up too much of my brother's time.

Gordon came in from the balcony in the corner of the house just as Tyler reached his bedroom door. "Hey, Ty!" he called cheerfully. "Why so glum?"

"John won't play pinball with me," Tyler complained. "He says he has to teach Spanish to Kat."

The fourth Tracy son regarded the seventh thoughtfully. This could turn into a sticky situation. Let's see if I can defuse it a little. "Well, maybe she asked him to. He's good at that, y'know." Before Tyler could continue his complaint, Gordon put an arm around him. "Listen, how about you and I play some pinball. A tournament for the championship of the world!"

Tyler sighed, but nodded. "I guess so."

"Okay!" Gordon said. "Come on, best three out of five! And last one there has to take second turn!"

The boy brightened, and started off down the hall in a hurry. "You'll be last all the way around, Gordon!"

"Oh yeah?" Gordon hustled off in pursuit of his younger brother, happy to have distracted him from his whining over John.



Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 20:29:49 GMT  
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 8/26/2006 12:47 AM

Tracy Island -- 28th July, early evening

"Hola, mi nombre es Kat. Trabajo con Brains en la Isla de Tracy," Kat said.

John grinned and then replied, "Your name is Kat and you work with Brains on Tracy Island."

They were both in the kitchen at the Villa preparing a meal. He had arranged to cook a meal for them to eat in his suite, while he started teaching her Spanish.

"Es de Londres?"

"No," she responded.

As soon as the meal was ready, she helped him to carry the food to his suite. Sitting down at the table, he dished up some hot soup and bread rolls followed by a pasta dish. For a while the two ate in companionable silence.

Then John said, "Me gusta escribir cartas, porque tengo un nuevo ordenador."

She hesitated then replied, giggling, "I like writing letters because I have a new computer."

After they had finished, she helped him carry the dirty dishes and cutlery back to the kitchen, and together they did the washing up. Back in his suite, she sat down on his sofa. He joined her, and for a while they continued, he firing Spanish at her and she replying as best she could.

Eventually he suggested that they take a short break. "Can I get you a drink?"

"Yes, please," she replied.

"Wine or fruit juice?"

"I'd like some wine, please."

"Um, Red or White?"

Kat giggled as she replied, "Ooh, decisions, decisions. I'd like white please."

John got two glasses and took out a bottle of wine from his cabinet, filling the glasses, he handed one to Kat."

"Cheers!" he said, raising his glass.

"Cheers!" she replied clinking glasses with him.



"Your Spanish is not bad. Better than you led me to believe," he remarked.

She smiled. "I rather suspect it's very textbook. I don't think I could hold a long conversation."

"Then we'll have to work on that. Maybe we could have Spanish evenings, where we don't speak any English."

He chuckled at the look on her face. "Well not straightaway perhaps."

When they had finished their drinks, he said. "Okay, Kat, name the days of the week."

"Lunes, Martes, Miercoles, Jueves, Viernes, Sabado, Domingo."

"Bueno. ¿Como està usted?" he asked.

"Me llamo Kat," she replied.

He laughed, "Kat I asked you 'how you are', not 'who you are'."

She blushed at her mistake. "John, I think I've had enough Spanish for one evening. Please, can we continue in English?" He agreed.

She looked around his suite. It was very tastefully decorated in cream and coffee colours. There were thick dark blue rugs on the floor and two reclining chairs, as well as the sofa. On the walls were prints of various constellations. Noticing a large bookcase against one wall, she wandered over.

"Have you read all these books?" she asked.

He shook his head. "No, not all of them. If there are any that you would like to borrow, please feel free to choose some."

She studied his books, and choosing two, came and sat down again.

"So, what have you chosen?"

She showed him. "The da Vinci Code, and The Secret of Atlantis."

"Hmm, that's an interesting choice," he replied. "What made you choose those?"

"I've heard so much about the da Vinci Code, and ancient civilisations interest me. Anyway, that's enough about me. So, tell me, John, what was life like for you before International Rescue?"

"Dad left the family farm, to join the Air Force. It was during that time that he met and married Mom. Grandma was always there for her when each of us was born, and she helped afterwards. Sadly Mom died when Alan was very young, and Grandma moved in to take care of us all."

"It must have been tough for your dad, losing his wife, and having five boys to bring up," she said.

"Yes, it was," he agreed. "But after Grandma went back home, we used to spend as much time as we could spare with her. I really enjoyed my days on the farm.

"It must have been a lively time with five boys. Were you all very mischievous?"

He had to admit that they had all gotten in to scrapes at one time or another during their childhood.

"I did find it a little difficult being the middle sibling, with two older and two younger brothers. When we were all growing up I used to feel that I didn't fit in. Scott and Virgil have always been close. Gordon and Alan are closest in age and seemed to enjoy teasing their elder brothers," he admitted.

"I know how you feel to some degree," she replied. "With two younger brothers, I know what you mean about teasing," she replied. "My brothers were just like that, all through my childhood."

"Did they give you a hard time?" he asked.

"No, they just played silly pranks on me. I could be rather serious as a child, especially where horses were concerned, and they certainly knew what buttons to press to wind me up."

He laughed at that. "So, then, tell me about your childhood."

"I had a happy childhood, enjoyed school, but I really loved the summer holidays when I was younger. I don't quite how, but they seemed to last forever," she remarked, as she curled her legs underneath her. "I was mad about horses. I think my mother use to hope that my pony craze would die down. It used to be one gymkhana after another through the holidays." She looked wistful. "In fact the only thing I really miss living here is horse riding."

"Did you own your own horse?" he asked.

"Yes, a New Forest pony called Rosie. She was lovely, so gentle, and so willing, although she could have her moods. I used to have some terrible falls. I really wanted to be a Three Day Eventer, but Rosie was too small, and I couldn't afford another horse."

"What happened to her?" he asked.

"When I went to college, I couldn't spend the time with her that she deserved, so I sold her to the daughter of a local farmer, the one who let me ride his horse when I went home for my birthday."

"I expect you missed her," he said.

"Don't let on, but I cried for days," she replied, then added. "Now what of your dreams, John, you must have had some."

"Like Dad, I wanted to be an astronaut. I attended college, eventually going to Harvard, and then took training in that field," he answered. "But then, I suppose International Rescue took over. Why did your father start it?"

"After Mom died, Dad left the Space Agency, and formed his own company, specialising in civil and construction engineering, before branching out into aeronautic and astronautic equipment."

"And you five boys were part of that?"

"Not at first. I remember that there was a very bad accident. A lot of people died because there wasn't the equipment available to help them. Dad decided that he would make ground breaking equipment. He bought Tracy Island and we all moved here. He'd met a young man who was truly gifted, and with his expertise and Dad's money, the Thunderbirds and the other equipment were created."

"I assume that that was Brains."

John nodded as he leaned back, placing his hands behind his head. He was enjoying this evening, just the two of them relaxing and talking about their lives, getting to know each other.

"So, how did Kyrano and Tin-Tin come to live on the island?"

"Dad and Kyrano first met at the Kennedy Space Centre. They met again later, and Dad asked Kyrano to join him to help with the domestic arrangements. Tin-Tin graduated with degrees in higher mathematics, and Dad invited her to join the team. She assisted Brains with the maintenance of the vehicles."

"Which I am now doing," she stated "I don't suppose you have much time for other hobbies?"

"Well I think I mentioned before I enjoyed athletics when I was in college. My preferred sports were cross-country running, racquetball, soccer and track and field. I can only really pursue running on the island. But I do enjoy reading, both fiction and non-fiction. I run on the beach some mornings. You'll have to join me, but I'll warn you, I run very early."

Kat laughed as she shook her head. "I don't think I'll take you up on that; I don't do early mornings through choice."

"We have a tennis court; do you play tennis?" he asked.

"Yes, although I've not played since I was at school; but maybe we could have a game of tennis sometime. I used to love watching Wimbledon on the television."

He grinned. "Okay, then, we'll have a game of tennis one day."

"I'll hold you to that," she replied, grinning back at him.

Kat glanced at her watch; it was getting late. "Heavens John! I don't know where the time went; I'll have to go. But thanks for the meal and the lesson. I enjoyed them both."

"It's a pleasure Kat, I enjoyed the evening as well. We must do it again."

He walked her back to her apartment. Holding her hand, the couple walked down the stairs and

through the kitchen, and then outside heading for the monorail. He glanced at her and squeezed her hand. She smiled at him; it just felt so right.

When they arrived at her apartment, she said, "That was a lovely evening, thank you so much. Oh no! I've left those books in your room."

"I'll make sure you get them tomorrow," he promised, and then he bade her goodnight.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 20:32:04 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 8/26/2006 2:18 PM

Saturday, July 28; 5:30 PM; Lena's home (9:30AM July 29 on Tracy Island)

Lena and Brains were in her home office, still working on the communications security upgrade program. It had taken the previous evening, and most of the day to integrate the program for the visors into this one, and they hadn't quite finished. She was trying to persuade him to stop for a few hours and relax, when they heard the doorbell ring.

He looked at her questioningly and she shrugged her shoulders, then left the room and went to the door. When she opened it, there was Matthew and Amelia. He hugged her, saying, "I wanted to meet the man who spirited you away for two weeks a few months ago. And since you said he'd be leaving some time tomorrow..."

Amelia interrupted him, saying, "And I know you. You get involved in something on your computer and you forget to eat. I'm willing to bet this Hackenburger person is the same way."

"Hackenbacker, Amelia. And you're right. I was about to get him to take a break. Are your boys coming, too?" She stepped aside to let them in, and heard a shout from the street before her daughter-in-law could answer.

"Hi, Nyanya!" She looked out and saw Naomi hurrying toward the house, with Kevin close behind. Joy and Tom had just gotten out of their SUV. Naomi reached her grandmother and hugged her, saying, "It's a good day for a party, and we decided to have it here."

Nonplussed, she shook her head when she realized that both Matthew and Amelia were carrying grocery bags. She looked outside and saw Joy with more bags, and Tom carrying a cooler.

Joy called to her kids. "You two come back here and help us with the rest of the things." As they passed her on their way back to the vehicle, she said to her mother, "We wanted to meet this man, and knew you probably wouldn't have enough to fill up Naomi and Kevin, never mind the rest of us, so we brought the food with us." She smiled and kissed Lena on the cheek.

"Here come Leslie and E.J." Lena once again glanced outside at Naomi's words and saw her other granddaughter drive up with her husband and baby. They parked across the street and got out, waving. Leslie quickly removed her daughter from the back seat and brought her to Lena.

"Nyanya, would you hold her while I get the rest of her things?" she said as she first kissed her grandmother, then handed her the baby before Lena could say a word. Then she hurried off. Lena chuckled and turned back inside.

"Where's this young man we came to see?" Matthew asked.

"He's in my office. I'll get him, but don't you go interrogating him."

"Who, me? I wouldn't think of it! I'd better go and see if anyone needs help bringing anything in." He headed out the front door as Lena walked over to her home office. She went inside closing the door behind her.

"Who was at the door, Lena? Someone selling something?"

"Not exactly, Brains." Just then, Siti cooed and gurgled at her great-grandmother, causing Brains to sit up suddenly and turn around.

"Who is that?"

"Dis is my newest great-granddaughter, Siti," she replied, looking fondly down at her. Then she began to laugh. "More dan half my family is here, wit food and drinks. Dey are determined to meet you. So save what you've done and come out to meet dem."

"Over half your family? They want to meet me? Why? What did you tell them?"

"Above de fact dat you asked me to come to de Tracy home to help repair de problem wit de servers, and you give me some otter assignments from time to time? Notting."

"Den. . . Er, then why does it sound like they're here to check out a prospective suitor?"

"A what?" Lena looked stunned. Then she chuckled, and the baby laughed. "You see? Even Siti tink dat is silly. Come on. You don't have a choice, you know. Save your work, shut down for de evening and come meet my family."

Brains grinned at her, and obeyed. They were soon in the living room, where he was introduced. He impressed them by not only remembering their names, but which went with whom, and reminded them that he lived with a much larger family. "I may be absent minded at times, but it pays to know who's who. Especially since one of them is a chronic practical joker."

Lena turned to Amelia. "You didn't get a chance to answer my question earlier. Are your boys and deir families coming?"

Matthew answered for her. "No, Mom. 'Fraid they couldn't get away. So that means, Hiram, that you don't get to meet the entire family at once."

Brains chuckled. "Well, if Lena and I keep having to work together, I'll probably be back, and can

meet them another time."

Just then Tom poked his head in. "The barbecue's ready for the meat, guys. Let's get this show on the road."

The men took Brains outside and chatted with him while they barbecued hamburgers and hot dogs. The women got the side dishes ready and the twins set up tables and chairs, and did anything else they could. Finally everything was ready, and they all sat down to dinner. For once the weather cooperated. It was warm, with a light breeze, and they were able to enjoy the impromptu al fresco dinner.

Once everyone declared they'd had enough, Matthew, Tom and E.J. got up to take care of the barbecue grill, and the women began clearing the table. Siti had slept through most of the dinner, having had hers earlier, and was awake and gurgling happily. Before Brains could move, Leslie handed the baby to him to hold while she helped her mother and grandmother.

Brains held the baby under her arms, facing him and said to the men, "Can't one of you take her? I've never held a baby before. What am I supposed to do with her?"

E.J. said, "If Leslie gave Siti to you, she's your responsibility. Don't worry. Just turn her around and let her sit on your lap with her back against you. She can watch us take care of this." He grinned at Brains as he watched him gingerly turn and put the baby on his legs. Observing the look of wonder that slowly came over the engineer's face as Siti turned and reached a hand up to touch his chin, he added, "She seems to like you. I'd say you're a natural."

Matthew and Tom looked up from their task and agreed. Brains continued to gaze at the child until she reached up and grabbed his glasses, pulling them off his face. "Oops," he said as he gently took them from her hand before she got them to her mouth. "That's not food, young lady. I need them to see how pretty you are."

"I'm sorry, Hiram," Lena said. She reached out to take Siti from him. "You'd better clean dem. Dey probably have her fingerprints all over the lenses. I doubt you can see any better wit dem on, dan wit dem off."

He held them up to look through them and had to agree with her. He quickly cleaned them and put them back on. By this time, the other men were finished with their task, and the women nearly so. Shortly they were all sitting in the back yard, chatting. Brains never felt like he was being scrutinized or interrogated; he just enjoyed getting to know Lena's family and hearing about the absent members.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 20:34:47 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/26/2006 5:03 PM

Sunday, July 29, 2068, 10:45 a.m., Tracy Island

Kat was puzzled. She had tried to contact John through his communicator to remind him about the books she had left in his suite. She was anxious to read them, but she wasn't able to get through to him. "I think perhaps I'll visit him at the villa, see if we could spend a little more time together today. I can retrieve the books in any case." With that decision made, she hopped on the monorail and headed for the Tracy villa.

The first person she met was Scott, who was coming out of the weight room, sweaty, with a towel draped around his neck. "Hullo, Scott," she said cheerfully, catching up to him. "I'm looking for John. Have you seen him?"

"Good morning, Kat." Scott stopped long enough for Kat to fall in step with him, and smiled at her. "Last I knew, he was going to play some pinball with Tyler. You might find him in the game room."

"That's this room around the next corner?" she asked as they turned the corner and passed the infirmary. She colored a little. "I've not been there often."

"Yes, that's it," Scott said, nodding. "If he's not there, just ask. Someone's bound to know where he is."

"I will," Kat said as she stopped at the door. "Thank you, Scott. Have a nice day!"

"You're welcome, and the same to you," Scott replied. He gave her a little wave as he headed for the stairs to the upper floor and his suite.

Kat walked into the games room. It was pretty empty; Tyler was standing at one of the pinball machines, racking up points, while Gordon and Cherie were off at the air hockey table playing an intense game. The younger boy glanced up briefly when she walked in, and returned to his game, but the others didn't even notice her, so intent were they on playing.

Tyler was playing with John anyway, and should know where he went, she thought. She smiled, and approached the boy, standing at his side until he acknowledged her. When Tyler continued playing as if she weren't there, she cleared her throat, then said, "Tyler?"

The boy looked at her as if annoyed and asked brusquely, "What do you want?"

Kat was taken aback by this abrupt tone. I wonder what has him so touchy. Still, she smiled again, and said, "Tyler, I'm looking for John. Do you know where he is?"

The boy didn't look at her this time when he answered curtly, "No."

Her smile faded, and she frowned slightly. This is vexing. I tend to get along with most every child I encounter, she mused. Am I doing something wrong here? Perhaps I should try to befriend him... She looked at the pinball game itself, watching as Tyler expertly used the flippers to speed the ball over the board, up to the upper levels, into a hole where it sat for a few moments, knocking down targets and setting off lights all the while. The score continued to climb, and despite her current slight pique, she was impressed. He's very good.



"My, you certainly are a good player," she said in an admiring tone. "I must admit I've not played pinball very much, though I am familiar with the game. Could I have a go? Perhaps you could teach me how to play better."

Tyler didn't look at her. He kept his eyes on the board, as if he hadn't even heard her, though the barely verbal, "Hmph!" he uttered showed her that he was indeed listening.

Now Kat was sure there was something wrong, and that it wasn't with her. "What have I said?" she asked tartly. "You're being very rude, you know. Perhaps I should tell your parents about your behavior."

His hands stilled, and after a moment, the ball drained. He looked at her, his expression carefully neutral, and said, "Here. You can play now. I'm done." And with that, he pushed past her and stalked out of the room.

She watched him leave, incredulous at his behavior. Then she turned to Cherie and Gordon, who were, it seemed, oblivious to Tyler and the little scene. She walked briskly over to them.

"Gordon," she said without preface, "could you tell me where John is?"

Gordon glanced up at her briefly. "Uh... oh hi, Kat. John? No, I'm afraid I don't know. Maybe Ty does; they were playing pinball just a little while ago."

"I asked Tyler," Kat said, glancing back at the closed door. "He either couldn't or wouldn't tell me, and he was rude about it in the bargain. Then he walked out."

Both Gordon and Cherie looked toward the pinball machine, which was still flashing, waiting for the player to continue. "Hm," Gordon said. "He left in the middle of a game, too. What did you say to him?"

Kat's eyes grew wide. "Me? I merely asked him where John was, then complimented him on his game. I even asked him to teach me! But he got very stroppy, and rude. Finally he walked out."

The two Tracys exchanged glances, and Cherie gave a little shrug. "I'm sorry he was rude, Kat," Gordon said. "He's a kid, and kids get this way sometimes."

"Maybe he didn't get enough sleep last night," Cherie offered. "That always makes him go off at the drop of a hat."

Kat considered their words, then nodded. "Perhaps you're right. In any case, I will go and see if John is in his quarters. He lent me some books, and I forgot to take them with me after our Spanish lesson last night."

"I'll have a word with Tyler later," Gordon said. "Let him know that his behavior wasn't appreciated."

"Thank you, Gordon," Kat replied, smiling slightly. "I'd best be off. Have a nice day."



The Tracys returned the wishes, and Kat left. Cherie regarded her brother with a keen eye. "Why do I have a feeling there's more to this than just Ty being Ty?"

"Because I think there is," Gordon said. "But don't you worry about it. I'll take care of it. What you have to worry about is... this!"

The puck shot across the table with near-blinding speed, but Cherie moved her hand, and sent it sailing back toward Gordon. "Ha!" she said as they resumed their interrupted game.

Out in the corridor, Kat turned toward the stairs, and had only taken a few steps when a voice from behind her called, "Kat!"

She turned around, and smiled to see John come up, a basket of laundry in his hands. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I came to pick up those books I wanted to borrow," she said as she fell into step with him. "I tried to call you, but was unable to reach you."

"Uh, yeah," John said, smiling a bit sheepishly. "I usually leave my wrist comm in my room when I do laundry. It's fallen into the washer before more than once."

Kat laughed. "You seem to have quite a bit of wash to do," she commented, as they stepped into the lift between floors.

John gave her a wry smile. "Have to catch up before I leave for Five. I like to have clean clothes to come home to."

They continued on to his suite, and Kat wondered, Do I tell him how Tyler acted toward me? No, it would be better off if I don't, especially after the incident with Callie. Besides, I don't want to ruin any time I have with him before he leaves with conflicts of any kind. Gordon said he would speak to Tyler, and I shall leave the matter with him.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 20:38:41 GMT  
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 8/26/2006 7:26 PM

Tracy Island, July 29th, 3:00 p.m.

"It's no use. I can't do this."

"Yes, you can," the voice gently coaxed, "Just give me your hand and I'll guide you."

The fear came back again. "Nope, it won't work, I just can't do it."

"Sure it'll work; I'll be right here with you." The gentle voice continued to soothe the rising fears until the moment the water covered their heads.

WHOOSH! The water spouted up like Old Faithful as Elise tore off her snorkel mask and started gulping for air. Gordon came up right next to her.

"See! ... I ... told you ... I ...couldn't do ... it!" she spluttered.

Gordon had the patience of a saint when it came to helping people overcome fears, whether it be out on a rescue with a total stranger or training with a teammate. "You did fine Elise, really you did. Just try not to come up so fast next time."

"Next time?" Elise was still trying to comprehend the fact that she was still alive and breathing air after this time!

"In a couple of minutes we're going to try again, okay?" Gordon continued his gentle coaxing until she nodded a quick 'yes' a few minutes later.

Elise knew she had to at least try once more. It was part of the therapy Dianne had suggested and she knew deep down that Gordon wouldn't let anything happen to her. For Pete's sakes, he's an Olympic swimmer and part fish - he won't let me drown! She clung to the side of the pool, regaining her breath before she tried again. She pulled the mask down over her face, and made her way with Gordon to the middle of the pool where they again went under.

Just like the first time, Gordon held her hand under the water and gave it reassuring squeezes. They didn't stay down for long and when they surfaced it wasn't as dramatic as it'd been before. Gordon's plan was to get Elise as comfortable as possible with just going under and re-surfacing, and he was willing to take as long as it took.

"What is so fascinating down there?" Scott asked, approaching Virgil who had been on the balcony for some considerable time.

"Those two," Virgil indicated without turning to Scott who now stood next to him.

"How long have they been at it?" asked Scott.

"About 45 minutes. He's doing a great job with easing her fears."

"Good. It's tough, but she needs this."

Virgil nodded silently in agreement, knowing that facing her fears was Elise's biggest challenge right now. After a little while the two brothers started to casually talk about how training was going with various team members, including Elise, then discussed some ideas that they'd had about pod vehicles and equipment. Their attention drawn away from the pool, they were unaware of what happened next until they heard Gordon painfully yelling, "Hey! Guys! I need help down here, NOW!"

Simultaneously, Scott and Virgil looked down. Gordon was trying to swim to the pool edge, dragging a spluttering, panicking Elise, and the both of them were not getting very far.

Instantly, Virgil was down the steps and running with Scott on his heels. By the time they reached the pool edge, Gordon was about 2 feet away; leaning down on the poolside, Scott reached out to Gordon's outstretched arm and pulled him in. Virgil did likewise and grabbed hold of Elise, swiftly pulling her out of the water. She all but collapsed onto the ground, spluttering and gasping.

"What the hell happened?" Scott asked Gordon who was now lying on his back, wincing and breathing heavily.

Gordon turned his head towards Virgil. "Is she ... all right?"

"I think so," replied Virgil not taking his eyes off Elise, but helping her calm down and sit up slowly.

"Gords?" Scott asked again, impatient yet concerned.

"Oh yeah, ... sorry ... Scott. We were doing fine, swimming great until the snorkel somehow slipped and ... as I tried to help her adjust it, she opened her mouth and took in water."

Gordon was still having trouble believing it himself. "She panicked, and as we came up to the surface she was kicking and got me ... where it counts." He winced again remembering the pain.

Scott almost laughed out loud in relief at his brother's choice of words. "Sorry bro, I feel for you. I'm just glad it wasn't more serious."

"More serious? I may have suffered irrevocable damage!"

Scott looked him over quickly and smiling at Gordon's wounded look, replied, "I doubt it!" Scott helped his sibling to his feet, grabbed some towels and handed one to Gordon and one to Elise.

"Are you okay, Elise?" Scott asked.

"Yeah, I think so. Gordon, I'm so sorry I panicked." She looked up at him, wrapping the towel around herself.

"S'okay, I think I'll live." He winked at her then added, "Are you okay? Do you hurt anywhere?"

"No. I'm fine. Just got scared."

"Well, apart from swallowing the pool, you did really great. But I think we'll call it quits for today."

"Thanks," she answered, sounding relieved and apologetic at the same time.

Virgil helped her stand and as he did she noticed how soaked he and Scott were.

"Sorry guys, for getting you all wet."

"It wouldn't be the first time, and I'm sure it won't be the last!" Virgil smiled at her. She laughed a little at his humor and they slowly made their way to the stairs and as Gordon and Scott headed up to the villa, Virgil stopped and turned Elise toward him. "Are you absolutely sure you're okay?"

The concern in his voice was evident and she was touched by it. "I'll be okay. If you're wondering will I ever get back in the water - I will. Gordon was so patient and understanding with me. He really helped. I just wasn't expecting to swallow half the pool today!" She smiled, hoping her answer would reassure him.

He softened a little and she noticed. "As long as you're sure, then let's go and get ourselves into some dry clothes!" He smiled at her as he carefully placed his arm around her shoulder and helped her up the stairs.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 20:40:58 GMT  
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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 8/27/2006 10:55 AM

Nikki turned to her mother to say goodbye while her brother put her luggage into the car.

"Well, this is it...again." Nikki hugged her mother. "I'll miss you."

"I'll miss you too." Sandra pulled away. "This time I want you to keep in touch more often, alright."

"I will this time."

"I'll be waiting." Sandra walked her daughter to the car. "Call me when you arrive safely."

"Sure." Nikki hugged her mother once more after opening the car door. "Take care of yourself, Mum."

"You too."

Nikki got into the car and shut the door. Pressing a button, she automatically wound down the window and waved to her mother as the car pulled away.

When their mother was out of sight, Nikki leant back on the car seat and sighed. "It was hard to say goodbye the first time round. I didn't think it would be the same this time."

"It's not a goodbye forever. You'll still write, e-mail or call." James grinned, even though he felt sad that his sister was leaving also. He tried to lighten the mood. "Humph! Women - always getting emotional over the littlest things. Now us men, we can handle anything and everything."

"I'll remember and remind you about that comment the next time your football team loses in the premiership again and you're blubbing into your pint and peanuts."

"I didn't blubber."

"Sure you didn't, bro." Nikki laughed.

"This season coming, your team is going down."

"You said that last season and the season before that. I'm still waiting for this prophecy of yours to come true."

James stopped his car at a red light. "Hey, you know, when you go back to the States, if you see anyone famous, get me some autographs. I mean, not for me, but for my girl."

"She has a name."

"Ok, for Alia."

"Erm, I'm pretty sure that there are celebrities living in London. Anyway, just because I'm over there doesn't mean I see famous people."

"Excuse me, but you work for..." James let his sentence hang as the traffic light turned green.

"Let it go, Jamie." A thought suddenly struck the nurse. If her brother hadn't mentioned autographs, she probably wouldn't have remembered what she housed in her bag until she reached the check-in. When she was putting items into her bag that morning, she had glanced at the envelope but hadn't thought anything of it.

Opening her bag, Nikki pulled out the blue envelope and opened it. When she pulled out the birthday present decorated card and opened it, a folded up sheet of paper dropped out.

James glanced at the card and paper. "Who is it from?"

"A friend."

"What does it say?"

"Don't be so nosy." Nikki unfolded the paper and began to read it in her head. She made sure she turned it away from James prying eyes.

Dear Nikki,

I hope as you're reading this that you're enjoying your birthday with your family and friends in England. Since I'll be nowhere near during your birthday, I decided to write you this little note. Tfully I'm finding it hard to write this as I'd prefer talking to you face to face.

What I'd like to say is that I'm glad we've got the chance to work together and to get to know each other. I find it really comfortable when we have our chats (even if we don't agree on some things. One subject comes to mind) and when we hang out. Speaking of which, you owe me a basketball rematch

Well, that's it. I'll see you when I get back.

Tell my adoring fans out there that I'll always be thinking of them (I can see you rolling your eyes at that comment). Don't forget about me while you're out there having fun.

Alan

Nikki smiled after reading the letter and as Alan predicted, she did roll her eyes at his comment.

"Oh no, it's from a boyfriend, isn't it?" James said, trying to tease his sister.

"No," Nikki answered. "Like I said before, it's from a friend."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 20:52:54 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/27/2006 4:32 PM  
Sunday, July 29, 2068, 7:30 p.m., Tracy Island

"Hey, Ty!" Gordon hurried out of the dining room after his youngest brother. "Wait up!"

Tyler stopped in the hallway and turned, a puzzled look on his face. Gordon caught up to the boy and put an arm around him. "You and I need to have a little chat, my man," he said, steering Tyler into the games room and through it into the home theater. Neutral territory.

He maneuvered Tyler onto one of the couches on the periphery of the room, and parked himself next to the boy. "Now," he began, putting on his best "confidante" voice and attitude, "I understand that you and Miss Williamson had a bit of a conflict today."

"Miss Williamson?" Tyler asked, wrinkling up his nose.

Gordon rolled his eyes. "Kat."

The change of expression from puzzled to sullen was dramatic. "Oh. Her," Tyler groused.

"Yes, her," Gordon echoed. "I want to hear from you what exactly happened."

Tyler was startled; he hadn't expected being able to tell his side of the story. He thought for a moment, then began. "Well, I was playing pinball and getting the highest score ever when I saw

her come in. She came up to me and asked me if I knew where John was. I told her 'no', 'cause I didn't know. Then she said something about what a good player I was and could she have a turn and maybe I could teach her. I didn't say anything to that, so she told me I was being rude and she would tell my parents about it. So I stopped playing and told her she could have a turn, and I left." He shrugged. "End of story."

"Hmm." Gordon regarded the boy with a thoughtful gaze. "I don't think that's the whole story, but then, I didn't get the whole story from Kat either, it seems." He sighed. "I want your honest injun, cross-my-heart-and-hope-to-die opinion here, Spud. Were you being rude?"

The boy looked down and away, anywhere but into his brother's warm brown eyes. Finally he muttered, "Yeah. I guess so."

"Can you tell me why you were rude?"

Tyler muttered something too low for Gordon to catch. "Excuse me, but I don't think I caught that," Gordon said, a slight warning tone in his voice.

"I said, I don't like her!"

"Ah, I see." There was another long moment when man regarded boy before Gordon asked, "Why don't you like her?"

"'Cause she's getting all kissy-face with John," Tyler said angrily. "She's been making all goo-goo eyes at him ever since she got here, and now, when he's going back to Thunderbird Five in just a couple of days, he'd rather spend time with her than with me or anyone else in the family!"

Gordon smothered a smile. He was amused to see that he wasn't the only one who had noticed Kat's obvious and growing attention to John. Things might be farther along there if he didn't have to go up to Thunderbird Five, he realized. I don't know if that's a good thing or not. He glanced at Tyler and sighed. Still, I can't let Ty continue the way he's begun. Gotta nip this in the bud.

"Listen, Ty," Gordon began. "You're going to have to learn to put up with this. John and Scott and Virgil and Alan and I are all grown-ups. There are going to be people, particularly girls, who will come into our lives and become part of our lives. And, as a result, we're going to spend less time with you, and more time with them. It doesn't mean we're going to love you any less. I mean, how did you feel when my dad started seeing your mom? I don't remember you being too terribly upset when that happened."

"That was different," Tyler said sullenly. "Mom still had time for me, even more time than she did when we were living in Greenville and she had to work. Plus, Dad started making friends with me, too. I didn't lose her. I got him."

Gordon nodded. He had to admit that his father and his stepmother made an all-out effort to win the hearts of all the children, not just the little ones, during their courtship and engagement and even beyond. They had tried hard to keep their interaction as the focus of a family, and not just as a couple. And, if Tyler's reaction was any indication, they'd done a good job of it, too.



He sighed. "You're right. It was different with Dad and Mom, wasn't it? But what happened with them isn't going to happen with us big brothers. We'll spend more time with the girls so we can get to know them. And that means less time for you... and even for each other." He put a commiserating arm around the boy. "It doesn't seem fair, I know, but it's what happens in life."

"I don't like it."

Gordon shrugged. "You don't have to like it. It just is, and you have to put up with it." He drew back a bit and caught Tyler's eye with his own. "But what you can't do is go around being rude to people."

"Even if I don't like them?"

"Especially if you don't like them," Gordon said firmly. "Though I don't know what's not to like about Kat, other than her making goo-goo eyes at John." He put the pinky and thumb of each hand together, making a circle, then lifted them to encircle his eyes, with the other three fingers running along the sides of his head. He made his eyes as wide as he could, and Tyler huffed out a chuckle at his antics. "I mean it, Ty; what else don't you like about her? Or is her making goo-goo eyes the only thing?"

Tyler's face sobered, and he thought for quite a while. Gordon was beginning to believe that he wasn't going to have an answer, when the boy suddenly said, "She only tried to make friends with me because of John, not because of me myself."

"Hmm." Gordon nodded. "I can see where you wouldn't like that. But have any of the other new recruits tried to make friends with you for just you?"

"Oh, yeah!" Tyler said. "Remember when you and me and Alex went fishing with Mr. Brandon?"

Gordon rolled his eyes. "How could I forget? We all got sick."

"Yeah, but we went fishing, and Mr. Brandon treated me okay." Tyler was warming to his subject. "And Mr. Dom brought me a book when I was sick, and Miss Elise and I got grounded at the same time and threw stuff in the ocean together, and Miss Callie went swimming with me and Alex, and Miss Nikki was great when I was sick, and Mr. Christopher let us pet Durian... that was before Kyrano got him..."

"Whoa!" Gordon put up both hands. "Slow down!" When Tyler complied, Gordon shook his head in amazement. "I never knew all this."

Tyler shrugged one shoulder. "You don't see everything." He made a face. "Miss Kat just makes goo-goo eyes at John and plays with Joshua. She pretty much ignores me. She even tried once to get John to go stargazing with her, when he had just gotten home from Thunderbird Five. You know he always plays pinball with me then." His voice lowered. "It was like I wasn't even there."

Gordon sighed, and ran a hand through his hair. "Ty... it doesn't matter if she ignores you or how she treats you. You still can't go around being rude to her. I'm not saying you have to like her, but you do have to be polite." He eyed his brother, catching the boy's gaze again. "By all rights, Kat

should have gone to Mom and Dad, and then you'd be getting more than just a talking to. But I said I'd handle it. Now," he reached out and held his brother's chin, "will you promise me that you'll at least be polite? Please?"

Tyler still looked mutinous, but finally he nodded. "All right. I'll try to be polite... as long as I don't have to like her."

"Promise?" Gordon knew his little brother; a promise was far more binding than anything else.

It took a few moments, but Tyler nodded again. "Promise."

"Okay." Gordon looked around the room. "You want to watch a movie or something?"

"Can I pick it?" Tyler asked, raising an eyebrow speculatively.

I may hate myself for this... "Sure. You pick it."

"All right! Can we make popcorn?"

Gordon nodded, and the two began to put together their impromptu movie night.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:01:22 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 8/27/2006 6:38 PM

Sunday, July 29; 7:30 AM; Lena's house

"Brains! The car has arrived."

He came down the hall, as usual juggling all his paraphernalia. Lena grinned and reached out, taking his carry on case from him. They headed out and handed the suitcase and then the carry on to the chauffeur, who put them into the trunk.

"Lena, thank you for your hospitality. I've enjoyed working with you here, almost as much as I did on Tracy Island."

She hugged him briefly. "Well, since dat's your domain, it's not surprising. I loved having you here. Come back anytime. If you have any sudden inspirations regarding dis program, let me know. I'll continue working on it, adding de translations program and adapting it to work for data dat you might have to send. Hopefully it'll be completed witin a mont or so. You do have de disc wit de info of what we've done so far, don't you."

"Yes, I do; and I'm sure it will. We got a lot accomplished together. I look forward to our next project."

"As do I. Now you'd better get going. You don't want to be late for your flight."

"Right; especially since I'm meeting Nikki, and we're traveling to Wichita together."

"Wichita? Why there?"

"We have a new recruit and she lives near there. She spent the weekend at the Villa, and will be taken back tomorrow, Tracy Island time. She'll arrive at midnight, then Nikki and I will fly back to the island on the same jet, after resting up at the Tracy farm."

"Ah; dat makes sense. Well, give my love to Nikki and to whomever is piloting de jet to Wichita. And have a safe trip all de way home."

He reached out and hugged her again, a longer one this time, then got into the limo. "I will, Lena. And I'll miss you. But I'll be in touch with you soon."

The chauffeur closed the door, touched the brim of his hat to Lena, then walked around to the driver's side and got in. Brains lowered the window and said, "Tell your family I enjoyed meeting them all, and hope to see them again. Good bye."

"I will. Good bye."

He raised the window, and she grinned as she noticed that he was taking out his data pad and looking over his notes as the car pulled away.

The trip was accomplished smoothly and quickly, and soon Brains was checked in. He looked around when he heard his name called, and saw Nikki waving at him. He walked over to her and said, "How was your visit? Did you have a good birthday? How was your trip back?"

"It was fine, Brains. I had a good visit, and the trips out and back -- so far -- were smooth. How was your conference?"

"Very informative. I'll be corresponding with several of those who were on panels I attended; some of their technologies could be integrated into various vehicles and tools we use."

"Well, why don't we head to the boarding gate? I want to make sure we don't miss our flight. What's our schedule after we get to Wichita? No one told me."

He explained it, and she was satisfied. "I'll get to pilot a Tracy jet part of the way? That's great! I've been wanting to try it."

"Well, we will decide who flies which leg before we depart. I don't know who is flying the jet here, but he'll need to get some sleep. He's getting in at midnight, and we'll be heading to the island around 2 AM, Wichita time."

"Then I'll need to get some sleep and at least one good meal, so I'll be alert."

By this time they had gotten through the security checkpoint. They headed to the gate and it wasn't long before they were aboard the jet (in first class, of course!) and on their way. A car was waiting at the airport in Wichita, and it took them to the farmhouse, where they rested and refreshed themselves until it was time to go.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:04:16 GMT  
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 8/28/2006 9:43 PM

Monday July 30, 2012 9:00 a.m. Tracy Island/ Sunday 5 p.m.Wichita, KS

The clock on the nightstand read 8 a.m. on Tracy Island. Heather stood in her traveling clothes with bags already packed and ready to go. She carried her bags out to the patio where the golf cart sat waiting to take her and Gordon to the plane. Putting her bags in the back, she looked around. Dressed in his favorite jacket, Jeff came down to take Heather back to the the jet with Gordon.

I wish Tin-Tin could go with us. Saying goodbye to her was more difficult than I expected, Heather thought.

"Ready to go home, Heather?" Jeff asked.

Heather chuckled. "No, I'm not."

"Have you seen Gordon?"

"No, I haven't."

From the deck, they heard a call. "I'm comin'! Wait for me!"

Jeff groaned. "Heather, I really appreciate you sharing the transport duties."

"Oh, you're welcome, Mr. Tracy. It will be a pleasure to fly your personal aircraft. I hear you have the best." The two studied each other for the few moments as Gordon hurried down the patio stairway, still tucking his shirt in.

"Did you forget something?" reminded Jeff.

Gordon froze for a moment before realizing he was missing his overnight bag. Turning around, Gordon was about to run back up the stairs when Tin-Tin appeared with his bag. "You almost forgot this, Gordon," Tin-Tin said.

Jeff sighed heavily as they watched Gordon accept his bag, and come rushing down the stairway.

"Well, let's get this show on the road!" the redhead announced excitedly.

Hearing Heather's laughter, Jeff turned toward her to say, "Just wait till you have kids!"

After the short drive to the landing strip, Gordon got out to bring down the hatch to the jet. Jeff grabbed her luggage and Gordon's overnight bag.

He was surprised when, instead of a handshake, she saluted him. "Heather, I'm not in the service anymore."

"Aren't you, sir?" she said with a fond smile.

"You're not in uniform, either," he teased.

"You'll take care of that, I'm sure," she teased back.

"Perhaps I will, Heather. Take care, and have a safe trip home. And be careful. Don't take chances. The weather in the plains has been growing rougher lately."

"Yes, it has, and I will, Mr. Tracy. Thank you for letting me come."

"You'd better get going. I'll talk with you soon," Jeff said. "You might want to talk it up with Gordon. It helps him pay more attention to what he's doing."

"One conversationalist coming up. Bye."

With that, Heather hurried up the stairway and she pulled the hatchway closed.

Scott accepted Gordon's clearance call in the command chair in the lounge. "All set to go, Gordon?"

"With a good looking lady by my side, of course, I'm all set to go... Ouch!"

"Someday you're going to learn. You have clearance, Gordon. Have a safe journey and Heather?"

"Yes, Scott?" Heather radioed back.

"Have mercy on the guy, okay?"

"No promises, but I'll see what I can do."

Heather sat in the co-pilot's seat next to Gordon. She felt the pressure push her back in her seat as the jet picked up speed and headed down the tarmac. With practiced ease, Gordon pulled the jet into the air.

"That was very smooth, Gordon," Heather said with admiration.

"Thank you! Comes with the last name," said Gordon slipping on a pair of sunglasses. "If you're a Tracy, you learn to fly. So how did you like staying on the island?"

"I confess my room was lovely. Especially the bed and all that sea air!"

"How did you like seeing Thunderbird 1? I mean it isn't as classy as Thunderbird 4, of course."

"TB1 looks fast just standing in the gantry."

"How about the pilot?" he teased. This gal is gonna be a whole lot of fun if she pilots for us.

"The pilot'?" she said confused. "You mean Scott?"

"Yeah! There isn't a girl that hasn't gone gaga for the guy," Gordon exaggerated.

Heather blinked a few times, thinking how best to answer. "You're not jealous of him, are you?"

"No, I'm not. But he's so serious sometimes that I like to bug him now and then."

"He's nice," Heather said neutrally. "I saw most everyone during meals."

Gordon admitted, "I'm sorry I didn't spend as much time with you."

"Well, we've got a whole flight to talk," she said with a grin. "And I'm a captive audience... Ow!"

After they reached Los Angeles and took time out to refuel and eat, Heather took over flying to give Gordon a break.

"Gordon, I do have a question. There aren't any sea snakes around the island, are there? Tin-Tin had me diving with her and she offered to find some 'water mambas'. I've studied snakes for a long time and--" She had to stop her narration to allow Gordon to catch his breath from exploding with laughter. "If you get bit by one of those--" Heather began.

"Ha ha ha! It's a joke, Heather."

"Oh. What did you do this weekend?"

"Made a bunch of snacks to watch a movie with my little brother, Tyler."

"Sounds like fun," Heather said. "I miss my little brother. He's disabled. He's twenty years old but acts like he's eight. You should have seen the commotion he caused at Mother's. Donny called me up on the vidphone and saw me getting out my revolver to shoot a rattler. Wow!"

Gordon burst out laughing. "What happened?"

Heather checked their heading before answering. "You'd have thought we were at war again. Donny yelled at Mother that I was going to shoot a rattler, Mother called her sister, my Aunt Jenny, and I have no idea what happened after that."

By the time they landed at the testing grounds near midnight, Heather was tired, and glad that Gordon had been her co-pilot. It made the decision whether to accept Jeff Tracy's offer just a little easier. As she and Gordon made their way off the plane, they were met by another young woman and a man with thick glasses.

"Heather, do you have a way home?" Gordon asked in a voice that lacked his earlier silliness.

"Well, I do have my car here--"

"No way," she heard him insist. "I'm calling you a cab, I'm paying for it and you are not going to argue with me. While we're all waiting, I can introduce you to two more of Dad's employees: Brains and Nikki."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:06:42 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/29/2006 7:46 PM

Monday, July 30, 2068, 10:30 a.m., Tracy Island

Dianne sighed as she put the latest update on Elise into her patient file. I've got two gals suffering from PTSS right now. Dom's been showing some signs of stress, too, as belated as they are. She ran a hand through her hair. I don't know how well I'm doing with this psychological treatment. I'm not a psychiatrist; this is just not my forte. She shook her head, and went back to her patient notes. Maybe I should go back to school, pick up another specialty. Or, maybe I should get someone to help me. She sighed. I'll talk to Jeff about it, see what he has to suggest.

She was so engrossed in her work that she didn't hear them enter. Only when Cherie cleared her throat with a noisy and deliberate, "Ahem," did she look up.

"Hey, guys," Dianne said, minimizing the patient record. "What brings you three here?"

"We're here to talk to you about our upcoming trips," Cherie said in a businesslike manner.

Dianne's eyes flicked from one child to another. "Trips?" she asked, frowning. "What trips?"

"The trips you promised us," Alex said, folding his arms. "You said that we could visit the new place in New Hampshire during the school break."

"And you said we could go back to the ranch, too," Cherie added with a nod. "Since there's just a month left to the school break, we thought we'd better remind you."

There was a pause, then Dianne asked, "Did I promise to take you anywhere, Ty?"



Tyler shook his head. "But I want to go where they're going."

Dianne chuckled. "Okay, okay. Consider me reminded. I'll see what I can do. But it'll have to be after Virgil's birthday party, okay?"

"Are we going to Virgil's birthday party?" Alex asked, his eyes wide.

"Yes, you're all going," Dianne said, smiling. "Can't leave you home this time."

"Where are we going? What will we be doing?" Cherie asked excitedly.

Dianne raised a sly eyebrow. "Wouldn't you like to know?"

"Mommmmm!" Tyler protested. "Why won't you tell us?"

"You'll find out soon enough," his mother replied smugly. "There may even be an announcement at dinner tonight."

"I hope it's someplace good!" Alex said. "Like maybe Australia or Africa! Places where there's plenty of weird critters."

Cherie rolled her eyes. "The reason that all you think about are weird critters is because you're weird."

Alex stuck his tongue out at his sister, then turned back to his mother. "Mom? When we go to the ranch, can we bring some of our friends?"

"Yeah, can we? Stephanie, too?" Cherie asked. Her voice lowered as she said, "Since I won't be going to school in Greenville, and Uncle Doug is moving away from there... and with all this... stuff happening with Grandp... I mean, your dad...well, there's no reason for Grandma to stay. I might not get to see Steph or my friends again."

Dianne reached out to put a hand on her daughter's arm. "I understand, honey. I'll do what I can to get some of your friends to come. Same for Alex and Tyler. But you have to remember that school starts earlier over there than it does for you. Some of your friends might be away on vacation, and Uncle Doug may be moving so that Stephanie starts the school year at the right time. I'll ask about the twins, too. It's not fair that Steph gets to go to the ranch and they don't... though it might be easier to take them to New Hampshire."

"Do you think Grandma will go back to Greenville?" Alex asked.

"I don't know," Dianne said, shaking her head. "She might decide it's still her home."

They were quiet for a few minutes, then Cherie turned to go. "C'mon, guys," she said. "We've got things to do."

"Yeah," Alex said. He stopped to kiss his mother and give her a hug. "Thanks, Mom."

"You're welcome, son," she replied, smiling. Cherie dropped a kiss on Dianne's cheek, and Tyler gave her a hug from the side, pinning her arms and squeezing as tightly as he could.

"We'll see you at lunch, Mom," Alex said as they left. Dianne turned back to her work, half listening to her children's conversation.

"Hey, Cherry!" Alex cried, his voice diminishing in volume as he got further away. "D'you think we could go hunting for spiders? I saw a neat tarantula the other day... it was crawling on Mr. Dom... you should have heard him scream!"

Dianne looked up, startled, as she heard the infirmary door swish shut. "A spider? On Dom? Scream?" She quickly found and opened his medical file. Damn. The man's an arachnophobe... no wonder why he's been looking stressed. She glanced toward the door, then got up and went in pursuit of her progeny. I'd better warn Alex: no spider hunting!

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:07:49 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 8/29/2006 9:07 PM

Monday, July 30; 11:15 AM; Tracy Island

Jeff opened the email he'd gotten that had made him frown earlier, and reread it.

Jeff,

Parker was in contact with the Paris agent, who reported that Brains arrived at his hotel safely. But he then told me that some other people were watching and following your young genius. I felt it necessary to look into the situation myself, under the guise of visiting François Lemaire.

I thought you should know there were a number of attempts by the Hightowers to kidnap Brains. None of them came even close to succeeding, often due to your engineer himself. He'd accidentally knock over a martini (Yes, you read that correctly; he was brought a martini, during a dinner with Professor Borrender. I was surprised, too.) that had been drugged, or turn to go back and retrieve something he'd forgotten a split second before he was going to be grabbed. He was never aware that anyone was after him. If it wasn't so serious, it would have been laughable.

I am certain that the Hightowers were behind the attempts, since Giles himself tried to take a hand in the last one, at the airport. But Parker, the Paris agent, and I were able to foil that one, and he left Paris safely.

I plan to advise Mrs. Matumbo, also, lest word get back to her via other channels, and she try to retaliate. She did say something to me when she was here about a promise she made to the

Hightowers. I don't think it will be necessary this time, so I'd like to let her know that.

I won't tell her until after Brains leaves to return to Tracy Island. I wouldn't want to spoil his visit with her.

Please give my best to all of your family.

Penny

He sat back to think about the repercussions of this latest attempt by the Hightowers, and what kind of security measures might be necessary to put in place.

"Ahem."

Startled, he looked up to see his wife standing in front of him.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:19:19 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/30/2006 8:59 PM

Monday, July 30, 2068, 11:40 a.m., Tracy Island

"Did I startle you?" Dianne asked, smiling.

"I'll admit I was surprised," Jeff replied.

"So was I when the kids did the same thing to me," Dianne said with a chuckle. She hitched her behind up on a corner of his desk. "So, what are you up to, Mr. Tracy?"

"Thinking over some more security procedures," he told her, angling his screen in her direction. "Seems that Brains has a guardian angel or two, and one of them is named Penelope."

Dianne scanned the email, then shook her head. "Martini? He's getting adventurous, isn't he?"

"Either that, or there are still a few things about our Brains that we don't know," Jeff replied.

"Seems so. And I think she's wise not to tell Lena until Brains is on his way home. That lady is too sharp... and very protective to boot. I'd hate to see how she'd retaliate."

"I'm glad she's on our side," Jeff replied. He leaned back in his chair. "So, why did the kids sneak up on you?"

"To 'remind' me that I told them we'd take them to the ranch, and to the place in New Hampshire

during the school break."

Jeff frowned. "Did you tell them this? Because I don't remember doing it."

Dianne rolled her eyes. "Yes, I told them. I told Cherie that we'd try to get back to the ranch this summer, and Alex that we'd try to take him to the New Hampshire cottage."

"The key word being 'try'." Jeff sounded irritated.

"Yes," Dianne replied, matching his tone. "But it's not a bad idea, Jeff. Especially with the situation in Greenville." She sighed. "I mean, my brother is moving; my mother does not want to move with him. With Garrett hanging around, there's a very good chance that she'll stay here with Kyrano. If she does, then what happens to the kids' friendships? They won't have that base to go to in Greenville. It will fall to us to keep the kids in touch." She folded her arms. "And it's natural that they'd want to see the new place."

Jeff blew out a frustrated breath. "With Virgil's birthday coming up, and the logistical problems that are likely to arise from that... I don't know if I can deal with another couple weeks away."

"We're only going away overnight for Virgil's birthday, love," Dianne said. "And I've already told the kids that we can't schedule any trips until after that." She unfolded her arms and reached out to put her hand on the desk top. "We can do another vacation, can't we? The ones we've had this summer have had ulterior motives, y'know. It'd be nice to just have a vacation with the little guys. Make some memories."

Jeff sighed, sat up, and reached to cover her hand with his. "All right. I'll start making arrangements."

She shook her head. "No. I'll handle it, or pass it on to Jeanette. You keep your mind focused on the family business... both of them."

He smiled. "Okay. I'll leave it with you."

She stood, and folded her arms again, moving to a chair nearby. "I didn't come up here just for that."

"Oh?"

"Yes. I came up to ask your opinion on something."

He leaned back again. "I'm listening."

She paused to gather her thoughts. "Well, you know that I've been doing quite a bit of psychiatric treatment and counseling lately. Tyler, Elise, Callie... and those are just the most recent ones."

He nodded, and she went on. "I have to admit, this isn't my specialty, Jeff. And I'm wondering how effective it's been. If there's something I don't want to do, it's make a poor decision on treatment and end up either doing nothing to help or exacerbate the problem."

"So, what do you propose to do?"

She shifted in her chair. "I'm not sure. I seem to have two options. One is to go back to school and pick up some more coursework in psychiatry; get licensed in it officially."

"The other?"

"To bring in someone more experienced to help." She cocked her head, looking at him with a questioning expression. "What do you think?"

"Hmm." Jeff tapped his stylus against his chin. "The second option is a bit chancy, I'd think. Security issues and all."

Dianne shook her head. "If we bring in someone from the outside, they'll be bound by confidentiality rules, just like I am. And don't we have someone among our agents who would fill the bill?"

He shook his head. "No, we don't. I've been hearing from a lot of our agents lately with the search for new recruits and no one has those qualifications." He grinned. "Why do you think I had to go looking outside for a doctor in the first place?"

She sat back, and folded her arms again, giving him a teasing, raised eyebrow. "Really."

"Yes, really. Only a couple of doctors on the team, and those were researchers of Brains's acquaintance. They're doing some very ground-breaking work, and are much more interested in that than switching to a mere 'family practice'. Plus, they'd have had to go back and pick up the general practitioner's license, from what I understood. I wanted someone who already had the qualifications."

"Yes, they'd probably have had to do that, depending on their coursework and what they'd done their residency in." She sighed again. "So, you think I should go back and take some more courses?"

Jeff regarded her as he thought for a long moment, then shook his head. "I think you have too much on your plate to do that." He got up and moved to one of the couches, and she rose to join him. "How would you approach this? Get recommendations? Advertise within Tracy Industries? Outside of Tracy Industries?"

"Well," she began, "I don't see the need for a full-timer, someone to live on the island. There wouldn't be enough for them to do. Maybe someone close by that we could schedule appointments with. Someone in New Zealand, Sydney... maybe as far away as Singapore. Perhaps they could come out to the island for small periods of time. I'd want someone qualified in counseling with people who work in rescue situations; that's important. A master's degree or higher. Someone who would work with me as far as prescribing medicines is concerned." She smiled and gave him a little poke in the arm. "As for where to start looking, I'll start where you did: with Uncle Drew. Since he knows the situation now, he'd be able to really pinpoint the best people."

Jeff chuckled, and poked her back. "Sounds like you've got this worked out. When do you want to start?"

"I'll call Drew as soon as the timezones align and I know he's at home," she said. Her voice dropped as she added, "What do you want to do about revealing the true scope of our business?"

He took her hand. "I think that in order to truly help our people, whoever we choose will have to know it all," he said. "As you've said, they'll be legally and morally bound to keep our secret."

"Would you make them an agent?"

Jeff sounded thoughtful. "I don't know. I'll have to think about that."

"Good enough." She snuggled closer, and he let go of her hand to slide an arm around her shoulders. "Mmmm. I could stay here all day."

"So could I," Jeff murmured. They sat quietly like that for a little while, then Dianne shifted and turned her face towards him. He responded by kissing her once, and again. He stood slowly, stretching, then offered her a hand up from the couch.

"It's almost time for lunch," he commented as he went back around his desk and clicked Penelope's email closed. "And I'm hungry."

Dianne eyed him speculatively. "Hungry for what?"

"Hungry for food, unfortunately," he said, giving her a rueful smile. "And both of us have a lot of work to do this afternoon."

She sighed wistfully. "You're right. But this evening..."

"In the Jacuzzi," he told her. "Wash away the day's cares in the very best way possible."

"You have a date." They joined hands for the walk down to the dining room. "When do you plan to announce Virgil's birthday celebration plans?" she asked. "The ladies that go will have to order finery, you know."

"I know. I'll compose the email for the recruits, and make the announcement to the family tomorrow night over dinner," he said.

"Not tonight?"

Jeff shook his head. "No, might as well wait until everyone's home." He made a face. "I hope we get enough volunteers to stay and be on call."

"If not, we'll go with plan B and send a few back in TB1 after the shindig," Dianne said. "I'm sure you'll find enough people to agree to that."

"I hope so."

At this moment, they entered the dining room and were greeted by their family, who was gathered for the noon meal.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:21:20 GMT  
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Monday, July 30, 2068, 7:30 p.m., London, England (6:30 a.m., Tuesday, July 31, Tracy Island)

Jacques slammed down the phone, and swore.

"No sign of him?" Desdemona asked as she poured herself a second brandy.

"No, none... the bloody bastard!" Jacques growled. "He was released on bail, which he took from the business account, and promptly left Paris. He took the Orient Express as far as Budapest, then seems to have disappeared."

"Have you checked his aliases?" she asked, handing him a whiskey.

"As many of them as I know," Jacques replied. He sipped the drink, and handed her a small data pad. "Those are the ones I've checked so far. Are there any others?"

Dez scrolled down through the list, and a small smile spread over her lips. "Yes, I believe I know of two that aren't on this list." She moved behind him and to his hutch style computer desk. "Let me have a go at him."

Jacques paced up and down, drink in hand, as Dez went looking for traces of Giles. He had just knocked the last of it back when Dez suddenly straightened and, sounding positively predatory, said, "I have him."

"Where?"

"Kabul."

"That Fatma woman."

"Very likely." She looked up at Jacques, who had moved to sit behind his wide business desk. "What do you plan to do?"

Jacques picked up the phone. "Cut off his supply first, then have Ahmed 'return' him to England - in one piece, though I will allow for some 'in transit damage'. Giles has much to answer for."

Dez smiled widely. "I'm looking forward to making him pay."



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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:22:58 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/2/2006 11:58 AM

Tuesday, July 31, 2068, 8:30 a.m., Tracy Island

"Dr. Tracy?"

"Yes, Kyrano?"

"You have a phone call. It is Dr. Carmichael."

Dianne glanced up at the retainer and smiled. "Thanks, Kyrano.  
I'll take it in the lounge."

Kyrano smiled back, refilled her coffee, and moved away. Jeff gave his wife a quizzical look. "I thought you were going to call him yesterday."

"I did," she said as she rose, taking up her cup and saucer. "He was out of town. I guess this is the first time he's had available to call." She glanced at her watch. "It must be half past one there... yesterday afternoon."

"Ah, okay." Jeff nodded. "Tell him 'hello' for me."

"For me, too," said Lisa from further down the table.

"I will." Dianne leaned over to give Jeff a kiss, then went off to take her call.

She put her cup and saucer down on Jeff's desk, then answered the light but insistent chimes of the vidphone. Drew Carmichael's face came into view, and Dianne winced to see how tired he looked.

"Hey, Uncle Drew," she said. "You look whipped."

He snorted. "And a good morning to you, too, Dianne. I should look whipped. I just got home from Kyrgyzstan as part of my Doctors Without Borders responsibilities. It was a long trip, and I'm ready to hit the hay. But I figured I should answer your call. What's up?"

"Oh, Uncle Drew," Dianne said in sympathy. "I didn't know about the trip. How'd it go?"

"Pretty well, actually, once we got the translation problems licked. We sent a team out to visit the clinics in several small villages, providing transportation and assistance to the local doctors. They

were having trouble getting to the more remote places."

Dianne smiled. "Sounds exhausting. My problem can wait."

Drew sighed. "It was exhausting, but if I can do something for you, I'd rather do it now. I'm here; I'm fairly coherent, and I'd sleep better knowing that I'd at least listened to your problem and set things in motion if possible. So, tell me all."

"Well..." Dianne told him about her concern over the number of counseling patients she had recently taken on, giving him only general details on the specific patients involved, telling him what she wanted in a counselor, and winding up with, "...it's just not my field, Drew, and I'm feel like I'm not providing the level of care needed."

"Hmm." Drew looked thoughtful. "I can see your point. I can think of a few people off the top of my head, and it probably would be better if I emailed you their information. How far afield are you willing to go?"

Dianne thought for a moment. "Sydney is probably as far as we should go, though if I can find someone in New Zealand, that would be far better in terms of travel time."

He nodded. "All right. I've got a list of names which I'll pass on to my secretary, and she'll email you the details today so you can get started. Then, I am going to have a good meal and hit the hay." He yawned widely. "If none of the names I suggest work out, let me know."

"I will."

He paused, then added seriously, "Maggie says she got a call from Garrett. He was looking for me at first, then he asked if he could have your number. Maggie didn't give it to him. She tried to call Lisa to warn her, and didn't find her home." He frowned. "What's going on there, Di?"

Dianne sighed. "Garrett's back in Greenville. He's... he says he's trying to make amends. He started with Dougie, and seems to have made some inroads there, but he's also been watching Mom's house, calling her... stalking is the word I'd use. He even confronted her in the grocery store when she was with my kids."

She shook her head. "I don't know what to think. But she's here right now, and safe. What happens when Dougie moves is anyone's guess."

"Doug is moving?" Drew sounded surprised.

"Yeah. He got a promotion, and a transfer. Mom has already said she's not going with him, but with Garrett sniffing around, she may not want to stay in Greenville, either."

"Tell her she's welcome here at any time," Drew said stoutly.

Dianne smiled. "She knows that. We're waiting to hear what the Tracy Industries security people find out about Garrett -- see if this whole 'amends' business is legit or if he's got some ulterior motive. Then Mom can make a more informed decision."

"Good move." Drew yawned again, but Dianne could hear the tapping of computer keys in the background. "Tell her I'll call her later... when I'm more awake. I hope you find someone from this list. You've got some pretty stiff qualifications here."

"I'll pass on the message, and I'll let you know. And thank Maggie for me. I appreciate her discretion."

"I will, but don't be a stranger, either. Give her a call. You know that she'd love to just chew the fat with you for a while."

"I'll call her soon; I promise. Hopefully I can get some phone interviews done and set up some face-to-face ones for the 2nd. I've got to make a trip then to Christchurch to talk with our pharmaceuticals provider."

"All right. You'll be hearing from my secretary soon. I'll talk to you later, Di."

"Talk to you soon, Uncle Drew. Get some sleep... and thanks."

"I will. Give my regards to Jeff."

"He sends his to you. Oh, and Mom sends her love."

Drew smiled wearily. "Give her mine right back."

"I will. Bye, Uncle Drew."

"Goodbye."

The call disconnected, and Dianne sat back, sipping her now cold coffee. "Well, just have to wait for the email, then get on the horn to some of these people. At least they'll be in a more convenient time zone."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:26:00 GMT  
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From: susanmartha Sent: 9/2/2006 1:48 PM

Tuesday, July 31, 2068, 3pm. Christchurch, New Zealand

Anna packed the last picture in the box and looked around the office. Nothing was left to show she had ever been here. "No, that's not true. All of the files on my patients are still here and I did make a difference," she sighed. "Even if it seemed like nothing ever changed. People got better and left and someone else took their place. It's an ever flowing stream and I was just a tree on the bank."

She grinned, wryly. "As long as it doesn't wash my roots away again."

She'd stopped accepting new patients 6 months ago and had been transferring her remaining clients to other therapists who worked for the city. For the past 2 months she had been sharing her office with her replacement. Today she had seen her last patient for the city.

The actual retirement party had been 3 months ago, when she went part time. Now she started to carry her belongings out to the car. She made it about 3 feet before she was stopped.

"You shouldn't be carrying that." Officer Dean Thomas grabbed the box from her and headed towards the elevator. "Isn't it over your weight limit?"

I don't have a 'weight limit'." She grinned. "I just can't carry it for more than 15 minutes at a time."

"The kids were asking about you the other day. John still has a couple of your books." Dean had been wounded during a convenience store robbery 5 years ago. He had fired back and killed the shooter. She had spent time with the entire family, sometimes as a counselor, sometimes just looking after the 3 kids so Mom could take a break or go with Dean to his doctor's appointments. She had totally corrupted John, then 11, by bringing him some of her favorite young adult fantasy and mystery books. "You know he's already read all of the sci-fi and mystery books in the school library. And this from a kid one of his teachers said was 'retarded'."

"I wouldn't insult people with any sort of disability by calling that teacher retarded. She is just plain stupid and an ass."

They reached Anna's car and she opened the trunk. "All I really did was give him something he thought was worth reading. Most of the books she wanted them to read talked down to the kids. She wasn't even following the school's recommend reading list for 6th graders. Teaching is one of the hardest jobs in the world. Why does it attract so many idiots?"

"Same reason we get them once in a while. Too many idiots." Dean closed the trunk and leaned against the car for a moment.

"Well, John is always welcome to come over and borrow any of my books he wants. Just make sure someone else comes with him or that both Ryan and I are there." She gave him a long look. "And you know you can give me a call if the nightmares come back."

"So what will you be doing now that you're retired? Work with kids some more? Start a private practice? Take up gardening?" Dean grinned. Anna's ability to kill any plant she tried to grow was a running joke around the office.

"I don't know. I want to volunteer more, or do something to get me out of the house. Maybe take on a few private patients. Some extra income would be nice. I wonder if Habitat for Humanity is still asking for people to help with rebuilding after the tsunami. Although I can't swing a hammer very long these days."

Pounding nails into wood was a wonderful way to get rid of stress. And seeing something you helped build being used by someone who really needed it gave a much needed boost to her

morale. But there was no way she could swing a hammer for more than 20 minutes, nowadays. "They would probably put me to work helping the other volunteers deal with the stress." And I don't think I could handle doing that full time any more. "People never realize how stressful it can be working with people who have lost everything. Especially when it seems like you're not doing enough and never making any progress."

"Whatever you do, I'm sure you'll enjoy it." Dean moved away from the car. "What was that saying about God you always quoted?"

She started the car and released the brake. "God has a weird sense of humor." She pulled out of her slot and onto the street.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:28:56 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/2/2006 6:48 PM

July 31, 2068, 3:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff looked up as Dianne and Lisa came into the lounge. He took one more look at his computer screen, nodded, then smiled at the two women. Lisa gave him a small, nervous smile back, while Dianne approached the desk.

"How did your phone interviews go?"

Dianne shook her head. "Don't ask. I'm finally getting places by using my name instead of yours, but the two men I've talked to were less than enthusiastic about coming out to the island. They have well-established practices and don't want to leave their patient load for any length of time." She shrugged. "I can understand it, really. I do have an appointment for a face-to-face interview on the second with the head of the psychiatric department at the Christchurch School of Medicine. It's a branch of the University of Otego. We'll see how that goes."

"Do you have any more calls to make?"

"Yes. A member of the faculty at the Otego's Wellington branch, a couple of people in Auckland, and three more in Christchurch. Private practices mostly. I'm hoping to set up at least two more face-to-face interviews for the second, though I could handle four more at the most."

"Sounds like you'll have a busy day in Christchurch."

"Yes. No rest for the weary." She tried to get a look at Jeff's computer screen, but he had minimized the window. "Should we get started?"

Jeff shook his head. "We're waiting for Kyrano. I think he should be here. He was in the midst of a

chore, and said he'd be a few more minutes."

"Oh." Dianne leaned up against his desk and said, "You had a great response to the announcement."

Jeff chuckled. "Yes, I did. I've got a couple of responses to my email invitation, too."

At lunch, Jeff had stood up and called for the family's attention.

"I wanted to take a moment and invite you all to join us for Virgil's birthday party. It will be a dressy dinner and dance party, to be held in the dining room of the Paradise Peaks hotel, on August 15." He glanced around the table at the delighted faces and waited until the excited chatter died down before continuing. "Now, I will tell you that though everyone is invited -- yes, that means you children, too -- I will need some volunteers to either stay behind, or return early. Thunderbird One will be flown to Paradise Peaks and hidden nearby, kept in readiness for those who are willing to come back and man the base -- or for any rescue that might be called in."

"Well, I'll be staying behind, that's for sure," John had piped up, smiling wryly. "Kind of hard to send a taxi to come get me."

"I'm sorry about that, John," Virgil had said sincerely. "When we first planned this, you weren't scheduled to be in Five..."

John had held up a hand. "Don't worry about it, Virge. I got to go to the ranch, and this way, Callie gets to celebrate her birthday with her family, as is only fair. I'm not complaining, just joking around."

"Well, we'll miss you," Dianne had said.

"Some of us in particular," Gordon had muttered, raising his eyebrows at John from across the table. John, to his credit, had merely colored a little. After lunch, however, there had come the sound of Gordon yelling, "Hey! Don't!" followed by a large splash.

"So, who has said what amongst our new recruits?" Dianne asked.

"Dom has said he'd stay, and so has Brandon," Jeff told her. "No one else has responded yet, with RSVP or the decision to stay here. I asked them to tell me either way, and if they'd be okay with coming back early should they decide to go."

At that moment, Kyrano entered the room. He nodded to Jeff and Dianne, and went to sit next to Lisa, taking her hand in both of his and whispering something in her ear. Her whole demeanor, which had been a tight bracing for the worst, relaxed, and she nodded at Jeff. Jeff indicated with his glance that Dianne should also sit, and she did, taking a chair where she could see both her husband and her mother easily.

Jeff came out from behind his desk, turning his computer screen so he could easily see it from where he stood, leaning up against the front. He maximized the window he had been looking at earlier, and glanced at it once more. Then he took a deep breath, and began.

"I asked you here to discuss with you the results of the investigation I had our security people make into Garrett Parkhurst. I was as concerned as you were about this man's motives and the timing of his reappearance in your life, Lisa, especially since he didn't seem to have any qualms about invading your privacy with his phone calls and personal contact." He paused to moisten his lips with his tongue. "I wish I could say I have good news, and that this man really seems to be sincere in making amends with his family, but... from the information presented to me by our people, I'm afraid I can't."

Lisa leaned closer to Kyrano, who kept her hand in one of his, and let go with the other, slipping it instead behind her back. There was a long moment of quiet, until finally, Lisa asked softly, "What did they find?"

"Well, he's been living in Biloxi, and has been working for the city in their parks landscaping maintenance department. He specializes in trees; pruning, planting, and generally taking care of them in the city's parks. He remarried about twenty years ago, and has two children by his second wife who is twenty years his junior. He's a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, and volunteers at the local homeless shelter."

"Sounds like he's turned his life around," Dianne muttered, shifting in her seat and folding her arms, frowning. I do not like the fact that I have a couple of half siblings out there somewhere.

"It does, doesn't it?" Lisa said softly.

"It sounds as if he has," Jeff said, nodding.

"Ah hear a 'but' in theyah, Jeff," Dianne replied, a bit of satisfaction in her tone.

"Yes. There's a 'but'," Jeff said, sighing. "I had my people look deeper. It seems that Garrett is in some financial hot water. He's got a heavy debt load, and his wife, who seems to be a compulsive gambler, has lost heavily at the casinos. Foreclosure proceedings have started on their house, and there have been some police reports of domestic violence calls. He's been arrested twice, and she's been arrested once, but the charges were either dismissed or the sentence reduced to community service and anger management counseling. Right now, he's on an 'emergency family leave' from his work; they believe he's..." Jeff paused and shook his head. "They think he's visiting his ailing daughter from his first marriage."

Garrett and his motives, part 1

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:33:20 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/2/2006 6:53 PM



## Garrett and his motives, part 2

Dianne's eyes grew wide with disbelief, as did Lisa's, while Kyrano's face was a study in maintaining a serene control at this staggering news. He rubbed Lisa's upper arm and shoulder in a comforting fashion.

"He lied to them?" Kyrano asked carefully.

"Yes, basically. His leave is for 30 days, and it seems that's why he's been pushing so hard to get to us," Jeff said. "That's also probably the reason he hasn't bothered to contact and hold out the olive branch to Jared; he doesn't have enough time to get up to Boston and 'make amends' in person."

"Besides," Dianne said, shaking her head, "Jared's olduh. He remembers moah. He's not as gullible as Dougie is."

Lisa closed her eyes and shook her head at Dianne's assessment of Doug. "Ah know you wish Ah could've pounded moah sense into that boy's head when he was a boy, Dianne, but as hard as Ah tried, theyah was no tellin' him anythin'."

Before Dianne could reply, Jeff spoke up again. "Let's not discuss Douglas here and now. He hasn't given Garrett our private number, and we can be grateful for that favor." He glanced down at the screen again. "According to Dianne, he also called Andrew, and spoke to Maggie, asking how to call us. Jeanette, who forwarded the file to me, added a note that Garrett has called, complaining that he had difficulty even reaching her office. He asked for our number, saying he was my "father-in-law" and wanted to talk to you, Lisa. So he knows you're here."

There was a moment of silence, then, at the same time, Dianne asked, "What's our next move?" and Kyrano asked, "What do you think he will do?"

Jeff smiled slightly. "Kyrano, I'll answer your question first. I don't know what he'll do, but I think that he's persistent enough to keep trying... at least, until we do something to make him stop." He paused. "As far as what our next move is, part of that depends on you, Lisa, and part depends on Doug."

"On Doug?" Dianne asked, a confused frown on her face.

"Yes." Jeff spread his hands out. "Despite all this evidence that he's looking for money, there is still the real possibility that Garrett's also looking to make amends. The real test of that will be: what does he do after Doug moves? Does he keep in touch? Does he try to be part of Doug's life? If so, then we have some evidence that he's sincerely trying to build bridges. However, if he just drops out of Doug's life as quickly and thoroughly as he dropped back into it, we have a good indication that it was just money he was after, and he was using Doug as a stepping stone to the one who he thought would be able to provide."

"You," Lisa murmured.

"Yes, me." Jeff gave his mother-in-law a long, thoughtful look. "Lisa, tell me tfully: are you afraid of

this man?"

Lisa was quiet for a moment, but finally she took a deep breath and said, "Yes." She wrapped her arms around herself even ask Kyrano drew her nearer. "His reappearance... the way he found out everythin' he could, the way he kept me guessing an' off-guard... just to know that he was watchin' the house gave me chills. It's brought back all those bad memories of owah marriage." She shook her head. "Ah... Ah don't think Ah can go back. Not to live. Not if he can find me. Between him and the memories... Ah just can't."

Dianne got up and went to her mother, crouching down before Lisa. "Ah understand, Ma. Ah really do. It's like me an' Rick, only mah memories are good ones -- good but sad." She took her mother's free hand. "You know yoah welcome heah. An' Uncle Drew says yoah welcome theyah, too. Jared would have you in a minute if'n you said somethin'."

Lisa smiled softly. "Ah know." She squeezed both Dianne's hand, and Kyrano's, and leaned her head against Kyrano's shoulder for a moment. Then she straightened, and looked over at Jeff. "Speakin' of Jared, Ah s'pose we should tell him about all this... if'n he doesn't know already."

Jeff walked over to his mother-in-law, and crouched down beside Dianne, who shifted to look at him. "Yes, we will. If you want, I can forward the report to Doug as well."

"Don' know as it'll do any good," Lisa said with a sigh. "When he gets it in his head to think one way, takes a lot o' convincin' to bring him 'round to anybody else's way o' thinkin'."

"In othuh words, Jeff, if'n Doug believes what Garrett told him, he'll go on believin' it, rathuh than look like a fool foah believin' it in the first place," Dianne explained. "He'll stubbornly cling t' what he thinks is right, and if'n you do get through to him with cold, hard facts, he look at you like yoah meddlin'... even if he has to admit yoah right." She shook her head. "Ah have no idea wheah he gets that from."

The two men exchanged glances, and Jeff smiled a little. "Well then, I'll leave it up to you how much to tell him, Lisa. I did think that if he knew for sure that money was one of Garrett's objectives, he'd refuse to give out any more information."

"Perhaps it would be better if he were simply asked not to do so," Kyrano suggested. "Lisa has enough reasons to ask this of him without bringing in the report."

"Better make it clear, too, that if Garrett asks him foah money, Doug's not t' be comin' and askin' us," Dianne said sharply. "Ah wouldn't put it past him t' ask Doug t' be a go-between, or force him into such a position."

"Yes. We'll have to do that." Jeff rose, and took Dianne by the hand to help her to her feet. "It looks to me, Lisa, like you've made one decision: to leave Greenville. Once you've decided where you're going to go, I'll be more than happy to help you with selling the house and business. I can hire people to pack everything up for you, too. Whatever you like."

Lisa nodded. "Thank you, Jeff. Ah appreciate all you've done so far. Ah think Ah need t' call Jared, then bend Drew's ear foah awhile, too."

"Better wait until tomorrow on Drew, Ma," Dianne said. "He's just come back from a long trip."

"Then I'll chat with Maggie. She's got more brains than he does." Lisa scooted forward on the couch, a signal for Kyrano to get to his feet and help her up. "I'll talk with you both later, Jeff, Di."

"Later, Ma," Dianne murmured as Kyrano offered his arm and the two older folks left the room. When they had gone, she turned to her husband. "Jeff, isn't there anything we can do on a legal front?"

"If he keeps harassing her, yes." Jeff put his arms around her waist. "And we can make sure we're protected from any possible lawsuit or action he might bring against us. But be prepared, love, in case he's sincere about making amends. Like I said, it'll show in his reaction to Doug."

"I know." She laid her head on Jeff's shoulder for a moment, sliding her arms around his back. They stood that way, his cheek resting on her forehead, then she lifted her face for a kiss, and said, "I'd better get back to making those calls. The sooner I get on them, the sooner I'll have the appointments."

"Okay, love. I'll see you at dinner, then."

"If not before." Dianne moved toward the study, while Jeff returned to his desk. "Thanks, Jeff.. And thank those security people for me. They did a great job."

Jeff nodded, and Dianne left. He sat back down with a sigh, and turned his computer screen around again. "Now, to start the ball rolling for Lisa's upcoming move... no matter where she decides to go."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:34:24 GMT  
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 9/5/2006 7:57 PM

\*\*\*\*\*Tuesday, July 31, 2068; Tracy Island; 4 p.m. local time\*\*\*\*\*

Callie was working on an experiment with Brains and Tin-Tin in the lab. They had broken down the fuel from the King of Thailand's private plane into its component parts. They had tried numerous combinations to counteract effects on any environment.

"Wow, look at the time! We've been working on it for over three hours straight since we left lunch," said Callie.

"I know," Brains said, "but we must see if there's any way to neutralize the fuel before it affects the environment."

Tin-Tin patted his shoulder. "Brains, you need to stop and rest. It won't do us any good if we keep working too hard. We will continue with this tomorrow."

With a nod, Callie agreed. "Sure. We'll figure out the solution together. Besides, we don't want you ending up in the infirmary for a nervous breakdown."

Brains took off his glasses and rubbed his forehead with his other hand. "I suppose you're both right. That's one of my biggest weaknesses. When I start working on something, I don't like to stop until it's done."

Taking a deep breath, Callie asked, "Could I ask you both a question?"

Brains and Tin-Tin looked at each other and then at Callie. "Of course you can, Callie," answered Tin-Tin. "Is something bothering you?"

"Well...yes. I need to know something because I'm what the two of you were: victims of the Hood."

"Ah, you want to know what that was like, how it felt," said Brains. "Believe me when I say it was not really fun. He started with his eyes, those glowing yellow eyes. Once he had me under his power, I basically passed out and didn't know where I was or anything. The only thing on my mind was water. I didn't know what had happened until after Scott found me not too far from Lake Anasta. Gordon showed up later and helped get me out of the sand. Seeing those trailers nearby helped me establish where I was."

Tin-Tin said, "As for me, I was a victim twice. The first time was also in the desert near Lake Anasta, where all he really did was render me unconscious. Those glowing eyes caused that to happen to me. The second time was when he tried to take over my mind and force the information from me just recently. I didn't know where it came from, but I felt the searing pain of his presence."

"And to think," Brains said, "we thought Kyrano had strange seizures and convulsions. We could never figure out exactly what happened after the doctor was called in and found nothing wrong with him. It took us a couple of years to realize that it was his own brother causing the seizures."

Callie shook her head. "I never thought I'd become one of his victims. He sure caught me by surprise."

Patting her shoulder, Brains said, "Remember that the Hood is a master of disguise. He knows how to surprise his victims very well."

"Maybe, but I had a frightening dream the night before last. Everyone in IR was after me because I almost gave away the names. If Dom hadn't found me in time..." She hung her head in shame.

"Please, Callie," said Tin-Tin, "you cannot let this haunt you for the rest of your life. You have friends with whom you can share your troubles."

"I know, but it's not easy for me to open up to strangers. My family is one thing, but people I've known for just over six months is another matter."

"Just think of us as an extended family," said Brains. "We'll always be there for each other."

With a slight smile Callie said, "Thanks. I'm glad to know I do have friends I can count on here. It may take me a little while to overcome the fear of what the Hood did to me, but at least I'm not alone."

"Yes, you are surrounded by friends," Tin-Tin said. "We will stop for today and continue this tomorrow morning... after breakfast, Brains."

"Okay, okay, Tin-Tin, I'll have my breakfast first. It's never good to do research on an empty stomach anyway."

The three engineers cleaned the materials, shut down the computers for the day, and walked out of the lab to relax.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:37:18 GMT  
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 9/6/2006 2:08 AM

Tracy Island -- July 31st -- evening

John was sitting in Kat's apartment. She had cooked him a meal of stuffed tomatoes, followed by a mushroom and cheese soufflé and fresh fruit. Now they were sitting side by side on the long sofa, enjoying a quiet drink.

"I'm sorry that I'll be leaving tomorrow," he said, "but I guess now you understand my reasons. Callie was so grateful."

She nodded. She still felt ashamed of her earlier behaviour with Callie and subsequently with John. But now that was all in the past. "Yes. When I apologised to her, she told me how kind it was of you. And how nice you are." She grinned at him. "But of course I knew that already."

John smiled, colouring slightly at her remark. Standing up, he went and looked out of the French windows. "I know it's fairly cool, but let's go for a walk on the beach."

Putting a sweater on, she followed him out of her apartment.

They walked together to the monorail, headed for the pool and down the steps to the beach. He held her hand. There was no moon but a myriad of stars were sparkling in the velvety blackness.

"You'll be up there amongst them tomorrow." She sounded wistful. "I wish sometimes that I could visit Thunderbird Five."

He squeezed her hand. "Maybe some day you will."

They continued walking, just enjoying each other's company. There seemed to be no need for conversation.

I wish this night would go on forever, she thought.

"When I return in September, I'll make sure that we spend as much time together as possible," he said.

"I'd like that too," she replied softly.

They wandered slowly along the beach deep in thought.

He really likes me and I like him, she thought.

Breaking into her thoughts, he stopped and faced her. "I'm sorry, Kat, but we'll have to go back now. I've an early start tomorrow morning."

They turned and headed back towards the Villa. For a while, Kat was very quiet, then, "I'll miss you, John," she said.

"I'll miss you too. But we can communicate as we did before. This time I'll try and contact you more often."

Arriving back at her apartment, she said, "Take care, John. I'll be counting the days until September."

He smiled at her as he let go of her hand, and bidding her goodnight, turned and headed back to the villa.

Later that night as he was packing his overnight case, John felt content. I'm doing the right thing, he thought with a smile. Callie will be able to spend her birthday with her family. Kat and I will stay in touch, and we'll plan some nice things to do together when I return.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:39:43 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/6/2006 1:37 PM

Wednesday, August 1, 2068, 12:30 p.m., Thunderbird Five

"Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Three, requesting permission to dock."

Alan grinned. "Permission granted, Thunderbird Three. And may I say that you are sight for sore eyes?"

"You may say it." Callie's voice came back, sounding amused. The vid portion switched on, and there she was, looking back at him.

"You're a sight for sore eyes," Alan shot right back.

He waited, staring at the clock until he felt the familiar "thump" that told him - even more surely than the feminine-voiced announcement - that, "Docking is complete. Docking bay is sealed."

"Boo yah!" he cried, punching the air. "Nicely done, Ursa."

"Aw, shucks," Callie said. "Nothing to it. It's easier than parallel parking."

"There are a lot of things easier than parallel parking," John chimed in. "Gravity and atmosphere controls on. You'd better get the float, Indy. We've got a lot of freight this time."

"F-A-B," Alan said. "I'll be out to meet you two in just a minute."

He put his hands-free communicator in his ear, and headed over to the ladder near the lift connecting the station's two inhabitable levels. Climbing down the first few rungs, he dropped to the floor once clear of the hatchway, and went off to the storage area to pull out the antigravity float. He knew that he, Callie and John would be here for a few hours yet; putting things away, refilling the water tanks and removing the trash and used water for recycling/filtering down on the island. He had a couple of items for John to watch out for rescue-wise, and truthfully, he just wanted to sit down and jaw with his brother for a bit.

He waited at the airlocks between the docking bay and the access arm, giving the space scanner's controls a quick once over while he was there. All the scanner's lights were green across the board. He looked up when he heard the hiss of the airlock to his left. The door slid open, and John stepped out, followed by Callie, who was carrying a small cooler.

"Hey!" Alan cried, coming forward to embrace his brother and thump him on the back. "It's good to see you!" He glanced over at Callie. "And you, too, Callie." He stepped over to her and gave her a light hug.

"Good to see you, too, Alan," John said with a grin. "Before we get started, have you had lunch yet?"

"No, I haven't," Alan admitted. "I was hoping we could eat it together and talk before getting down to the nitty gritty of station transfer."

"Well, then," Callie said, hefting the cooler. "Let's eat."



Over the meal, which they ate in the station's more spacious lounge as opposed to its tiny galley, John and Callie brought Alan up-to-date on some of the goings on down on Tracy Island.

"Did Nikki get back safely?" Alan asked.

Callie nodded. "She and Brains got home early yesterday morning. We met up in the workout room and she said she had a good time. Her mother organized a surprise party for her."

"Sounds good," Alan replied. His voice got softer and he asked, "How are you holding up, Callie?"

Callie gave him a small smile. "I'm... okay, I guess. Looking forward to going home and resting up there." She turned to John. "Thanks again for swapping with me, John. I'm sorry that I put you through so much grief over the argument with Kat."

Sighing, she added, "With what happened in the jungle, I'm especially glad to have the extra month to... to get myself together before coming back up here."

"You're welcome, Callie," John replied, nodding and smiling softly. "I hope the time away helps."

"Well, guys," Alan said, standing up. "This has been fun, but we've got work to do, and I for one am looking forward to one of Kyrano's dinners."

John and Callie both chuckled, and with that, the three astronauts got up to start the transfer of cargo, preparing for the eventual transfer of personnel.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:41:26 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 9/6/2006 2:49 PM

Wednesday, August 1 2068. 12:30 p.m.. Tracy Island.

A bird squawked loudly overhead and flew off in the direction of Mateo Island. The leaves of the plam it had been resting in shook sharply as it took off, before being rocked to calmness again by the breeze. A lone blue feather floated down and landed on the paving around the pool. Joshua went to investigate, accompanied by Horsey. It was one of the warmer days of the Tracy Island winter -- not that it ever got particularly cold -- and Dominic had taken his son out for a little fresh air and exercise, before the Irishman would settle the child down for his afternoon nap, before beginning the arduous task of ironing; there was a lot to be done. Sometimes I wish I could let him run around starkers all day. It'd save on the washing and ironing -- oh, how I hate ironing...

"Don't pick that up, Jak!" Dom called as Joshua reached for the feather. "It's dirty." Joshua plainly ignored his father, and picked it up, but Dom held firm. "Now, if you don't put it down right away you'll have to take a bath!"

Joshua thrust the feather towards the ground and ran over to his father, throwing it a look of disgust.

"Good boy," Dominic said.

Joshua smiled and clapped his hands -- unfortunately, dropping his stuffed horse in the process.

"Hosey falled over! Hosey falled!" He said, suddenly teary-eyed. "Da!" The boy picked the toy up and held it out. "Da make better!"

"Okay, give him here."

Dominic sat the horse on his lap and regarded it seriously.

"Where does it hurt?" He bent the toy's front leg up to point at his head. "Well then, there's only one thing for it." Dominic bent down and kissed its forehead, and asked, "better now?" He nodded the toy's head in agreement. "There you go, Jak," Dom said, offering the child his precious horse back.

Instead of taking it and going off to play again, though, Joshua clambered into Dominic's lap and tucked his head under his father's chin, and grabbed a fistful of his t-shirt.

"Da, story pease?"

"Don't you want to play with Horsey some more?" Dominic asked. He considered himself somewhat lacking in the imagination department.

"Story, pease? Hosey hurted an' wants story."

"Okay then, wee man," Dom said. Horsey my eye, he thought, before beginning. "Once upon a time there was a young man named Sir Jack the Brave, who had a fine horse named -- uh -- Horsey..."

By the time Sir Jack and Horsey were charging head first into a battle with a lion, Joshua had fallen asleep, and Dominic kissed the top of the child's head. My stories must be really boring... he thought, but smiled anyway.

"What, you're not going to finish?"

Dominic looked up to see Gordon and Brandon seated on loungers nearby, the former with an expectant look on his face.

"I didn't even see you lads come by," he said, feeling his face grow warm.

"Yeah, well, we're here, so finish the story."

Dominic chuckled softly and shifted the sleeping child in his arms.

"Don't be daft. Sure it was so borin' the kid conked out."

"It's tough, being two," Brandon said with a grin. "Takes a lot of energy."

"Yeah, and it's tough having a two-year-old."

The men shared a quiet laugh, before Dominic excused himself, ready for his battle with his most hated of household chores.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:44:06 GMT  
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 9/9/2006 5:46 PM

August 1st, 7:30pm, Tracy Island.

Since the announcement of Virgil Tracy's upcoming birthday bash at Paradise peaks, the most talked about topic on the island was fashion - at least for the women. The men would, of course, all be wearing tuxedos including Alex and Tyler. It was a different story for the female inhabitants of Tracy Island.

"I'm so NOT wearing that!" Nikki emphatically stated, pointing to the computer screen, which Cherie had pulled up. Moans and groans could be heard around the room.

Tin-Tin, Elise, Kat, Callie, Nikki and Cherie had all congregated in Nikki's apartment about an hour ago. Elise had noticed that Kat was a little down in the dumps when she ran into her in the laundry room earlier that day and all but dragged her to the get together they were having. "I thought you liked shopping!" Elise had said to her when Kat had tried to get out of going. Then, ignoring the rest of her pleas and excuses, Elise escorted Kat to the apartment.

"What's wrong with that one?" Cherie asked a little impatiently. She'd lost track of how many different styles she'd searched online for.

"It's just, well, too flouncy!"

Kat giggled, Elise rolled her eyes and Tin-Tin just shook her head and suggested another website to Cherie. As they continued to look, they listened to Tin-Tin's suggestions and started to find what each was looking for, as well as a few that shouldn't be seen in daylight!

"Oh my gosh! There's nothing to that one!"

"Wait. Hold on.... look at it in orange!"

"Who would seriously wear that?"

"Maybe we should get it! It'll shock Virgil!"

"It'll shock everyone not just the birthday boy!"

"I wish I could be there just to see who does show up wearing that!" Callie added. "Being with my family is more important to me, but I will miss you all!"

"You need to change your birthday to February or something, so you don't miss any cool parties!" Cherie said, smiling. Callie laughed along with the others.

The banter continued with giggles and laughing in between. Kat's spirits had been lifted and she found herself helping Tin-Tin pick out colors. Elise got sodas for everyone and Nikki helped set out snacks.

"You know," said Elise, leaning against a counter, legs casually crossed at the ankles and eating a yogurt, "Paradise Peaks is a ski resort, right?"

"Yes," came a collective reply.

"Well, why can't we just wear ski pants and a sweater?"

Cherie spun around on the computer chair, mouth agape. "We can't wear ski pants!" she exclaimed.

"Are you crazy girl!" added Nikki.

Elise laughed. "It was just a suggestion!"

"Trust me, when my dad and brothers plan a big party... they will be dressing up! So will my mom for that matter."

"In that case, we'd better get serious then." Nikki tried not to smile as she spoke. It didn't work.

As they began finalizing their choices, it was Kat who suggested the idea of them all wearing the same color. "Tin-Tin? Don't you think that'll work? The men will all be in black tuxes, so we could all compliment them!"

Tin-Tin nodded, liking the idea. "Yes, I think it will work, ladies, but first we have to decide on the color."

The next half hour was filled with comments about colors, and shades and the occasional, "Yellow makes me look ill!" and "I look fat in that color!" "No, you don't; it'll look great!" "If you like it so much, you wear it then!"

Finally Tin-Tin raised her voice to put an end to the humorous squabbling. "LADIES!" The room was instantly quiet, all eyes on the pretty Asian. "I think that red will work for everyone. That

seems to be what most of you are looking towards"

After a few seconds, it was unanimous. Red it was. Tin-Tin assured everyone that Grandma Tracy would be happy to do any alterations if needed when the dresses arrived. They each took turns ordering online and printing off a copy of their dress.

"Cherie, are you going to print out some of the dresses for your Grandma and Mom to look at?" asked Tin-Tin.

"Yes, I'm going to show them tonight! Hopefully Mom will like the same one I do!" Cherie held up her hand and crossed her fingers. Tin-Tin smiled at the young girl's enthusiasm. Cherie then grabbed her handful of print outs, announced her departure and rushed off to find her mother.

"I've never been to Paradise Peaks before; this is going to be awesome!" Kat stated.

"Me neither but Tin-Tin has, haven't you?" asked Elise with a smirk. Virgil had told her during one of their training sessions about the time he'd raced TB2 against a cable car with Lady Penelope and Tin-Tin in it.

"Yes, I have!" Then, upon the begging from the others, Tin-Tin told them of her adventures at Paradise Peaks.

"You got to hang out with Cass Carnaby? I'm SO jealous!"

Callie's announcement brought forth peals of laughter as Tin-Tin continued her story.

In the meantime, Cherie had found her Grandma Lisa in the kitchen helping Grandma Tracy cook. "Hmmm ...Smells great!"

"Well, hello there, sweetie. What brings you here?" asked Lisa, giving her granddaughter a hug.

"I'm on my way to find Mom to show her the dresses we've been looking at for the party."

"Well, let's have a look then!" Lisa led Cherie to the table and sat down. "Emily, come and look at these lovely dresses Cherie has picked out."

For the next few minutes, both women "oohhed and ahhed" over the dresses and laughed at Cherie as she became excited all over again about them.

"I do like this one, but you know your mother has to have the final say young lady, don't you?" Lisa said.

"Yes, Grandma, I know."

"Oh don't be so glum, sweetheart. You're blossoming into a lovely young lady and I'm sure your mother will see that and approve of what you like," Emily added.

Cherie smiled again and said, "I hope so," as she hugged her Grandmas once more and left to

find Dianne.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:48:55 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/9/2006 6:16 PM

[August 1, 2068, 9:00 p.m., Tracy Island

Kyrano had been keeping an eye on Lisa all day long. She had gone about her business quietly, far too quietly to his eye. Even Emily had noticed the change and had questioned it.

"Are you feeling okay, Lisa?"

Lisa had looked up, startled. "Oh, uh... I'm okay, Emily. Just a bit tired, that's all. I'll get to bed early tonight."

Emily had given Lisa a look that said plainly, "I don't believe you," but then Kyrano had stepped in.

"I will take Lisa for a walk in the garden this evening, Mrs. Tracy," he had quietly said to her. "Perhaps that will lift her spirits."

Emily had nodded and given the retainer a small, encouraging smile.

Now the cooking for tomorrow was done. The dishes and kitchen were clean. The excitement that Cherie had shared with the two women was gone, and Lisa was quiet once again. He and Lisa were back in his quarters, and Kyrano decided it was time for that little walk.

"Lisa, would you care to accompany me to the garden?"

Lisa looked up from the romance novel that she had been reading, or trying to read. She shook her head slightly. "I'm sorry, love, but I'm not in the mood."

Kyrano gave her a patient smile. "So I have seen. You not been yourself since you arrived back here, but even less so since our talk with Jefferson yesterday." He sat down next to her on the settee. "I think that a change of scenery -- and perhaps some serious discussion on what we should do is in order, dear one." He rose from his seat, and held out his hand.

She glanced from his hand to his face. "You know I can't argue with you when you take that firm tone with me."

"Yes. I know. Please, my dear. Let us visit the garden."

Lisa sighed heavily, and put her hand in his. He helped her to her feet, then ducked into the bedroom and returned with light jackets for them both. He helped her on with hers, then tucked

her hand under his arm, covering it with his opposite hand. Together, they went out to Kyrano's garden.

The evening was dark and chilly and the sea sent a moist, salt-laden breeze their way. Lisa shivered a little, and Kyrano let go of her hand to drape an arm around her shoulders. "We will have fog in the morning, I fear," he said quietly. Lisa only hummed in agreement.

Their path was illuminated by light-sensitive lanterns that gently swayed, hung on wrought iron hooks at ankle level. The bushes of the garden acted as a windbreak to some extent, and the pair sat down in the garden swing. The bench swung a little when they did, then stilled. The scent from the evening flowers that still bloomed despite the season wafted on the breeze and Lisa breathed it in. She relaxed enough to put her head on Kyrano's shoulder for a few minutes. He rubbed her shoulder comfortingly.

After a few quiet moments, Kyrano asked, "Lisa, do you still fear this man?"

Lisa sighed and straightened up. She was quiet for a while, then said, in a small voice, "Yes. Ah do."

"Why is that, love?"

She shook her head. "Ah... Ah don' know. Perhaps it's 'cause Ah never knew what would set him off. The drink was certainly a factor, but near the end there were times when he wasn't drunk and he'd still go off at me. He was... unpredictable and, Ah suspect, unbalanced. Ah still don' know what to expect. He made me feel small an' worthless durin' owah marriage, an' that has nevah changed. Ah nevah did confront him, not even durin' his trial ovah Dianne or durin' owah divorce proceedin's. Ah don' know that Ah can evah confront him." She shivered again. "Seein' him again made me feel small an' worthless... an' angry. Ah won' go back if'n he's hangin' around."

There was another silence between them, then Kyrano coughed softly, clearing his throat. "I know you do not want to return to Greenville. I understand why, and I will not attempt to persuade you otherwise. And you have expressed that you will not follow Douglas to his new home." He pulled her closer. "Perhaps it is time that we... formalized things between us."

She gave him a sharp look, almost disbelieving. "Formalize? As in... marriage?"

He nodded, and said, "Yes, dear one. We have spoken about it before, but until now you have not wanted to leave your home. You have been happy in Greenville with your shop and your friends. But now that happiness is twice shattered." He looked down, and grasped her hand with his free one. "I would see you happy, my dear Lisa. Happy and safe. Not afraid."

He pulled his arm from behind her shoulders, and moved her hand to his now freed grasp. With the other, he steadied himself as he slipped cautiously off the swing and onto one knee before her. "This is difficult for old bones such as ours," he quipped gently. She giggled a little as, now steady, he put both of her hands in his. "My dear, beloved Lisa. Will you marry me?"

She leaned forward, touching her forehead to his. "Oh, Tuan." She shook her head gently. "What am Ah gonna do with you?" She paused, a silence that Kyrano took to bode ill for his idea and his



proposal. Then she chuckled. "Yes. Let's 'formalize' owah relationship. Ah will gladly marry you."

Kyrano let out a breath he hadn't been aware he'd been holding. He lifted Lisa's hands to his lips, kissing them one at a time, then he let go so he could rise from his rather precarious position, groaning. "I do not understand how this practice became popular in the West. It is hard on the knees, and there is a danger of falling over."

Lisa chuckled again as she helped him stand. "I think it had something to do with being knighted and chivalry and all that Middle Ages claptrap." She snuggled close as he sat next to her, putting his arm around her shoulders again. "So. Now that we've settled that matter, what next? Do we tell our family right this evening?"

Kyrano looked out into the darkened garden as he responded. "I think we should wait until as much of our family is gathered as possible. Since Dr. Tracy has gone to New Zealand to speak with the pharmaceutical supplier, I think we should wait until she returns to announce our engagement." He sat up as if stung and said, "Ah! I knew I was forgetting something."

He reached up to remove the chain that hung around his neck, the one that held his alarm pendant. He didn't undo the clasp, but pulled something off the chain before returning the pendant to its usual place. "My trousers and tunics do not have pockets, so I was hard pressed to find a place to put this," he explained as he worked. "The pendant is large enough that this would not slide off."

Lisa, having heard a distinct light clinking of metal against metal, asked, "Is that what Ah think it is, Tuan?"

"If you think it is a ring, you would be correct," Kyrano said smugly. He grasped her left hand and she held up her ring finger helpfully.

"It's warm," she said as he slipped it on. "How long have you had this?"

"A month, perhaps longer," he said. "I have wanted to ask you to marry me for some time now. Jefferson's accident pointed out to me how anyone could be taken from those they love, suddenly and without warning. He was fortunate to survive his ordeal, but you or I, we might not be so. I wanted for us to be one in all ways possible; physical, spiritual, emotional, and legal. I had not yet chosen a time to do this; instead, the time revealed itself."

"Oh, Tuan," Lisa breathed. "Ah am so glad you thought ahead an' did this. This is the answer to mah prayers... as are you."

She reached up with her now-bejeweled hand and drew his face toward hers for a long, sweet kiss. He placed an hand over hers and said, "You are cold. I think it is time we went inside."

"Yes," she said, drawing him to her for one more kiss. "Let's go in. Ah could use a cup of tea right now, and Ah'd like to see this ring in the light. Ah wonder how many people will notice it."

Kyrano chuckled. "I am sure that Mrs. Tracy will if no one else." He stood, and helped her to her feet. "Come, my dear one. The tea, and our warm bed, await."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:52:41 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/10/2006 1:53 PM

Thursday, August 2, 2068, 7:30 a.m., Christchurch, New Zealand (Same day and time, Tracy Island)

Dianne rolled over when the phone rang, groaning. She reached out for it, missed, then reached out for it again and snagged the receiver. The vidphone was already set for "voice only" and she mumbled something into the handset. A perky voice on the other end (not a recorded voice, not for the rich woman in the luxury suite) reminded her that she had asked to be awakened at seven-thirty. By the time the wake-up call ended, Dianne was coherent enough to mumble an actual, "Thank you," before hanging up.

She sat up on the side of the bed, stretching. "Why did I decide to do this by myself?" she muttered as she rubbed her face. "I should have brought Cherie or someone along for company. And I shouldn't have waited until after dinner to leave." Sighing, she rose, dug her toiletries bag from her suitcase, and headed for the shower.

By eight-thirty, she was dressed - complete with make up and styled hair -- and enjoying her room-service breakfast, which she'd ordered after her shower. She glanced at her watch, then at her PDA. Her first appointment was at nine-thirty, with the pharmaceutical supplier. Then she would be off to the Christchurch School of Medicine for her interview there. One of the psychologists on her list had deigned to see her in his office over his lunch break; she hadn't liked his attitude on the phone, but thought he still should have a chance. The woman from Wellington's School of Medicine branch was coming to see her at the hotel at four, and she had appointments with two other local psychologists: one in that worthy's office at two, and the other back at the hotel at five-thirty. I wonder if I can get back to the island in time for dinner? she mused. She had decided that, if her search in Christchurch was fruitless, she would then extend it to Auckland and beyond.

She finished her coffee, brushed her teeth, and primped her hair a bit in the mirror. A touch more lipstick, a quick phone call, then she grabbed her suit jacket, purse, and brief case, and was on her way down to the chauffeured car that had been arranged for her convenience.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:53:50 GMT  
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From: MagicMaster8 Sent: 9/10/2006 5:41 PM

Thursday, August 2, 2068; Tracy Island; 4:30 p.m.

It was a beautiful winter day, and Brandon decided to take advantage of the remaining daylight. In addition to his regular duties, he had spent some extra time on the simulator and was due to go to Hawaii to try for his pilot's license. Being the person he was, he wanted everything to be perfect.

"Now to relax," he said, stopping to pick up a book off the table. He went out on the balcony and sat down at the table. He had just started to read his book when the door buzzer rang.

"Coming!" he shouted, putting the book down and going to answer the door. Upon doing so, he was surprised to see Callie standing there.

"Hey, Brandon, what's up?" Callie asked. "I was wondering where you were since I haven't seen you much lately. It seems we've both been busy with things other than our regular duties."

"I was in the simulator practicing my landings. I don't want a repeat of what happened when I was on my first flight with Virgil." He remembered too well his less than perfect landing. On his approach he thought he had seen something on the runway and had pulled up too quickly. Trying the landing again, he had lined up the plane with the runway, the plane touching down and bouncing twice.

After a few minutes of talking, Brandon remembered his manners and invited her in.

"Would you like something to drink?" Brandon asked Callie, going to the kitchen. "I have soda, iced tea and bottled water."

"No thank you, I'm still full from lunch."

"So," Brandon asked, walking into the living room with a bottle of water in his hand, "what's up with you?"

Callie laughed. "I was going to ask you the same thing."

"I've been practicing on the simulator a lot and Virgil's been taking me up in Ladybird whenever he can so I can get in some extra flight time. In addition, there are my regular duties."

They walked out onto the balcony and Callie looked down, noticing the book lying on the table. "Oh, did I interrupt anything?"

"No, no, you're fine. I was going to ask YOU what you've been up to. I haven't seen you much for the last couple of days."

"I've been working with Brains and Tin-Tin in the lab. We've gone non-stop trying to find a way to neutralize the environmental effects of the experimental fuel from the King of Thailand's private plane." She frowned. "We haven't had any luck yet but we are getting close."

"Hey, knowing you guys, you'll find the solution."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence."

The two friends talked a little more before Callie excused herself and headed back to her apartment.

After she'd left, Brandon went back to the balcony table, picking up the book and flipping through it, thinking about what was to come. Jeff had made arrangements for him to be flown to Hawaii on the fifth where he would meet with a flight instructor and take the final test for his license. While he was excited at the prospect, he was nervous at the same time.

I know I've been practicing my landings, but what if I mess up? Mr. Tracy's counting on me to be a back-up on Thunderbird Two and I don't want to disappoint him. Brandon smiled. And I could use the license myself.

Brandon thought back to his time in WASP. The basic training had been tough, but, thanks to his perseverance, he had made it. Hey, if I can make it through WASP, I can make it through this.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 21:55:32 GMT  
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 9/10/2006 6:42 PM

(Thursday 9:38 p.m. El Dorado, KS / Friday 2:38 p.m. Tracy Island)

Thursday night, Heather picked up her wine glass and walked out onto her front porch. The night sky displayed itself like a ebony silk sheet in the sky, full of tiny stars and and a handful of meteors. Heather drew in a breath at the beauty, wishing there was someone to share it with. The evening was much like the night when Heather had arrived home from been in the South Pacific. The air had been thick and muggy as it was tonight. As she got out that early 1:30 a.m., the cab driver opened the trunk and pulled out her luggage. "Would you like me to carry these in for you?" he asked, grabbing his leather hat as they stood in her driveway.

"No, thank you. I can manage," she answered as she maneuvered her purse, started to look for her wallet.

"Oh, don't worry about the tip. The young man took care of that, too. Thank you muchly!" Tipping his hat, he crawled back into his car and drove back onto the road again.

Her feet ached, her stomach growled, and she was tired, but she couldn't help looking into the night sky, marveling at the heavenly expanse. "I have to admit, it's a beautiful night. I'm grateful I've got tomorrow off so I can readjust from being on the other side of the International Dateline!" she had said to herself as she grabbed her luggage and pushed the gate open.

Closing it, she'd made her way up the sidewalk to her ranch-styled home. Too tired to sleep right away, Heather started up a glass of iced tea in the Brew Master and then kicked off her shoes. "Oh ow! Oh pain!" Heather winced. "You could have dressed for comfort, but no-o-o-o-o-o. You

had to dress sharp for Mr. Tracy, knowing this would be the last he'd see of you until you give him word. Boy, my feet hurt! I still say it would have been kind to at least warn me to bring clothes for winter in the tropics!"

Walking barefoot in thick cushy carpet into her bedroom, she pulled everything off and slipped into a soft robe. "What will I do?" She laughed as she went to the kitchen for her glass of fresh green tea. "I won't be able to walk around nude there, that's for sure. Not like I can here!"

She looked around her high tech home with its TV constantly on the meteorology channel. Walking over, she reached over on the electronic console and fired up the television. A cold front was moving over the Rockies, while heat continually flowed from the Gulf.

A flag popped up on the HDTV, signalling that she had online mail that had come in. Several of them had little cameras next to them indicating that they were video mail. The first one was from her friend, Andrea Gainor. Andrea was a willowy, blue-eyed, blonde weather forecaster and Heather's complete opposite. Where Heather wanted to fly amongst the clouds, Andrea wanted her feet firmly on terra firma. It was Andrea who constantly encouraged Heather to get out and mingle.

"Heather! It's been ages since I've seen you! Did you fly off to Jamaica or something? Look, my boyfriend, Mark, has this friend who's in the Air Force and wants to you! You'd be a perfect match!"

"No, we aren't! He's Air Force and I'm Navy. Totally incompatible! Everybody knows that," Heather laughed to herself.

"Give me a call! This week! Don't sit on your duff out in the wheat fields, counting the number of hailstones in an square inch!" Andrea's beautiful face vanished off the screen.

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Heather yawned. "But I will call. N-n-next!"

The next video call was James Kennedy. He looked sternly in the camera, but there was a twinkle in his eyes as he spoke. "Heather, I'm waiting for your call. I darn well better be the next call you make when the sun rises or sometime thereafter!"

"Yes, Father," she sighed with a grin.

"And by the way, I wanted warn you--" Jim whispered, looking around. "Your mother found out about Tracy's sons. She pitched a fit, threatening to throw you into a convent!"

Heather let out a snort, commenting, "I sure couldn't walk around nude there either!" She managed to get to bed not long after that. Three days later, Heather stared up at the sky, debating on whether or not to join International Rescue.

Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:02:03 GMT  
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From: susanmartha Sent: 9/10/2006 9:04 PM

"Dr. Hanson? I'm Dr. Dianne Tracy." She was meeting her 5th and final candidate for a counselor. Ms. Hanson had just retired and no longer had an office, so Dianne had suggested they meet at the hotel restaurant. If they wanted to talk privately, they could go to Dianne's suite later.

Anna Hanson didn't look like a businesswoman. She was wearing a nice pair of slacks and a plain silk blouse. She looks comfortable, more like a school teacher. Her handshake was firm.

"Dr. Tracy. I'm pleased to meet you also. And it's Mrs. Hanson. I just have a Master's in Social work, not a PhD."

"Considering some of the PhDs I've met so far, that might be an advantage." Dianne chuckled.  
"Would you like to order something? Tea, coffee?"

"Coffee, please. Decaf, with cream." The hovering waitress nodded and brought a cup and a bowl of flavored creamers over, while the two women sized each other up.

"I understand you are looking for a counselor to help with a family practice. I gather from your comment your search has not gone well?"

"No, it hasn't been going well. I have a patient who needs help immediately. It's not something I feel comfortable doing. I've dealt with trauma before but she is going to need more help than I can give, and more time than I can spare. I already have her on antidepressants and they are helping some. But I don't think she's actually healing from what happened, just suppressing it. I have 2 other patients who need some help. Plus I'm keeping an eye on one of my sons. Tyler was sick a couple months ago and I believe it was due to stress. There have been a lot of changes in his life in the past year. My husband nearly died last February and there were several other major changes in Tyler's life about that time. I know I'm not the best one to handle this -- I'm too personally involved." Dianne took a sip of her coffee. "I don't want him to cover his feelings up to try and protect me. If that's what he's doing, I can't be the one to deal with it. It needs an outsider."

"For several reasons, I would like to have someone come to my home to start work with the patients. They could come to the mainland for appointments after things have been set up, but right now the doctor or counselor needs to come to them."

"The problem is none of the established doctors are willing to do that. They don't want to leave their current patients for that long. And they don't see a reason to. The ones who are willing to come -- well, I wouldn't turn a dog over to one of them and the other," she hesitated, "I think he's out for all he can get. And I just don't feel right about him."

"Trust your gut. There are some doctors and counselors out there that shouldn't be trusted with a houseplant, much less a human being." Anna grinned. "Sturgeon's law applies to doctors and counselors as well as everything else."

"Sturgeon's law? What's that? Who is he?" Dianne looked quizzically at her.

"He was a mid 20th century science fiction writer. His law is right up there with Murphy's. '90% of everything is crap'."

Dianne snorted. "Sounds about right for today."

"I'm curious." Anna looked at Dianne. "Where do you live that it's so hard to get a counselor out there? Most places that are large enough to have a doctor usually have enough people to have at least a part time counselor? And why do you need to have someone come there at first?"

Dianne stared at her for a second, then quickly recovered. "I want someone to come and stay for a bit because one of the problems is rather complicated. You would be better off talking to several of the others involved before talking to the patient. She will be better off talking to you in a place where she feels safe. And, yes, we are a bit isolated."

She doesn't know we have our own island. she mused. If she doesn't know I'm 'That' Dianne Tracy, so much the better.

"You know, I specialized in trauma cases - especially with police officers, firefighters and paramedics who have been injured on the job, seen a colleague killed on the job, or been forced to kill in the line of duty. My other experience is mostly with victims of major accidents, natural disasters, rape and abuse. That's not exactly a family practice."

"The two people I'm most worried about fall into those categories. And I can't say anything else without breaking patient confidentiality." Or, she thought, without breaking IR security.

Anna leaned back and looked at her. "You do know the law requires me to report anytime I feel a child might be in danger. If there is something like that going on I must turn you in. And I will."

"The only child involved is Tyler, who's nine. There is nothing illegal or immoral going on." She grinned. "I won't say anything about fattening."

Now for the biggest sticking point. "How are you with handling other religions? Or 'alternate belief systems'? One of the patients has some unusual beliefs." Dianne had decided this was the best way to try to explain about Callie and the Hood, after her first attempt had been met with laughter and a, "She hears voices in her head? We have a good inpatient treatment center," from a noted psychiatrist.

"It doesn't matter what I believe. It's my job to help my client in any way I can." Anna closed her eyes for a second. "You know I've worked with domestic violence victims?" When Dianne nodded, she went on. "While I was in college, I interned at a shelter. One of our clients was convinced her husband had put a curse on her and could follow her anywhere. So she and I together hunted up a priest, shaman..." Anna shrugged. "I never could decide just what he was. But she had faith in him. We arranged for him to come to the center the day she escaped, and he did a full ritual while we were filling out paperwork. I don't know if it worked, but her husband never found her or her kids. We did have to disconnect the smoke alarm though."



Anna waved the waitress over for a coffee refill and thought for a moment.

"You know, I planned on being an Episcopal priest for a while." Dianne's eyebrows shot up in surprise. "I've come to the conclusion that God is a whole lot bigger than I am. I have no idea what he looks like to others. And there are so many things out there I don't understand; how can I say what is actually possible? I once had a patient who thought rocks talked to her. Since they generally gave her good advice, I didn't worry too much. As long as it isn't hurting anyone, why should I care? If his or her beliefs get in the way of the client's healing, I'll worry about it then."

"How is the 'rock' patient doing?" Dianne knew it was unprofessional of her, but she had to ask.

"Well, I last saw her 20 years ago. She had left her alcoholic husband, gotten her first job and had returned to finish high school. Rocks no longer talked to her much but they were still very soothing." She paused for a moment. "You know, that was actually the case the made me decide to return to school and become a certified counselor instead of a social worker. I realized I was so much better at counseling than arranging for public assistance. And I actually enjoyed it."

Dianne nodded slowly and sipped her coffee. "I'd like for you to come to my home and meet some people. It's on an island, so it might be easier if you planned on staying overnight. If the people involved agree, I would like for you to stay a while or make some arrangements to come back for a short time to do initial assessments and meet some of the other people involved."

"I'll need to talk this over with my husband. How long would you want me to stay?"

"The first time? At least a week. After that, we'll try to set up regular appointments here or arrange for you to fly out once a week. You have a pilot's license, don't you?" Dianne had noticed that and thought it might simplify things.

"Yes, but I really don't like to fly anymore." At Dianne's raised eyebrow she continued. "Three words: congestive heart failure."

Dianne looked her over with a professional eye. "How bad?"

"Not very. I get tired easily. I don't walk up more than two flights of stairs. But when I do get tired, I just go plop! I need to rest right then with no time to land a plane." She made a face. "I never liked piloting that much. My husband likes to fly and I figured I better know how to at least land his plane. But I'd rather walk."

"Well, let's get back to our respective husbands and I'll call you tomorrow." Dianne took a deep breath. "If you are still unsure about going to a strange place with a total stranger, I could provide some references. With your background I can understand being cautious."

Anna grinned and stood up. "No, I don't need references. Your request was odd enough that I called some friends in the police department and checked up on you. But you can tell Jefferson Tracy that he better have a good explanation for his son quitting NASA. I know he had to quit -- his boys needed him to be there. But why did John quit? He was doing so well."

Dianne watched as she walked away. "You just might find that out."

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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/10/2006 9:13 PM

Thursday, August 2, 2068, 7:45 p.m., Tracy Island

Dessert was nearly finished, though Dianne was still eating her entrée. She had arrived home around 7:20, missing the beginning of dinner, even though Jeff had asked that it be delayed for her. Kyrano moved around the table, refilling coffee cups and smiling at the banter between the various family members. After having refreshed Jeff's coffee, he put the thermal carafe on the sideboard, and went to stand next to Lisa, who had eaten with the family to keep an eye on the children in Dianne's absence.

He put a hand on her shoulder, and she glanced up at him, then she said, "If'n Ah could have everyone's attention..."

Those around the table quieted and their eyes turned toward the retainer and Lisa. Kyrano colored a little and cleared his throat, while Lisa smiled widely.

"We... Lisa and I... have an announcement to make," Kyrano said solemnly. He paused, swallowed, and continued. "Last evening, I asked Lisa to be my wife."

The audible gasp of shock and delight made him pause, but things didn't quiet until Jeff called, "And what did you say, Lisa?"

Lisa smiled even wider. "What else could Ah say? Yes, of course."

The table erupted into cries of excited congratulations. Emily leaned over and murmured so that only Lisa could hear, "I thought as much. That ring on your finger told me the whole story."

"Kyrano said you'd know before anyone else," Lisa murmured back. "Thanks for keeping it quiet until we could announce it ourselves."

"Have you set a date yet?" Tin-Tin asked her father.

He shook his head. "No, we have not. But it will not be far in the future. We are too old to wait for long."

"Hey!" Gordon cried. "This will mean that Mom and Tin-Tin will be step-sisters!"

"Gordon!" warned Jeff.

The redhead kept going. "And if our 'mom' is her sister... that makes Tin-Tin our step-aunt!" He waved at Tin-Tin gleefully. "Hey, Auntie Tin-Tin!"

Tin-Tin glared at him, as Brains shook his head and tried to keep from laughing. "Don't go there, Gordon. Just don't go there," she warned, shaking her finger at him.

The others laughed, and Tyler piped up to say, "Hey! That means we'll have another grandpa! Grandpa Kyrano!"

Kyrano nodded. "You are correct, Master Tyler. But I would prefer to be addressed as 'Grandfather'."

"Can we start calling you that now?" Alex asked.

"Wait until after the wedding, okay, Alex?" Dianne said. She got up and circled the table to hug her mother. "Ah am so happy for you, Ma. So very, very happy."

"Ah'm pretty happy about it, too," Lisa said as she returned the embrace. "It just seemed to be the right time."

Dianne's eyes met those of Kyrano, and suddenly, she was unsure what to do. The retainer would soon be her step-father, but there was the man's general reservedness, and his deep sense of propriety... and somehow, a hug just didn't seem proper -- at least, not yet. Instead, she bowed deeply. "We will be happy an' honored to have you as part of owah family, Kyrano."

Kyrano returned the bow. "I look forward to becoming so... Dianne."

Meanwhile, Jeff had disappeared, and Emily with him. They reappeared a few moments later with a tray full of champagne flutes, which they passed out as Jeff said, "I have a bottle of champagne in the chiller, and I'll put another in as soon as that one is done. We must have a toast to the engaged couple."

Scott got up to help, as Dianne took her seat once more. The whole task took some time to organize properly, but soon everyone had a glass of champagne -- except the children, who had sparkling white grape juice -- and Jeff, standing at the head of the table, raised his glass.

"A toast," he declared. "To Kyrano and Lisa. May their marriage be as happy as their love is deep."

"And may all the preparations go smoothly," Dianne added.

The rest of the family and friends around the table chuckled, then echoed, "To Kyrano and Lisa."

xxxx

Later, Lisa wrote an email to John.

Dear John,

Funny way for me to start a letter, that! Insert lame joke about "Dear John" letters...

I just wanted to let you know that Kyrano and I are engaged to be married. He asked me last night, and I accepted. We announced our engagement after dinner this evening, and everyone is very, very happy for us. It will make a difference in some of the familial relationships around here,

as Gordon told all and sundry once he'd thought them through. Word of advice: if you value your life, do NOT call Tin-Tin "Auntie"! And Kyrano will prefer to be called "Grandfather", but only after the wedding!

We haven't set a wedding date yet, though I think it will be either late this year or early next year. Kyrano doesn't want to wait long, and neither do I. Life is far too short to get caught up in preparations; it's the doing of the thing that matters.

We'd have spoken to you in person, but the evening got away from us, and I didn't want to keep you up too late. So we'll talk to you in the morning, as you deserve to ask your questions of us personally. Your father is sending an email to announce this to the other team members, and Dianne is writing our engagement notice, which she'll send to the papers in Greenville, complete with picture. She also insisted on taking a close up picture of my ring, which I've attached to this email. I'll be calling my brother and my other children as soon as the time zones align (as Dianne would say). I hope they are as happy for me as the family here is.

Take care up there, and I'll talk to you soon.

Love,  
Grandma P.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:06:37 GMT  
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From: Tawnyangel22 Sent: 9/11/2006 1:53 AM

Tracy Island -- 3rd August -- early morning.

Gordon arrived at the gym to see Alan running on the treadmill and very red in the face. He chuckled. "Hey, little brother. Looks like you're a little out of shape."

Alan reduced the speed. "You'd be breathing hard too if you'd been running for nearly forty-five minutes," he replied between gasps.

"Hah!" his brother exclaimed. "I don't suppose it has anything to do with all that apple pie you were stuffing at dinner last night."

Alan slowly increased the speed on the treadmill again. "I eat a healthy diet, even on Thunderbird Five, although the flash frozen meals aren't quite the same as the ones here."

"Well, you certainly seemed to make up for it last night," Gordon chuckled.

"I enjoy Grandma's cooking," his brother replied.

"Yeah, right," Gordon said, still laughing. He picked up some weights and began doing some bicep curls, all the time watching his brother.

Soon Alan slowed the treadmill down, walking on it for a few minutes to cool down. When it stopped, he got off, and walked across to the rowing apparatus. Sitting on it, he bent his knees as he grasped the bar. Pulling it back, he straightened his legs and continued in a smooth rowing motion. Suddenly he had an idea, stopped rowing, then called across to Gordon.

"How about a little bet?"

The auburn haired young man eyed his brother suspiciously. "What exactly do you have in mind?"

"Oh, just a few trials, to see which of us is the fittest," Alan answered. "Are you up for it?"

"Yes, of course I am," his brother replied.

Alan smiled. "Okay, we'll start with who can do the most sit ups in two minutes, and then who can do the most press ups in two minutes."

"No, not press ups; how about bicep curls at an agreed weight?" Gordon replied.

"Okay," his brother replied. "What if we finish with a run along the beach? See who wins."

His brother nodded in agreement. "Sounds okay to me. If you like we could get some of the new recruits to cheer us on. I'm sure you'd like to show off in front of Nikki." And he gave him a sideways look.

But Alan shook his head, "No. No onlookers. Let's do this early one morning."

Gordon grinned at him. "Okay, you're on. But I really think that we should have someone to judge these tests. I suggest Virgil and Scott."

Alan glanced at him. "Okay. I'll ask them, but I want Virgil to judge me."

"Why don't you want Scott?"

"He's too strict."

Gordon chuckled. "I don't think that Virgil will be easy to fool. Anyway, how much are we wagering?"

"Ten dollars?"

"Only ten?" Gordon said.

"Could make it twenty if you like."

"Twenty-five and it's a deal."

They both shook hands, and then continued with their workout.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:30:12 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/11/2006 8:18 AM

Friday, August 3, 2068, 1:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Lisa hummed as she worked, pulling Cherie's lengthening locks through her fingers and snipping off the split ends that had developed. Cherie smiled at her image in the room's mirror, and Lisa, catching her granddaughter's eye in her reflection, smiled back.

"Lands' sakes, child," she said as she began to part Cherie's hair into more manageable portions. "When this grows out it'll be pretty, but heavy. Are you sure you want to have long hair in this climate?"

"Yes, Grandma, I do. Steph has had long hair for years, and I love the way it looks... when it's brushed and braided."

"Yes, it is pretty when it's brushed and braided, I'll give you that," Lisa admitted. "But let her go without brushing for just a few hours, and it's a mare's nest! And I hate how it looks when she first wakes up in the morning." She fingered the hair in her hand for a moment. "Of course, her hair is fine compared to yours. You shouldn't have as much trouble with snarls."

Cherie's eyes darted about the room in the Round House. Once it became clear that Lisa's frequent visits to the island would include a session or two of hair styling and cutting, Jeff set up one of the first floor guest rooms as a salon of sorts. It had the appropriate sinks, dryers, mirrors and even a couple of state-of-the-art hydraulic chairs so that Lisa could work her magic in comfort. "This place has better equipment than my own salon," she had quipped when she first saw it. "But it'll never replace the customers I have."

"Grandma?"

"Yes, hon?"

"What will you do with your salon once you and Kyrano are married?"

Lisa paused in her work for only a moment and sighed. Then she went back to French braiding her granddaughter's hair. "I suppose I'll sell the shop. Your father says he'll help me with that. I'll miss all my customers, of course, and I'm sure they'll miss me for a while. But they'll soon find other people to style their hair."

"What will you do here?" Cherie wanted to know.

The older woman smiled softly. "I'll be a wife again, which is a good thing. And I'll continue to help out in the kitchen, and with taking care of you and your brothers and even little Joshua from time to time."

"Why don't you have a salon here?" Cherie suggested. "You know; offer to cut the hair of anyone who lives here. I'm sure the other team members would like not having to go to New Zealand or Moyla to get their hair done."

Lisa's smile grew. "That's such a good idea that I've already thought about it. I sent out an email today to let them know that I'm available to do it. I'll also be available for massage, too, since that's something I know how to do. I have a feeling that with all that I'm able to do to help, I won't be bored living out here."

The door slid open, and Dianne walked in, greeting her mother and her daughter. She walked around Cherie, nodding in approval as her daughter's hairstyle was finished.

"You always look nice in a French braid, hon," she said as she handed Cherie the small mirror. Lisa turned the chair around and the teen used the hand held looking glass to see the back of her hair.

"Looks great, Grandma," she said as Lisa removed the protective cape and brushed the cut hairs from her face and neck with a soft shaving brush. She climbed down from the chair and gave Lisa a kiss. "See you later!"

Lisa smiled as she watched Cherie go. "Best pay I've had all day." She looked at her daughter, who had taken up Cherie's position in the chair and was idly studying her nails. "What's up with you?"

"I was wondering how things went with your phone calls," Dianne said, trying to sound blasé.

"Oh, checking up on me, are we? Hmm?" Lisa replied. She took the other hairdressing chair and turned it to face her daughter. "Well, Doug was... himself, I guess. Shocked, trying hard to figure out what was in it for him, and whining about the fact that I was moving here, instead of going to Indiana with him. I think that if I stayed in Greenville, he wouldn't squawk. But moving here makes him think I'm choosing you over him. I had to make it quite clear that I was choosing Kyrano over him. Angela was thrilled, but then, she's always been more practical and less envious." She sighed. "I'm sure Garrett knows by now, too."

Dianne nodded. "How about Jared?"

"Well," Lisa began, "I ended up telling him the whole story about Garrett. Jared said that he hadn't heard word one from his father, and thanked me for letting him know what was going on. He was happy for me, and wanted to meet Kyrano some time before the wedding. I told him I'd see what we could do."

"And Drew?"



Lisa laughed. "Over the moon for us. Maggie, too." She glanced at Dianne, then down. "I've asked him to be the one to give me away, and... I've asked Maggie to be my maid-of-honor. I hope you don't mind."

Dianne felt stung by her mother's decision, but hid it as well as she could. "It's your choice, Ma, and though I'd love to have stood up for you in that capacity, Maggie's a great choice, too. I know how supportive she was when Garrett took off, even though they didn't live close to us." She smiled encouragingly. "You've made a great choice, Ma, all the way around."

"I know," Lisa answered. "And thanks for being understanding." Both women stood up to embrace. "You're the best daughter I could ever have."

"You're just saying that because I'm your only daughter," Dianne gently quipped.

Lisa raised an eyebrow in sly challenge. "Not for much longer, Di. Don't forget; I'll soon have a step-daughter to compare you to. And I've had daughters-in-law as well."

Dianne laughed. "Okay, okay. Point taken." She embraced her mother again. "Thanks, Ma. I love you, y'know."

"I know. And I love you more."

There was a small silence, which Dianne broke. "Well, when's your next appointment?"

Lisa picked up a PDA from a nearby table. "Don't have any more appointments for today. Why?"

"Want to come help me pick out a dress for Virgil's birthday?"

"Now that sounds like a good idea! Let me clean up here, then we'll hit the virtual shopping mall!"

Dianne laughed again. It'll be good to have her here full-time. I never realized how much I missed her until now.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:31:23 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/11/2006 9:07 PM

Friday, August 3, 2068, 2:30 p.m., Tracy Island

Jeff sat back and sighed heavily with relief, turning off the vidphone with a decided click. He'd just gotten off the phone with Simone, the Tracy Industries security chief for South Carolina, and in particular, Greenville. She was also an IR agent, a position that made it easier for Jeff to talk with

her about specific security issues.

Good to know that Garrett's stopped hanging around Lisa's house. But then, if Lisa made those phone calls she said she was planning on, he probably has heard from Douglas about his ex-wife's impending nuptials.

He tapped his stylus on his chin. Simone said she'd send me a list of recommended local realtors. Lisa will have to have the final say, of course. She might not even want to sell the house... but the business, that's another matter. We can discuss it later, when she's ready to. He glanced over at his calendar. I'd better add that meeting with Mrs. Hanson to the list. Don't want to forget it. Have to make arrangements to get her here, too. He shook his head. It's not always easy living in paradise.

He was in the middle of adding Anna Hanson's phone number to the entry for their meeting with her when Dianne walked in. Glancing up, he smiled, then went back to finish the job.

"So, do we have an appointment with Mrs. Hanson?" Dianne asked.

He nodded. "On the sixth at 10 a.m., rescues permitting. I've set aside Tracy One for the flight to Christchurch. Would you like to be the pilot?"

Dianne thought about this for a moment. "Well, if I went, she'd know that she was safe and in good hands, whether I was flying or not." She snorted a laugh. "She seems to be one who does her homework."

"All right," Jeff said "I'll put you down as riding along, even if you don't pilot. I'll check around to see who else might be available."

"Alan would be a good choice since he hasn't flown for a month or so."

Jeff nodded. "And he could take one of the new team members up as co-pilot so they could get in some more practice. I'll see who Scott thinks could use it."

"Sounds like you've got a handle on it." Dianne moved around his desk to sit in his lap. "I think she'll be good for us. Seems to be very down-to-earth."

"I hope so." He smiled at her, raising an eyebrow coyly. "Do you have some particular purpose in mind, Mrs. Tracy?"

She kissed him, long and deeply. "Just a little sugar to speed me on mah way," Dianne drawled. "Ah have an appointment with mah mothah to look at some fancy dresses foah Virgil's party."

"Ah, I see." He returned the favor, his tongue sliding into her mouth and making her moan. "Do I get to see this fancy dress?"

Smiling, she ran a finger down the length of his nose. "Not until the party. Ah want to surprise you."

Kissing him once more, she squeezed him tight, then got up. "Ah'll see you latuh, suh."

"Later, love," Jeff said with a soft smile. He watched her go, admiring her derrière from the back, and smiling wider as she stopped at the study door to blow him a kiss. Then he sighed, and sat back in his chair, hands behind his head, allowing himself a little daydream of his wife and himself... later.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:32:44 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 9/13/2006 9:52 PM

Friday, August 3, 7 PM; Silver Spring (1PM August 4 on Tracy Island)

Lena finished washing up her dishes, then went into her office to check her personal email. She saw one from Lady Penelope, with whom she'd communicated sporadically since they met, and opened it. She enjoyed Penny's descriptions of some of the people she socialized with, and this email started out no differently. But the last part brought Lena up short.

I thought you ought to hear this from me, in case you got word somehow, about Brains while he was in Paris. It seems that the Hightowers' attention has been redirected toward him. Several attempts were made to kidnap him, some which were thwarted by our young engineer, himself. Although I did not witness the first few, I was told that he got into a taxi driven by a minion of the Hightowers, only to get out on the other side, because he saw someone he wanted to talk to. He also turned around to go retrieve something he'd forgotten a hair's breadth before a couple of men were going to grab him.

I did see him knock over his martini, which I knew for a fact that someone had drugged. He'd been talking and gesturing at the time. Did you know that he drank martinis? I didn't. It seems that you never know someone as well as you think you do.

I was able to thwart two more, along with Parker (who sends his best wishes, by the way), and our Paris agent, and he headed to your area without a hitch, as you already know. He was totally unaware of what was happening. And he arrived on Tracy Island safe and sound.

The main reason I'm telling you this is because I remember the promise you told me you made to the Hightowers. I want to ask you not to carry it out this time for two reasons. First, it could cause their attention to once again be fixed on you. And second, nothing you could do to them right now could be any worse than the frustration they must be feeling at all the failed attempts. And that could make them all more dangerous.

Please take care of yourself and keep in touch.

Penelope

As she read the message, surprise and anger mixed with amusement. She considered Penny's request, and realized that there was a lot of truth in her reasons. All right, Penelope, she thought. But de next time dey try something like dis wit someone I know, I will retaliate! She sent a reply, then turned to the rest of her email, before getting back to work on the security program.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:37:30 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 9/14/2006 7:56 AM

Saturday 4th August, 2068, 2.30pm, Tracy Island.

Dominic ran a hand through his hair and glanced behind him, frowning when the footsteps he thought he had heard heralded no company. He was standing outside Jeff's study in the villa lounge, having requested a meeting with the man not long before.

A few moments after pressing the door chime, a resonant, "Come in," sounded from inside, and Dominic activated the door release, and stepped inside.

"Afternoon," he said pleasantly. "How's tricks?"

"Hello, Dominic," Jeff replied, smiling lightly. "'Tricks' are fine, thank you." He chuckled. "Have a seat."

Dominic slid down into the comfortable chair on the other side of Jeff's desk, and clasped his hands in his lap.

"You said something about your codename earlier," Jeff said. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, on the last operation it became apparent that my codename and Doctor Tracy's codename are a little too similar for comfort. With the communications problems, 'Dak' and 'Doc' were getting mixed up."

"I see what you mean," Jeff said. "And with both of you on the medical team, it's only going to cause more problems."

"Exactly. So," Dom said, "I'd like to change mine. Doesn't make sense to ask Doctor Tracy t' change hers. I mean, she is the Doc, after all," he said with a lopsided grin.

"That's true. Have you decided on one?"

"Yes: Tynan. Me gran used t' call me it when I was little. Don't ask me why. I figure that no one'll ever recognise that, 'cept her, of course, but I'd like t' think that my gran won't be in need of

rescuing by us at any point!"

"Okay. Request granted," Jeff said. "I'll circulate the new codename via email too make sure everyone takes heed of the change."

"Ta," Dom said.

"Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"No, thanks. Unless you've got the name of a good local barber," Dom said jokingly.

"Well, actually..."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:38:10 GMT  
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 9/14/2006 7:12 PM

(Saturday, August 4; East of Towanda; 11:30 a.m./ 4:30 a.m. August 5; Tracy Island)

While Heather was in her office pushing paper, Richard intently studied the skies. The weather for the Wichita-Hutchinson area was expected to be bad. He could smell a hint of ozone on the winds. On the horizon, he could just make out a dark layer of storm clouds marching towards the testing grounds. Pulling up his favorite digital binoculars, he looked again towards the horizon. Through the high-powered glasses, he could see a boiling, thick, yellowish mass of storm clouds spreading out along a dry line.

"This is gonna be bad!" he muttered to himself. The moment he turned to head into the facility, he heard the sound of a wailing siren. The X-star and two other test planes were already beginning to sink into their underground hangers for protection.

Sitting in her office, Heather tapped out the final paper on the X-Star she'd been testing. Of all the aircraft she'd flown, she liked the X-Star the best. The prototype came fresh from the developers, beautifully designed and with a new, near frictionless skin. Heather needed just a few flights to fine tune the engines and to adjust the weight on the struts in order to declare it fit for manufacturing. Tapping out the last sentence and double checking her spelling, Heather poked the enter key with a flourish. Leaning back in her office chair, Heather's smile became rueful. Already, she was feeling bored, wanting the adrenaline rush that came with testing newly designed aircraft. Turning around in her seat, she looked at the huge glass windows that encased the general office that she shared with the other pilots. The feeling of lethargy was already sneaking it's way into her mind and fidgeted in her seat. Would joining International Rescue keep that at bay? Would it be the thing that would force me to settle down? she wondered as she saw Richard running down the hallway to her office.

As she got up out of her seat to meet Richard and ask him where the fire was, she heard sirens

popping on. Grabbing her flight jacket, Heather hurried out into the hallway. "Planes locked down?!" she shouted as they headed towards the exit.

"Yes!" he shouted back. "They're all dropping underground right now! I checked the sky and there's a massive storm building up roughly 25 miles from here! We should get underground ourselves!"

Shaking her head, Heather shouted as the sirens continued. "I'm heading home!"

"Home?!"

"Yes!" Heather shouted back. "My Aunt Jenny lives alone! I want to be there! Or at least be nearby!"

"That storm has got the longest dry line I've ever seen! Will it do me any good to tell you to stay here?!"

"No!" she insisted with a grin as she led them to the nearest exit.

The heat outside surprised her as she walked out to her Jaguar. Jumping in, Heather fired up the engine and drove out to the security station. As she waited for Ben Sanders, the security guard, to check her security pass, she could see the storm approaching. "Ms. Kennedy, you're hearing the alarms, right?" asked Ben as he gave her back her security pass. "I've just got orders to close down the security station and hit the basement. You really should follow me down."

"Get that bar in the air and I mean right now!" Heather demanded. Instantly, the security bar blocking her way popped up into the air. Ben watched the Jag roll out of the gate, turn right on the highway, and lay down a strip of hot rubber as the engine roared to life.

Heading down U.S. 35, towards home just outside El Dorado, Heather noticed the sunlight rapidly disappearing. "That's coming up quicker than I ever thought," she muttered to herself. "Wow!" As she headed northeast, a patrol car on the other side of the divided highway raced with lights flashing and sirens screaming back towards Wichita. She continued down the road until she was near Towanda, which lay to the west of the highway when the sky blackened behind her and lightning streaked across the unstable sky. In the rear view mirror, Heather saw a white pipe of a cloud dropping down from the sky. Twisting the wheel, Heather guided the black Jag over to the side of the road and climbed out into a ferocious wall of wind.

She stared into the sky amazed at what she was seeing. "I've seen them, but never this close!" she breathed, trying to get her heart to stop racing. It's so close! And the sirens haven't come on out here! Frightened for the towns around her as well as her aunt, she grabbed her cellphone and called the police.

The funnel began to twirl and twist its way down towards the ground as she watched in morbid fascination. "This is Heather Kennedy! I'm on U.S. 35, east of Towanda! I'm watching a funnel cloud dropping from a half mile wide base! The sirens are not on!"

"Where are you?" she heard an officer say.

"I said, I am on U.S. 35, east of Towanda! Fifteen minutes from El Dorado!" She spoke distinctly as possible.

"We've got several tornadoes touching down right now!"

"Oh, God, no!" Heather whispered as she stared upward. There were tornado seasons where a few tornadoes touched down, and then there were summers where there could be as many as 72 in one night. As the tip of her tornado edged closer to the ground, dirt and debris began to dance around and around. Somewhere, a siren began to blow, to be joined by more as word began to fly from one community to the next.

Nearby, other cars slowed down down and stopped, seeing either the tornado touching ground or Heather's stopped car. Doors opened and closed as excited passengers sought for the safety of the ditches by the road. One station wagon had stopped behind her car. The license plate read from Ontario, Canada. The man had a Toronto Blue Jays hat over a head of curly brown hair, wore glasses and light summer clothing.

"What is that?!" he asked in fascination, as a young woman with short light brown hair and sunglasses ran up.

"That's a tornado! It's extremely dangerous. We have to get to safety right now!" Heather ordered. "Follow me!" The three of them crawled over the barriers and they dropped down in the depression created by the road workers. As they tucked in against the dirt wall and the tornado roared towards them, Heather wondered how Jenny was doing. I'm sorry, Aunt Jenny. I tried to make it home.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:39:11 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 9/14/2006 9:14 PM

Saturday, August 4; Murray Gill High School; 11:30 AM local time (4:30 AM August 5 on Tracy Island)

"And last, but certainly not least, Peter Valerian!"

A small redheaded boy with a big grin on his face was pushed in his wheelchair up to the podium by his proud mother to accept his ribbon. Everyone cheered, whistled and applauded. This was Peter's first time participating in any kind of sporting event, and although he didn't win, he had finished in fifth place and had for the first time in a long time, laughed and interacted with others outside his family.

He reached out to take the ribbon from the organizer, Michael Hart. But the wind had picked up a great deal, and the man squatted in front of him. "Peter, the breeze is getting very strong. Would



you do me the honor of allowing me to put it around your neck?" The boy nodded, and Hart carefully placed the award over his head, then took one of his hands and shook it.

Peter beamed even more than he had a few moments ago. His mother watched the interchange with tears in her eyes.

Michael moved back to the podium to give a short speech and declare the Challenge Day events officially over, but just then the sirens went off, warning of an impending tornado. He glanced up and around, then said to the man sitting just behind him, "Mayor, we'd better get everyone inside the school. It's the safest place for them until this passes."

Mayor Tom Riverton nodded, and stood up, ready to assist in getting everyone inside. Michael turned back and said, "Everyone head inside the school. We'll stay there until the 'all clear' is sounded." Despite the fact that he was using a microphone, he had to shout to make himself heard over the increasingly stronger wind.

Some of the younger children were whimpering and a few were crying. Their parents gathered up their belongings and moved toward the entrance. A few people who had come to watch, help, or both grabbed as many of the folding chairs and equipment as they could quickly and followed.

Michael held the door and made sure everyone got inside before he did. As the last person entered, he heard a sound like a freight train heading straight for him. He turned and, looked to his right. "My God," he breathed, then turned back and hurried inside. "We've got to get everyone into the basement!" he shouted. "Now!"

People began screaming, and they looked from him to the mayor. Tom took one glance at Michael's face and took control. "Everyone, head through the doors on the left. Helpers, assist in getting the children down the stairs, especially those in wheelchairs. MOVE!"

The equipment and folding chairs were dropped and immediately forgotten as they obeyed the mayor's orders. His wife helped guide and comfort some of the more hysterical women, as his three teenaged sons helped get the wheelchairs down the steps. The helpers worked with them and soon they were all in the basement, and not a moment too soon.

The tornado hit, and they heard the roar of the winds, then the crashing and breaking up of the walls above them. The doors to the room were blown out and crashed into the room, as the lights went out. Screams of terror, of pain, and of anger merged with other sounds of the wind. It seemed to last for hours, but was just for a few minutes.

When it was over, there was crying and whimpering. It was pitch black. Mayor Riverton called out, "Is everyone okay?"

There were several assents, and some people saying that they had been injured, two with broken bones. A few people took their cell phones out, and were trying to call for help. One of the helpers was heard moving around, then a light came on. He said, "We keep some battery operated lanterns down here, just in case. I was able to remember where they were in relation to my location when the lights went out. I'll get the rest of them and pass them out."

"Well done, Seth," the mayor said. He moved carefully over to assist in passing the lanterns to the others, then began to see if he could find a way out. As he did, he realized he hadn't seen or heard from Michael. He knew that, since Hart had been the last one downstairs, he'd probably be closest to the entrance. After taking a moment to get his bearings, he headed in that direction.

He stopped suddenly. "Shawn, Carl, bring two more lanterns over here." His sons obeyed and he pointed in the direction he wanted the light to shine. They looked at what the lanterns showed and Carl gasped.

Debris was piled on top of the blown out doors, and pinned under them was Michael Hart. They moved the lights back and forth and saw that his left side was underneath, and there was what appeared to be a deep gash on the side of his head.. The mayor moved over to Michael and squatted down, taking the wrist in his hand.

"He's still alive, but barely. Let's see if we can get enough of this debris off of him to move him. This is our only way out, so we have to try anyway." He turned to the rest of the people. "Anyone able to help, get over here, now. Seth, is there any kind of first aid kit down here?"

"Yes, sir; I'll get it."

"I'm a nurse," one of the women said. "If you can get enough of that stuff off of him to move him, let me check him over first. We don't want to aggravate any injury."

"Good idea. We'll do that."

"We've got a couple of kits here, Mayor."

"That's good. Give them to the nurse so she can help the other injured, then come over here to help us move some of this stuff."

Seth complied, then joined the others as they began the slow process of lifting the debris off of the fallen man.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:43:32 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/15/2006 3:56 PM

Saturday, August 4, 2068, Noon, local time, Murray Gill, KS (5 a.m., Tracy Island)

"Mr. Mayor?"

Tom Riverton turned to see Scoutmaster Brian Guillaume facing him, a group of Boy Scouts ranged in a group behind him. "Yes, Mr. Guillaume?"

"We were wondering if we could be of any help. I've asked my fellow Scout Master and some of the older boys to help shift the debris off of Mr. Hart, but the younger boys want to know what they can do."

Mayor Riverton surveyed the somber faces of the boys, then nodded. "We could use a head count, find out how many people made it down here. Get a list of names and see if we have anyone... missing. Make note of those who are injured, and how badly. The nurse can help you with that."

"All right. We can do that. Our Den Mother's already giving the nurse a hand, but we'll get started on the head count and the list. Anything else?"

Tom sighed. "I'm sure the emergency services are swamped right now; that twister was powerful and came on fast."

"That's the impression I've gotten from those few who have been able to reach 911," Guillaume said, nodding. "A lot of people can't get signals; some of the local cell phone relays must be down."

"Then it could be hours before we get any help." The mayor glanced over at where Michael lay, a small group of workers nearly obscuring his view as they sought to remove the debris. "Michael needs help quickly. So do our other injured people."

"Not necessarily hours, sir." Guillaume brought out a military-style radio unit, one that the Scouts had been using to coordinate their efforts during the Challenge Day. "There's someone we could call, and they'd be here far faster than our local people, and with better equipment."

Tom thought for a moment, then nodded. "Good idea, Mr. Guillaume." The mayor took the radio unit. "I just hope that they can hear us." He switched it on, took a deep breath, and lifted the radio to his face. "Calling International Rescue. This is Mayor Tom Riverton. We have an emergency situation. Please respond. Calling International Rescue..."

xxxx

The recorder started up on its own when the faint call came through. Thunderbird Five's computers automatically amplified the call, and piped it down to the habitation level, startling John out of a sound sleep. He sat up, disoriented for only a second, then grabbed his bathrobe and pulled it on as he headed for the ladder to the control level. It was faster than the lift, especially when his long legs took the rungs two at a time. Within seconds he was in place, smoothing back his hair with a hand and clearing his throat so he could properly respond to the call.

"International Rescue here. What is the nature of your emergency?" he said.

The response, so loud and clear, brought out a cheer from those Scouts who were standing by their leader, getting instructions. Guillaume shushed them and moved them away from the mayor so that Tom could focus on the call.

"International Rescue, this is Mayor Tom Riverton of Murray Gill, Kansas. Our town is located just southwest of Wichita. We've had a strong tornado come through here, and it's trapped a group of young Special Olympic participants in the basement of the high school. We have several injured people, one severely so. Can you help?"

John jotted down some notes on his data pad, and made note of the coordinates that pinpointed the call. "Yes, we can help. Where can our representative meet you?"

Tom rubbed the back of his neck, glad that the man from International Rescue couldn't see him. "Well, actually," he hemmed, "I was part of the Challenge Day. So I'm trapped in here with the others."

John's eyebrows rose a bit, but he kept his voice steady. "Thanks for that information, Mayor. Do you have a number of people involved? Of injuries and types of injuries?"

"Not yet. We're working on that now."

"Excellent. We'll coordinate things with your emergency services personnel."

"Good enough. When can we expect you?"

John made a couple of quick mental calculations. "Our reconnaissance people will be with you in forty-five minutes or less. Our rescue equipment will take longer though."

Tom sighed. "I understand."

"We'll be there as quickly as possible, Mayor. Just sit tight."

Tom found the young man's voice to be reassuring, and said ruefully, "Don't worry. We're not going much of anywhere right now."

John smiled despite the seriousness of the situation. "Right. Keep this frequency open so I can give you updates and ask for information."

"All right."

"I'll be back with you soon. International Rescue out."

There was only static then, and Tom felt like a lifeline had been cut. He said he'd be back in touch. Then he turned to the people who were in the darkened basement and began to explain the situation.

In Thunderbird Five, John reached with one hand for the toggle that would put him in touch with the island, and reached over to pull up a weather map with the other. "A tornado in that part of the country isn't unknown at this time of year, but it is unusual," he muttered. "I'd better see if that's the only one out there."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:44:27 GMT  
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 9/16/2006 8:53 PM

The freight train sound of the Towanda tornado had Heather and those around holding their ears as they hugged the dry grass of the ditch they were hiding in. As the sound began to drop off, Heather took a chance to peek over the embankment to see the tornado turn off the road where it dropped and head off into the cornfields nearby. "I always wanted to be an astronaut, but this is not how I wanted to get to the moon!" Heather breathed as the man in the Toronto Blue Jays hat got up off his feet.

"Harry Amberton," he introduced himself, chuckling at Heather's remark. "This is my wife, Mary. We want to thank you for rescuing us. We wouldn't have known what to do if you hadn't told us."

Shrugging, Heather accepted their thanks. "Someone had to tell me when I first came to the area. I suggest that you find a motel or hotel to get to, because the weather isn't done with us yet. Most places have underground shelters. If there's a tornado on the way, you'll hear three blasts on the siren. When it's all clear and safe, you'll hear the sirens give one long blast."

"We'll start looking right away," Mary assured her.

When they clambered back on the highway, Heather saw that everyone's car was intact, including hers. As the winds continued to whip around them, Heather jumped into her car and at the first junction, turned right. Five minutes from her home, Heather saw the scouring marks of a twister that had gone through earlier. The marks headed straight towards Jenny's farm. "Oh no! Please God! Not Aunt Jenny! Please not Aunt Jenny--!"

At that moment, she heard her cellphone singing, 'You're Cheatin' Heart' by Hank Williams, Sr. Slipping on her headset, she answered it. "Aunt Jenny? Are you all right?" She fought to keep from shouting into her aunt's ear.

A breathless voice answered. "Yes, we're fine. A twister hit the farm...."

"Oh Aunt Jenny, I'm sorry! Is the house okay?" There was such a long pause, Heather imagined the worst. "Look, Aunt Jenny. I've got rooms in my place. You could stay there if you wished! I'm on Rock Road and I'm five miles away--!"

In a small quiet voice, Jenny interrupted her. "That won't be necessary, honey. My house is just fine, but I do want you to come--come home."

Sensitized by the Towanda tornado, Heather kept a sharp eye on the sky which looked as if it had been bruised. Turbulent clouds colored in blacks, blues and purples were back lit by streaks of lightning. She turned off the highway and onto Rock Road. All she had to drive was a mile and a half and she'd be home. Heather found it odd that Jenny was standing in the middle of the field across the road from her own home.

That's odd. Did I drive too far? I don't see my home. she thought. I know I'm still a bit rattled,

but--how can I miss my own home?

Heather parked her car on the side of the road and got out. Taking in the landscaping she saw the tell-tale circular scouring marks in the wheat fields near Jenny's home. She followed the trail the tornado made across the road to the same markings where her aunt stood. Debris spread out in an explosive pattern.

Her voice cracked as she spoke. "We had a tornado come through the wheat field and--it hit your house." She watched as Heather walked around the porch in a daze. "I came over as soon as the all clear sirens blew to check everything out. Honey, I'm so sorry." she said.

Heather barely heard her as she struggled to take in the idea that her home with its white picket fence, garage and comfortable living room had been destroyed. Jenny called to Heather once more and then walked up to her, putting her arm around the young woman. "Heather, why don't we go over to my place for iced tea then we can talk about this if you feel like it. You could lie down if you wish. Looks like you had had to dive into the dirt somewhere."

Looking down at herself, Heather looked at her clothes all covered with dirt and mud. "Look at me! I need to get a shower and get into some decent...clothes..." Her voice trailed off. "Heather, come with me and you can get cleaned up. Maybe lie down. You've had a tough day." Jenny encouraged her. "We'll take your car to my place. Okay?"

Heather allowed Jenny to drive her car back over to Jenny's farmhouse. Heather followed her into the kitchen for a tall glass of ice water and stared out the kitchen window as she drank. She found herself searching to see her house, but there was nothing but stripped trees and the foundation. "I think I'm going to lie down, Aunt Jenny."

"All right, honey. I left your old room just the way you had it when you were building--" Jenny caught herself. "Take all the time you need."

"Thank you, Aunt Jenny. Don't worry," Heather said with a weak smile.

"I'm worried," Jenny muttered to herself as she heard Heather mounting the stairs as it continued to storm outside. Walking into the living room, Jenny hurried over to the vidphone and tapped the numbers to James Kennedy's home. When the screen popped on, it was Martha's face that appeared. Oh nuts! It would be Martha.

Martha was dressed in her usual finery of cotton and silk. Her light brown hair coiffed to perfection. Diamonds dripped off her ears, neck, and hands. "Jenny! It's nice to see you. How are you?"

"We're having a tough time of it, I'm afraid. We've got tornadoes all over the state right now--" she began.

"Serves you right for living out there! And then you get Heather to go out there, too, when she ought to be home where she belongs! She should be living in her family home until she marries--"

"Martha, is Jim there? I need to talk to both of you," Jenny spoke, barely able to control her

temper. She didn't believe in suffering fools gladly, but Jim had to know about Heather's situation.

"What do you need him for? I'm here--!" she said petulantly.

"Just get him!" Jenny demanded, her concern growing.

"Oh all right. James! Would you come in here please?" she called out.

To Jenny's utter relief, Jim came quickly. "Jenny, how are you? Are you and Heather okay? I've seen the weather reports out there."

"That's what I wanted to talk to you about, Jim. We're both all right, but a tornado tore through my wheat fields and crossed over the road to hit Heather's house. Her beautiful home was absolutely destroyed. All that's left is the foundations."

"The house?!" Jim groaned. "How is she? Can I talk to her?"

"She's okay, Jim, but she's in shock right now. I sent her up to her old room upstairs. I'm hoping she'll get some sleep. She showed up just covered with dirt and mud. Her hair was a disaster. She was out in the middle of the weather, I think. She's hardly spoken at all. I've never seen her eyes like that before." Jenny sighed worriedly.

"So long as she's all right, Jenny. I'm just grateful you were there to meet her. As soon as she wakes up, have her call me. Make sure she calls either one of us, or call me up and just shove her in front of the camera."

"All right, Jim."

"Be careful out there. Give me a call as soon as you can." With that, the connection broke, and Jenny went back to the kitchen to make Heather a pecan pie from scratch, while the weather cracked and rumbled outside.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:48:22 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 9/17/2006 2:28 PM

The emergency klaxon sounded as clear as the morning sky, and Jeff blinked a few times before his mind fog cleared and he realized what was happening. He wrenched back the bedcovers and stepped into his slippers, as his wife held out his dressing gown for him, already clad in her own. Without a word the pair made their way to the lounge and arrived just after Scott, who was tousled, but obviously clear-headed. Jeff reached for the switch to activate the hidden commlink with Thunderbird Five, and a live feed of John, dressed in his own robe, appeared where his portrait had been.



"Go ahead, John."

"Father, several tornadoes are powering their way through lower Kansas state," the space monitor said. Jeff's eyes widened a fraction, but he let John continue. "We've had a call for help from a high school in Murray Gill. Several people have been trapped in the basement of a high school, including the participants of a Special Olympics Challenge Day."

Jeff's mouth thinned as John relayed the rest of the details. His family were not strangers to the power of a Kansas tornado. Fortunately, they had been always been spared in terms of property and, more importantly, life. He put aside any latent fears, however, as his commander's mask slipped into place.

"Okay, John. Give Scott the co-ordinates when he's airborne, and keep that commlink open."

"Will do. I'll relay more information as I receive it. Thunderbird Five, out."

John's portrait clicked back into view, and Jeff turned to the assembled crew.

"Scott, off you go," he said, though his eldest son was already heading towards Thunderbird One's access point. "Virgil, take pod Seven, loaded with the DOMO, Excavator, Firefly, Laser Truck, as well as the oxyhydrite cutting gear. We'll need the med team, as well as Gordon, Alan, Tin-Tin, Brandon, Callie, Elise, and Kat. This is going to be a big one. Off you go."

The crew scrambled in a whirl of dressing gown ties and loose pyjamas, and Dianne placed a swift kiss on her husband's cheek before following after the others. Jeff resisted the urge to say, 'be careful', knowing that it wasn't necessary. And now, he thought, the cycle begins once more.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:50:05 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/19/2006 1:54 PM

Sunday, August 5, 2068, 5:30 a.m., Tracy Island time, en route to the danger zone

"Thunderbirds One and Two from base."

Virgil reached up and toggled the switch that put his 'Bird in communication with base.

"Thunderbird Two here; go ahead, base."

Scott's response, similar in nature, could be heard over the tricircuit connection that Virgil now had with his father.

"A reminder for all veteran team members, and one of our new team members as well. You are going into territory where you are known, possibly on sight. Take special precautions to shield

your identities. Hats and visors at all times."

"Will surgical masks and hair covers work for the med team, Boss?" Dianne's question came from the back where she was just sitting down. All of the med crew were dressed in their scrubs, ready to hit the ground running as soon as Thunderbird Seven was unloaded.

"That should suffice," Jeff replied, sounding a little testy.

"Then, F-A-B," she responded, smiling.

"F-A-B," Virgil echoed. "Thunderbird Two, out."

He took a quick look at the people ranged behind him. He had changed into his uniform while the pod was being prepared, and once they were airborne, the members of the team headed into the crew's quarters to take off pajamas and robes and switch over to their official look. The women went first in two groups, then Brandon and Dom followed, with Dom carrying scrubs pulled from Thunderbird Two's sickbay. Nikki and Dianne followed suit, grabbing their work gear for the job ahead.

Now Dianne got to her feet again. "Since we've got a bit of a haul ahead of us, we'll all need some breakfast. There are some of our specially-packed MREs in the crew's quarters. Time to get them out and pass them around."

"I'll give you a hand, Mom," Gordon said. Together, they disappeared into the area behind the cockpit. A few minutes later, they returned, carrying vacuum-sealed pouches. "I think you know what to do with these by now. Most of them are Farmer's scramble; I picked up veggie omelets for you, Dom, and for you, Kat. I hope that's okay."

"It's grand, Gordon," Dom said as he took the packet from the aquanaut.

"Yes it is. Thank you, Gordon," Kat replied with a smile.

"Coffee's on already," Dianne said. "First cup to the pilot though."

"Sounds good to me." Virgil kept his eyes up front and grinned. "Just don't let Gordon fix it, okay?"

"I'm insulted!" Gordon said with a mock affronted tone.

"You'll be assaulted if you try to 'a salt' my coffee," was Virgil's riposte.

"I'll fix it for you," Alan offered, getting up. "Besides, I'd like to get my coffee before we have to make another pot."

Virgil shook his head, and the cockpit settled into quiet as the team members ate, strengthening themselves for the task ahead.

Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:50:45 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 9/19/2006 3:21 PM

Kat thoughtfully ate her omelet. She took a sip of coffee, then said to Gordon, "The only tornadoes I have ever seen have been on the news, along with the total devastation that they caused. I just can't imagine a wind so strong that it can destroy entire buildings. And to be trapped, like those we are rescuing, must be terrifying."

"I agree," he replied.

"Have you ever experienced them first hand? Your family home is here in Kansas, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is, but we've been lucky so far. We've been spared."  
She glanced over toward where the medical team was seated. "Dom, what about you?"

He looked up at her. "I, too, have been lucky; a close call or two, but no injuries or damage. Hopefully my brother isn't in the vicinity of any of these twisters."

"I hope nobody we know is affected directly by them," Alan said. "Also that the damage and loss of life aren't too great."

There were general murmurs of agreement, then silence as everyone finished their breakfast.

Written with some dialogue suggested by Tawnyangel22

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:53:44 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/19/2006 8:00 PM

Saturday, August 4, 2068, 12:55 p.m., local time, Murray Gill, KS (5:55 a.m., Tracy Island time)

Scott climbed out of Thunderbird One's cockpit and gazed around. The sky overhead was a mass of dark clouds, pushed by a strong wind. There was the smell of ozone from lightning strikes and Scott had seen the damage that the multiple twisters had done as they marched across the landscape. He had been tempted to deviate in his flight just a bit and see if their old farmhouse still stood; John said that some of the tornadoes had touched down near there.

"They haven't finished yet, Scott," John had warned him. "I'll do what I can, but you need to keep a weather eye out yourself."

The school building looked like it had been hit by a bomb. The roof was gone, and the walls that

supported it had gone with it. The only reason Scott could tell that the school had once had three floors were the few support columns, truncated yet still tall, that stood like branchless trees amid the rubble. The cement panel walls had fallen away, some smashed to chunks on the ground below, some still sticking out, slab-like, from the heap. The basement must be extra reinforced for times such as this. He took in a deep breath, then began to look around for Thunderbird Two's landing spot.

His arrival had not gone unnoticed. There was a work crew already on hand, but their equipment was too small and too few for the giant task of removing the debris from the school. The man who was obviously in charge hurried over to Scott, pulling off his feed cap and running a hand through his sparse hair.

"Man, am I ever glad to see you," the man said. He held out his hand. "Henry Dolan. I'm the construction inspector for the city."

"You can call me Maverick." Scott shook the man's hand then took another look at the front end loader and the two plows that were hard at work, trying to move the rubble. "We got a call from your mayor. Some youngsters with special needs are trapped inside, and so is he." He nodded toward the equipment. "I see you've gotten a start here."

Dolan nodded. "I know about the kids, and the mayor. He called me to see if I could get some plans for the high school here. Said you were coming and would need them." He sighed heavily. "All the emergency services are tending to gas fires, downed power lines, clearing roads of debris, and more. Communications are spotty; I was surprised the mayor was able to get through. When I heard from him, I came out with what equipment and people I could gather. When can you get them out?"

Scott glanced at his watch. "My heavy equipment will still take some time to get here. I'm here to do some reconnaissance and figure out where we're setting up our vehicles and equipment." He gave Dolan a confident smile. "We'll hit the ground running once we get here."

"Should we keep at it?"

"Yes, definitely. Any progress you make is helpful. I'm going to set up my communications base, and I'll relay those plans to get a head start on our strategy."

Dolan fished around in his pocket and pulled out a data card. "Here they are. We'll keep at it." His face relaxed into a tentative smile. "I'm glad you're here."

Scott nodded, and the inspector jogged off to continue supervising the crew. Scott climbed back into Thunderbird One.

"Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One. Come in, Quasar."

"Thunderbird Five here. Go ahead."

"I'm at the Danger Zone. I'll be uploading plans to the high school we'll be digging out and I'm sending the mobile camera to get some pictures of the place as well. I'll need them relayed to

Sweet on Two. She's the best one to decipher where we should start digging."

"F-A-B, Maverick." John paused, then asked. "How bad is it?"

"Bad. You'll see just how bad in a few, Quasar." He stuck the data card into the reader onboard Thunderbird One. The computer scanned the information for possible malware, then transmitted it to Five. While it was doing that, Scott pulled out the remote control for the anti-gravity mobile camera and a pair of digital binoculars. The computer beeped that it was finished, and Scott removed the data card, tucking it into a pocket of his vest before climbing back out again. "First the images, then the landing site." He jogged his way down toward the storage bay, ready to pull out Mobile Control.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:54:48 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/19/2006 10:58 PM

Saturday, August 4, 2068, 1:35 p.m., local time at Danger Zone (6:35 a.m., Tracy Island), en route to Danger Zone

"So, here are the latest thermal imager readings from Scott, as well as the floor plans and the pictures from the Mobile Camera," Tin-Tin said to the small group that surrounded her at the computer screen in the rear laboratory area. "I think that Thunderbird Two should concentrate on the area here with the grabs. It'll be able to get the larger pieces of concrete up and out of the way." She embedded a green marker in one spot of the overlaid images, then put a red one in another place. "The Excavator should start in here and clear as far in as possible. The Firefly can help clear the Excavator's debris. The DOMO needs to be in reserve for possible wall collapse."

She looked up at the expectant faces surrounding her. "This won't be easy. We'll go over this again before we touch down so everyone knows where they should go." She lifted her eyes to the three small pictures in the corners of the wide plasma screen. "Maverick, I'm downloading this to you. Please keep us updated on any more collapses in the structure."

"F-A-B, Sweet."

"Van Gogh, what's our ETA?"

"We're still twenty minutes out, Sweet."

Tin-Tin sighed. "Wish we were there right now."

"Amen to that," Gordon said quietly.

Kat, who was among those watching Tin-Tin's briefing, hugged herself as they turned to go back

to their seats. "It is a shame that Thunderbird Two doesn't fly as fast as Thunderbird One. Things would be much simpler if it did."

"There's no way it can, Kat," Alan said quietly. "The tonnage it pulls, its size, the very design itself works against it as far as speed is concerned."

"Virgil says that he's asked for an upgrade of the engines," Elise told her. "Bring it up to at least Mach 9 or 10. Still, that's only half of Thunderbird One's speed."

"And Virgil also knows very well that it would take a complete redesign of Two to accomplish even that," Tin-Tin said, slightly irritated. "Something that Mr. Tracy isn't about to do quite yet. Brains has enough on his plate with the plans for Thunderbird 8..."

"The hydrofoil," Brandon said with a gleam in his eye.

"And the two-man, close range shuttle attached to Thunderbird Five," Alan added.

"Plus secure communications and too many other projects for me to mention," Tin-Tin finished.

"How far away is this town we're going to anyway?" Callie asked as they entered the cockpit.

Gordon replied, "It's just outside of Wichita, which is..."

"Seventy-nine hundred and forty-eight miles from Tracy Island," chorused Alan, Dianne, Virgil and Gordon in unison.

"As the crow flies," added Virgil. He glanced back. "You've been talking about my baby again, haven't you?"

"Only in the best possible fashion," Elise assured him with a grin. She took her seat, and put on her safety belt.

"Just remember, Kat. The only thing on Earth that goes faster than Thunderbird One is Thunderbird Three. And she's meant to get from place to place in space, not on the surface," Alan remarked.

"At Thunderbird One's speed, Kansas wouldn't seem so far away, would it?" Kat replied.

"No. Wish we could go that fast; it'd be nice to get there quickly on a daily basis. Since it only holds a maximum of three or four, the rest of us have to get there the slow way." Gordon looked up and grinned at his scowling brother, Virgil. "But we can take a whole lot more luggage."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:55:49 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 9/20/2006 5:07 PM

"I wonder how Tom's feeling in this weather," Dominic said.

He and Nikki had been busy prepping the medical cabin of Thunderbird Seven, and had just crossed through into the cab, where Dianne was running pre-flight checks.

"Your brother?" Nikki asked as she strapped herself into her seat.

"Aye. He's probably bouncing around the place like a twelve-year-old, thinking, 'This is so cool!' He's a weirdo at the best of times."

"I don't know how anyone could get used to this type of weather," Nikki said. "It's a little bit scary."

"The power of nature is mighty," Dianne said from her seat in front of the other two. "But hopefully she'll have spared those children down there."

"Thunderbird Seven from Thunderbird Two."

"Go ahead Thunderbird Two."

"I'm raising the struts now. Prepare for departure."

"FAB, Thunderbird Two."

The eerie sound of Thunderbird Two's hydraulic systems working to heave the great machine off the ground was soon heard, and then replaced by the steady hum of the pod door being lowered. The afternoon light, dim in the wake of the tornado, picked out the edges of the pod vehicles in front of them. The medical crew waited as the others rolled out, before Dianne followed in their wake.

"Here we go," she said. "Hopefully we won't have to deal with too many casualties. These basements are built to withstand a helluva lot. The majority of those pulled out will be the Challenge Day participants; they're young kids, so be prepared for that."

"Yes Doctor," the nurses said in unison. It had gotten to the point where they no longer realized they did so.

"Thunderbird Seven from Mobile Control, come in please."

"Thunderbird Seven, receiving you strength five."

"Doc, we could use some more hands to help with the initial excavation."

"FAB. We'll set up shop first and then one of us'll be along to help. We can't leave Seven unattended, and I don't want to leave anyone on their own," Dianne said.

"Exactly what I was thinking. Thunderbird One out."



Dianne turned briefly to look at her nurses.

"That okay with you guys?" She asked.

"Sure," Nikki said.

"I'll go help with the digging," Dom said. "I imagine it'll only be a little while before the first casualties are out. I'll come help with triage as soon as they are."

"Right," Dianne said as she pulled Seven up to the appropriate spot. "Let's get to it."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:57:47 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 9/22/2006 1:48 PM

The nurse and the Boy Scout assisting her approached Peter Valerian and his worried mother, after handling the other injuries. Peter had a bad cut on his forehead, and his right forearm appeared to be broken. His mother had carefully put it on the arm of his wheelchair, and immobilized it using her scarf. He was crying, and not looking at anyone.

"Hello, Mrs. Valerian," the nurse said. "I'm Lynne Feller. I'd like to check Peter out, if I may."

"Of course." Peter's mother knelt down at his side. "Honey, there's a nurse here to see if she can take away some of the pain. Please let her."

Peter looked listlessly over at his mother. He'd stopped crying, but was obviously in pain. The nurse efficiently began to check the head wound, then cleaned and bandaged it. "It isn't too bad. It'll heal up okay. And you've immobilized the arm properly, I see. So, just try to relax, and when we get out of here, someone will fix Peter right up. What about you? Are you injured?"

"Just some scrapes and bruises. I'll be fine."

"Well, I suspect that all of us will need to be checked out at a hospital or clinic. But we'll get through this. And Peter," she added, turning back to the boy, "just think; we're getting saved by International Rescue. Isn't that cool?"

Peter looked straight at the nurse, and a gleam showed up. His mother smiled. "He's been a big fan of that organization ever since he was old enough to understand about it. He used to draw pictures of what he thought their air vehicles looked like, and of their people rescuing others."

A sadness swept over her. "Then, fourteen months ago, a drunk driver T-boned our car. My husband and Peter were in it. Frank was killed instantly, and I thought I'd lose Peter as well. But he lived, although he's been in that wheelchair since he got out of the hospital. He hasn't spoken a

word since. Today was the first time he participated in anything with others. I was hoping. . ." She broke down.

Lynne put a comforting arm around her. "I wish I could tell you that everything will be alright again. But I'm a nurse, not a fortune teller. All you can do is hope and pray, and work toward that end."

A shout drew the women's attention to the men moving the debris.

"We've uncovered him enough to move him, if you say it's okay, Miss Feller. Will you check him out now?"

It's about time! "Be right there." She looked at Mrs. Valerian and asked, "Will you be okay?"

"I think so. But there's something I'd like to ask you."

"What's that?"

"Are you any relation to the baseball player from the twentieth century, Bob Feller?"

The nurse grinned as she got to her feet. "He was my great-grandfather. And he passed his love of the game on to his kids, grandkids and great-grandkids."

She headed toward Michael Hart, the boy scout following, his eyes wide at what he just heard. Boy! Wait until I tell the rest of the guys!

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:59:06 GMT  
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 9/22/2006 8:49 PM

As Jenny pulled out her mixer, she heard the floor board squeak upstairs. Opening a cupboard door, she pulled down an old mixing bowl with faded roses passed down from her mother, a small glass bowl for the eggs, and a measuring cup. Setting it aside, she heard silence from upstairs.

"My stars, Martha!" she muttered to herself as she walked over to the pantry and pulled out a well-aged bottle of dark corn syrup, a package of sugar, vanilla, and pecans. "Did you ever think that you might have driven her off with your high-falutin' ways?! Oh, it just makes me so mad!" Jenny growled as she moved to the refrigerator and pulled out three eggs from the egg carton on the side of the door. "I forgot the butter!" she groaned.

Going the refrigerator for the butter, she heard the floor boards squeaking a few times as Heather walked to the bathroom. "She's having trouble sleeping," Jenny remarked as she poured the syrup into the rose mixing bowl. "Martha, if you hadn't been so blasted insistent about trying to marry her off to some blue-blooded sort, she might not have run off to the Navy!" Next, she broke and scrambled the eggs viciously, adding them to the syrup. Then, she measured off a cup of sugar and poured that in. "The only smart thing that woman ever did was marry Jim!"

The floor squeaked again and settled into quiet. The butter and vanilla went in next, and then the whole thing was shoved into a professional mixer, and set on medium speed. While the blades stirred the syrupy concoction, she went to the refrigerator again and found a package of preformed dough. "Well, it hurts my pride to use this, but I want it ready to go when she wakes up." When the pie was ready, Jenny set it aside to cool.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 22:59:58 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/23/2006 2:49 PM

Saturday, August 4, 2:15 p.m. at Danger Zone (Sunday, August 5, 7:15 a.m., Tracy Island)

"Mobile Control from Base. Come in, Mobile Control." Jeff's picture popped up inside of Scott's visor, and his voice boomed into Scott's earpiece. Wincing, the field commander turned down the volume.

"Mobile Control here. Go ahead."

"An update, Maverick."

"We've started excavating the site, trying to reach the top of the stairs and the wheelchair access ramp. It's closest to the victims, and may make getting the kids out a bit easier. Ursa has the Excavator in chewing up the debris on the ground level; her job is to make a path for the rest of us. Thunderbird Two is pulling debris off the top so that less and less will slide down and get in the Excavator's way. Firefly's shoving the bits and pieces left behind off to one side so we'll have a clear shot at the door once we're in there. The DOMO's waiting in case we need to pick up some larger slabs or hold up some restraining walls. Seven reports they're ready, and Doc has come up with a tagging system so that the victims and their equipment are easily matched up. Once we're at the head of the stairs, it'll be cutters."

"F-A-B, Maverick. Let me know when you've broken through. Has everyone eaten?"

"You think Doc would have let us go out on empty stomachs?" Dianne had pressed a Farmer's Scramble MRE into his hands the moment she saw him.

"I take that as a yes, then." Jeff paused to consider his next question. "Any guess on a time frame here?"

Scott shook his head, then realized that his father couldn't see that. "Negative, Boss."

"Thunderbird Five is getting some more calls, it seems, but none as urgent as this one. The National Guard has been called out to help deal with the devastation. They should be able to help pick up the slack, but be prepared to go elsewhere once this is done."

"F-A-B."

"Quasar's been getting weather updates. There may be more tornadoes on the way. If anything heads your way, run for shelter. And tell the others to do so, too."

"F-A-B. He's been updating me regularly. We should get enough warning."

"I hope so. Tornadoes are notoriously unpredictable." Jeff nodded. "Keep me posted on your progress."

"F-A-B, Base. Mobile Control out."

Jeff's picture winked out, and Scott blinked, an afterimage still burning on his retina. That's one drawback to these visors.

He glanced over to the school building, where a cloud of cement dust marked the Excavator's location. Time to check in with the crew, he thought as he raised his hand toward his earpiece.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:01:53 GMT  
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 9/23/2006 3:13 PM

Callie operated the Excavator as she worked to clear the debris around the school. Driving the machine through the debris, she could see the dust stirred up by the maw as it ate up the rubble like a super wood chipper, including the loud noise. Even though she couldn't see the dust coming out through the pipes in the back, she kept going forward.

"Big Mac's doing fine with the Firefly, and with both of us doing debris clearing, we can get in there and help the people who need it most." When she noticed the concrete slab on her right, she added, "Hmm...we may need the DOMO to hold up that wall later."

This was her first mission since her frightening encounter with the Hood in Malaysia. Although she was glad to be on a mission again, seeing the debris made her think back to when she was seven years old.

I remember seeing my brothers playing video games in the living room while I looked out the window at the darkening sky. I didn't really think about the weather at that moment, but Mom was worried.

Then I heard the tornado sirens going off. I thought nothing of it at the time. I figured it was the drill, but then I saw my mother's reaction when she muttered the words tornado emergency. I remember her going silent for a couple of seconds.

"Callie, boys, we need to get to our storm shelter now. We don't have any time to lose."

I wanted to go back to my room for my favorite plushie, but Mom grabbed my arm. "We've got to move...now."

The way she sounded, this wasn't the run-of-the-mill tornado warning.

Joe and Bri were so excited. "Wow!" said Joe. "Mom, is there a real tornado coming this time?"

Mom had a very serious tone of voice, and her face was set in a grim expression. "Yes, it is, and I don't want any of you to stay out here!"

After she had us shuffle into the safe room within our storm shelter, I was still having trouble understanding exactly what was going on. "Mom, what if this tornado doesn't get here?"

When it came to tornadoes, I believed Mom had some sort of sixth sense about them. "Trust me, honey, it's coming."

Strangely, for a minute or so, things had actually gotten quiet. I said I didn't hear anything and wanted to get outside.

Mom grabbed my hand. "No, honey, don't go out there! The tornado's almost here!"

Then came the roar...the unforgiving roar. When I heard it, I screamed like nobody else could. "MOMMY!"

She held onto me tightly. "Don't worry, Callie. This won't last long."

My ears popped so hard it hurt. I never knew how bad it could be inside a tornado.

Everything stopped again after just less than two minutes...at least, that part felt that way. Just then, we heard one very long siren for about a minute. "That's the all-clear," Mom said as she let me go. "Kids, stay here."

I didn't want her to go out. "No, Mommy, don't leave, please!" I was scared something could happen to her while the three of us were in the cellar.

She came back to me and held my shoulders. "It'll be okay, sweetie. The tornado has passed. I'll let you know in a minute if you can come out." When I saw her walk away, I heard the taps of her feet on each of the wooden steps. I saw a flash of light and heard the hinges of the cellar door creaking loudly. I heard a grunt coming from her, not knowing what was happening.

Probably a moment or two passed before Mom spoke again, but not hearing her voice made it feel like an eternity. "Okay, kids, you can come out now. It's safe."

The three of us came out from the cellar, and I couldn't believe my eyes. I could see the dark green sky to my east, where the tornado was going at that point. Every house in our neighborhood was either damaged or destroyed. How did a sports car end up in the second floor of someone's house? The fire hydrants gushed out more water than I could remember. I even saw a 2 x 4 go

through another car's door! There was a little bit of a natural gas smell, but not enough to drive anyone away. I thought Opp was wiped off the map.

I suddenly remembered about Dad. "Daddy! What about Daddy!?" I yelled. I didn't know if he was still alive after seeing the devastation.

Brian hugged me and said, "Don't worry, sis. Dad's work place has its own set of safe rooms. I know he's okay." The way he sounded, though, didn't really help me at all.

All four of us walked around our now ruined neighborhood to see if anyone needed help. We saw many of our friends come out from their storm shelters.

One of our neighbors said he could cook up some food on his gas grill, since somehow it missed getting damaged by the twister. As fast as the storm came through, more sirens sounded, but this time it was paramedics, ambulances, and fire trucks all coming into the scene.

Joe looked around and saw a hand sticking up in debris. "Mom, I think it's Mr. Regan!"

I wanted to run up there, but Mom held me back. "No. Brian, keep Callie away. I'm going to find out if he's alive."

Because Brian did keep me away from the scene, I really couldn't tell what Mom and Joe were trying to do. All I could see were Mom and Joe. The arrival of paramedics and firefighters, though, shielded me from seeing what was going on. It took about 10 minutes, but after they finally cleared the rubble, I could see Mom offering a silent prayer while Joe shook his head.

"Bri, what happened? What's wrong with Mr. Regan?"

He looked at me and said, "Sis, Mr. Regan's dead. He didn't make it."

I started to cry, since I had lost my babysitter and my friend, Dale Regan.

I was so scared about Dad being among the dead, but he showed up a couple of hours later at what was left of our house. When I saw him, I quickly ran up to him and hugged him as tightly as possible. "Daddy!"

"Oh, Callie, honey, are you all right?"

"Yeah, but Mr. Regan...he..." I started crying.

"Oh, no," Dad said, pulling me into his arms for a long, comforting hug. "I'm sorry, sweetheart. I'm really sorry."

Mr. Regan was just one of the 13 people who died that awful day. I never did find my favorite plushie again.

The memory was as fresh to her as the day it happened. "Mr. Regan," she whispered to herself. "This tornado's making me miss him all over again. I'll never forget that day, and I don't think I

should."

"Ursa from Maverick," said Scott. "How's the work going?"

Snapping back into reality, she pulled herself together and answered, "It's going fine, Maverick. However, I'm getting a little concerned about this wall over to my right. We may need Indy to use the DOMO to hold it up while Big Mac and I keep digging."

"F-A-B, Ursa. I'll let him know immediately."

After the transmission ended, she had mixed feelings of sadness and determination. "I lost Mr. Regan, but I sure won't allow anyone else to suffer after this tornado." With that statement, she continued to clear the rubble with the Excavator.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:05:14 GMT  
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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 9/23/2006 7:40 PM

"Left 2 degrees. Okay, now right 1 degree. Hold it right there. Lower the grabs."

Elise carefully moved across the large pieces of rubble, guiding the grabs as she did so. Kat was playing out the cable from inside Thunderbird Two and Virgil was holding the transporter steady. Communicating through her visor and earpiece Elise was able to contact both Kat and Virgil at the same time.

"Grabs secure!" Elise relayed back to TB2.

"F-A-B" Virgil replied as the grabs started to pull another large piece of debris off the pile. It was slow going, to say the least, as most of what they were removing were the solid slabs of concrete that had been the outer walls of the building.

With the debris secure in the grabs, Virgil veered off towards the dumping area. Looking around her as she waited for Thunderbird Two's return, Elise took in the total devastation. Bad weather was one thing, but this mess resembled something from a war zone.

"Damn, what a mess!" she muttered to herself.

"You can say that again," Gordon replied in her earpiece. He wasn't too far away from her and she turned to see him shaking his head in disbelief. The roar of Thunderbird Two returning from dropping the load of debris turned her attention back to the task at hand. Kat started lowering the cable again, faster than she had previously been doing.

"Hey! Slow it down, MGM!" Elise yelled.



"Sorry, Frankie." Kat slowed the line down and then continued feeding it.

"You okay, MGM?" Virgil asked from the cockpit. He'd heard Elise yell and hated not being able to see what was directly underneath him.

"Yes, I'm okay," came the frustrated reply. Elise's yell had stung her a little, but she tried not to show it.

Down below, Elise let out a frustrated breath of her own. Guiding the grabs into place one more, she announced, "Grabs secure! Pull up!"

"F-A-B" both Kat and Virgil replied this time.

As she watched the huge slab of debris rise, Virgil called her, "Frankie? Are you okay down there?"

"Yeah. It's slow going though. I'll be glad when we can finally reach those people."

"Me too." He sighed and turned his 'Bird away towards the dumping area again.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:05:50 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 9/25/2006 4:50 PM

The Laser Cutter Truck was making short work of the larger pieces of debris, with Gordon guiding the beam with great care and precision. His eyes flicked from the control panel to the scene in front of him as another slab of concrete was deftly cut in two, putting the rescue crew one step closer to getting into the trapped people. He changed the trajectory of the beam and started cutting once more. Just a little bit more was needed.

The combined power of the Excavator and the Firefly had cleared most of the debris from the surrounding area, but the machines had proved too large to be effective in closer quarters. Gordon had rolled in with the smaller, more specialized truck after that. If only the beam could penetrate that little bit faster, he thought. Every second lost could spell disaster. His experience kicked in and pushed those thoughts to the back of his mind. Just concentrate on the job. There'll be time for suggestions and improvements later. Another slab fell apart in two chunks, and Gordon moved on again. Soon enough, he found himself the herald of good news.

"Mobile Control from Cousteau,"

"Go ahead, Cousteau," Scott replied.

"I'm just about through here. One more slice, and that door should be ready to be opened."

"FAB. I'm sending Big Mac and Da -- Tynan, to you now. Seven is on standby."

"FAB. Cousteau out."

Gordon hopped down from the cab as soon as the last slab was cut, and just as he did, the two others arrived, Brandon bearing oxyhydrite cutters, and Dom with a medical bag slung over his shoulder.

"Okay guys," Gordon said with his best mock military briskness, "Let's go."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:06:43 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 9/26/2006 3:24 PM

Lynne knelt down beside Michael's still body and began to gently feel his neck and back, then his extremities. "His left leg seems to be broken in two places. His right shoulder is badly bruised, but seems to be intact, otherwise. It's this head injury I'm more worried about, but I want him moved to where I can look at it more easily."

Mayor Riverton smiled for the first time since they had been trapped, and signaled some of the men to help. Three of the scouts pushed a few tables together to place the man on, and he was gently lifted, then carried to them.

Lynne cleaned the head wound carefully then examined it closely. She sighed in relief. "It's not as bad as I first thought; I'm not happy that he hasn't regained consciousness, though."

"Actually, he did for a minute -- at least partially," replied the mayor. "Jerry heard him moan; he bent down and told him what was happening. Michael murmured something, then slipped into unconsciousness again."

"I see. How long was he awake?"

"Only a few minutes, but I believe he understood what I told him," Jerry replied.

"That's good, then."

There was a shout from the area of the stairs. "I can hear something! It sounds like someone's trying to get through the debris!"

Everyone began to talk excitedly and several people started to move in that direction. "Everybody, freeze!" the mayor said loudly. "Keep quiet. We need to hear what's happening."

Silence quickly descended upon the room, except for noises from the top of the stairs. The mayor cautiously moved forward and kept to one side, listening. Suddenly he heard a muffled, "Hello? Can anyone hear me?"

"Yes! We're down here! We're alive, but several of us need medical help, one seriously!"

"Okay. Move everyone back as far as you can. We're going to break through in a few minutes, mainly in the area of the ramp, so we can get the non-ambulatory people out more easily."

"Will do!" Mayor Riverton turned to the crowd. "Okay. Let's move back to the far wall, so no one gets hurt when they get through the debris. We'll be out of here very soon, folks. Let's cooperate all we can."

In a matter of minutes, everyone had moved - or been moved -- as far as possible from the debris, and they waited excitedly.

Suddenly there was a loud noise. Debris scattered and there was daylight pouring into the room. Everyone cheered as they saw it, and the people carefully descending to help them.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:07:41 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 9/26/2006 4:05 PM

Dominic led the way down into the basement, treading carefully but moving quickly. He saw several sets of eyes swing towards his medical bag and the folded up antigrav stretcher in one of his hands. A woman stepped forward and looked at him expectantly.

"Are you a doctor?" she asked.

"No, but close enough; I'm a nurse," Dom replied.

"Thank goodness. My name is Lynne; I'm a nurse, too. Come, I'll show you what we've got." She started walking briskly, and Dom followed. "Your name is...?" She asked.

"You can call me Tynan," Dom said.

"Okay."

Lynne led Dominic over to the tables where Michael Hart lay, and explained the situation to him. Dominic noted the man's condition, tagged him, and relayed the information back to Thunderbird Seven.

"Alrighty, we'll get 'im out of here right away. Cousteau! Big Mac!"

Gordon and Brandon headed towards them at the call, and out of the corner of his eye, Dominic saw Lynne look at him suspiciously, but said nothing. Dominic applied a soft collar to the man's neck, and unfolded the stretcher just as the other two arrived. Without a word they moved into positions to help lift the injured man.

"After three," said Dom. "One, two, three, lift!"

The transition was swift, and Gordon quickly secured the unconscious man to the antigrav stretcher.

"Thunderbird Seven from Tynan."

"Go ahead," Dianne answered.

"The first red tag is on the way now," he said, nodding at Gordon and Brandon.

"FAB, Tynan. We're ready."

Dominic turned back to Lynne as Michael was stretchered away. The woman led him on to the next most serious injury, and threw a glance over her shoulder on the way.

"I take it your real name isn't 'Tynan', unless your friends had some creative parents," she said.

"Well, no ma'am, it isn't," Dom said. "Security and all that."

"I guess it's not important, anyway," she said, before turning her attention to the next casualty.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:08:12 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/26/2006 7:38 PM

Nikki stood at the head of the ramp, waiting for their first patient to be brought to them. She held in one hand a fresh anti-gravity stretcher, and in the other, a group of thin plastic bands.

As Gordon and Brandon brought the stretcher, she glanced back and called, "Doc? They're here."

"Coming." In a moment, Dianne had appeared, her hair covered by a surgical cap, and a thin medical mask ready to pull up over her face. Nikki thought it was strange; this wasn't the doctor's usual garb. Then she remembered the warnings about being recognized, and nodded slightly to herself.

"I've got him," Dianne said as the two men brought the floating stretcher to the top of the ramp.

"Angel, explain the coding to them while I get our patient into the surgery."

"Coding?" Brandon asked, his face wrinkling into a puzzled frown.

"Yes." Nikki handed each young man a group of the colored bands. "Each of these is actually two bands, both with identical bar codes on them. When you're bringing up patients who have wheelchairs, pull them apart. Put one on the patient's wrist, then one on a portion of the wheelchair or what have you, where it won't slide off. We'll scan the codes into the doctor's notes, and hopefully keep patient and appliance together. Tell this to whoever else is bringing in patients."

"F-A-B," Gordon said. He took the proffered AG stretcher, and Nikki ducked in to pick up the third one. "I think Ursa and Frankie are both being pulled to help with the transport."

"Yeah, Indy's still on the DOMO," Brandon commented as he took the third stretcher. In fact, they had considered ducking beneath the outstretched arms of the machine as they came out with the first patient, but Gordon had wisely steered the stretcher around it instead.

"We'll be back shortly," Gordon said as they turned and hurried down the ramp, breaking into a jog as they headed back to the building.

"F-A-B," Nikki murmured at their retreating backs before turning to join Dianne in the surgery.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:10:29 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/27/2006 2:20 PM

The patient was already on the scanner bed when Nikki came in. She thought momentarily about mentioning lifting safety to Dianne, then thought better of it. Instead, she took a pair of scissors from the nearby counter top and picked up cutting off Michael's clothes where Dianne had left off.

"The head injury is the most troubling thing here," Dianne said, glancing up at the overhead scanner display and murmuring her notes into the recorder. "Outer laceration needs a little more cleaning out there; get the grit out then we can glue it shut. But Da... Tynan?" Dianne didn't have to touch her earpiece; she just turned her head a little. Still, the mask muffled her voice somewhat in Dom's ear.

"Yes, Doc?" The nurse stopped for a moment to answer the call.

"You said this first patient regained consciousness for a few moments?"

"That's what was reported."

"How long was he out for in total?"

Dom looked at Lynne. "How long was... Michael? Is that his name?" When Lynne nodded, he continued, "How long was he out for in total?"

Lynne's face looked bleak. "Three and a half to four hours. If he was conscious any other time, no one noticed or reported it."

Dom nodded briskly. "Three and a half to four hours is the best estimate, Doc."

"How long ago did he regain consciousness?"

Again, Dom turned to Lynne and repeated the question. "A half hour at most, and he seemed to understand what was going on."

"Damn," Dianne muttered. She raised her voice. "F-A-B, Tynan, and thanks."

"A half hour. That's still too long." She slowed the scanner down as it transversed the head. "I'm just not seeing... there's no skull fracture... I don't see anything other than the head injury." She shook her head. "Let's see what else he's got and I'll come back to the head."

As the scanner moved slowly down the length of the table and the patient, Dianne tsked. "The left shoulder's just bruised; no fractures and doesn't look dislocated but he's going to hurt for a while."

Nikki finished pulling off Michael's clothes, and covered him with a paper sheet, then went to prepare a shaver, a bowl of cleanser and some sterile pads to clean the head wound. The scanner moved down farther, and Dianne took a deep breath and blew it out her nose.

"Double fracture with displacement in the left tibia, around halfway down its length. A clean fracture and slight dislocation in the left fibula. Double fracture will need some shoring up, but I'm not sure if I should do the surgery now, or wait and let the local medicos handle it. It's not precisely life threatening." As the scanner reached the feet, Dianne peered at the screen, then used a remote to zoom in on the bones of the foot. "Hairline fractures of the third and fourth metatarsals in the left foot, angling upwards from near the middle of the bone toward the heads, and of the fifth proximal phalanx near the base." She smiled ruefully. "He'll be wearing a cast from knee to toe for a few weeks."

Nikki returned the smile sympathetically. She finished removing the hair around the head wound, and Dianne started reprogramming the scanner for another look at the brain. Nikki soaked a couple of sterile pads with the antibacterial cleanser then, as she began to gently dab the stuff on, cleaning away blood and grit, the patient drew in a sharp, hissing breath. Dianne's eyebrows rose, and she pulled a penlight from the counter and opened one of Michael's eyes, flicking the light across the pupil. She repeated the process with the other eye, and watched Michael's face screw up with an attempt to close the eyelid. He raised a hand, which Nikki quickly caught, lowering it to the bed and holding it there firmly.

"What's your name?" Dianne asked.

"M-Michael Hart."

"Do you know where you are?"

"Hospital. 'Mergency room."

"Not quite, but close enough." She held up three fingers. "How many fingers am I holding up?"

His eyes opened just a slit. "Th-three."

"How long have you been awake?" Dianne asked in a matter-of-fact tone, as she peered at the scanner again.

"Uhhh. Jus' a little while. I 'member you talkin' about m' foot," he rasped.

"And before that?"

"Don' know. Mos' of th' time, I think. Was easier t' keep still. Didn' hurt so much."

"I see. Did you ever think of telling anyone you were awake?"

He started to shake his head a little, but Dianne reached out for his chin and held his head still. "Just talk. Keep your head still for me."

He sighed. "No. Wassa bit confused when th' dust settled. Thought people knew. Then they took somethin' off m' leg an' I passed out."

"Well, Mr. Hart, it looks like you are a very, very lucky man. I don't see any sign of major head trauma, though I'll let the medicos at the hospital take a much longer look at you. But as for now, we'll splint your leg up, give you something for the pain, and let the locals deal with the breaks. We've got more patients coming and you don't seem to be in any immediate danger."

"Mean I'm no' at th' hospital?" he asked, squinting up at her.

"No, Mr. Hart." She pulled out a hypospray, and filled it with an ampule of general analgesic, then administered it by pressing it against his neck. Over the hiss he could hear her say, "You're in a Thunderbird."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:11:14 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/29/2006 3:46 PM

\*\*\*\*\*Saturday, August 4, 2068; International Space Station; Orbiting over open Atlantic Ocean,



7:15 p.m. (Same day, 2:15 p.m. in Murray Gill, KS; and Sunday, August 5, 7:15 a.m. on Tracy Island)\*\*\*\*\*

Hundreds of people from all over the world were working hard aboard the International Space Station. They did everything from important scientific experiments to janitorial services. In one laboratory, Dr. Mitzi Wegenhauer was isolating cellular elements in hopes of solving a complex problem. "I hope this will finally help us come up with a cure for diabetes. We haven't been able to do that on Earth."

Her partner, Professor Xiang Xe, smiled at the prospective idea. "I agree, Mitzi. If that succeeds here on the ISS, just think of the possibilities on Earth. Diabetes, hypoglycemia, and hyperglycemia could become things of the past."

"Ja, my friend. Even after more than 150 years of researching, we still haven't found a cure for diabetes yet."

"Relax," said Xiang. "We've made it so far, so we can keep going with it."

Mitzi shook her head and smiled. "Yes, but we also have a number of experiments that have been on the waiting list forever." She turned and saw a photo of herself, Xiang, and someone else. "Ah, if only Callie were here," she said. "I was completely surprised when she accepted a position with Tracy Industries back in February." With a sigh she added, "At least she won't have to go so far from Earth to be close to her family. I am happy for her, though. She deserved the chance."

Patting Mitzi on the shoulder, Xiang said, "I don't believe Callie's forgotten about us. She can leave the ISS, but the ISS can't leave her."

The two scientists giggled. "You're right," said Mitzi. "Who knows? When either or both of us get back to Earth, maybe we can find Callie and go on a shopping trip."

After sharing another laugh, they went back to work on the experiment, hoping success would come down the line before too long.

\*\*\*\*\*Same day; Silicon Valley, California; 12:25 p.m. (2:25 p.m. in Murray Hill, KS; 7:25 a.m. next day on Tracy Island)\*\*\*\*\*

In the main control room of ElecSignal Incorporated, technical engineer Bryce Cullen was tracking the orbit of the company's high-definition TV satellite, which was located 22,500 miles up in space. Going in geo-stationary orbit over California, the satellite's job was to continuously send the high-definition signal to all its customers in the western United States. "Signal strength still at 99%," he said as he computed the information into the main system. "That's good. Hopefully I can watch a rerun of that old show Heroes tonight."

Another technician walked into the room and said, "Hey, you won't miss it."

Bryce turned around and noticed her. "Jenna, welcome back. I take it little Mark is doing okay?"

"Yeah, he's doing fine," said Jenna Welkins, a technician who had returned from maternity leave

after giving birth to a healthy baby boy two months earlier. "All tests have gone well, and Mark's been given a clean bill of health. So, how's our baby?"

"Doing fine. She's still in just about perfect orbit, and--"

Bryce stopped talking because a red light suddenly went off in the control room. "What the hell?" He looked at one of the lights and said, "Oh, no. One of the thrusters has malfunctioned."

Jenna quickly took a seat next to him and entered the calculations into the computer. "It sure looks like it. The satellite's shooting straight downward, and it's heading into that area of space junk 400 miles above the ISS."

"We'd better contact International Space Control about this. I'm worried."

"About what?" Jenna asked.

"About a possible collision with the ISS itself."

\*\*\*\*\*International Space Control Headquarters; Upham, New Mexico; 1:30 p.m. (2:30 in Kansas; 7:30 a.m. next day on Tracy Island)\*\*\*\*\*

Dr. Rose Windham, head of ISC, was checking locations of space junk. "That old GOES satellite is still up there," she said.

"ElecSignal, Inc., calling International Space Control," said Bryce through the communications in the control room.

Windham heard the call and immediately went there to answer. "This is ISC, ElecSignal. Is there an emergency?"

"Yes, ma'am, there is. Our HDTV satellite has a malfunctioning thruster and is heading towards the space junk zone."

Sitting down, she started computing possible path scenarios. "It appears your satellite will collide with the ancient GOES-4 weather satellite within the next 40 minutes. After that, it remains to be seen which way it ends up going. I'll call again in 40 minutes after the collision takes place."

\*\*\*\*\*40 minutes later; just after the two satellites collide\*\*\*\*\*

Dr. Windham noticed a new odd reading on the computer. "Unbelievable," she said, shocked. "The two satellites have somehow fused together, and they're now in geostationary Low Earth orbit along the equator." Entering the new data into the computer, she contacted ElecSignal again. "ElecSignal, this is ISC. Your satellite has fused with the GOES-4. I'm trying to determine a trajectory for them now."

On their end at ElecSignal, Jenna spoke up. "Understood, ISC. We're doing the same thing over here." She programmed the readings and checked with the orbital path of the ISS. "Uh-oh, this isn't good."

Bryce looked at her. "What do you mean?"

"From what I've got here," she said grimly, "the two satellites will collide with the ISS in eight hours." Pressing a button, she said, "ISC, have you determined a eight-hour collision time with ISS?"

"Yes," answered Dr. Windham. "And worse, the collision will be over Quito, Ecuador. There's nothing you can do now, ElecSignal. Leave the rest of this to us here at ISC."

Bryce nodded. "Understood, ISC." After cutting the transmission, he looked at Jenna. "I would joke about people around here losing their high-def signal, but right now I don't feel like it."

"I know, buddy. You and I both know how serious this really has become."

Dr. Windham opened an emergency channel directly to the ISS. "ISS, this is International Space Control. Do you copy?"

In the main control room, Colonel Peter Roberts picked up the call. "ISC, reading you full strength." Discovering this was the emergency channel, he asked, "What's our emergency?"

"Two satellites have fused together. One of them has a malfunctioning thruster. It's now moved into geostationary orbit and moving east at the same speed as you are."

Peter rubbed his chin. "Hmm...it wouldn't seem like a threat, but since we're moving northeastward and southeastward while the satellites move just straight eastward, we would face a collision. How long do we have?"

"We've confirmed our readings with the company who has the malfunctioning satellite, ElecSignal, Inc. There's a window of less than eight hours. The location over which the collision will take place is Quito, Ecuador."

"Okay. We'll start emergency procedures here immediately. What about in terms of preventing the collision, though? We don't have the means here on the ISS."

"Don't worry about that, Colonel. I know one group who can handle the job without fail: International Rescue."

Peter nodded. "Very well, Dr. Windham. ISS, out." He pressed a button to communicate to every part of the space station. "Attention, all personnel on board. This is an emergency. I repeat, this is an emergency. This is not a drill."

In the lab, Mitzi and Xiang heard Peter's words. "This is serious," said Mitzi.

He continued. "Listen carefully. A pair of fused satellites is presently on a collision course with the ISS. At the moment, we don't know exactly which area will be directly affected. Therefore, I want everyone to proceed with precautionary measures. Once we learn the exact area of impact, we will start emergency procedures for those personnel, including moving them into other areas of the station. Our time window is under eight hours. Please do not panic, but stay on high alert."

Back at ISC, Dr. Windham opened up as many channels as possible. "Calling International Rescue, calling International Rescue. This is International Space Control. We have an

emergency."

Post by TracyFan4Ever

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:12:42 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/29/2006 5:01 PM

Saturday, August 5, 2068, 8:25 a.m., Thunderbird Five (3:25 p.m., previous day, Danger Zone)

"Acknowledge, Dr. Windham. We'll be launching as soon as we possibly can. International Rescue, out."

John shook his head as he looked over the notes he'd garnered from his talk with Dr. Windham. "At least we don't need Thunderbird Two to be in two places at once," he muttered as he reached for the switch to turn his communicator back on. He had muted his conversation with his father in order to concentrate on the call. "Base from Thunderbird Five," he said, going over the notes once again.

Jeff wiped the bacon grease from his lips and put his napkin down, then reached for the switch. "Go ahead, Thunderbird Five."

"Boss, we have another call."

"Another?" Jeff asked, a startled frown creasing his forehead. "Give me the details, Quasar."

"I'm downloading what I have. I think we can swing it if Maverick can get the astronauts back to base quickly."

Jeff pulled up the file that John had just downloaded to him. He read it through carefully, humming tonelessly under his breath. Finally, he nodded. "Yes. We'll send Einstein out with them, too. The ISS is Ursa's old stomping grounds. Don't want any chance of her being recognized."

"F-A-B," John replied.

"How does the weather look out there?"

John glanced over at the weather map, zooming in on the area where most of his family were working. "Tornado warning is still on for the region. There seem to be more forming -- I hope they're spared this batch." He paused, then asked, "Have you heard anything...?"

Jeff sighed and shook his head. "No. I've been calling, but there's no answer."

John bit back a curse. "I hope you hear something soon," he said.

"Me, too." Jeff nodded. "I'd better get in touch with Mobile Control and give Maverick the new assignment. Stand by to brief them on their way back to base, and I'll bring Einstein up to speed."

"F-A-B. Thunderbird Five, standing by."

The picture went mute, and Jeff reached first for the intercom. "Brains? I need you up here, pronto." Without waiting for an answer, he switched over to his communicator. "Mobile Control from base. Come in, Mobile Control."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:14:06 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/30/2006 7:14 PM

Saturday, August 4, 2068, 3:35 p.m., Danger Zone (8:35 a.m., next day, Tracy Island)

"Mobile Control to Frankie," Scott's voice resonated in Elise's ear. She was checking to see the grabs were secure when he called.

"Go ahead, Mobile Control." Her reply was followed by an 'oomph' as she jumped off of a large piece of debris to the ground.

"Return to Mobile Control immediately."

Elise was momentarily stunned by the almost sharp request. "F-A-B," she managed to blurt out before the link was disconnected. "Frankie to Van Gogh."

"Go ahead, Frankie."

"I've been ordered to return to Mobile Control immediately. Grabs are secure."

Virgil frowned, puzzled as to why Scott had suddenly ordered Elise back to Mobile Control. "What! Why?"

"I have no idea, Van Gogh. I'll let you know. Frankie out."

As Elise made her way towards Scott, Virgil called his brother. "Mobile Control from Thunderbird Two?."

"Mobile Control here, what's up, Van Gogh?"

"Are you planning on telling me what's going on, Mav?"

"Slight change of plans, Van Gogh..." Scott continued to inform Virgil of the call John received

from the World Space Agency and of the staff switch around. "I need you to land so MGM can take over on the DOMO."

Virgil shook his head. "I'll send her down in the rescue cage," he said.

"Works for me," Scott replied. "Send her to me. But I still want you to land; we could use an extra pair of hands down here."

"F-A-B."

As Elise approached Mobile Control, she saw that Callie and Alan, arms folded across his chest, were already there.

"What's the deal, Mav? Why did you call us? We have a ton of work to do!" Alan almost demanded in his impatience to return to the rescue.

"I know, Indy, believe me, I know. Base just called in. They received a rescue call from WSA; two satellites have collided and are on a collision course for the International Space Station."

A sharp intake of breath could be heard from Callie. The three team members exchanged glances. "How did it happen?" Callie asked.

"Quasar can give you details when you're on your way. Right now I need to get you back to base to launch Thunderbird Three." Turning to Elise, Scott continued, "Frankie you'll fly One and take Indy and Callie."

At this point, Kat came running up. "Van Gogh told me to see you," she said, looking at the assembly.

"Right. MGM, I need you to take over the DOMO for Indy," Scott told her. "Van Gogh will be joining us momentarily."

With a collective, "F-A-B," the team turned and 3 ran towards Thunderbird One, the other toward the ruined high school.

Callie, Alan and Elise scrambled through the pilot's hatch, Alan pulling in the folding ladder behind him and closing the hatch. Seating for him and Callie would be cramped, but speed was what they needed and Thunderbird One could deliver.

"Everyone secure?" Elise asked as she settled herself into the pilot's seat.

"Yes," they both replied.

"Ok, let's get this show on the road." Elise powered up the engines, obtained clearance from Scott and was airborne in what seemed like seconds. After contacting base to advise them of the ETA, she then called John. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird One?."

"Thunderbird Five receiving you strength five; go ahead, Frankie," John's voice replied. Callie

smiled to herself, picturing him up there in space and silently thanking him again for the reason he was there.

"Hey, Quasar, just checking in for details on the space accident. I got two 'wannabe astronauts' here hounding me for info!" She turned and grinned to Callie and Alan as she spoke. They didn't seem amused.

John could be heard laughing softly just before he replied, "Well, it seems that one satellite's thruster malfunctioned and it collided with another satellite. Unfortunately, they are both fused together and on a collision course for the ISS. The WSA can't get anyone up to the ISS fast enough to avoid a disaster, hence the reason we got the call." Alan let out a slow whistle.

"Is anyone else going up with us?" asked Callie.

"Einstein will be ready as soon as you land."

"Okay, Quasar, thanks."

"No problem, Thunderbird Five out."

"Sounds like you guys will have your work cut out for you up there," said Elise.

"Nothing like back to back rescues to keep your spirits up!" Alan added. \*"Base from Thunderbird One, on final approach."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird One, retracting pool now."

With a blast from the engines and boosters, Elise switched back to vertical flight for the descent into One's launch bay. She felt her hands start to sweat and flexed her fingers as they guided the controls. This part always made her nervous, especially as she'd messed up royally a couple of times when in training. Guiding the craft down carefully, she breathed a sigh of relief as Thunderbird One came to rest perfectly on her launch pad.

"Your hands sweat, too?" Alan asked. Callie and Elise both looked at him, somewhat shocked. "It happens to the best of us, believe me, but I want you to swear this stays between us." He looked at each of them waiting for confirmation. They both nodded and the topic was closed.

As soon as the engines were quiet, Alan and Callie were out of the craft and on their way to Thunderbird Three's silo as Jeff had requested. Elise had wished them luck and headed towards the lounge for a short debrief and some food before heading back to Kansas.

This is going to be a very long day. Oh well, goes with the job description I suppose. She sighed and entered the lounge.

--ferry duty by FrankieCTB2



Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:15:17 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 9/30/2006 7:28 PM

As Peter and his mother were brought up into the daylight, they heard a roar. They looked in the direction of the sound and Peter's eyes lit up. He watched as Thunderbird 2 landed and his whole body quivered with excitement. Dom looked at Mrs. Valerian questioningly.

"Since he was about three years old, he's been a big fan of International Rescue. To actually see one of their ships in action is a big thrill for him; it's taking his mind off his injuries, for the moment."

Dom knelt down to put a band on Peter's uninjured arm, then the other on the wheelchair. "Well, young fella, that's a Thunderbird you're looking at. And you'll be going inside another, for medical treatment." He stood up and Brandon got behind the wheelchair.

"If you'll follow us, ma'am, we'll get you and your son some help." She nodded and they set off toward Thunderbird 7.

As they neared it, there was another roar. They paused again, as Peter twisted his body to see what made the sound. His mother stopped him, not wanting him to further injure his arm, and had Brandon turn the chair toward the sound. Thunderbird 1 was taking off, and Peter watched it ascend, then sighed contentedly.

"C'mon, squirt. Let's get you fixed up," said Brandon as he pulled up to the back of Thunderbird 7. Nikki was waiting for them. She entered the information into a data pad, then told Mrs. Valerian that they'd have to take Peter out of the chair. She explained about the bands and how they would help get the wheelchair back to Peter.

She untied the scarf keeping Peter's arm immobilized and held it carefully as Brandon gently lifted the slight boy, then carried him to a biobed. He placed Peter on the bed and with a "See ya!" and a cheerful wave, headed out.

Dianne moved over to the bed and looked at her pad, then at the boy. "Now then, young man, let's see what I can do to help you." She first examined his head wound. "Someone did a nice job here. It doesn't even look like you'll need stitches."

"That was Nurse Lynne Feller. She helped everyone who needed it," Mrs. Valerian replied. Then she smiled slightly. "I think that she's going to be very popular for some time. She told me, when I asked, that she was the great-granddaughter of baseball Hall of Famer Bob Feller. And one of the boy scouts, who was helping her, heard her say that."

Dianne continued to check Peter as she said, "I don't follow baseball, so I'm not familiar with the name."

"My husband was a big fan of the game. Bob Feller pitched for the Cleveland Indians from 1936 to 1956, except for three years during World War 2, when he was in the military. He was even the

subject of an Abbott and Costello routine."

"Now them I've heard of. What routine?"

"It was at the start of the radio show on which they introduced the "Who's on First" routine. I have the entire show on CD."

"I'll have to check that out some time. Well, young man. Aside from the cut on your head, and this arm, you don't seem to have any other injuries. But both the bones -- the radius and the ulna - in your forearm are broken, about halfway between the wrist and elbow. Do you remember how it happened?"

Peter looked at his mother. "Doctor, Peter hasn't spoken since the accident that put him in the wheelchair." She sighed deeply. "All I can tell you is that the tornado blew the doors to the school open and debris was hurled in all directions. I tried to cover him, but got knocked off my feet. When I got back up, his head was bleeding and his arm was hanging over the arm of the chair. I carefully put his arm up on its arm, and used a scarf to tie it down." There was a worried expression on her face as she added, "I hope I did the right thing. Lynne seemed to think so."

Dianne glanced at her. "You did. Don't worry; he'll heal up just fine." She turned back to the boy. "Now I'm going to splint your arm and give you something to ease the pain. Then we'll get you to a hospital so they can finish patching you up, okay?"

Mrs. Valerian sighed in relief. "Wichita Memorial is probably the best hospital to take everyone to. They're a large one, and located in the southwest portion of the city. And they know Peter there. Probably several of the others, too."

"Thank you for that information." Dianne finished splinting Peter's arm, then readied the hypospray and, as she had done for Michael, pressed it to his neck.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:16:31 GMT  
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 9/30/2006 7:28 PM

Saturday August 4, 4:10 p.m. Eldorado, KS/ Sunday August 5, 9:15 a.m. Tracy Island

Four hours later, Heather came back down again with eyes dark from lack of rest. "Didn't you get any rest at all?" Jenny asked as she checked the pie she made that she had sitting on the side to cool.

"I got a little," Heather answered, pushing her hair back.

"Now, what happened to you on your way home?" Jenny asked.

"Well, I'd just finished my last reports on the plane I was testing when the sirens started blaring. I sent the reports off through the company email system; the planes were on their way to being stowed for weather, and I decided to head for home. In a nutshell, I spotted a tornado right near Towanda, reported it, and by that time there were several drivers making for the ditches. I dove for the ditches, too, and had started for home when you called," Heather answered wearily.

"Well, I promised your father that you'd talk to him, so get calling while I get dinner set on the table."

Sitting down on Jenny's worn, cloth-covered couch, Heather tapped out the number she knew by heart, and a few minutes later, her mother and father sat in their black leather divan to face the camera.

"Are you all right, Heather?" Jim asked as he got up. "Honey, we've been worried sick."

"I'm just fine. It was a bit close for everyone's sake. It's been pretty bad all day," Heather admitted to him.

"Jenny said a tornado caused your house to collapse," said Martha who was fidgeting in her seat.

"Oh, it didn't just collapse, the thing just pulled it off the foundation and left just splinters. All that's left is the foundation," Heather said, wincing. "I feel like I've been turned into a tumbleweed!"

Martha felt slightly jealous of the connection between Jim and Heather. My stars, she's a disaster! If Jenny's so high and mighty, why doesn't she have some decent clothes for Heather to wear?! Oh, it's time to get her home. She might be too old to have children, but if married to someone prominent like the Alstairs or the Franklins, that would put us up with the top families. Oh we'd be invited to the Washington Balls. Jim could pick up on some huge commissions, she thought to herself. "Heather, maybe this would be a good time for you to come home now."

Oh no, Jim thought to himself.

Heather's mouth fell open and she could see her Father's reaction. "Honey, we haven't seen you face to face in years!" Martha said. "Donny hasn't seen you in such a long time."

Now that's hittin' below the belt, Martha! thought Jenny as she put a bowl of cooked carrots down on the table along with Southern Fried Chicken and mashed potatoes. Don't you give in, Heather! Not unless that's what you really want.

"Don't worry about the house, pumpkin. I know that was heavily insured. We can rebuild it again for you," Jim reassured his daughter.

"Thank you, Dad. For right now, I think just getting the claim going would be the best thing."

"Will do. I'm just glad you're all right. You look as if you fought a tornado singlehandedly. You did, didn't you? You were right in the middle of one!" Jim said, frowning worriedly.

"No, not right in the middle of one, but about as close as you can get without being tossed."

Martha interrupted. "If you'd stayed, this wouldn't have happened!"

"Martha, can't you see she's tired?" Jim complained to Martha.

"Stop!" Heather shouted, startling Martha, Jim, and Jenny, who nearly dropped the butter dish she was bringing to the table.

Jenny knew how a simple conversation could turn into a shouting match, and she foresaw how one right then would not help Heather's situation. Wiping her hands on her apron, she prepared to march out and defend her niece.

"I know exactly where this is going, and it's going to stop right here," Heather spoke sharply. "I've had enough! I'll call you back a little later." With that, she broke the connection.

"Mother just makes me want to scream sometimes!" sighed Heather, burying her face in her hands.

Walking to the couch and sitting down, Jenny wrapped her arms around the younger woman. "I want you to know that your mother does love you, honey. I admit, she has a strange way of showing it."

"Aunt Jenny, I don't understand her at all. It's like we've been at odds since I was born! Was she always like this?"

"No, she wasn't always like this," Jenny answered wistfully, patting her on the back. "She laughed at me when I came out here so many years ago, and then she blamed me when you decided to make your home right across from me. Your father appreciated it, though. Why don't we go have dinner?"

As soon as the connection was cut on the vidphone, Jim and Martha glared at each other. "And you wonder why she left in the first place!" roared Jim with his hands clutching the back of the divan.

"Don't you blame this on me! You're the one who helped design and build that home! Now it's totally destroyed!"

"What about Heather?! She was in the middle of a twister!"

"You're exaggerating!"

"Honey, do you even care? Not only did she barely survive out there, but her home was destroyed. She loved that place."

"Yes, I know and look where she is now!" Martha said weakly. The argument she'd been using for so long was wearing thin on everyone.

"You two have been total strangers for--I don't know how long!"

At this, Martha turned around her diamond earrings twinkling as she moved. Speaking evenly and

firmly, she walked until she was staring at him. "Ever since you became famous!"

Jim's mouth fell open. "What?"

"Yes," Martha said petulantly. "Ever since you became famous. Being rich was one thing, but you becoming famous just made my life--miserable! When we'd just gotten married, we didn't have to try and live like everyone else! When you 'hit the big time', suddenly I was thrown into a culture I knew nothing about!"

"Your father was wealthy! It couldn't have been that different!"

Martha ignored his words with a wave of her well-manicured hand. "In order for you to get those commissions, I got you into the finest parties and get-togethers!"

"You're saying that it wasn't my work that made me so well known, but it was simply you getting me to the right people. Is that it?"

Jim stared at his wife who looked up at him with a smile. "If we want to keep going, we need to become connected with a solidly prominent family--like the Adamses, for example. My family ties aren't strong enough. That's why I keep hoping to convince--"

"What's happened to you?" he asked as if seeing his wife for the first time.

Martha patted the leather divan, trying to think. Finally, she said honestly, "I don't know, Jim. I don't know, but it angers me to think that Heather is wasting her life! She's practically too old to have children!"

"Honey! That is her choice! If she wants to live as a single for the rest of her life, that's her prerogative! We have no right to tell her what to do, and making it as one of the rare few women Blue Angel pilots is a great achievement among many! You act as if she has insulted you by not marrying the man of your choice!"

Throwing up her hands, Martha proclaimed, "What good is that when you're old and your family is gone? What will she have then? Who will take care of her then? It certainly won't be you!"

As Martha moved off to the kitchen to talk to their cook, Simon, Donny came shuffling out of his room after hearing his mother and father arguing. Worried that he had something to do cause it, he came out to find Jim standing in the living room with his face drained white and his hands in fists.

"Daddy, did I do something wrong again?"

Jim ran his fingers through his hair in frustration when Donny asked his tearful question. That bothered him, too. Donny couldn't help the things he did, and Jim knew he treated Donald with the most loving care he could give whenever it was possible. Shaking his head, Jim accepted his mentally disabled son in his stronger arms. "Now, listen to me. You haven't done anything wrong, Donny. I'm very glad you came to see me."

Donny smiled happily, enjoying the opportunity to be in his father's arms which felt safe.

What is going on here when I'm gone? he thought worriedly. I wonder if Jeff might have time to talk with me if I call? I could sure use another wise head.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:17:55 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 9/30/2006 8:55 PM

Saturday, August 4, 2068, 4:20 p.m., local time, Murray Gill, KS (9:20 a.m., next day, Tracy Island)

"How're we doing, Tynan?"

Dom came up the ramp, his medikit dangling from one hand. "I think we've got all the yellow tags, Doc. The cases in most need are aboard, with the appliances... and parents."

Dianne looked around at all the extra people, and nodded, sighing silently. It had taken a fair amount of persuasion to get Scott, then Jeff -- to whom the field commander deferred -- to approve the unorthodox and potentially dangerous situation. But as a mother and a physician, Dianne knew that these parents would be required at their destination to grant permissions for further treatment -- and that the children, who were all under the age of 6, would need their parents for support and reassurance. She was almost ready to pull rank as CMO, when Jeff had nodded and given his approval.

"I know you'll be sensible about this, Doc. Just go easy, okay?"

"We will, Boss," she'd replied with a wink. "See you later."

Jeff had smiled. "F-A-B. Base out."

"All right, everyone," Dianne said, rubbing her hands together. "I need the parents to all sit on the floor Indian-style. That way you're less likely to fall." She glanced back toward the surgical area, where a stable of small wheelchairs and walkers were secured with a net from Thunderbird Two. She had thought at one point about stacking them inside the empty morgue, but decided against it.

"All set, Angel?" Dianne asked, feeling the rumble of the engine starting.

"F-A-B," the nurse, sitting in the pilot's chair, replied.

Dianne glanced at Dom, who had closed the doors and retracted the ramp, and was now taking up the position in the monitoring station. "All set, Tynan?"

"F-A-B, Doc," he said as he secured himself.

"Then let me get strapped in and we're off!" She took one more glance around the medical cabin. "Please, folks, don't stand up. Your children are secure. We're headed for Wichita Memorial, ETA..."

"Twenty minutes, Doc," Nikki supplied with a smile.

"ETA, Twenty minutes," Dianne echoed. "If I'm needed, I'll be in the cockpit."

With that, she stepped into the cockpit and took the co-pilot's seat to Nikki's right. She strapped herself in, then nodded. "Let's go."

Thunderbird Seven rose on its quiet hoverjets, eliciting a small chorus of "oohs" from the passengers. From where he lay, Peter Valerian could look up through the three round skylights and see the dark gray clouds go past at what seemed to him to be an impossible speed. His mother sat near his head, one hand laying gently in his hair, and in the bed next to her lay Michael Hart, who sighed heavily.

"Are you all right, Mr. Hart?" she asked solicitously.

"Yes, I'll be fine. Just never thought I'd be transported in a Thunderbird... at least, not like this!"

His wry comment made her smile. "It's a wonderful thing, but not one I'd care to repeat." Glancing up at Dom, she said, "No offense."

"None taken," Dom replied, an amused look on his face. "I've found that most of our passengers feel the same way."

She nodded, then turned her attention back to her son, whose eyes were fixed on the sky, and the lightning that occasionally arced from cloud to cloud.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:20:13 GMT  
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 10/1/2006 11:15 AM

(Saturday, August 4, El Dorado, Kansas 4:45 p.m./Sunday, August 5, Tracy Island 9:45 a.m.)

While eating dinner, Jenny watched Heather carefully. She noticed that her niece kept looking out the kitchen window, peering at the place where the lovely house had once stood. The dark grey sky with its flashes of lightning described Heather's mood. Then in a fit of frustration, Heather shoved her chair back, marched over to the kitchen window, and pushed the window shades closed. Sitting back down, Heather started to eat again.



"Are you all right?" Jenny asked carefully as she passed a plate of biscuits.

Accepting two hot biscuits, Heather smiled. "I'm about as all right as I can be." Taking one of the biscuits, Heather buttered it, dribbled honey on it, and then nibbled on it thoughtfully.

"Pass the mashed potatoes?" Jenny asked. Heather wiped the honey off her fingers and passed the bowl of steaming mashed potatoes, being careful not to bump the large spoon stuck in the lumpy mound.

"You know, Aunt Jenny," Heather spoke thoughtfully. "At first, when I saw you standing on the grounds, I thought I could handle it just fine. My home was just nuts, bolts, boards, brick, paint and electronics. All could be rebuilt. So, why does it bother me so bad? I shouldn't feel like this!"

Patting a slightly rough hand, Jenny sighed. "Honey, it's hard to describe, but you've basically set down roots and the tornado pulled them up. You and your father designed the house together, so it meant something to you. You worked hard to build it. You couldn't wait to move in. You built the fence around it, and put all the electronics in it so you could keep in contact with the rest of your family who live so far away. All the neighbors were so excited to have you move here. But I know that you're trying to decide whether to take Mr. Tracy's offer. Don't worry about what your mother thinks, what your father says, or even what I think. Do what's best for you."

As Heather reached for the fried chicken, she nodded at what Jenny had said. "The first thing I want to do is get a room at the Regis Hotel in Wichita."

"When would you go?" Jenny asked, taking a sip of coffee.

"I'll go this evening," Heather said as she sipped her iced tea.

"What about all your legal papers and such? Or did you have them there?" Jenny asked.

"Oh I had them there--"

"Oh no!"

Raising up a hand, Heather reassured her, "No, it's okay. The tornado took the house and everything above ground, but I put all my legal papers and things in a fireproof safe and that's in the basement. I'll go get those before I take off for the big city."

Seeing the exhaustion tugging at the corners of Heather's eyes, Jenny quelled the desire to insist that her niece stay at the farm, because once Heather was gone, the tough navy pilot would be out of her care for good. Who's going to look after her then? "Heather," she asked. "After you get your paperwork, come back here. I'll have something for you that will help get you by for the next few days."

"Okay," Heather agreed.

After they finished dinner, Heather drove over to what was left of her home and, grabbing a spare flashlight in the glove compartment, she found the basement stairway and walked down it.

Flashing the light about, she had to push her way through the piled up furniture, and looked to the back wall where a tapestry once hung. Walking over to it, she found the safe in perfect condition. "Best thing I'd ever done." Opening it, she pulled out her legal papers, the cases that held her medals and ribbons won in service, handwritten letters by her father, her mother, and Donny, and a diamond necklace she wore on rare occasions.

Taking all her treasures out of the safe, she stowed them safely inside her coat and made her way back up and out of her ruined home. As she promised, Heather stopped by her aunt's farmhouse. A light scent of pale lavender came off her aunt's skin as she hugged the older woman close.

"Heather, I've never had a daughter of my own. You've been the closest thing to it that I've ever had. Would you forgive me if I've tried to hold you too close sometimes?"

"Of course," Heather replied. "You act as if I'm leaving for good."

"It's because you are."

After giving Heather one last hug, and an envelope of money, Jenny walked towards the porch where she would keep watch of her niece. Getting into her car, Heather waved from the open window as she fired the engine to life. A moment later, Jenny watched with a heavy heart as the black Jag roared off towards Wichita.

"God protect you, honey. You always seem to find yourself right smack dab in the middle of trouble," she whispered.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:20:51 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 10/1/2006 2:51 PM

It was eerily quiet, considering the amount of people in Thunderbird Seven's medical cabin. Dominic angled himself so that he could read the data on the monitoring station, while watching the patients and parents from the corner of his eye. The journey had progressed without incident. Even the most curious of the adults asked no questions of the dark-haired nurse in the International Rescue scrubs. No one could think of anything but getting their children safely to hospital.

His fingers clenched momentarily as he thought about what it must have been like, watching as your child lay injured and trapped in a basement. No way out, no help available... He briefly closed his eyes before locking them on the monitors again. I don't know what I would do. If something happened to Joshua, if I were stuck with him, or away from him, powerless to help... it's too hard to think about. He shoved terrible images of bloodied blond hair and a tiny crumpled body away from his mind's eye, and was glad when Nikki's voice came over the intercom.

"We're just about to touch down, folks. Please remain seated, we'll get you all out as quickly as possible."

Dominic grinned slightly at the comment, and wiped his face with a hand when Nikki furthered the comment in his earpiece.

"I feel like an air hostess or something," she said, and chuckled. "Keep 'em calm, Tynan."

"Will do," he answered quietly.

A few of the nearer parents briefly turned around, and Dominic gave them a mild smile.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:21:35 GMT  
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From: lillehafrue Sent: 10/1/2006 6:35 PM

Boulder, Colorado, Saturday, August, 4th, 3:45pm local time.

Luke Morel stood in the doorway, his arms folded across his chest. "That's it? You're just leaving?"

Barry sighed. "Luke, don't."

"Don't what? I'm supposed to be happy about this?" Luke marched over and pulled the shirt out of his lover's hand. "You're giving up on four years?"

Barry sighed and sat down on the edge of the bed. "You think this is easy for me? I love you."

The anger drained out of Luke and he sat down on the bed, next to Barry. "Then why are you leaving?" he asked quietly.

Barry looked over at him. "Luke, are you happy? I mean, really happy?"

Luke's shoulders slumped. "I... don't know."

"I do. Babe, we never see each other! You're up at the SAR cabin for weeks and since I got that promotion, I'm always on the road." He took Luke's hand. "It's nobody's fault. We've just drifted in different directions."

Luke's fingers curled around Barry's. "Couldn't we try?" he asked softly, already knowing the answer.

"We've been trying for what, a year now?" Barry shook his head. "It's just not working." He got up

and resumed his packing.

Luke sighed. "I'm sorry, Bar."

Barry smiled. "There's nothing to be sorry for, Luke. This sort of thing happens to the best relationships." His green eyes twinkled. "And you have to admit, this was one of the best." He wiggled his eyebrows seductively.

Luke couldn't help but laugh. He got to his feet and gave Barry a quick, hard hug. "I've got to take the mutt for a run. Will you be here later?"

Barry nodded. "The moving van isn't coming until tomorrow. Then off to LA by the end of the week."

"Then how about we meet at Carelli's in a couple of hours? A last supper kind of thing."

"I'm only moving, babe! Not dying!" Barry laughed. "But sure. See you then."

Luke started to leave, then paused. "Bar, I love you. And...I'll miss you." Then he turned and walked out the door.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:22:12 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/1/2006 7:44 PM

Sunday, August 5, 9:35 a.m., Tracy Island time, in orbital approach to Danger Zone, Thunderbird Three (4:35 p.m., previous day, Murray Gill, KS)

Alan came up in the tiny lift, rubbing his hands. "Your turn, Callie," he said as he sat down behind the pilot's console.

"Thanks," she said as she rose. "Is everything still hot?"

"Yeah," Alan replied, checking over the settings and nodding with approval to see all was in order. He put his communicator in his ear. "We left you plenty of coffee, too."

"I'm looking forward to it." Callie entered the lift and pushed the switch that would bring her one level down to where the living quarters/infirmary level was. The smell of coffee and of bacon filled the air, and her stomach rumbled at the scent of it. "Breakfast twice in one day!" she quipped as she made her way around the central column to where the tiny eating area was. "Einstein?" she called, thinking she had missed the engineer, as she didn't see him. "Einstein?"

A voice sounded in her ear communicator. "Yes, Ursa?"

"Where are you?"

"In the, uh, lounge," Brains replied. "I thought I'd better clear the way so you could change your uniform."

"Oh. Thanks." Callie sighed slightly. "I'll let you know when the coast is clear."

"F-A-B," Brains replied.

As Callie began to strip off her grubby uniform, she recalled the beginning of their journey. The trip to Thunderbird Three had been a whirlwind in itself. Grandma Tracy and Kyrano were waiting in the lounge when the astronauts, followed in a few moments by Elise, entered the room.

"Now, here's a boxed breakfast for each of you," Grandma said as the three astronauts sat down on the green sofa. "I expect you to eat every bite on your way up to the rescue zone!"

"But Gran... GM!" Alan began to protest. "We had breakfast on our way to..."

Emily cut in. "I am aware that you each had MREs, but land's sakes! Those are not a proper breakfast! These boxes are!"

Alan appealed silently to his father, who shook his head. "In matters of food, Indy, I do not argue with her."

"And he's wise not to do so," Emily snapped. "Now, K has already put clean uniforms in Three for you, uh, Indy, and for you, um, Ursa. Change into them on the way." She looked the two already tired operatives up and down. "We have a reputation to uphold and it wouldn't do to have you present yourself to the public in grubby uniforms." She shook a finger at Alan and Brains. "I expect you two to be gentlemen..."

"That's quite enough," Jeff said curtly, shutting off his mother's harangue. "The boys know their manners and they all know their job. It's time we sent them on their way." He turned to address the trio. "Quasar has more information to download to you. Good luck, and keep us posted."

"F-A-B," Alan responded smartly. Jeff pressed on the button, and the sofa began to lower into the floor. As it did, Callie could hear Mrs. Tracy say to Elise, "Now as for you, young lady, it's off to the dining room with you..."

She slid her clean uniform pants up over her hips and buttoned them, zipping up the fly, then replaced the communicator in her ear. "I'm decent, Einstein, if you want to come up. I could use the company."

"On my way."

Callie had her boots on by the time Brains made it up the one level. He didn't have a visor; they still had to come up with one that mimicked his eyeglass prescription, but he looked smart in his dark brown shirt. "Feel better?" he asked as he poured himself a travel mug of coffee.

"Somewhat. I'll feel even better when I get a shower."

"While you eat, I'll let both you and Indy see what I've decided on as a solution to this problem."

Callie sat down at the tiny table and Brains opened up his laptop computer. "You with me Indy?"

"Reading you strength five," he said.

"Quasar?"

A small box popped up on the computer screen. "I'm here," John said, the small picture a live representation of him.

"Good."

Callie took a bite of pancake as Brains began to talk. "We're on a slingshot trajectory that should bring us into the danger zone within our time frame. Two of us will space walk over to the satellites with the goal of turning off the malfunctioning thruster. Then we have the option of planting charges to destroy the two satellites, cutting them apart and setting them adrift, or changing their trajectory so they re-enter the atmosphere and burn up there."

"Destroying the two satellites is going to create headaches of its own," Callie said. "The debris itself could damage the ISS, and not only them, but other manned or unmanned satellites in low Earth orbit. And there's no guarantee that the satellites would burn up completely on reentry, either."

"Setting them adrift may also cause problems further down the road," Alan added.

"Agreed. I may have another solution, though." Callie took a gulp of juice, then continued, "Take the satellites in close tether and drag them out to a higher orbit, or even shove them out of Earth orbit entirely."

"As tempting as that is," Brains said, "we just don't have the time. We may be needed back at the Danger Zone in Kansas."

"They'll be wrapping up at the high school soon," John said. "Base says you're to take as long as you need, within reason."

"Who is going to space walk?" Alan asked.

Brains and Callie exchanged glances. "I have friends on the ISS, and I don't want to run the risk of being recognized," she said. "So whichever job is going to minimize that possibility, I'll do."

"F-A-B," Alan said. "ETA to Danger Zone, forty-five minutes."

"I'll keep in touch. Thunderbird Five on standby," John said. His picture went static. Callie and Brains exchanged glances.

"So," Brains asked, taking his communicator out of his ear and sitting down across the table from

her with his coffee. "Who do you know on the ISS?"

Callie swallowed her mouthful, and began to tell him.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:44:30 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/2/2006 4:37 PM

Saturday, August 4, 5:10 p.m., Murray Gill, KS (10:10 a.m., August 5, Tracy Island)

Kat adjusted the grip on two of the DOMO's arms, tightening the grasp that the machine had on the slab of concrete. There's a lot of debris behind this. I can't let it fall, not now, when there are still children to bring out from the basement.

She glanced back at the open hole. A Boy Scout was climbing out, a small girl on his back, her skinny arms around his neck. An awestruck expression grew on her smudged and dusty face while she gazed, wide-eyed, at the DOMO as she was carried past. Kat smiled, but her smile faded she noted with sadness the prosthetic limb on the girl's right leg. So young, she thought. Too young, really. I wish all children could be whole, but I know that tragedy strikes even the youngest. Sighing, she turned back to the dials of the DOMO. I am just thankful that no one was killed here. That would have been a true tragedy.

Another Boy Scout emerged, this one carrying a couple of tiny walkers. Scott had finally decided the most expedient thing to do would be to carry those who could not walk and bring out the appliances as quickly as possible. Jeff had agreed.

"For some of these families, those wheelchairs and walkers cost a pretty penny, and they can't afford to replace them. And for the children, they mean mobility... and dignity. So make sure they're all retrieved, Maverick. It's important."

As long as they don't jeopardize the safety of the team, I will, Scott had thought at the time. Now, as he watched the small parade of IR personnel, Boy Scouts, parents and onlookers emerge from the depth of the high school, he knew it had been the right decision to make. Automatically, he glanced over at the spot where Thunderbird One had been parked. It was still vacant, and he glanced at the chronometer on Mobile Control. "Where the hell is she?" he muttered irritably. "She should be back by now."

He was about to call Thunderbird One and get an update, when Gordon approached, followed by a woman and four men, three in the uniforms of Scoutmaster, and one in grubby looking civilian clothes.

"Maverick?" Gordon began. "This is Ms. Feller, and this is Mayor Riverton." He introduced the scoutmasters as well. "Ms. Feller's been helping with the triage and says that everyone's been tended to. The scoutmasters have been organizing transportation to a shelter for those whose



cars were damaged by the tornado."

"And I just want to say thank you on behalf of all those here, today," Tom Riverton said warmly, holding out his hand. Scott took it and shook it firmly. "You and your people have done a fantastic job today, and we really appreciate it."

"You're welcome, Mayor Riverton. I'm glad we could help," Scott replied, smiling. He was glad that his face was mostly covered by hat and visor; Mayor Riverton looked vaguely familiar.

"Is the young man I spoke with at first here? I wanted to thank him, too," Tom asked, glancing around.

"No, sir, he's not, but I'll pass along your thanks."

"Right." The mayor looked around once more, this time taking in the still-dark sky, and shook his head. "I have a feeling those storms aren't through with us yet. I'd better see to getting everyone under cover, and find out how our emergency services people are doing. Again, thanks for all your help."

Scott nodded, and the small group moved off. He sat back down at Mobile Control, toggling a switch.

"Van Gogh from Mobile Control, how's it going in there?"

Inside the basement of the high school, Virgil folded up the last of the child-sized wheelchairs, checking to see that there was an identification tag on it. He touched his earphone. "Van Gogh here. We're wrapping things up. Everyone's out; just getting the last of the equipment around."

"F-A-B, Van Gogh. Mobile Control out."

Brandon swept his flashlight around, making sure that they'd gotten all the equipment, both what belonged to the children, and what belonged to IR. He stopped as he spied something red sticking out of the rubble.

"Come on, Big Mac. Time to go," Virgil said as he hefted the wheelchair and headed for the opening.

"Just a minute." Brandon shifted his light to the other hand, shifting the pair of tiny crutches he held to accommodate the flashlight. He reached down and pulled the red ribbon from the debris, then held it up for Virgil to see. "Thought someone might be missing this," he said as he tucked the ribbon into a vest pocket. Then he joined Virgil at the doorway and the two of them left together.

"Mobile Control, we're clear," Virgil said as they passed by the DOMO, giving Kat a wide smile.

"F-A-B, Van Gogh." Scott tapped his earpiece. "DOMO from Mobile Control."

Kat reached up to respond. "MGM here, Mobile Control."

"We're clear. Time to put the DOMO to bed."

"F-A-B," Kat responded. She carefully backed up the equipment, getting out of range of the slab, extending the supporting arms to their furthest length before cutting power to the pads. The cement slab fell with a cloud of cement dust and a resounding boom! Virgil and Brandon turned around, startled, but relaxed as they saw Kat maneuver the machine out of the cloud and trundle toward them.

"See you at Two!" she called as she passed them by. Brandon shook his head, then brought the crutches over to a pickup truck. Arrangements had been made for the families to collect the equipment once the tornado threat was over.

"Thunderbird One from Mobile Control." Scott tried to bury his irritation as he called. "Position and ETA, please."

"Mobile Control, this is Thunderbird One," Elise's voice came back into his earphone. "I am five minutes from the US west coast, and twenty minutes from your position." She paused, then added, "I was shanghaied at base and virtually force-fed breakfast."

Scott sighed. "F-A-B, Frankie, understood. Return to the Rescue Zone."

"F-A-B," she replied. "Thunderbird One, out."

Scott glanced across to Thunderbird Two, where Virgil was now supervising the loading of the pod. "Guess there's just one more venue to hear from." He tapped his earphone again.

"Thunderbird Seven from Mobile Control, come in please."

"Thunderbird Seven here, go ahead, Maverick." Dianne sounded chipper.

"Status report please, Doc."

"We're already on our way back to your position," she said. "All patients unloaded, and all equipment accounted for."

Scott smiled. "F-A-B, Doc. Just waiting for you folks, then we're headed out."

"On our way, Maverick. See you soon."

Scott ran a hand through his hair and stood, stretching. Just need Thunderbird One and we'll see if we have a new assignment. If not, we're outta here... after I swing by the old homestead and see how it's fared.

Just then, the sirens went off.

Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:46:12 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 10/3/2006 3:38 PM

Scott was startled for a moment, then he looked over toward the pickup and the vans that would take the rest of the locals to shelter. There weren't many -- only a dozen or so. The others were either at the hospital, or had been able to leave in their own vehicles. He saw the mayor looking at him, and waving.

"Don't worry about us now," he shouted through cupped hands. "We'll get the rest of us to shelter. Take care of your own people."

Scott waved back, then took off running for Thunderbird Two, which stood raised above the pod. "Everyone inside!" He skidded to a stop just outside the pod, and tapped his earpiece. "Thunderbird Five from Mobile Control. We're getting sirens here. What is the status of the weather?"

"Two more tornadoes have touched down about three miles east of you, Maverick, but they are moving south. There is nothing in your immediate area at the moment. There's bad news, though. There is one moving straight toward Seven. I've warned Doc, but I don't know if she can avoid it."

Damn! "FAB, Quasar. Keep me posted." Scott turned back to get Mobile Control, and simultaneously called Virgil. "Van Gogh, Thunderbird Seven may be in danger. We're loading the last of the equipment in Two. Be ready to lift off the moment we hear anything."

"Maverick, what if Seven is damaged?"

"We take care of the personnel first, and worry about the vehicle later. No arguments!"

"FAB."

Scott ran back to get his equipment, and found Gordon at his heels. He turned to tell him to go back, but his brother interrupted him, saying, "The others can handle what's left. It'll go faster with two of us handling Mobile Control. C'mon; let's get going!"

Scott knew Gordon was right, so he gestured for his brother to take one side, while he took the other. Together they moved the equipment into the pod and Gordon closed the hatch. Virgil lowered Two down.

"If Seven gets here intact, I can raise it again, so Doc can bring it into the pod. But I want us to be safe, in case another tornado hits here. Those things can't affect us in this baby."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:48:52 GMT

From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 10/4/2006 8:07 PM

\*\*\*\*\*Sunday, August 5, 10:10 a.m., Tracy Island time, in orbital approach to Danger Zone, Thunderbird Three (5:10 p.m., previous day, Murray Gill, KS)\*\*\*\*\*

Callie and Brains were conversing about her friends on the ISS when Alan spoke to them both. "Einstein, Ursa, we're approaching the Danger Zone. Report to the main control room immediately."

"Guess it's time," she said. "We've got to plan this out just right."

They walked to the elevator which opened for them. "There's really only room for one person," Brains said. "Therefore, ladies first."

With a blush, Callie said, "Uh, thank you, Brains." She stepped into the elevator and went up. They're really not used to having females in this vessel, she thought.

Moments later, when Callie and Brains met with Alan, he opened communications with John in Thunderbird Five and Jeff back at base. "Boss, Quasar, we've arrived at the Danger Zone. Thunderbird Three is now maintaining constant speed with the fused satellites."

Jeff nodded. "Very well, Indy. Quasar, what's the current position of the satellites in relation to the ISS?"

Checking the calculations, John answered, "The satellites are now five hours away from colliding with the ISS, and earth position is still Quito, Ecuador."

"Okay, Quasar. Now, Indy, have you and the others decided who will spacewalk to the satellites?"

Callie spoke up. "Boss, even though I haven't done a spacewalk since my last assignment at the ISS in December, it's best if I'm at least one of the people involved. This way, I won't risk being recognized by my colleagues or compromising IR's security."

Understanding she was still reeling from her encounter with the Hood, he nodded. "Very well, Ursa. However, I want you to keep your communication restricted to Thunderbird Three and Thunderbird Five."

"F-A-B, Boss." I almost blew it last time. This time it won't even be close to happening.

"Who else will go with Ursa?"

"I will be, Boss," Brains answered. "This way, Indy can keep communications open while we work."

Alan smiled. "Good idea, Einstein."

"Wait, I just realized something," said Callie seriously. "We'll need schematics for both the HDTV satellite and the GOES-4."

John said, "Ahead of you, Ursa. I already got them and am uploading them into Thunderbird Three's computer system."

Noting the sound of his voice, Alan, Brains, and Callie all looked at each other. She then asked, "Quasar, are you all right?"

"I'm fine, Ursa," he snapped. "The upload's complete. You can get this done now."

"F-A-B, Quasar. I'll get them printed out immediately and then get into my space suit." As she paced towards the computer, she became concerned. I've never heard John like this before. I hope everything's okay.

Brains walked with Callie to the main computer. "After you get the blueprints, I'll see if I can isolate the area of the ISS which may be impacted if we fail."

Jeff shook his head. "No, Einstein. We won't fail. Good luck to all three of you."

Alan said, "F-A-B, Boss. Thunderbird Three, out."

Callie completed the printouts and went back down the elevator to get into her space suit.

When Brains calculated the impact point on the ISS, he shook his head. "It'll hit the biochemstiry, botany, and agricultural labs. Indy?"

"Yeah?"

"Notify the ISS that the impact point will be the nature labs area."

"F-A-B, Einstein."

Callie was clipping the top of her space suit when she heard Brains' dreaded words. "Oh, no...Mitzi and Xiang..."

Brains joined her in the "lounge" to discuss what they would do during their spacewalk. "We'll need cutting equipment to separate the satellites, but our first order of business is to shut off the thruster."

"Right. I'll grab the cutting gear."

After a few minutes, the pair were completely dressed in their space suits. Tethered to make sure they would not drift away, they exited the airlock and floated their way to the satellites.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:49:46 GMT

From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 10/4/2006 8:18 PM

(Saturday, August 4, 2068 Wichita, KS 5:30 p.m./ Saturday, August 5, 2068, Tracy Island 10:30 a.m.)

The sky overhead still seemed streaky and boiling. Her long auburn hair was pulled to the side from the winds that had yet to let up. She growled as she fought to keep the car on road due to the fierceness of the winds that seemed to come straight down the road she was on. Rather than think about the aches and pains that were traveling up and down her body, she concentrated on simply getting to the Regis Hotel. What was normally a twenty minute drive, turned into forty minutes as she had to avoid paramedics rushing to their danger scenes, police racing about answering calls, and temporary backups due to the weather. As she crept along, she heard what sounded like small rocks hitting the roof of the car and bouncing off the windshield. "Just hold together, baby. Just stay in one piece. I just need to get to the hotel and we're home free!" she told herself as she drove.

Soon the hailstorm abated, and she was able to increase her speed until she reached Wichita and the neon lights of the Regis Hotel beckoned her like a lighthouse in the dark. She drove up into the circular drive, and got out throwing the keys to the valet. "Thank you!" she called out as she walked into the hotel and into the elegant lobby.

Everything in the Regis lobby glittered with gold. The floor was a plushy gold and white. The lamps on all the tables were gold. Even the lobby's check-in desk was layered in a gold paneling. Walking up to it, Heather set her credit card down and said, "I need a suite for a week and I don't care where it's at."

The name tag on the man's lapel read Chase. He studied the scruffy-looking woman with hair all askew and replied understandingly. "You look like you need a long rest. I have the perfect suite. It's up on the fifteenth floor."

"I'll take it," she sighed. "Is the salon open?"

"Oh, yes, Ma'am," he said. "Not busy right now either. Did you have any luggage to have taken up?"

Heather sighed at the question. "Unfortunately, no."

Following the surprised desk clerk's finger, Heather walked down the hallway of gold lit by big glass globes towards the salon, beginning to relax as she went. Soon, she found herself in stepping into a large, posh, women's boutique filled with everything from smart slacks and silk designer shirts, bras and panties, and nightwear. "Perfect!" Heather thought. "I just don't have the strength to endure major shopping. I just want to get it and go!"

Two female clerks eyed her from the crystal clear counter full of expensive toiletries. The shorter of the two with platinum blonde hair and tiny, pert nose whispered to her partner, "No way am I taking that lady. Lizzy, you take her!"

Elizabeth, a fifteen year veteran clerk, stared down at the petite younger woman, whispered back. "Why don't you want to help her?"

Jackie took in the black flight jacket tugged over a mannish khaki uniform shirt with the Tracy Industries logo: and the name Heather stitched underneath it. The shirt was tucked into a pair of dark brown slacks and finished off with a pair of boots.

"She's not exactly Rosie the Riveter, but she's darn close! Those women always give me a hard time! Would you do it, Lizzie?"

With a satisfied smile, Elizabeth agreed, thinking as she looked at Heather's tired, weary eyes, "Jackie, you just passed up the commission of a lifetime and you're going to hate me."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:51:30 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/4/2006 8:33 PM

Saturday, August, 4, 2068, 5:20 p.m., local time, between Wichita and Murray Gill (10:30 a.m., next day, Tracy Island)

"Thunderbird Seven from Thunderbird Five," John's tense voice called to Dianne. "You've got a tornado on your tail, Doc. To the port side, moving at 75 mph."

The train-like roar of the tornado could be heard above the engines of Thunderbird Seven. "F-A-B, Thunderbird Five." Dianne risked a slight glance behind her. "Everybody buckled in securely? We may be in for a bumpy ride."

"F-A-B," answered both Nikki and Dom from behind her. Dom was tense; his fingers gripped the arms of the co-pilot's seat white knuckled. He'd seen the destructive power of a tornado more than once before today. Nikki looked scared, but had a hint of excitement in her eyes. Kent wasn't exactly given to tornadoes and this whole rescue was a first for her.

Dianne nodded once, her face set and intense. "Starting evasive maneuvers. Hang on!"

Thunderbird Seven peeled off at an angle, picking up speed, banking from left to right as much as the hoverjets would allow.

Nikki grunted as a particularly sharp bank threw her hard against the restraining straps. Yet above the silence of the cabin, the roar of the winds called, getting closer, then farther away, but never stopping.

"It's picked up speed, Doc!" John's voice could barely be heard above the winds.



"Ah know! Ah know!" Dianne cried. "Damn! Nothin's workin'! Ah can't pull far enough away!"

Suddenly, the winds diminished dramatically as Dianne punched the accelerator and moved the hovercraft off the roadway and over the open farmlands, taking a detour that she hoped would allow them to lose the funnel cloud. She relaxed a bit when the sounds of the winds died down to near silence.

"Whew!" she sighed, letting out a deep breath. Behind her, Nikki and Dom relaxed marginally and exchanged relieved smiles. "Looks like we shook it. Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Seven: Quasar, how does it look?"

"Doc! Look out!" John yelled. "To starboard....!"

"Ohmigod!" Dianne shouted as the tornado came out of nowhere to her right. She fought with the steering yoke, trying to direct the hovercraft out of the twister's way. But the hoverjets that enabled Seven to pass over water and snow betrayed the Thunderbird today. The rear of the vessel lifted, the winds relentlessly tugging and tugging, then suddenly, within a blink of an eye, Thunderbird Seven was swept into the powerful vortex!

\*\*\*\*\*

"Mobile Control from Thunderbird Five, we have a code red emergency!"

Scott, just entering Thunderbird Two's cockpit, jumped, grabbing onto the earphone, his blood running cold both at John's declaration and at the urgent tone of his voice.

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Five, what is the emergency?" He nodded to Virgil, who switched the signal over to the internal loudspeaker.

"Thunderbird Seven has been enveloped in a strong twister three miles northeast of your position." There were gasps of shock from all of the personnel in the cockpit. "I have lost communication with the three occupants, but their locator signals indicate that they are in the twister!" John's voice was tight.

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Five! Give me moment by moment updates." Scott replied, trying with his strong, authoritative tones to calm the agitated space monitor. "Download Seven's current position to Thunderbird Two; we're heading out now."

"F-A-B," John said.

"Thunderbird Five, standing by."

Scott's heart was beating hard in his chest as he spoke into the comm. again. "Thunderbird One from Thunderbird Two."

"Thunderbird One here," Elise replied.

"Frankie! We've got trouble. Thunderbird Seven has been sucked into a tornado. I need you to

bleed every last ounce of speed out of One and get back here as soon as possible. Here are the current coordinates." He ran off the numbers that had just showed up on Thunderbird Two's guidance computer.

"F-A-B, Maverick!" Elise's voice was noticeably tighter. "I'll set a new record."

"Every last ounce, Frankie. Maverick out."

"Everyone, sit down!" Virgil called to the agitated crew. "That means you, too, Maverick."

"F-A-B." Scott sat, resisting the urge to jump up and start pacing. He knew he needed to think about what might be waiting for them and plan for it, but what weighed most in his mind at the moment was, What the hell am I going to tell Dad?

xxxx

Inside the twister, Dianne continued her fight with the control yoke, battling to keep her Thunderbird upright in the tremendous winds. She wasn't concerned about the ship tearing apart; like all of the other Thunderbirds it was made of super strong cahelium, one of Brains's best inventions. But the ship did have two parts, held together by the same sort of electromagnets that kept Thunderbird Two's pod in place.

High tension electrical wires, hanging in the path of the twister, broke from their moorings, snapping in the fury of the the storm. One danced along the skin of the mobile ambulance. The cabins were well insulated; the overdose of power did not reach the passengers. But the minuscule gap between cockpit and medical cabin was another matter.

A sudden vibration and screaming alarm alerted pilot and co-pilots that there was a problem. Glancing at the control panel nearest him, Dom's eyes widened. "Dianne! We have a fault on the electromagnets! They're coming loose!"

"Reroute power!" she called frantically.

"F-A-B!" Dom's fingers flew over the controls, but it was too late. The vibration turned to a second or two of violent shaking, then the medical cabin was torn away from its control cab! The sudden separation complete, the lighter cockpit tumbled and tumbled, out of control, buffeted about by the winds. Dom's grip renewed its strangle hold on the seat arms. Dianne's stomach threatened to revolt; she closed her eyes and looked away from the swirling brown air in front of her. She still held onto the control yoke, hoping that the hoverjets might be of use. Nikki jumped and gave an involuntary cry as a large piece of something unidentifiable smashed into the windshield, shattering itself on the strong polyhexane and dropping away.

"Just hold on!" Dianne cried. "We'll ride it out! Nothing can hurt the cab!"

"Oh my God!" Nikki's horrified shout made Dianne open her eyes. They widened in paralyzing shock moments before the medical cabin filled the windshield, on a direct collision course!

She barely had time to shout out, "Brace your...!"

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:53:18 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/4/2006 8:40 PM

Saturday, August, 4, 2068, 5:20 p.m., local time, between Wichita and Murray Gill (10:30 a.m., next day, Tracy Island)

Gavin Belle looked up from his PDA as the news van headed south towards Murray Gill. "I hope International Rescue hasn't left yet. It'd be a feather in our collective cap to get some footage of them... or even an interview."

His cameraman, Mike Triton, who was listening to the emergency scanner, shook his head. "They haven't. From what I've heard on the EMS frequencies, their mobile hospital left Wichita General just a few minutes ago. They won't leave until its back with them."

Suddenly the tornado warning sirens went off around them. "Damn!" Gavin swore. "We'd better get under cover."

"Wait!" Gavin's sound man and driver, Eric, pointed to a spot ahead of them and to their left. "Is that what I think it is?"

"Hot damn, yes!" Gavin said, excitedly. "Thunderbird Seven! And it's being chased by a tornado! Go after it!" He turned to Mike. "Get the camera on and keep your lens on that ship!"

"Whatever you say, boss." Mike hoisted the camera to his shoulders and leaned forward, shooting out through the windshield as they followed the massive medical ship's progress.

They watched as the tornado seemed to tease the white medical ship for a few moments, following its path as the Thunderbird dodged and weaved, leaving the tarmac, and heading over open fields. Then suddenly disaster struck! Thunderbird 7 was picked up into the twister and tossed around like she weighed nothing. The ship spun and Gavin thought he could almost hear the screams of the people inside.

"Keep filming!" Gavin shouted.

The twister encountered some high tension wires, and the dirty vortex was suddenly filled with blue and white electricity, arcing across the Thunderbird. To their horror, the giant medical freighter was torn into two sections. The larger back end whirled off into the brown maelstrom, showing up only now and then. The smaller section rolled, moving faster than the bigger, rectangular section. Gavin and his crew let out gasps of shock as the larger part slammed into the

smaller, turning on one axis to slam again into the cab's side. It then dropped like a stone, rolling twice before coming to a stop. The smaller section hovered for what seemed like eternity, then was spit out of the tornado, falling to the ground with a sickening crunch roughly a half kilometer away.

As fast as it had started, the tornado moved off, finally dissipating in the distance.

Gavin and his crew looked at each other for a moment, then Eric put the pedal to the floor, pulling a U-turn and speeding off towards the wreckage. He burned rubber, weaving in and out of the stopped cars, and passing the people who were climbing out of the ditches, and pointing in the direction of the white vehicle. Gavin pulled open his phone, and called the office. "I've just uploaded some footage that is dynamite, and I should be uploading some more soon! Story of the Year stuff! A Thunderbird is down! Send out the chopper! We'll need aerial footage!"

Eric pulled onto a dirt road that he figured would get them close to the downed craft. It did, and he pulled up beside the field where the smaller portion had come to rest. They all climbed out of the van, and got ready to start filming.

"This is fantastic! Roll the sound! Roll the sound!!" Gavin shouted as Eric gave him the thumbs up. "This is Gavin Belle, reporting live from near Murray Gill, Kansas. Earlier today, tornados struck this sleepy Mid-west town, causing a major catastrophe. But, saviors arrived in the form of International Rescue. They valiantly did their duty, saving the trapped townspeople, knocking down potential hazards, everything we have come to expect from these extraordinary people. But now, it looks as if they are the ones in need of rescue. A rogue twister has just struck Thunderbird 7, the medical frigate." He swept his arm behind him. "As you can clearly see, it is highly unlikely that any of them have survived."

Mike panned the camera towards the disaster scene. "This appears to be the control cab of the vessel known as Thunderbird Seven. Let's see if there's anyone alive inside!"

exclusive footage by Lillehafrue and Tikatu

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:54:34 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/5/2006 7:28 AM

Once Callie and Brains were gone, Alan kept his eyes on the viewscreen that showed him what was going on outside, but put his earphone in, and tapped it.

"Indy to Quasar."

John, in the middle of updating both Virgil and Elise on Thunderbird Seven's position, reached over and keyed in his brother's call, adding it to the two others he had going. "What is it, Indy? I'm

a little busy right now."

"What's going on?" Alan asked, frowning. "You don't speak to people the way you spoke to Ursa without a damn good reason."

"I don't have time for this, Indy," John said, his tone warning. He paused, peering at the locator screen. "Finally! They've stopped moving. Thunderbirds One and Two from Thunderbird Five, Thunderbird Seven has stopped moving. I'm downloading coordinates for you now."

"F-A-B," came the overlapping voices of Virgil and Elise. "Proceeding to that position now," Elise added.

"F-A-B," John replied. He turned back to Alan, and sighed. "We have a code red, Indy. Thunderbird Seven's in trouble, big trouble. I don't have time to explain it more than that."

"Code red!?" Alan, who had heard the whole exchange between the other three Thunderbirds, bit back his questions. "All right. I'll let you deal with it. But as soon as we're done here, I want all the details."

"You'll get them, I promise." John looked up at one of the nearby vid screens. It picked up the satellite news programs, filtering them through a program similar to the one used on the audio pick up. The screen had settled on the M.W.A.N. station, and John groaned as he saw a line of text crawl along the blue stripe at the bottom of the screen. "Damn!"

"What is it?"

"The media's already gotten wind of this! 'International Rescue craft downed by tornado; more details as they become available'," John read.

Alan gasped as his brother read the notice. "Downed by a tornado? Is everyone okay? What the hell happened?!"

"I don't know!" John cried. "All I know is that it got swept up in a tornado, and it seems to have landed somewhere. One and Two are on their way."

"Does Da... the Boss know?" Alan asked, his eyes big with disbelief.

"Oh God." John groaned. "No, Indy, he doesn't, and I'm not going to be the one to tell him, either!" He shook his head. "I need to keep this open so I can listen for calls from Seven, okay? Please, Indy. I'll get you details as soon as I have them!"

Alan let out a deep breath, and nodded. "All right." He glanced up. "Einstein and Ursa are at the satellite now. Get back to me as soon as you can."

"F-A-B," John replied. He paused, then added, "Indy?"

"Yeah?"

"Pray."

Alan bit his lower lip, and nodded again. "I'm not much of a praying man, but... yeah. Talk to you soon, Quasar."

John nodded curtly. "Thunderbird Five out."

God, I hope they're okay, Alan prayed. Dad couldn't stand to lose... Mom. And Dom... Joshua can't lose him! Oh dear God... Nikki's in there too! Please, please let them be okay!

He rubbed his eyes, ridding them of a sudden, unexpected moisture, then turned his attention back to the spacewalking duo just in time to hear Brains say, "We're going to deal with the thruster first."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:56:56 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 10/5/2006 4:09 PM

"I think...yes, there is it, and it's intact." Brains smiled briefly in thanks. "We're going to be able to deal with the thruster without having to get inside."

He and Callie had made their way across the void of space to the fused satellites, their tethers snaking behind them like streamers. Callie's eyes caught the access panel Brains was talking about. She was certain it was the correct one, as it had 'Emergency Thruster Control' emblazoned across it.

"Nice of them to label things in case of emergency," she quipped.

"Somehow, I doubt they ever thought something like this would happen," Brains said.

The two anchored themselves by the satellite's bulkhead, and Callie felt around the edges of the panel for the release mechanism. With a few tugs, it came loose and slid aside on purpose-built runners, revealing the controls.

"Excellent. They're in perfect condition."

Brains reached across with one gloved hand to punch in the code for the deactivation sequence...and nothing happened.

"What?"

He tried again, and still nothing.

"There's no sign of any damage -- there couldn't have been unless the outer panel was

compromised, which it wasn't," Callie said.

"Unless," Brains said, "the force of the collision has caused a problem with the internal circuitry."

"That's possible," Callie said. "We'd need to get underneath this control panel."

"Exactly. Can you see anything that may be some sort of release for this panel?"

The two scrutinized the panel, lit by their helmet lights, before Callie reached out and pushed in an innocuous-looking button in the upper left corner.

"Hey presto!" she said as the casing of the control panel slid to the side, revealing the technology it was designed to protect.

"You're good at that," Brains said.

Callie chuckled.

"Someone's got to be."

Brains scrutinized the circuitry before him for a few moments, before reaching into his utility belt and pulling out a thin, long-handled tool. Callie was familiar with it; it acted as a sort of screwdriver and soldering iron all in one, fit for use in space.

"I wonder... It could be as simple as one circuit being damaged. If I can perhaps ascertain whether power can be brought back online..." After a few moments of diagnostic work, Brains clucked his tongue. "Yes, I think we're in luck. Hold this for me, will you?"

Brains handed the thin tool to Callie, and pulled out a thin strip of metal.

"I get it," Callie said. "It's so simple, like something a kid would do in a tech class."

"Indeed. But, as I've always believed, sometimes the old methods are the best methods."

Together, the two worked to repair the damaged circuitry of the control panel using a simple practice akin to soldering -- though using more appropriate materials for their job than the average technology student would have possessed -- and soon enough, power returned and the panel burst to life.

"Look what I made today, Ma: a real working satellite!"

Brains chuckled at Callie's words, before sliding the inner cover back into place. He keyed in the deactivation sequence again, and this time he was rewarded with the sight of the thruster shutting down, and having it confirmed as fact on the panel before them.

"There we have it," he said.

"Great! Now all we have to do is separate these babies," Callie said. "But something tells me it's



not going to be easy..."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 23:59:00 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/5/2006 4:18 PM

Dominic opened his eyes. The world looked odd to him. He shook his head then decided that it wasn't such a good idea as a stab of pain lanced through it. He glanced around and realized that he was upside-down, in an almost jackknife position. The restraining straps dug into his shoulders as they kept him from falling to the debris cluttered ceiling below.

Last thing I remember was Dianne shouting something about bracing....

A low moan from next to him brought his focus to Nikki, who was just opening her own eyes. She lifted a heavy hand to her head.

"Did anybody get the number of that lorry...?"

Dominic smiled wryly. "That wasn't a lorry. It was a bloody tornado."

A strange hitching sound refocused his attention and he looked over at the source.

"Dianne!"

Dianne was, like them, upside down, but unlike them, her face was turning blue and she was struggling to breathe. Dom unbuckled himself carefully, grasping the arms of his seat and moving his legs and feet slowly down what was now the floor of the cab. The floor slanted towards him and he had to climb a bit to get to the pilot's chair.

"Damn!" he said as he saw the problem. The front of the cab had been crumpled in the impact with the medical cabin. The windshield was spider webbed with cracks, and smashed through in several places. But the steering yoke had been pushed up hard into Dianne's abdomen, just below the ribs and it was this that was keeping her diaphragm from expanding to fill her lungs. One leg dangled, making the problem worse, while the other stood out straight, her foot seeming to disappear within the control panels' cabinetry.

"Nikki, I need your help!" he shouted back to his companion.

Nikki unbuckled herself and tried to follow his lead about gradually setting herself down onto the floor, but eventually just fell into a heap. "Ow!" she cried, putting a hand to her ankle. "Damn! That hurts!" She crawled out from under her chair toward the back wall, using it to brace herself as she tried to she tried to stand.

"You okay, Nik?" Dom asked, concerned as he examined Dianne's seat.

"No, but I'll do," she replied, shoving off the wall and hobbling over to the pilot's chair. "I think I've sprained it."

Dom nodded tersely. "I'll help you with it in half a mo." He motioned to the side of Dianne's chair opposite him. The doctor's wheezing was becoming more and more labored and her eyes pleaded with her nurses for relief. "We need to move her seat backwards," he said. "You take that side and I'll take this one."

"Lean it back?" Nikki asked, taking hold of the chair, trying to keep from putting weight on her ankle.

"Yes, but push it back to a different spot, first. I've got the manual control. Ready, set, push!"

It took three tries to get Dianne far enough away from the steering yoke to ease her labored attempts to breathe. She seemed to be caught by the steering yoke's pillar and was hard to move. In the end, leaning her back was most effective. Nikki hobbled to get the first aid kit that was mounted by one of the outer doors. She also ducked into the lockers on the back wall of the cab, pulling out some bulkier equipment, most importantly, an oxygen bottle and mask. She fitted the mask to Dianne's face, turned on the O2, and both nurses sighed with relief to see their patient's color improve.

"Now what?" Nikki asked. "She's stuck and still upside down."

"Now we see if we can communicate with Mobile Control and get some help," Dom said, sliding over to where he had been sitting. He rummaged around in the debris that had fallen to the floor and came up with his visor, and ear comm. He put it in one ear and tapped it.

"Mobile Control from Thunderbird Seven, come in Mobile Control."  
Virgil pounced on the signal.

"Thunderbird Two here. What's your status, Thunderbird Seven? I'm patching in Thunderbirds One and Five on the tricircuit."

Dom took a deep breath. "We were sucked into a twister just off of South 39th Street. It ripped the medical cabin off and tumbled us about, and then we collided with something hard. I think it might have been the medical cabin because the front end of the cab is smashed in and the windshield is smashed too. We are upside down and Doc is caught by the steering yoke. We can't move her. Angel seems to have sprained an ankle, but beyond that is okay and so am I, just minor bruises and bumps. Doc was in respiratory distress from the steering yoke's position but is now on oxygen and her color is good for being upside down. Angel is applying a soft cervical collar to her neck...."

Nikki realized that Dianne's head kept flopping forward. "This might help you keep your head more stable," she said with a gentle smile.

"Hurts," Dianne whispered.

"What hurts?" Nikki asked.

"Leg hurts."

It was then that Nikki noticed the drops of blood that were plopping, one by one, onto the ceiling.

"Da -- Tynan, we have a bleeder!" she called to her companion.

"We need some help pretty quickly here, Thunderbird Two. Doc is bleeding from somewhere... Angel, can you see where the bleeding is?"

"Her left leg as far as I can determine. Her uniform trousers are soaked with it. I'm going to find a blanket and see what I can do to keep her from getting shock."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Seven. Help is on the way. Did you get all that, Thunderbird One?"

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Two," Elise replied.

Virgil's voice sounded in Dom's ear, then a low whistle. "I've found the medical cabin. One corner is all smashed in. I'm closing on your position now."

It was more than just one corner. The medical cabin lay on its side, leaning against a stand of trees, the wide sliding doors facing the ground, the damaged edge and rippled side sticking up. Scott got up to look out, standing beside Virgil with his hand on the pilot's chair. He went over the layout of the medical cabin in his mind, and sighed with relief as he realized the smashed corner was mainly storage, and the morgue. I'm almost afraid of how the cockpit looks if the med cabin looks this bad! With that thought, he looked ahead to see the white gleam of the cockpit not far away.

"There they are," he said quietly. "There's a place you can set down, about five hundred yards on the other side. Do it!" He turned to face the others in the cockpit. "Sweet, get the medical bay ready for patients. MGM, you help her. Van Gogh, stay here and in constant contact with Quasar. We need to know if any more tornadoes are heading this way, and we'll need to lift off as soon as we have the medical team aboard. Big Mac, Cousteau, you're with me. Let's get ready."

tornado trial, part two, by ArtisticRainey and Tikatu, with some help from Hobbeth

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:00:39 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 10/5/2006 4:33 PM

Dominic scooted back over to Dianne and braced himself so he could look at her leg. The blue material of her scrub pants was soaked through, and he knew that it would have to be cut away.

"Is there a scalpel or a pair of scissors in there, Nik?" he asked.

"Here's a scalpel. Be careful!" Nikki said. She opened the space blanket she had brought along, and began to tuck it in around the restraining straps that held Dianne in place.

Dom nodded and carefully began to cut away the scrub pant leg. He had done this before, and years of assisting surgeons in the operating room had made him a deft hand at using a scalpel. Eventually, the material was cleared, and Dominic had a few choice words for what he saw.

"She's caught on part of the steering column. The shard doesn't seem to have nicked the tibial artery, but there is a lot of blood."

"We need to get her lying down, but how are we supposed to? She's stuck." Nikki's face was tight with concentration as she tried to figure out what they could do.

"We're gonna have to cut that metal first, but damned if I know how," Dominic said.

Dianne groaned in pain, and her eyes fluttered closed, then open again.

"It'll be okay, Dianne," Nikki said. "We'll get out soon enough."

Dianne looked at the young nurse, who maintained a steady, confident expression. We'll get out, I know it, she thought.

"Thunderbird Seven from Thunderbird Two, can you read me, Tynan?"

"Tynan here," Dom replied quickly. "Reading you strength five. What's the situation?"

"Well, I'm at your position now," Virgil said, bringing his Thunderbird around to hover over the upside down portion of Seven. "The cab looks pretty smashed up on the starboard side and... damn!"

"Smashed up" was an understatement, and the other occupants of the cabin sucked in breath, clapped hands over their mouths, and swore both quietly and loudly. The starboard side, which faced the road, was scored with a ripple of maltreated metal. Edges of the door stood out from their joints and the big red "7" on the door was badly scraped, wide swathes of white and even gunmetal gray showing where the metal was laid bare. But what made Virgil curse was the front. It had a massive dent, almost full center, wide and deep and concave. Ridges of metal from the hood could barely be seen from his vantage point, but he knew there would be an accordion-like folding where the nose had been pushed toward the cab. He could almost imagine how the dented edge of the medical cabin would fit into that dimple. He huffed out a deep breath, a sigh made from equal parts frustration, anxiety, and sheer disbelief.

"Damn!" he exclaimed again.

"What's wrong?" Dom asked.

"You have company."

Nikki turned and Dom looked up to see the film crew. They had reached the cockpit, and were trying to film through the spider webbed reflective glass. Nikki quickly turned back to Dianne, shielding the doctor's face as well as her own, while Dom slipped on his visor.

"Is anyone in there? Are you all right?" Gavin called.

"What do you think you're playing at?" Nikki shouted, her expression one of abject disgust. "The media! Can't they keep their noses out of anything?"

Gavin ignored the comment and turned to Mike. "I can barely see in there. Can you get anything?"

"No," Mike said. "This stuff is too opaque."

Gavin glanced up at Thunderbird Two. "Try to get some shots of him, then."

"Okay." Mike aimed his camera upward.

"Oh, no, you don't," Virgil said with a grim smile. He reached over and activated the camera fogger. "Take that!"

Mike suddenly pulled his camera away from his eye. "Damn. They've blocked us."

"Gentlemen!" Virgil's voice boomed over Thunderbird Two's seldom used loudspeaker. "No pictures, please." Someone other than Scott gets the fun part for once, he thought.

"Don't worry," Gavin said quietly. "We got what we need." He glanced behind him. "Here comes emergency services. Figured they'd be out in a jiffy when they learned a Thunderbird was down." He turned away, and motioned to Mike and Eric. "Let's clear the way."

The brief levity was gone, and Virgil was busy trying to land and ascertaining the condition of the exits. "Have you tried the door releases?" he asked.

"Not yet, Thunderbird Two," Dom said. "Stand by."

Dominic glanced at Nikki, who gave him an affirmative nod. She made her way across the cabin and tried the release on the undamaged side. Nothing. She tried again and again, but the door wouldn't open. Then she shifted her attention to the undamaged sliding rear door, the one that would normally lead to the now-AWOL medical cabin. She pulled on the manual release, braced as well as her injured ankle allowed, and straining with the exertion. It wouldn't budge. Finally, she glanced at Dom, shaking her head silently.

"Damn," he muttered. "Thunderbird Two, one door is smashed and the other two are not operational. We're stuck. And we need to get some cutters in here to get Doc out so we can deal with her injuries."

"F-A-B, Thunderbird Seven," Virgil said, his lips tightening at the word 'cutters'. "The oxyhydrite

equipment will be with you as soon as I land. Stand by."

"F-A-B."

"Dom," Dianne whispered.

"Yes, Doc?" The nurse came close to Dianne's face.

"Give me a general analgesic then a local for the leg," Dianne instructed in a whisper. Dominic pulled a hypospray out of the medikit, selecting the analgesic ampule first and injecting Dianne with it. Then he selected a local anesthetic and pressured it into Dianne's leg just below the knee. The results were gratifying; Dianne almost immediately relaxed.

"Better," she murmured.

"Good," Dom said.

As one patient was relieved of pain, however, another's became apparent. Nikki yelped in pain and clutched at her ankle, her face pulled in a tight grimace. Dominic turned around and his frown grew deeper.

"We need to do something about that," he said.

"It's fine," Nikki replied. "What we need to do is concentrate on Dianne."

"Don't be daft."

"Really, it's fine."

"No, it's not."

"People."

The two nurses turned towards the prone doctor, both suddenly aware of how childish they were being.

"Dominic, wrap up Nikki's ankle. Nikki, let 'im. Both o' you, Ah have eight kids, an' Ah don't need any more..."

"Sorry, Doctor," they replied together.

Nikki slid down to the floor and Dominic fetched a medikit, and the task was done in moments.

"Sorry we don't have any crutches handy, Nik," Dom said apologetically.

"I'll do," Nikki responded.

Their heads both snapped up at a sudden pounding on the windows, which was accompanied by

a shout.

"Do you need any help in there?" A tall dark-skinned man in an EMS uniform called to them.

"Our people are on the way," Nikki called.

She glanced over at Dominic, and then Dianne, before shifting her weight to keep it off her injured ankle. And they can't be too soon...

tornado trial, part three, by ArtisticRainey and Tikatu

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:01:38 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 10/5/2006 4:38 PM

Scott, Gordon, and Brandon hurried towards the mangled wreck that had hours before been a fully-functioning Thunderbird. They carried with them the cutting equipment that would get the trapped crew out, as well as a medical supply kit from Thunderbird Two's sickbay. Where the hell is Elise? Scott thought for the thousandth time. We're going to need One's speed. A substantial group of emergency services personnel had gathered at the crash site. Scott motioned for Gordon and Brandon to get started while he turned to address the people who were approaching them.

"Thanks for the support, folks," he said. "We've got the equipment to get our operatives out, but we could use some more substantial medical equipment."

"We'll be glad to help you out," said one man, who proffered a large hand. "Dave Kandagaye, Kansas Region II EMS."

"Thanks," Scott said, accepting the handshake.

Meanwhile, Gordon and Brandon had donned their protective gear.

"Thunderbird Seven from Cousteau, we're coming in. Keep clear of the starboard door and stay as far back from the windshield as you can. We're going to pass cutting gear through to you to release Doc, but you'll be exiting through the side."

"F-A-B, Cousteau," Dom said. "The sooner the better."

Don't I know it, Gordon thought. He took up his position at the front of the wreck beside Brandon, who handed him a crowbar. The taller aquanaut had a caladium hammer in his hands already, poised to start the demolition work.

"Ready?" Gordon asked.



"As always," came the reply.

"Okay, on three. One, two, THREE!"

The strength of the two men took a substantial chunk out of the windshield, and they stood back, satisfied. Then Brandon passed his cutter and some safety gear through the gap, while Gordon made his way to the side door, and began to cut.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:01:57 GMT  
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From: AmandaTracyandFred Sent: 10/6/2006 9:13 PM

Unaware of what was happening to International Rescue at the moment, Heather saw Elizabeth pat a silver curl in her hair and approach her as she looked at the racks of nightgowns, teddies, and peek-a-boo two pieces. Heather found something that said medium. It was red, loose-fitting, and that's all she cared about.

"Hi, my name is Elizabeth. Everyone calls me 'Lizzie'. May I help you, dear?"

Heather liked the apple red cheeks and the graying hair. "Uhh... yes. I need one day outfit, I need some kind of nightwear, underthings and I just can't hardly stand up. I need like one of those ladies travel kits?"

"The one from France?" Elizabeth asked as she stepped behind the glass counter.

"That's the one!"

As Heather recited tiredly, Elizabeth kept a keen ear towards her and began selecting just what Heather needed, while Jackie watched a stack of clothes grow. Taking a chance, Elizabeth added a pair of satin bedroom slippers and a nice bathrobe by her cash register. To the stack, Heather added a white turtleneck shirt, a pair of slimming khaki slacks, and trouser socks for daywear.

When Heather slowed down, Elizabeth began to ring everything up. "Also, I can add as a gift, a very nice makeup kit as well. It has everything you need in it. You use warm colors?"

"Yes, I do. Thank you very much," Heather said gratefully.

Once everything was rung up, and Heather paid with a charge card, she gathered everything up and headed right out the door. Jackie sneaked over to Elizabeth's counter to see the total sale, and her mouth dropped open.

"She just needed a little help," remarked Elizabeth. "She looked so tired."

With her arms full of boutique bags, Heather made her way back to the spacious gold lobby to find

the elevators. As she neared the elevators, she saw the lobby TV set on the meteorology channel she used to set her HDTV on. Live cameras displayed the devastation between Wichita and El Dorado. With an unstable dark gray atmosphere as the weather forecaster's backdrop, Heather became fixated on the ribbon of up-to-the-minute news that crossed the bottom of the screen:

"This just in! While rescuing disabled children from a local school, a tornado dropped down catching Thunderbird 7 in its destructive vacuum. More to follow as this information is updated! Stay tuned!"

Flopping into the nearest chair, she crossed herself, feeling an insane desire to run out and help. But someone must already be there, she thought logically, and I'm in no shape to offer any help. By the time I figured out their location, and gotten there, it would be too late. Thunderbird 7? I think that's Dr. Tracy's vehicle, and no doubt, she was flying, too. I hope she's going to be all right.

Afraid to sit any longer, Heather got up, making her way to the elevators. As she stepped into the sparkling glass booth framed by reflective chrome, and felt it push her up to her floor, the broadcast reminded Heather of Jeff Tracy's offer. Sun, surf, and sand, and all I have to do is risk my life every now and then, she mused.

As she slid past the fifth floor, she thought about how losing her home might actually have been a blessing in disguise. Maybe this God's way of telling me where I'm supposed to go next. Of course, this is one heck of a way to tell me! It could have been worse. I could have been home when it happened. Then I wouldn't be here--there's my floor!

As she gathered her stuff together and climbed out onto her floor, Heather concentrated on simply finding her suite. Her key card read 15B which put the suite to the back of the floor. Just figures, she thought as she slipped the card in and pushed the door in. They would stick me in at the back end of the corridor. Of course, I could have asked for help, but did I think of that? Oh no, not me!

Grabbing all her bags and her peevishness, she walked into the sumptuous suite. As soon as the door closed, locking itself automatically, Heather leaned back and let out a gasp of relief she'd been holding in all day. "All I want to do is just--hide!" she groaned.

Leaving her bags by the door, she didn't bother to shower, but shed everything she wore, dropping it all on the floor. Forsaking the nightgown she'd just bought, she crawled in between the cool sheets of her bed, pulled the covers over her body and cried hot tears.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:04:54 GMT  
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 10/7/2006 5:50 PM

Callie and Brains had successfully shut down the thruster to the HDTV satellite, which had been

fused with an antiquated weather satellite.

"So far, so good," said Callie. "I'd better notify Indy. Ursa to Indy. Ursa calling Indy. Do you copy?"

Inside Thunderbird Three, Alan was in a state of disbelief when he heard her calling. I'd better not show any emotion right now. Shaking off any feelings he had about Thunderbird Seven's dire situation, he concentrated on what his two comrades were doing on the satellite. "This is Indy. What's the status of the thruster?"

"The good news is we've shut down the rocket thruster, and we're finally slowing down." After breathing a sigh of relief, she added, "That also means the ISS won't collide within the time frame over Quito, Ecuador."

Brains was more cautious. "Yes, but it changes things around. It won't be within four hours, but it can still collide with this pair of satellites."

Alan rubbed his chin. "Hmm, what do you think we need to do?"

"We've got to separate these satellites," Callie said firmly. "The problem is, the way these satellites are fused together, we may not get them separated in time to prevent the collision."

Thinking carefully, Brains contacted Alan. "Indy, do us a favor. Get Quasar to contact the ISS and tell them we've stopped the satellite's movement. Our current position places us over the open Pacific Ocean, approximately 2000 miles south of Hawaii."

With a nod, Alan said, "F-A-B, Einstein. I know exactly what you and Ursa need right now." The ISS's position in relation to where the satellite is now to see if it will still collide. He opened communications with John. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Three, do you copy?"

In the space station, John heard Alan's call. Trying to handle both emergencies started taking an emotional toll on him. "Thunderbird Five, reading you strength five. How are the satellites?"

"Stopped. I hate to do this to you, Quasar, but you need to contact the ISS and tell them to give you their current position. It's important because the satellites are now positioned over the open Pacific Ocean."

John breathed deeply in attempt to calm down. "All right, Indy. I'll do it. I'm still keeping communications open with Seven at the moment, and some people have volunteered to help Maverick, Big Mac, and Cousteau with getting the med team out." After taking another breath slowly, he asked, "Do Ursa and Einstein know about--"

"No, I haven't told them yet. Telling them might distract them from trying to separate the two satellites."

John opened up communications to the ISS. "International Rescue calling International Space Station. Can you read me?"

In the ISS, Colonel Roberts answered the call. "This is the ISS, International Rescue. You're coming in at full strength. How goes the situation?"

"We've been able to stop the thruster on the fused satellites, and it's now in a position over the open southern Pacific Ocean. What I need from you now is your present position. Even though we did stop the satellites, we have to check to see if you're still on any collision course."

Peter nodded. "Understood. Our current position places us over the Sahara Desert. At our present orbital path, I fear we'll collide with the satellites within two hours. That won't give you a lot of time to get the satellites out of the way."

"Don't worry, ISS. We've got our team working on the problem right now. I'll let them know what's going on. International Rescue, out." Although he thought he was calming down, John was still very anxious in his heart. Mom...please, God, don't let anything happen to her. She means everything to Dad and all of us. She's kept everything glued together for not just our family, but for all the new recruits we've gained in these past months.

On the satellite, Callie and Brains worked feverishly to separate the two satellites. "We'll need that position soon," Brains said nervously. "I'm not even sure how much time we have."

"I know," she said. "The problem is these two satellites are so heavily fused, I'm afraid time may be running out."

Alan waited for John to return with the coordinates. "Thunderbird Three from Thunderbird Five. I've got the current coordinates for the ISS. Unfortunately, now the window has dropped to just two hours."

"Two hours!? Are you sure?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so. Orbital path will put it on the collision course again."

Alan spoke with Callie and Brains. "Listen, time has gotten much shorter now. There's only two hours before the ISS will collide with the satellites. We need a plan, now."

Callie shook her head. "Our only option is to send the satellites out of Earth orbit entirely. To do that, though, we'll have to literally turn the satellite and then activate the thruster again."

Brains said, "Wait. We'll need to move the satellites out of orbit, but instead of us turning the satellite, we tether it to Three."

Alan concurred. "I agree. Einstein, I want you to come back to Three and grab the special net and tether line. You two will put the net over the satellites. Then I'll tether that to the hull with magnets."

"That sounds good," Callie said. "Then we move it out of the trajectory, and reactivate the thruster."

"And finally," said Brains, "before we send it off, we place a tracking marker to alert other space traffic. I'll get the net and tether line. You stay here and keep working on this as best you can."

She nodded. "F-A-B, Einstein."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:08:39 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 10/8/2006 11:21 AM

Dominic accepted the gear Brandon had passed through, and firstly applied a protective covering to Dianne's leg to prevent further injury. He then quickly put on the visor and gloves, and picked up the heavy gear. This is not going to be easy, he thought.

"Be careful, Dom!" Nikki said, standing back.

"I can't be anything but," Dominic quipped, but he could already feel the sweat beading on his forehead.

Dianne opened her eyes and pinned him with a look that conveyed more than words could have, and Dom nodded.

"It'll be fine," he said, and activated the gear.

Suddenly the hours of cross-training were worth it. Part of him had thought: this is a waste of time, as Gordon trained him on the oxyhydrite equipment. I'm a nurse, I'll never need this. However, as he stared at the metal digging into his doctor's leg and began to cut it to free her, he appreciated everything International Rescue had done for him.

It was delicate work, trying to slice the metal cleanly and quickly without causing further injury. He could hear Gordon cutting through the starboard side and Nikki's quiet breathing, and the smell of the gas was pale through the protective mask. He could feel his heartbeat become progressively stronger, in his temples, ears and wrists, and he briefly closed his eyes as the last of the metal was cut, and Dianne could be moved.

"See?" He said to her as he switched off the equipment and lifted his visor. "Didn't make a scratch."

"Jus' get me outta heah," Dianne said, but with a tight smile.  
Dominic nodded, and turned his head as he heard Gordon's voice become suddenly clearer - he was in.

"No problem. The cavalry has arrived."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:09:46 GMT

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From: FrankieCTB2 Sent: 10/9/2006 8:07 PM

Elise let out a whistle at the sight beneath her as she brought one in to land. As soon as the aircraft came to a rest, she threw down the ladder and hit the ground running. Spying Scott, she immediately ran over to him.

"Where the hell have you been, Frankie?!" Scott practically jumped down her throat.

"Breaking speed records to get here! Where d'ya think I was? Out sightseeing?" Her voice dripped of sarcasm; her feathers were now ruffled.

Scott realized he'd snapped and he probably shouldn't have. He knew Elise would have flown hell bent for leather to get here. "Sorry," he mumbled.

Elise sighed. "Okay," then added in a warning tone, "Just don't do it again. Now, what's the plan?" Scott filled her in as they watched Brandon and Gordon work.

"Who are all these guys?" Elise asked, noticing the gathering of various people nearby.

"Local EMS mostly, and the media," Scott said the last part with disgust.

"Typical. Ambulance chasers, just what we need." She paused, and then added, "Yes, I activated the camera fogger!"

Scott smiled slightly at her uncanny ability to read his mind sometimes.

They turned their attention back to the rescue. It seemed that there were twenty different things going on all at once.

Outwardly Scott was the role model of a field commander but inside, Elise knew his stomach must have been churning. Just as he finished talking to Virgil, Elise asked, "I bet base is worried sick about this."

Scott was hesitant in replying, which prompted her to ask, "They do know, don't they?"

Scott looked at her, glanced away and then looked back at her. "No, not yet."

Elise was stunned, but before she had a chance to say anything, John called Scott. It took but a few seconds for Scott to become irritated with his brother. "No, I haven't yet, and yes, I do know!" Elise glanced sideways at Scott through her visor as he let out a frustrated sigh. "I'm on it, okay!? Maverick out." He looked at Elise but no words were needed. He reached up to adjust his earpiece again, dreading what he was about to say, and called base. "International Rescue base from Maverick."

The reply was instant. "Go ahead Maverick."

Jeff had been waiting to hear the official stand down from Scott. John had kept him informed of the weather, except the rogue tornado, which had happened so quickly and during the space rescue as well. As Jeff paid closer attention to his son's face on the vid-screen, he noticed how tense and worried Scott looked and he didn't like it. The hair on the back of his neck stood up. Something was wrong and Scott was about to tell him it wasn't good.

Scott quickly decided to get to the point. There was no use beating around the bush. "We have a major problem here, Sir; we were hit unexpectedly by a rogue tornado after the initial rescue. Thunderbird's One and Two and the pod vehicles are secure, no damage. Thunderbird Seven took a direct hit from the tornado." Scott swallowed as the news sunk in.

"WHAT!" Ohmigod, Dianne! Jeff's heart dropped into his stomach. "How bad is it?" Jeff managed to ask.

"Pretty bad, I'm afraid. Tynan, Angel and Doc are all injured." Jeff let out a breath; thankful to hear they were all alive. "We're cutting into the cockpit in right now to get them out. It looks like Doc's injuries are the worse."

Jeff closed his eyes, praying that when he opened them he'd be at his wife's side, holding her, helping her, anything but what he was doing right now. When he opened them, he knew he hadn't been praying hard enough. "Maverick, who is cutting them out of the cockpit?"

"Cousteau and Big Mac and we have some local EMS personnel on hand to help if needed."

"I'm going to call Cousteau to find out how serious Doc's injuries are and in the meantime I want you to make sure Thunderbird One is ready for transporting A.S.A.P."

"F-A-B." Scott signed off as his father called Gordon. He looked at Elise who'd been standing there the entire time. "Think you can get One ready for patient transport in record time?"

She smiled softly and replied, "Consider it done, Commander." Giving a mock salute, she ran back to Thunderbird One.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:10:51 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/9/2006 10:07 PM

Saturday, August 4, 6:10 p.m., Kansas (Sunday, August 5, 11:10 a.m., Tracy Island)

Gavin Belle glanced around to see if there was anyone close who might stop him. Some state police had shown up to close the road; the word about Thunderbird Seven's crash had gotten around and those who has seen it had managed to track it down. But they were out directing traffic, and not nearby. He wanted a word with the man who was obviously in charge, wanted to



find out who had been hurt and how badly. So when the female pilot ran off toward Thunderbird One, he told Mike and Eric to stay put, and approached the leader.

"Hey," he said. He held out his hand. "I'm Gavin Belle, and I'm with MWAN."

The commander looked at him briefly. Gavin couldn't tell what the man was thinking; the visor he wore hid his eyes quite effectively. However, the man's lips thinned and he turned away. "I have no comment," he said brusquely.

"Listen. I know we got off on the wrong foot here," Gavin said earnestly. "But could you just tell me who got hurt and how badly?" He waved an arm in the direction of the damaged Seven. "People all over the world are going to want to know about what's happened. Right now, all they know is that this Thunderbird is down. Isn't it better that they get facts than rumors?"

The man shook his head. "I have no comment," he repeated.

Just then, the sound of the news chopper approaching caused both of them to look up. "I can call that chopper off," Gavin offered. "I respect your 'no pictures' policy. But I need just to know who got hurt and how badly. We can help each other here."

The man sounded disgusted and fed up. "I don't have time for this." He tapped the speaker in his ear, and turned away from Gavin. The reporter couldn't hear all of what he said, but "upping the gain" and "fogger" came through.

Gavin sighed and looked around. There are other ways to find out. I'll get closer to the action, and hear what I can.

So when Scott turned back to Gavin, the reporter was gone. But a few moments later, the news hound was pulling his comrades back to the van. "I got what we need," he said. "Overheard a couple of EMTs talking. Three people injured, no fatalities. Seems no one was riding in that back part over there. But get this! Their doctor has the heaviest injuries!" He climbed into the seat. "Let's get out of range. I need to get this news to the office, pronto!" He glanced up at the chopper, who was circling. "Hope Harry gets some good footage. We could use it."

With that, Eric pulled headed back the way they came while Gavin tried to dial the office and give them this important tidbit.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:11:48 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/9/2006 10:13 PM

"Where'd that reporter get to?" Scott muttered to himself, scanning the crowd. He glanced up. "I hope that boosting the gain on the camera fogger works. We don't need the media frenzy on top of all this!"

His earphone buzzed for his attention. "Maverick from Cousteau."

"Maverick here."

"We need to make some room in here so we can get Doc out of her chair. Can you get someone to help Angel out? Her ankle's sprained at the very least."

Scott's eyes widened. "F-A-B," he said, "I'm on it." With a quick tap of his earpiece, he called, "Sweet from Maverick."

In Thunderbird Two's sickbay, Tin-Tin straightened suddenly and put a hand to her ear. Kat noticed the movement and stopped putting fresh linen on the medical bed. "Sweet here. Go ahead, Maverick."

"We need someone to help get Angel out; she's got an injured ankle."

Tin-Tin nodded, even though Scott couldn't see it. "Say no more. MGM and I are on the way."

"F-A-B." Scott sighed with relief. Then, not content to stand by while others worked, he jogged over to Seven's control cabin. "Excuse me," he said as he pushed past the EMTs who were crowding around the entrance and inside.

"I'm not sure, Boss. Let me patch you through to Tynan," Gordon was saying, his face tense with the difficulty of trying to deal with a tightly focused and extremely concerned Jeff. He gave Dom a pleading look. The latter, speaking quietly with Dianne as the EMTs tried to figure out how to get her down, heard his name called and glanced over, then nodded. Gordon tapped his ear, and Dom, rubbing his neck, retreated to the farthest corner of the cab to apprise Jeff of the situation.

"Maverick!"

Scott glanced over to the cut open doorway. Tin-Tin and Kat were there, trying to get in and get to Nikki.

"Let them in," Scott said to the EMTs, nodding. The group parted, and Tin-Tin entered with Kat close behind.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:12:05 GMT  
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From: Nikki-browneyes1 Sent: 10/10/2006 1:26 PM

Tin-Tin made her way to the dark-skinned nurse, who was sitting down while leaning against the siding and immediately noticed that she was holding some gauze on the left side of her forehead.

She removed Nikki's hand and the gauze, which had a faint stain of blood on it. She looked closely at the gash. "It doesn't look deep, but it still needs to be dressed."

Nikki nodded slightly, but soon regretted it as the headache that threatened to make an appearance on many occasions after the tornado roller coaster made itself known.

Tin-Tin then saw Nikki's foot, undid the bandage and examined it closely. "It looks slightly swollen at the moment." She wrapped it back up again. "Any other injuries?"

"Just some bruises and the creeping headache. Plus my neck is sore, probably whiplash."

Tin-Tin smiled comfortingly. "Let's get you over to Thunderbird Two. How are you for an escorted walk?"

"I guess I can use the support," the female nurse replied. She still felt shaky after the accident.

Tin-Tin looked over to Dominic. "Tynan, how are you doing?"

"I'll be alright, Sweet. It's just minor bumps and bruises," Dominic answered.

Tin-Tin nodded before asking Kat to help her with Nikki. With Kat on her left side and Tin-Tin on her right Nikki was able to slowly, but efficiently make her way to the mammoth craft. Kat looked thoughtful for a while before speaking up. "Doc will be alright, won't she?"

"She's a strong woman. I'm sure she'll recover from this," Tin-Tin said confidently.

'I really hope so,' Kat thought.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:15:39 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/10/2006 1:40 PM

Scott watched them head for Thunderbird Two's rescue capsule, which they had used as a sort of elevator to get them to the ground level. He nodded, and ducked back in.

He moved up next to Dianne. They'd managed to pull the chair backwards as well as lean her back so she was now free of the steering column. He noticed a lumpy bandage wrapped around her leg and realized that must be where the piece of metal had done its damage, and that it was very likely still in there, waiting for the surgeons to remove it. She was pale and drowsy looking.

"We've almost got you out of here, Doc," Scott told her, giving her an encouraging smile. "Then I'll fly you to Wichita..."

"No." Dianne murmured, vaguely waving a hand. "Not Wichita. Los Angeles."

"Los Angeles?"

"Come 'ere."

Scott did as he was bid, and she turned her head to whisper hoarsely, "Wichita's swamped. L.A.'s got bettah imagin'... an' an agent who's chief o' surguhry. Mercy General. L.A."

"But this is only a leg..."

She shook her head as best she could. "No. Theyah's also internal... oh God!" She groaned, her face contorting. With one hand, she feebly shoved him away seconds before she vomited.

Dom turned quickly. "Get her down! Now!"

The EMTs gathered around, as did Gordon and Brandon. Dom himself got beneath her as hands crossed her body, taking hold of her arms and legs on from opposite sides. Scott backed away, unsure what was needed.

"Mav!" Scott looked back. Dom was looking at him with an intense expression on his face. "Be ready. Five minutes!"

Scott nodded, and headed out the door. He heard Dom say, "On three! One, two, three!" There was the snick of a latch letting go. He paused outside the door to see the group of men and women lower Dianne to the level of the Stokes basket that the EMTs had brought in, untangling her from her restraining straps. Then he ran for the waiting and ready Thunderbird One.

"Maverick from Base," Jeff's voice sounded in Scott's ear as he ran. He reached up to touch his earphone.

"Maverick here."

"Give me ETA to Wichita Memorial."

"Negative, base." Scott was climbing into Thunderbird One. Elise glanced down and got out of the pilot's chair. "CMO has specified Mercy General, Los Angeles."

There was no surprise in Jeff's voice as he replied, "F-A-B. Calculate ETA. I want to know the second you hit the helipad there."

"F-A-B." Scott clambered into his chair. "You'd better give our agent in L.A. a heads up. I'll call the hospital from here."

"Acknowledged," Jeff said. Then his voice broke. "Take good care of her, Scott."

"Always," Scott said softly. He turned to Elise. "We'd better take all the med crew to L.A. at once. Can you tell Sweet and MGM to bring Angel over?"

"F-A-B," Elise said. She climbed out. "I'll see if I can speed things up a little."

Scott watched her pelt over to Thunderbird Two, then directed his attention to the group of four men and one woman who were carrying Dianne his way. Brandon and Gordon were in front, and the stretcher bearers were followed by Dom, who was himself flanked by Dave Kandagaye. Scott got out of his chair, Gordon climbed up into One, and with the help of Brandon and the others, they got Dianne into the cockpit. Scott frowned in concern at his stepmother's pallor. Her eyes fluttered closed, then opened, but it looked like she was having trouble staying awake.

"We need Angel," he told Gordon as his brother was climbing out of the cockpit. Glancing out his windscreen, he saw that Elise and Tin-Tin were supporting Nikki as they walked over to One. "They're coming, but going slow. See what you can do."

Gordon gave Scott a curt nod and went off. Dom climbed in, and Scott could hear the booming voice of Kandagaye call, "Get yourself checked out. You've likely got whiplash!"

"I shall! And thanks!" Dom called. He double-checked that the basket was securely fastened, and strapped himself into the jump seat. "Let's go, Maverick."

"Need Angel," Scott replied. He glanced out the windscreen again. Gordon and Brandon had taken over, and made a chair with their arms, carrying Nikki toward One at a good pace. "Just a moment more... ah, there they are." He climbed out of his seat again and helped Nikki into the cockpit. Her forehead was bandaged. "Strap in. We're out of here!"

He retracted the ladder, closed the hatch, and lifted Thunderbird One into the air. "This is International Rescue Thunderbird One calling Mercy General Hospital in Los Angeles. We have three patients, two stable, one critical on the way to you now. ETA, six minutes."

The chopper continued to circle the Danger Zone as Scott sped off. Wish I had time to chase that out of the area, he thought, his eyes narrowing in frustration. He glanced down at Dianne. But there are more important things to do.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:17:11 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/10/2006 2:45 PM

"How's it going, Ursa?"

Callie wished she could swipe her forearm across her brow. "Not good, Einstein," she said, powering down her laser cutter. "These two pieces of junk are too fused to cut apart."

"Then we go with Plan B," Alan said, his voice sounding in her ear.

"Yes. We've got the tether and the magnetic net," Brains said. "Ursa, you'd better get inside Three. You've been out here longer than the rest of us. Indy is suiting up. He can help with this project."

"But what happens if someone from the ISS calls? Won't they recognize my voice?"

"If that happens, let Quasar handle it," Alan said. "He can relay the messages."

Callie thought for a moment that they were putting a lot of pressure on John, especially when there was still a rescue wrapping up on Earth. "Are you sure?" she asked.

"It's okay, Ursa." John's weary voice sounded in her ear. "You don't need any more exposure to the solar radiation than you've had already. I can handle any message relaying."

"All right, then," Callie said. She hung her laser cutter on her tool belt, and activated her jet pack to bring her back to the airlock. As she reached it, the door slid open, and both Alan and Brains floated out. Alan was holding what looked to be a gun of some sort, while Brains had a pillow sized packet tucked under an arm. They both tethered themselves to Three, and gave Callie's helmet a friendly tap as she passed by them into the airlock. She activated the door, which slid tightly shut and started the sequence that would allow her to take off her helmet, and enter Three's atmosphere controlled innards.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:17:30 GMT  
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From: susanmartha Sent: 10/10/2006 6:28 PM

The priest looked out over the congregation. "Are there any other prayer requests?"

A tall, skinny woman stood up. Anna Hanson, sitting 3 rows behind her, recognized Janet Simons. Since Janet was normally extremely shy, Anna straightened up in her seat and took notice.

"You all remember the tanker truck crash and the resulting chlorine leak last year. And that my brother was injured in the resulting pileup. International Rescue responded within 20 minutes to contain the spill and neutralize the chlorine. They were able to get people out of the wrecks and give them medical help on site."

"My brother lost his leg in the crash, but not his life, thanks to them. He still talks about the wonderful doctor who saved him and how amazing Thunderbird 7 was. Well, I just heard Thunderbird 7 was hit by a tornado and crashed. They say some of the International Rescue people were injured. I would like to ask for prayers for the people on board and the other people in that organization."

Anna remembered the accident. Some idiot had decided he wanted to go faster than the rest of

the traffic. He lost control of the car and hit another car, which crashed into a tanker truck.

It hit a bridge support right next to a major shopping mall. It had been a 23 car pileup. The driver who started it all had driven away unhurt. When the chlorine started to leak, there was no way to get people out of their cars in time or to evacuate the mall. Eight people, including 2 police officers, had died. Fifteen more had been badly injured. If International Rescue hadn't been there, the casualty count would have been a lot higher.

One of her patients after the accident was a 14-year-old daughter of a paramedic. She and her mom had been in the pileup and had watched the gas cloud get closer and closer. She couldn't say enough about the men from International Rescue, including the 'really cute' brown-haired guy who had cut her and her mom out of their car. As a way to get the girl to write about her experience, Anna had suggested she start a fan club and write a letter to International Rescue thanking them. It had worked beautifully and Anna had finally been able to help her deal with what happened. As far as she knew, the fan club was still going strong.

I will definitely add them to my prayer list. If for no other reason than, because of them, I had to deal with a terrified girl and her mother instead of a grieving 40-year-old colleague. Maybe I should call the family this afternoon and see how they are handling this.

"Let us pray for the whole people of God, and for all people according to their need." The service continued.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:21:47 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/10/2006 9:00 PM

Sat, Aug 4, 4:30 PM local time, L.A.(6:30 PM, Kansas; Sun, Aug 5, 11:30 AM Tracy Island)

Jeff picked up the phone and dialed a number that he hadn't had to use yet. It was the direct line to Drew Carmichael's cell phone -- the one that had been provided to him by International Rescue.

In Los Angeles, Drew was preparing for the arrival of Thunderbird One. He had a good idea just who the critical patient was; after all, it was the reason he'd been told the secret of the Tracy family and been recruited as an agent. He stopped in his tracks though when his cell phone vibrated in a peculiar rhythm that he'd been instructed would mean just one thing: a call from International Rescue's commander.

He ducked into the hospital's chapel, quiet and clearly deserted at that time of day, and answered the call, plugging an earpiece into the phone for more privacy.

"It's me. I know why you're calling. They're about to set down on the helijet pad. When will you be arriving?"



Jeff sighed, a heavy sigh made out of both relief and deep sorrow. "As soon as Maverick gets back to base, I'll be on my way."

"All right. Two caveats, as from a physician to a patient."

Jeff frowned, then nodded. "Go ahead."

"One, do not do the flying yourself. Grab whoever is available and let them fly you out."

"That'll have to be K; everyone else is out on rescues."

Drew's eyebrows climbed. "Everyone?"

Jeff nodded. "We got another call for a rescue in space. Every able-bodied operative is either in Kansas, in orbit, or setting down on your helijet pad."

"He'll have to do then. Caveat two: bring... bring his partner, and the kids."

"The kids?" Jeff sounded incredulous. "They don't need to see..."

"Wrong. They do need to see. They lost their father, they almost lost you, and now their mother? They're going to need a helluva lot of reassurance that she isn't going to die on them, and the only way they'll get that is to be here."

Jeff thought this over for a moment, then nodded. "All right."

"Good man. By the way, you're staying with us."

"Drew, we can't..."

Drew's mouth set in a firm line. "You can and you will. No arguments now."

"What about security?"

The doctor ran a hand through his hair. "I'm open to any suggestions. I have your reasons for shipping her here to me covered, but beyond that... we'll have to wing it. The secure floor is being prepared though. Now, I've got to go. I'll see you when you get here. Have K's lady give my partner the heads up."

"I will," Jeff replied. He smiled a little, a wan and weary smile. "Thanks."

"Don't thank me yet," Drew warned him. "The hardest part is yet to come. Gotta go. See you soon."

With that he terminated the call, and folded up his phone. He looked at the altar, its honey colored wood lit golden by diffuse, indirect lighting, and stopped to breathe a quick prayer before heading out to deal with his newest -- and most newsworthy -- patient: his own niece.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:22:52 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 10/10/2006 9:49 PM

The team members still on the ground watched as Thunderbird One quickly disappeared into the clouds. The EMTs got a call and headed out shortly afterward. Soon there was silence, then Virgil cleared his throat and swallowed hard. "Okay," he said to the others. "Time to get back to work. We need to get Seven into the pod."

"How do you propose we do that, Van Gogh?" Elise asked.

He paused for a moment, looking at the two sections lying half a kilometer apart. "First, we turn the control cab upright. Brandon, I want you in the Firefly on one side, lifting; Elise, get in the DOMO. You'll pull from the other side. Kat, once it's right side up, see if you can get it running, or at least get the electromagnets functioning, so we can reattach the two sections. It'll be easier if we can get the whole thing in at one time. We may need to dig a path to the pod. Tin-Tin, go get the chains and ropes; Kat you help her. We may need to tow the parts inside, and I want to be ready. Let's move!"

Everyone quickly separated to do their assigned tasks. Virgil raised Two, enabling the others to get the equipment out of the pod. Brandon and Elise soon got their vehicles in place, and ten minutes later, the control cabin was righted. As they moved off to work on the medical cabin, Kat began to check out the motor, with Gordon assisting.

"Van Gogh, if this engine is repairable, I can't do it; I don't have enough training to handle this much damage. But I think I can reroute enough power to activate the electromagnets."

"Do it, then." He looked at Tin-Tin. "Sweet, it's up to you to determine where to place the chains and ropes; you have the expertise. I'll help you take the chains and ropes; we'll go to the medical cabin first. It'll need to be hauled to the control cabin. Then if Kat is successful, we'll reattach them, and move the chains." He tapped his earpiece. "Cousteau, head to the medical cabin. We'll need to haul it to the control cabin."

"F-A-B. On my way."

When they arrived there, the medical cabin had been righted. Virgil called Brandon. "Start clearing a path to the control cabin. Then do another to the pod." Brandon answered in the affirmative and moved the Firefly into position, then lowered the blade and began clearing the way.

Virgil and Elise helped Tin-Tin attach the ropes and chains, and Virgil contacted Gordon about half-way through, telling him to bring the Excavator over to haul the medical cabin to the control cabin

It took an hour, but, with help from a farmer and his two sons, Seven's cabins were finally reattached, and ready to be towed into the pod. Tin-Tin had used some of the chains to connect the two cabins, in case the magnets failed again. Gordon started up the Excavator and slowly began towing the Thunderbird toward the pod. Once he got it inside, he shut down his vehicle and

got out to remove the chains. The others began putting the rest of the equipment into the pod.

A thought occurred to Virgil as he looked at the field and the damage they had caused, and he turned to the farmer, thanking him, then asked if he knew who owned the field they were in. As it turned out, it was the farmer's and Virgil apologized for the damage.

"No apologies needed. This field was left fallow this year. You just saved me some of the plowing up. Now you go on and get your people home. You've done a good job around here, and we appreciate it."

Virgil shook his hand and thanked him again, then hurried to his 'Bird. He lowered it over the pod. Soon pod and 'Bird were one, and he lifted off again. As he started to head out, he had two thoughts. Sure hope Mom recovers and Better make a pass over the farm to check out how things are there. He piloted Two on a heading that would take it over the Tracy farm.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:24:06 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/12/2006 8:28 PM

Saturday, August 4, 2068, 4:35 p.m. local time, Los Angeles(6:35 p.m. same day, Kansas;  
Sunday, August 5, 2068, 11:35 a.m., Tracy Island)

There was an emergency team waiting for them as soon as they hit the tarmac of the helijet pad. The people were very professional, pulling Dianne out, Stokes basket and all, beginning their triage of her right then and there. Another team came up as soon as the first was away, and these folks insisted on taking charge of Dom and Nikki, asking questions, providing a wheelchair for Nikki and support for a now-swaying Dom. Scott pocketed three data chips, and spoke to the two people who remained. One was the head of security, who introduced herself as Carol Ferris; the other, an officious looking public relations man who shook his hand vigorously and said his name was Geraldo Montoya.

"Should I leave One here, or is there somewhere else I should take her?" he asked Carol, as he buttoned up his Thunderbird and armed the security systems.

"We're making other arrangements for your vehicle, clearing some parking lot near the back of the building where it won't be so conspicuous," she said as she fell into step with him. "I'll let you know when we're ready."

He nodded. "I may not be here that long, depending on what my commanding officer says. But I appreciate the effort."

"Uh, sir?" Montoya had trouble keeping up with Scott's long stride. "I was wondering if I could release some statement from you and your organization, especially with regards to just why you chose our hospital. The press will be pounding on our door any moment now and I need to have

something to tell them."

Scott bit back his first, caustic reply, then remembered Dianne's words. He smiled faintly. "Well, sir, our CMO knew that the hospitals in Wichita were already swamped with casualties from the tornadoes that have ravaged the area. She chose to go elsewhere to spare them the extra burden, and she chose Mercy General because of its superb imaging facilities."

Geraldo's face was covered with a beatific smile. "Oh, thank you, sir. That's perfect." He picked up the pace. "Come along and meet our chief of surgery. He'll be working on your people himself."

Wouldn't you be surprised if you knew that I've already met your head surgeon, Scott thought as he hurried along.

The emergency department was a scene of controlled chaos, one that Carol threaded through with practiced ease. She took him to the room where Dianne was being evaluated. The blue scrubs had already been cut away and Scott winced at the glimpses of deep bruising he saw on his stepmother's abdomen. If those damn scrubs were made of Penelar...

"Come over here." Carol took his elbow and guided him to the central station. Scott relaxed slightly to see the tall figure of Drew Carmichael standing there, looking over a data pad. "Dr. Carmichael, this is the International Rescue member who brought our latest patients to us."

Scott put out his hand. "You can call me Maverick." Drew shook it, then Scott pulled out the three data chips. "Here are pertinent vital statistics for our three operatives. This is for Tynan, the dark haired man. This is Angel's information; she's the nurse with the sprained ankle. And, this is Doc's info; she's the one who has the worst injuries."

"Your doctor is among the injured?" Montoya asked, incredulous. Scott nodded. Drew focused on the chips as he slipped them into fresh data pads. "I remember meeting Angel and your doctor briefly in Samoa."

"You know them?" Montoya's voice was nearly a squeak.

"No, I don't 'know' them, Gerry," Drew said impatiently. "I met them. Briefly. I was impressed."

"So was our doctor," Scott said, suddenly knowing another reason he could give for choosing that hospital. "That's probably one of the reasons our doctor chose Mercy."

"Possibly. I'm sure she had other, better reasons." Drew called out to a couple of interns. "Dave, Terry! Here's info for the IR patient in room five, and this one's for the patient in room eight." He handed the data pads to the young man and the young woman who had answered his summons. "Let's keep all this under wraps as much as possible."

"Yes, sir." "Of course, Doctor." The two interns hustled off to deliver the information to those working on the IR nurses.

"Now, let's see about your doctor," Drew said. He gave Scott a small smile. "She's in my hands now and I'm going to my best for her. Carol here can show you where you can wait."

"F... Thank you," Scott said. He watched as Drew entered the trauma room, then the doors swung shut and Carol led him away to an empty VIP waiting room.

"I'll be preparing the secure floor for your people," she told him. "If you need anything, just call."

"I will, thank you." And with that, he was left alone with his thoughts and his exhaustion.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:25:11 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/13/2006 12:30 PM

"Hello there."

The familiar voice made Dianne open her eyes just a crack. The corners of her lips tugged upwards in a slight smile.

"Good to see you again," Drew continued. "Wish it were under better circumstances, but with your line of work, disaster is pretty much a given."

"Goo' t' see you too," she whispered drowsily. "Wha's th' verdict?"

"Internal injuries. Bruising, possibly some lacerations. We're going to start anesthesia here and take you straight up to the surgical imaging suite." He spoke to someone out of Dianne's line of vision. "Is the suite ready?" There was an answer that Dianne couldn't hear. It was taking all of her energy just to focus on her uncle. "Who's on for orthopedics? Singh? Willis? Damn. Figures. He'd want to be in on this, wouldn't he? Oh well. Have Singh prep as assistant, and let Dr. Willis know that it's my orders."

She feebly waved a hand in his direction. He glanced down at her, his smile tight, a sure sign to those who knew him that he was worried. "Mah nurses?"

"They're being treated. You worry about yourself right now. Ray? Let's put her under."

A mask was fitted to her face and she breathed as normally as possible. She wasn't even aware when the moment came and she passed from conscious thought to no thought at all.

Drew checked his team. "How are we doing, Ray? Everything looking good?" He looked around. "We've got to do something to keep people from... ah! Juanita, you're a genius."

So it was that a few moments later a gurney rolled out of trauma, accompanied by two security guards. A cardboard box, cut out on two sides, created a screen to veil the face of the person in the gurney as it disappeared into the patient elevator and headed upstairs to surgery.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:26:13 GMT  
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 10/13/2006 7:28 PM

Callie had finished getting out of her space suit and had entered the main control bridge for Thunderbird Three while Alan and Brains were working on getting the fused satellites tethered to the space rocket. She sat at the controls and contacted John. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Three," said Callie. "Come in, Thunderbird Five."

In the IR space station, John rubbed the temples of his head, the emotional trauma of his stepmother's injuries clearly taking its toll on him. He heard Callie's call and answered wearily, "Thunderbird Five here, Ursa. How's the satellite situation?"

"Indy and Einstein are putting the special net around the satellites, and hopefully we'll get it tethered to Three within the next 30 to 45 minutes. I know it's going to cut it awfully close with the ISS coming, but they're doing as best they can right now."

"F-A-B, Ursa. Knowing them, they'll get the job done."

Hearing the strain in John's voice, she knew something wasn't right. "Quasar, is everything all right? I've never heard you sound so tense before."

"I'm all right," he answered, exhaustion prominent in his voice.

"You don't sound all right to me. Quasar, I want to know what's going on."

Hearing her persistent tone, he sighed. "All right. Since Indy already knows most of the story, I may as well go ahead and tell you. The rescue in Kansas...Doc, Angel, and Tynan were all caught in a rogue tornado. All three were inside Thunderbird Seven, and it's suffered severe damage."

"Oh, my God," she gasped. Growing more concerned, she quickly asked, "How are they?"

"Angel and Tynan's injuries aren't that serious. Doc, though, has suffered internal injuries."

Callie pushed her head into the back of the chair. "Damn it!" she muttered. "First the Boss and now Doc?! What did they do to deserve this? I would give anything to have stayed in Kansas--"

"No, Ursa," John said clearly. "Your expertise in space was more needed on this current mission. Even if we both were in Kansas, there's nothing we could've done. Even International Rescue can't stop Mother Nature's fury."

Trying to fight back tears, she said, "I know, but Doc had just helped me last week with my nightmares. I'm also going home for my birthday in a few days. Maybe I should cancel the trip."

John shook his head. "Don't do that, Ursa. Doc would want you to be there with the ones you love. Your family is the most important thing you have."

"You know what's really bad about this? I can't tell my family about my encounter with the Hood or the very fact I work with IR. I hate the idea of not being able to tell them the t."

"I know; it's never an easy situation. Oh, excuse me, the ISS is calling in. Let me handle this part, okay? You keep an eye on Indy and Einstein."

"F-A-B, Quasar." She changed frequencies to contact Alan and Brains. "Ursa to Indy and Einstein. How much longer?"

Outside, they just finished putting the net around the satellites. "Good news, Ursa," said Einstein. "We've completed the first part of the task. Now you just need to pull the tether in and connect the satellite to the hull magnets."

"F-A-B, Einstein." Pressing a button on the controls, she watched the tether line slowly approach the hull of the space rocket. "I suggest you guys get back in here fast before I accidentally magnetize both of you to the hull."

"F-A-B," said Alan and Brains.

She heard a beeping sound on the control panel. "John's calling in," she said to herself. "Go ahead, Quasar."

"ISS just called in. They'll be in your area in 45 minutes. The satellites won't be a threat anymore with the tether, but Thunderbird Three is only a few feet away from the ISS's trajectory. You need to move it out of the way, or there could be a collision between you guys and the ISS."

"Thanks for the tip, Quasar. Satellites are now inside the net, and the tether line is moving in. Hull magnets will be activated when net is within 100 feet of the exterior."

John breathed a sigh of relief. "F-A-B, Ursa. Keep me updated."

"Right. Thunderbird Three out."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:27:27 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/13/2006 8:11 PM

Jeff pinched the bridge of his nose, going over his options in his head. His thoughts seemed to swirl; unwanted visions of his wife, Lucille, after the accident that had claimed her came to the fore and made it hard for him to concentrate. I lost Lucille this way. I can't lose Dianne, too. I hope, I pray that the difference is Scott and Thunderbird One.

Finally, he had the bare bones of a plan. I can't abandon the desk, not while the operatives are out



still out there working. So, I need to get Scott back here. Soon as that happens, then I can take off... no, we can take off. Drew's right. The kids need to see Dianne, no matter what happens... all of the kids. I can't have a repeat of Lucille. If she doesn't... No. I can't think that way either. She's going to be all right. She has to be all right.

Turning to the intercom, he paged his retainer.

"Kyrano." It was hard to keep his voice steady.

"Yes, Mr. Tracy?" Kyrano could hear the edge in his employer's voice, and put down his cleaver. Emily, who had been working with him on making lunch, stopped what she was doing as well.

"I need for you and Lisa to gather up the children and bring them up here quickly. There's been an... an incident."

Kyrano and Emily exchanged glances. "Do you want me up there, too, Jeff?" Emily asked.

Jeff took a deep breath. "Yes, Mom. I need you up here, too. As soon as possible."

"We are on our way," Kyrano said firmly. The connection closed, and the kitchen's denizens began to put their perishable things into the refrigerator. "It sounds ominous," Kyrano said as he washed his hands.

"It does," Emily agreed. "You get Lisa. She's watching Joshua, so he'll have to come along. I'll find the children and meet you in the lounge."

"Yes." Kyrano nodded and the two went on their separate missions. Meanwhile, Jeff was talking with his eldest son.

"The security head has arranged for me to move Thunderbird One to a less conspicuous spot," Scott told him.

"What have you heard otherwise?"

Scott sighed. He knew this question was coming. "I haven't gotten an update yet. I'm not sure who to ask."

"Well, find someone!" Jeff snapped. "I need to know how our people are doing!"

"F-A-B," Scott replied sharply, emphasizing each syllable. "I'll find out now. Maverick out."

The connection quit, and Jeff ran his hands through his hair. That was uncalled for, Tracy. You don't need to take your frustration out on him. He's not the reason your wife is in the hospital. You'd be better off figuring out how to tell your children that their mother is injured. He glanced up to see Kyrano come in with Lisa, who carried Joshua in her arms. Following in their wake were Cherie, Alex, and Tyler, all of whom had apprehensive - Make that downright scared - looks on their faces. Bringing up the rear was Emily, who had a comforting hand on Tyler's shoulder

"Sit down, please," Jeff said as he rose from behind his desk. He eyed Joshua as the others sat down. Will I someday have to tell that boy that his father is dead or crippled? God, I hope he's not badly hurt this time!

"I'll get right to the point, everyone. About an hour ago, Thunderbird Seven was picked up by a strong twister." He paused as the people around the room gasped in horror. Tyler let out a whimpering little, "No!" and sat close to Emily, nearly hiding behind her.

"What happened?" Emily asked sharply.

"I don't have all the details, but Thunderbird Seven was really - banged up doesn't cover it - really badly damaged."

"Is... Is everyone okay?" Cherie asked tentatively.

Jeff ran a hand over his face, then went to sit down next to her. "No, Princess, they're not. Dominic, Nikki and your mother were all injured in the event."

"Injured?" Alex said, picking up on the word and using a cautiously hopeful tone. "Not... dead?"

"Not dead," Jeff said firmly. He leaned forward and made eye contact with everyone. "Dominic and Nikki seem to have relatively minor injuries, but your mother is hurt more. They are all at the hospital in Los Angeles where your great-uncle Drew works. He's going to make sure they all get the best of care."

"Surgery?" Lisa asked bluntly.

Jeff was equally blunt. "Yes, at least in Dianne's case. But she was conscious and alert long enough to make that decision, which is a good sign."

"Can we go see her?" Alex asked, his tone half hopeful.

"Yes. That's part of the reason I called you all here. I need you to pack your clothes and get ready to go to Los Angeles. Lisa, I'm under orders from Drew to have you call Maggie and bring her up to speed. He says we're to stay with them, and won't let me argue about it."

"Of course he wouldn't. Family stays with family." Lisa got up and handed Joshua off to Kyrano. "I'll call right now." She moved over to Jeff's desk to make her call.

"Mom, could you take Joshua?" Jeff asked. When Emily nodded, he continued. "I've also been told I'm not to do the flying, which means you'll have to take the pilot's seat, Kyrano."

"Of course, Mr. Tracy."

Kyrano rose and brought Joshua to Emily, who settled the toddler on her lap and looked at her son with an expression of concern. "When will you be leaving?"

"When Scott gets back here. I'm not leaving the desk unmanned or you alone," Jeff told her.

"Has there been any news about Marion?"

Jeff shook his head. "No, but I've probably got some voice messages to listen to. I'll check them once Lisa's finished with her call."

He rubbed both hands over his face, then glanced up to see Tyler standing before him. "Dad? Is Mom going to... die?"

Jeff opened his arms and settled his youngest son on his lap. Holding Tyler close, he told the boy, "I don't know for sure, Ty, but I don't think so. Scott got her to the hospital in Thunderbird One, so you know she got there quickly. And Uncle Drew... well, he's not going to let her die, not if he can help it."

Alex joined them as Cherry leaned up and put her arm around one of Jeff's. "I'm scared," Tyler whispered.

"We're all scared, Ty," Cherry said. "But Dad's right. Uncle Drew's on the case. He won't let Mom die."

"He may not have any choice," Alex said gloomily.

"Now that's nonsense, Alexander. Your uncle would move heaven and earth to save your mother. And don't forget: your mama made us a promise, and you know she's going everything she can to keep it," Lisa said, coming up to the little group. "Everything's set with Maggie, Jeff. She'll be waiting when we get there... whenever that is." She held out her hands to her grandchildren. "Come along, Tyler, Alex. Come with me, Cherie. Let's get packed up and be ready to go."

Jeff hugged Tyler hard before letting him get up. He patted Alex on the back and ran his hand through the short blond hair, then he kissed Cherie on the cheek and on the forehead. The children moved away slowly, with many a backward glance, but urged on by their grandmother.

"I will prepare Tracy One for flight," Kyrano said. He bowed, a courtesy not used much between them anymore, and followed Lisa out.

Jeff sighed heavily and returned to his desk. John's portrait was still active, but muted. All of the other "portraits" had been moved to icons on his desktop computer. Unless the operative was in a vehicle, they showed up as CGI characters on his screen. He called up his answering service, and began to listen to the messages, something he never did during a rescue. But he knew his mother's mind; it wouldn't be at rest until she had news. Besides, he was concerned about the caretaker at their family farmhouse, too.

Emily looked up as her son let out a sigh, one that sounded relieved. "Jeff?" she asked as she bounced Joshua on her lap.

He gave her a smile, small but genuine. "Good news, Mom. Marion called Jeanette, who relayed the message to me. She was in town most of the day, so she's safe. She hasn't been out to the house, though."

"Oh, that is a relief," Emily said, returning his smile. She put Joshua down, and stood, taking his hand. "I think this young 'un needs some lunch. I'll make sure you get some, too, Jeff." She approached the desk and put her free hand on Jeff's shoulder, squeezing it. "She'll be fine, son. She's in good hands."

Jeff merely nodded. Emily kissed him on the cheek and led Joshua off to feed him.

Putting his head in his hands, Jeff agonized silently. What the hell am I going to do? There's so much to think about! I need to focus on the team... but how can I? How can I put my wife on the back burner and think about others?

His eyes fell on Dianne's picture, the one that sat on his desk. It had been rigged to function like those of the boys, showing Dianne's face as she piloted Seven, but was rarely used now. He took a deep breath and put her picture face down on the desk. He let out the breath, and reached into the cabinet behind his desk. Pulling out a bottle of fine Scotch and a glass, he poured himself two fingers worth, downing it in one shot. Then he put away the liquor, laid the glass on his desk, and went to call Scott.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:27:58 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 10/13/2006 9:10 PM

Saturday, August 4, 9 PM; Lena's house

Lena was working some more on the communications security program, trying to modify it for sending data. But she was having a hard time concentrating, due to the news that International Rescue's medical vehicle was damaged. She desperately wanted to call Tracy Island and find out how the medical team was, but knew she couldn't. All she could do was pray.

Finally she gave up. I can't concentrate on dis until I know dey are okay. She shook her head as she saved her work and shut down the computer. As she left the room, she thought, First Jeff, now Dianne and de nurses -- what were deir names again? Oh yes -- Nikki and Dominic. I pray dey recover completely.

She went into the living room and turned on the television, searching for news of International Rescue. She saw an update come on, but it didn't say much more than she already knew. It's amazing dat dey aren't hurt more often. I hope it doesn't happen again to any of dem for a long time.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is

From: lillehafrue Sent: 10/14/2006 6:07 PM

Scott paced the length of the small waiting room. He glanced up at the clock for the hundredth time since he'd brought Nikki, Dom and Dianne in.

He sighed. The call home had been rough. While Scott knew his father was merely concerned with Dianne's condition, Scott still resented being snapped at. I'm just as worried as he is.

He paced the length of the room again. That's it. I've had it. Time to find out what's going on. He marched out the door and went in search of the doctors.

The hospital staff was rushing around; most ignoring his presence, though a few sent curious glances in his direction. He walked over to a nurse's station. "I'm looking for my teammates. Can you tell me where they are?"

The woman nodded. "Let me look, sir." She looked down at her computer for a moment. "Your two nurses are being admitted now. They're being kept overnight for observation. Your doctor is still in surgery."

Scott closed his eyes briefly. "Thank-you."

"Sir?"

"Yes?"

"I...I hope things turn out all right."

So do I. "Thank-you. Which way do I go?"

The woman pointed down the opposite hallway. "That way, sir. I'll make sure some one keeps you appraised of your other teammate's condition."

"Thanks again." Scott made his way down the hall, stopping in front of one of the doors. He knocked briefly, then stepped inside.

Dom looked up as he came in. "Scott! How's the Doc? These blokes won't tell me anything!" he said irritably.

Scott shook his head. "She's still in surgery. I'm as much in the dark as you." He tried to smile. "How are you feeling?"

Dom shrugged, carefully. "Sore. No concussion, but whiplash. And a marvelous variety of bumps and bruises. They're insisting I stay for observation, but what about Josh?!" he said agitatedly.

"Easy, Dom, Josh is being taken care of. I'm sure Grandma and the others just love having him all to themselves." He gave Dom a stern look. "Now, worry about getting better so you can get back

to him."

"FAB." Dom smiled wearily. "Can you let me know as soon as you hear about the Doc?"

"You know I will. Get some rest." Scott gave Dom one last look before going in search of Nikki. He got to her room just as the doctor was coming out of it.

"There you are, good. Saves me from having to go look for you."

The man smiled warmly at Scott. "I'm Dr. Stephan Mansfield. Your colleague," He glanced down at the chart in his hands. "Angel?" Scott nodded. "Well, she's going to be fine. There was no break to the ankle, just a bad sprain. And a nice case of whiplash on top of it. I've given her a mild sedative to help with the pain, and she's sleeping. I'd rather you left her alone for the time being. You can go in later."

Scott nodded again. "And Tynan?"

"Again, nothing serious. Whiplash and bruising, mostly from the seat restraints. I'd like them to both stay overnight for observation."

"That will be fine. But I will insist on some sort of security. I don't want anyone getting into these rooms unless it's you or me," Scott said, his tone brooking no argument.

The man didn't flinch. "I can assure you, son, nothing is going to happen to them here."

"All the same, I'd rather not take the chance," Scott persisted.

Dr. Mansfield nodded. "I can have guards up here in a few minutes. As to only me being allowed in, I do have other patients. The nurses will have to attend to your teammates as well."

"Fine," Scott growled, his temper near the breaking point. He wanted food, bath and sleep, not necessarily in that order. And he knew he wasn't likely to get any of them any time soon.

Just then Carol appeared at their side. "Maverick? We've secured the area for your...ship. You can move it anytime." She looked closely at Scott. "Can I get you something? Coffee? A sandwich?"

Scott smiled gratefully. "Both would be great."

She smiled back. "Consider it done." She pulled something out of her pocket and handed it to him. "This is a pass-key. It will open the doors to the secure wing. There will be guards posted as well."

Dr. Mansfield nodded to Scott. "See, everything will be fine. Now, go move your ship, then get some rest. You won't do your people any good if you end up there with them." He shook Scott's hand once more, then walked off down the hallway.

Scott turned to Carol. "Do you have any news concerning my other colleague? Last I was told, she's still in surgery."

"Let me see what I can do." Carol told him.

"Thank-you."

"Come, let me take you to the parking lot." She led the way down to the lower level. "Back there, we've cleared Parking Area B. It should be large enough for your ship, and it's a secure lot so the press won't be able to get close."

"Sounds perfect." Scott turned to her. "Thank-you again for your assistance."

"It's my pleasure. I'll be inside when you're through."

Scott made his way back to Thunderbird One. He sat in the pilot's chair for a moment, his thoughts whirling. Dom and Nikki will be fine. We'll figure out how to get them home tomorrow. Who knows how long Mom'll have to stay...He sighed and rubbed the bridge of his nose. He could feel a headache of enormous proportions sneaking up on him. Dad should be here soon. I just hope I have some news by then...

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:32:59 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/14/2006 8:03 PM

Saturday, Aug 4, 7:45 PM Kansas (5:45 PM, L.A.; Sunday, Aug 5, 12:45 PM, Tracy Island)

"Oh no," Virgil breathed. He closed his eyes momentarily, then called Gordon forward.

"Is that...?" Gordon asked, his voice sad.

"Yeah. I'm recording it and I'll upload it to Five." Virgil toggled a switch. "Thunderbird Five from Thunderbird Two."

John sounded bone weary. "Thunderbird Five here, reading you strength five. What's the news?"

"I'm uploading images for you."

There was silence in the cabin. Elise came forward to peer at the screen, then drew in a sharp breath. Tin-Tin joined them, murmuring a sympathetic, "Oh no."

Finally, John's voice could be heard, breaking as he spoke. "Damn. Just... damn."

"What is it? What's wrong?" Kat asked as Elise sat back down. Brandon turned in his seat to listen as Tin-Tin returned to her seat.

The engineer sighed. "The Tracy farmhouse. It's been in the family for generations. Now... it's gone."



Kat put a hand up to her mouth, her eyes round with alarm and shock. "Oh no! How dreadful! Was anyone hurt?"

Tin-Tin sat back, a worried frown creasing her features. "I don't know if the caretaker was there or not. I hope not."

Virgil glanced up at Gordon. There were tears in his brother's eyes, and one was running down his cheek. Virgil reached a hand up to squeeze his brother's shoulder. "I know."

"It's... it's too much." Gordon said. He blinked, and wiped his eyes, then took a deep breath. "Looks like about half the barn was spared. But the house... it's gone."

"Yeah. I'd like to say it's just a building, but it's not. It's been an anchor for us." Virgil squeezed Gordon's shoulder again, and his brother nodded. He returned to his seat. Brandon had moved so that Tin-Tin could sit next to Gordon. She rubbed his back across the shoulders in a comforting way.

"Quasar? You still with us?" Virgil asked quietly.

"Yeah. I am." John's voice sounded thick.

"What's going on elsewhere?"

"The Thunderbird Three team have turned off the thrusters on that one AWOL satellite, and they can't cut them apart. So they've tethered the thing to Three, and they plan on releasing it outside of geostationary orbit. They're going to be a while yet just getting up beyond geostationary."

"Do they know about... Doc?"

"Indy and Ursa do. I think Indy's told Einstein by now."

"F-A-B. What's the news from L.A.?"

"Don't know yet. Haven't heard from Maverick."

"Base knows?"

"Yes. He knows."

Virgil sighed. "Don't let him see this, not yet. He's got enough on his plate."

"GM will want to travel out and salvage what she can."

"I know. But she'd agree that people take priority." Virgil's voice dropped to a lower, softer tone. "Let's take one thing at a time."

There was a pause, then John replied, "F-A-B." Virgil could hear John's frustrated sigh. "I... I just wish I could be down there right now."

"I'll discuss that with Maverick when I get back to base. Are there any instructions for me?"

"I'll check. You may be needed to swing by L.A. and pick up Tynan and Angel."

"You focus on Three. I'll hail Maverick and find out what he wants us to do."

"Right. Thunderbird Five out."

Virgil stayed still for a few moments, holding Thunderbird Two in a stationary position over the farmhouse, staring at the devastation. It took Elise's hand on his shoulder to rouse him from his reverie.

"I can take her for a while, if you like," she offered, a sympathetic smile on her face.

He took in a deep breath and let it out slowly. "Thanks, but no thanks. I think I need to fly her for a while. Therapeutic in a way. But if I get tired, can I take you up on that?"

"Sure," Elise said. She squeezed his shoulder. "We'd better go. Don't want to draw suspicion."

"F-A-B." Virgil took one more look at the camera images, then changed direction and headed west, toward Los Angeles.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:39:34 GMT  
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From: Hobbeth Sent: 10/14/2006 9:46 PM

Each person sat quietly, lost in his or her thoughts. There had been so much destruction, some of it close to home for a few of them. Kat looked around at the others, wishing she could say or do something to ease the sadness.

She began to feel dizzy, then faint. Oh no, she thought as she checked the time. It's been too long since I last ate! She checked her pockets and found a Muesli bar. Quickly opening it, she began to munch on it.

The sound aroused Tin-Tin and Gordon, who both looked at her, then at each other. "It's been too long since any of us had something to eat. Whether or not we feel like eating is irrelevant," she said. "We need sustenance, if only to have enough energy to get through the debriefing when we get back to base. Thanks, Kat, for reminding us."

"You're welcome, although that's not why I did what I did."

Gordon smiled slightly. "Then maybe we should thank your blood sugar problem for making the rest of us realize we need to eat."

Kat giggled a little. "Always glad to help whenever I can."

Well, let's get the MREs distributed," said Tin-Tin. "Gordon, will you help me?"

"Okay, Tin-Tin," Gordon replied. They got up and went to where they had the MREs stored. They began to pass them out to everyone. Elise asked for two, saying she'd take the other one to Virgil when she finished eating hers. That way he could have his while she piloted Two.

They chowed down, making sporadic comments once in a while. But no one felt like talking much.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:40:31 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/14/2006 10:09 PM

Scott closed his eyes when his Virgil's voice sounded in his ear. "Maverick from Van Gogh. Come in, Maverick."

He pulled the earpiece from his ear, and took off his visor. Reaching forward, he switched the communication over to Thunderbird One's console. "Thunderbird One here, go ahead, Thunderbird Two."

Virgil's eyebrows went up when Scott's weary face appeared in his viewscreen. "You look like hell," he observed.

"I feel like hell," Scott snapped. "The only news I have on Doc is that she's in surgery. Tynan and Angel have whiplash, various bruises and cuts, and Angel has a sprained ankle. They've both been admitted overnight for observation." He began to fasten his restraints. "The security people here have cleared a parking lot for me. I'm going to move One there."

"F-A-B," Virgil said mildly. "I guess you don't need us in L.A.?"

The fight went out of Scott and his shoulders slumped. "Of course I need you here. I need someone here I can lean on for a change. But you're better off heading back to base. The Boss should be on his way out by now and I have no idea who he's left behind. And I'm not leaving until either he arrives or I have word on Doc... or both. You have Seven?"

"Yeah, we have Seven safely stowed in the pod." Virgil's voice dropped. "We also have vid of the farmhouse."

Scott sat up straight at this and his eyes widened. "Is it... is it bad?"

Virgil nodded. "It's bad. In fact, it's gone."

"Damn." Scott closed his eyes and grimaced, then shook his head. "I guess our luck ran out on this one, didn't it?"

"You could say that," Virgil replied. "I'm changing heading now and will get back to base. Let us know the minute you have any news, and don't forget Quasar. He's doing double duty right now and is under a lot of pressure. In fact, I want to talk to you about possibly having Three stop and pick him up."

"F-A-B. I'll think about that, and I promise to be on the horn to everyone as soon as I know anything." Scott gave his brother a tight smile. "Don't forget to eat. Those MREs aren't the best, but I bet you and the crew haven't had anything since breakfast. And since Doc isn't here..."

"F-A-B, Maverick. Message received." Virgil's voice softened. "You take care of yourself, too, Mav."

"I will. Thunderbird One, out."

Virgil sighed and shook his head. He glanced up to see Elise standing beside him, an MRE in her hand.

"You need to eat," Elise said firmly. "Let me take her. You take this and head back to the crew's quarters. I suppose you'll scarf it down to get back here ASAP, but the change of scene will do you good."

Virgil smiled. "I just got orders of the same sort from the field commander," he said as he rose from the pilot's seat.

"Well, then. Listen to Scott for a change." Elise handed him the MRE, and slid into his place. "Sometimes he even knows what he's talking about."

"I'll tell him you said that," Virgil teased.

"He won't believe you," Elise huffed.

Virgil allowed himself a small chuckle, then sighed again and headed back to the crews' quarters. Scott was right; he did need to eat, and Elise's idea of a change of scene was good, too. A sudden thought struck him, and he stopped at the door to the back portion of the command level.

"Everyone?"

Those in the cockpit looked back at him expectantly, except Elise, who was focused on flying Two.

"The field commander isn't here, so this falls to me." He glanced at the chronometer on Two's control panel. "Stand down from rescue, 20 hundred hours, local time. Log it, please, Elise."

"F-A-B," she said softly.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:44:30 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/15/2006 11:08 AM

Setting Thunderbird One down in the secure area, Scott gathered up his visor and cap and was prepared to head back into the hospital when his father's voice sounded out over the comm panel.

"Maverick from Base. Come in, Maverick."

Sighing, Scott toggled the switch. "Thunderbird One here. Go ahead, Base."

Jeff's face showed up on the comm screen. He looked tired, but had a determined set to his jaw that set warning bells off in Scott's head. He's about to get stubborn. Well, sir, I can be just as stubborn!

"What is your ETA to base, Thunderbird One?"

"I have no ETA to report, base."

Jeff's eyes narrowed. "I am waiting for your return to base so I can leave for Los Angeles, Maverick."

This took Scott aback. "May I ask why... sir?"

"Because I have been ordered by our Los Angeles agent that I should not fly out myself, and should bring the... troops with me. This would leave only GM here by herself, with Tynan's child. I will not leave her here by herself, nor will I leave the desk unmanned. Therefore, I order you to return to base immediately."

Scott thought about this for a moment, then straightened. "I understand your reasons, sir, and I sympathize with them. However, someone should be here at all times for security purposes, and for... for Doc when she wakes up. My assessment of the situation tells me that you wouldn't be here in time for that event, even if I was at base this very moment." He took a deep breath. "Therefore, I must respectfully tell you that I am staying here."

Jeff's eyes widened as Scott continued. "Thunderbird Two is on its way back to base at this moment. It would be far better to have more than just one person available to GM, especially considering that we have currently have a team in space." His voice softened. "A half hour isn't going to make a lot of difference at this point, Boss. Besides, you can snag another pilot for the trip. Someone's got to take Tynan and Angel back tomorrow anyway."

There was silence between them for a moment, then Jeff's brows knit in a scowl. "Regardless of Thunderbird Two's status, I want you commanding in my absence. As you have said, we still have a team out in space, and you are best fitted to deal with that. Again, I order you to return to base immediately."

Scott shook his head. "No, sir. You know I'm right, but you're not thinking logically right now. So I respectfully tell you to take your order and shove it."

There was a sound in the background, like someone scolding, and Jeff turned his head away briefly. Scott tried hard to hide a smile; his grandmother was weighing in on the subject, and it sounded like she was on his side.

Jeff turned back to look at Scott. He drew in a deep breath, and let it out noisily through his nose. "Very well, Thunderbird One. You may stay until my arrival. But we will discuss this insubordination at a later date."

"F-A-B, sir." Scott said sharply, resisting the urge to salute.

"Base, out."

Scott blew out a relieved breath. He shook his head as he put his visor back on, double checking that his earpiece was in properly, then ran his hand through his hair before donning the cap again. He put on the camera fogger, and set the security measures, climbing out of the cockpit. Glancing toward the hospital's emergency entrance, he saw Carol Ferris waiting for him.

"I have a meal waiting for you inside," she said as he fell into step with her. "But you should know that Gerry Montoya has a press conference scheduled a few moments from now."

"Damn," he muttered. He looked at his companion. "Any way I can listen in?"

"Of course," she said. "The networks are carrying it live."

"Wait up a moment." He stopped in his tracks, and tapped his ear piece. "Thunderbird Five from Maverick."

A little icon of John showed in Scott's heads up visor. "Thunderbird Five here, go ahead."

"There's to be a press conference in a few moments, given by Mercy General's public relations people. Can you notify base, and record it from where you are?"

"Yes, I can."

Scott could hear John's unspoken question. "I'd notify base myself, but at the moment, I'm being insubordinate."

The eyebrows on the icon went up. "I see. In that case, I'll comply. But I'll want an explanation later. Thunderbird Five, out."

Scott tapped the earpiece again, and gave Carol a tight smile. "Let's go," was all he said.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:47:01 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/15/2006 1:04 PM

"Is everyone here?" Geraldo Montoya asked his assistant.

"The room is packed." She handed him the data pad on which his statement was printed. He glanced over it, then straightened his tie and gave his hair a last brushing.

"Here I go," he murmured as he stepped out onto the small podium, and into the harsh lights.

His assistant was right. There was standing room only in the conference room he'd commandeered for the press bulletin. He smiled, and put his data pad on the podium, which had the hospital's crest prominently displayed on the front.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am sure you have all heard about the arrival of International Rescue's Thunderbird One a little earlier this afternoon. The craft was airlifting three patients, one in critical condition, from the Wichita area to our facility, on orders from International Rescue's chief medical officer. Two of the patients have minor injuries and have been treated and admitted for overnight observation; the third is in surgery. The surgeons working on the case are our chief of surgery, Dr. Andrew Carmichael, and our chief of orthopedics, Dr. J. Edward Willis. I am told that International Rescue chose Mercy General because they wished to spare the already burdened hospitals in the Wichita area, and because of Mercy General's state-of-the art surgical imaging equipment."

He took a deep breath, then said, "I'll take questions now."

A woman near the front raised her hand. "Is this related to the reported downing of Thunderbird Seven by a tornado outside of Wichita earlier today?"

"Yes, it is." Geraldo nodded.

"Are the patients IR personnel?" someone else asked. "The reports out of Kansas say that the doctor and the two nurses were injured in the crash."

"Yes, IR's physician and two nurses are the patients that were brought in."

"It's been reported that the doctor is the one with the more serious injuries," a NTBS reporter said. "Is this true?"

Geraldo nodded again. "Yes, the doctor -- who, I understand, is also the CMO -- has the more serious injuries and is in surgery as we speak."



"What kind of injuries have the IR personnel suffered?"

"I can't answer that question due to patient privacy issues." Sweat was beginning to bead on Geraldo's forehead. Sure is hot in here!

"We understand that Mercy General has the finest surgical imaging technology to be found anywhere," a local reporter asked, his tone slightly sarcastic. "But there are certainly other fine institutions between here and Wichita, some even closer to the scene of the crash. Are there any other reasons why this hospital was chosen over others?"

Geraldo paused, then made a decision. "I was informed by Dr. Carmichael that he had briefly met with International Rescue's physician and one of their nurses during the tsunami relief efforts in Samoa. He was impressed at the time."

This caused a lot of writing and murmuring among the reporters. "So you believe that their physician may have been equally impressed with your Dr. Carmichael and come here on the strength of their... acquaintance?"

The public relations man shook his head. "I can't say one way or the other. I can only give you Dr. Carmichael's statement."

"International Rescue is almost fanatical about its security and anonymity. What steps has Mercy taken to ensure their security?"

"Our head of security has asked me to refrain from giving details on the arrangements we have in place. Suffice it to say, we will do our best to keep International Rescue's operatives safe and secure."

One of the television reporters asked, "Are you expecting the arrival of any other International Rescue personnel or craft?"

"Not at this time." He looked around the room, then smiled. "I'm afraid that's all the time I have, ladies and gentlemen. We will be sending out press releases and holding conferences as the situation warrants. Thank you for coming."

With that, he strode off the platform, the unasked questions of the press sounding behind him. He stepped outside the room into the coolness of the hallway, and strode briskly to his office, his assistant trying to keep up. Once behind his desk again, he took out a handkerchief and wiped his face.

"Whew!" he said. "How do you think we did?"

"I think we did well," his assistant replied. "But the real person to ask would be the guy who brought in the patients."

Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:47:34 GMT  
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From: ArtisticRainey Sent: 10/15/2006 2:28 PM

The bed sheets crunched a little as Dominic shifted once more, trying to move in a way that would alleviate the gradually increasing pain in his neck. He closed his eyes and listened to the heartbeat of the hospital: heels clicking rapidly on the hard floors, gurney wheels squeaking both slowly and quickly, and the mumbles of doctors and nurses and patients and visitors.

He took a deep breath of the antiseptic air through his nose, and let it out through his mouth.

His thoughts were heavy on his brows, and he scrubbed at his face with his hands. There was a dull ache present in most of his muscles, and he was now finding it difficult to keep his eyes open. What a day, he thought. I don't even want to think about it. He felt disconnected from the person, Tynan, who had ridden a tornado and cut his doctor free from the steering column of Thunderbird Seven. The man lying on an L.A. hospital bed was just plain Dominic, who had a slight tremor in his hands and wanted to go home to his son. I wonder what Joshua will make of Daddy's rainbow of bruises. Probably want to poke 'em all...

He let his arms drop back onto the bed and shifted again. I now have renewed empathy for all of those auto-accident patients I've assisted on. I forgot what whiplash was like... He thought back to the car crash he had been in as teenager, and snorted at the comparison. I think this one has well surpassed that in crappiness...

He mulled over the events of the rescue and afterwards for a little while longer, before slipping off to sleep.

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:48:30 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/15/2006 9:31 PM

Saturday, August 4, 6:30 p.m., Los Angeles (Sunday, August 5, 1:30 p.m., Tracy Island)

"What is this stuff?" Dr. Willis asked as he pulled another metal shard from the wound on Dianne's leg. He dropped it with a clink into an emesis bowl. "I've never seen metal like this before."

"I don't know, Jonah, and I'm not asking," Drew Carmichael said. He looked at the scanner's screen. "Where is that laceration?" he muttered to himself. "Ahhh. There you are. you little bugger. Gotcha!"

As he began to repair the tiny laceration, he asked, "How's she doing, Ray?"

"Better since we intubated, Drew," Ray replied. He was keeping an eye on Dianne's blood oxygen levels and the anesthesia they were using to keep her under. "She's going to find just breathing painful for a while."

"And not just because of those bruises, either," Drew said, keeping his eye on his work. "I still want to fuse those cracked ribs."

"Doesn't International Rescue believe in airbags?" one of the nurses said as she used suction on the laceration site.

"I bet they will after this," Drew replied. In fact, I'll make sure of it!

Dr. Willis stood up. "I think I've got it all. Nan, here are the metal fragments. Package them up, please. A little souvenir of this adventure." He handed the bowl to the nurse, then shucked his gloves. "Dr. Singh, would you close?"

"Yes, Dr. Willis," the young doctor murmured. He motioned to the nurse for a clean pair of gloves to be slipped on over his current pair, and took up Willis's position next to Dianne's leg. Dr. Willis left the operating theater, passing through the electronic anti-bacterial barrier before opening the door to the scrub room.

"Sorry about that, Rajeev," Drew said distractedly. "I should have known he'd want to be in on this. Any chance to become famous."

"No apologies necessary, Dr. Carmichael," Rajeev replied. "I know Dr. Willis and his ways well. They do not bother... me..."

Drew frowned. He didn't dare take his eyes off his work, but he knew that something was wrong. "Talk to me, Rajeev. What's wrong?"

"A bowl, please, Nancy." There was a pause, then a tiny clink. "It seems that Dr. Willis may not become famous after all, but rather infamous." Another tiny clink sounded, then another.

"Damn the man!" Drew said with a scowl. "Nancy, make sure you keep what Dr. Singh is pulling out and what Dr. Willis has already done separate. I want clear proof of this malpractice." He paused, then said in a more moderate tone. "More suction please."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:49:50 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/15/2006 9:38 PM

Saturday, August 4, 7:00 p.m., local time, Los Angeles (Sunday, August 5, 2 p.m., Tracy Island)

Scott was in the secure floor's waiting room again. He'd been there for a while now. Both Dom and Nikki were asleep, and the nurses were keeping him better apprised of Dianne's progress. He kept flipping the channels on the television, and shook his head when nearly all he could find were special bulletins about Thunderbird Seven and the situation in Los Angeles. Even the soccer game he had settled down to watch had a news crawl across it, giving the details of the day over and over again.

Too bad that what happened to us seems to have totally overshadowed the rest of the destruction out there in Kansas. And I wish to God we could suppress that footage of Seven! I wonder if Dad has seen it yet. Maybe he could get the agents on the case... though it's probably too late for that by now.

He sipped the coffee he'd gotten from the little kitchenette. The nurses had brewed a fresh pot, just for him. It's better than what Mt. Sinai used to have.

His thoughts began to turn back to the last time he waited in a hospital for news. Wasn't half as complicated as this is. How are we going to handle people coming to see Mom? I wish my brain was working on all cylinders, but I am whipped.

His communicator beeped in his ear. "Maverick from Van Gogh, come in, Maverick."

Virgil! He stood and began to pace as a tiny icon of Virgil popped up on his visor. "Maverick here. Go ahead, Van Gogh."

"Just wanted to give you a heads up. We're back at base, safe and sound. I've been put in charge for the moment. The crew is eating, and we'll debrief as much as possible once that's done."

Virgil remembered how surprised he'd been to find his younger siblings, Lisa and Kryano already waiting in the aircraft hangar, as he backed Thunderbird Two into its spot. And how equally shocked he was to find his father closing up his attaché case, ready to leave.

"I'm handing the desk over to you, Virgil. Your brother, Scott, has seen fit to disobey my direct orders and I'll be dealing with him later. But right now, I'm on my way to Los Angeles to be with Dianne. I know I can count on you to keep things running smoothly."

"Yes, sir," Virgil had said, feeling a bit dizzy at the abrupt departure. "Is... Is there anything I need to know? When is the Thunderbird Three crew due back?"

"Last update I had," Jeff had said, stopping at the top of the steps to the study, "they were roughly an hour from the geosynchronous orbital layer. Once they clear that, they'll let go of the satellite, reignite the thruster, and send it on its way. I'm sure that you, John, and Alan can handle it." He gave Virgil a small smile. "We'll be staying with Drew and Maggie. Contact numbers are on the desk." A brusque nod, a hurried, "I'll see you soon," and Jeff Tracy had left. Kyrano asked for departure clearance less than fifteen minutes later.

"So, that's what's happening on this end," Virgil said as he gave Scott an abbreviated version of the events. "You can expect the Boss and company to land in Los Angeles at roughly 2300 hours

your time."

"Thanks for the heads up, Van Gogh," Scott said gratefully. "Wish I had some news on this end. Tynan and Angel are both asleep, but Doc isn't out of surgery yet. The longer it takes, the less I like it."

"I agree," Virgil replied. He paused, then said, "You remember that I mentioned talking to you about Quasar?"

"Yeah, I do. You said something about having Three pick him up?"

"Yes. We could either automate Five or ask Einstein or Ursa to stay for just a couple of days. You know he's going to want to see Doc. He could use the respite, too, after today."

"It's okay with me," Scott said. "Just don't ask Ursa, okay? I think she's not ready yet, and besides, she has leave coming to her soon."

"F-A-B. I'll bring it up with Einstein, then. Like I said, it'd only be for a few days."

Scott sighed, and his voice lowered. "Have you talked to GM about the house?"

"No, not yet. Let her get Tynan's kid down for the night and some food into her. Maybe even a good night's sleep. She'll face it better then."

"We'll have to make arrangements about that, too." Scott shook his head. "There's so much to do and the Boss? The Boss isn't thinking right now."

"I know." Virgil sighed as well. "I'd better get some food, and bring Quasar and Indy up to speed. Call as soon as you have news on Doc. And take care of yourself, too."

"F-A-B," Scott replied. "Maverick, out."

With that, Scott turned from the door and pulled up his visor, rubbing his tired eyes. Back on the island, Virgil glanced up to see Emily come in with a tray for him. "Kat has Joshua right now," she said as he came to her to take the tray. "I want to know if you saw the farmhouse."

Virgil put the tray on his father's desk, then sighed. "Well, Grandma, it's like this..."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:50:39 GMT  
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From: TracyFan4Ever Sent: 10/17/2006 6:37 PM

Alan and Brains had successfully placed the fused satellites into a special net. Callie had tethered the line and had activated the hull magnets on Thunderbird Three's exterior. As soon as the men

were safely back inside the space rocket and the satellites were locked onto the exterior, they moved to a point 100 miles southwest of the International Space Station's trajectory. As a result, neither Thunderbird Three nor the ISS was in any danger of a collision in space.

Alan smiled at Callie and Brains. "That part of the mission is now complete. With no one in danger, all we have to do now is place a tracker on the satellites and then send them off into space."

"I guess all those HDTV customers will have to go without it for a while," Callie joked, "at least until a new one can take the faulty one's place."

Brains shook his head. "Most TV companies nowadays have several replacements, so don't be surprised if a new one gets up there within three days."

Standing up, Alan said, "Okay, I'm heading back out there with a tracker and remote device. I don't want Three to be caught up in the thruster. Callie, go ahead and release the hull magnets' hold on the satellites."

"F-A-B, Alan," she said as she pressed the button. "How long will this take?"

"Probably no more than 30 minutes. I can get the net off, and you can bring it in. I'll hook up the thruster's wiring to the control device, and we'll have plenty of time to get out of here before firing it."

Brains said, "The thruster should fire just fine by the way we have it set up."

Checking how far the satellites were, Callie noticed the safety zone. "The net's now out of range, so I'll deactivate the magnets." Pressing the button to turn off the magnets, she said, "Okay, Alan, she's all yours."

"Thanks, Callie. As soon as we fire the thrusters, contact Thunderbird Five and base for stand down time."

As she nodded, Alan put on his helmet and placed the tether line on his back. Floating out into space, he went up to where the satellites were and took off the net surrounding them. "Ursa, bring in the net."

"F-A-B, Indy. Tether net coming in now."

Alan had no trouble connecting the thruster's wires to the remote device. Then, he placed the tracker on the top of the HDTV satellite. "That should do it." Returning to Thunderbird Three, Alan undressed himself from his space suit and said, "Everything's set. Callie, press the button to activate remote device."

She did so, and the thruster activated, sending the satellites safely out of Earth's orbit and into the depths of space. "Thunderbird Five and base from Thunderbird Three. Mission completed. Satellites are now moving away from Earth. Stand down time is at 1503 hours local time."

On Tracy Island, Virgil heard Callie's stand down time. "F-A-B, Ursa. Good work, all of you. Now I need you to make a side trip to Thunderbird Five so Quasar can switch out with Einstein for a few days."

Surprised to hear Virgil on the other end, she thought, That's weird. It's usually Scott who's behind the desk when Mr. Tracy's gone. What's going on? Oh, never mind, I'd rather just get this over with so John can get to be with his mother, too. She shrugged and said, "F-A-B, Van Gogh. We're on our way now."

John spoke up. "I've contacted ISS, ISC, and ElecSignal. They're all saying thanks. Right now, though, I feel like going home."

"Don't worry, Quasar," said Alan. "We're on the way to pick you up now."

"F-A-B, Indy," said a clearly exhausted John. "Just give me time to pack some clothes for a few days."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:51:42 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 10/17/2006 7:15 PM

Saturday, August 4, 8:15 p.m., local time, Los Angeles (Sunday, August 5, 3:15 p.m., Tracy Island)

"Maverick?"

Scott startled from his doze. Drew stood before him, a tired smile on his face. "We're finished."

"Where is she?"

"Recovery. We're waiting for her to come around."

"Can I...?"

Drew chuckled. "Of course. Your... boss will want a full report."

Scott smiled hesitantly, and stretched as he got up from the chair he'd fallen asleep in. Drew turned, and the younger man followed him down the hallway.

xxxx

Dianne slowly became aware of sounds around her. Machines beeping, the hiss of a ventilator, sounds she was so familiar with, but from a different perspective. There was something wrong with her breathing; her own natural inclination and rhythm fought against an unnatural force that



now controlled it. Her eyes opened a crack, and uncoordinated hands waved as she tried to bring them up to the breathing tube.

"Dianne," a soft, familiar voice whispered into her ear as a strong hand caught hers. "Doc," the voice said, louder now. "Come on, sit up and let's get this tube out."

Arms slid behind her, helping her to sit up and her eyes opened further, still dulled from the drugs. "Cough for me, Doc. Cough."

She tried to gather breath to cough, and after a few painful gasps, was finally able to help expel the breathing tube from her throat. "Gah!" she rasped. "Tha' hurts."

Drew and his nurses eased her back against the upraised head of the bed. She finally focused on the faces around her, and smiled slightly. Scott stood behind the medical personnel, wearing visor and hat, watching. He smiled at her, then glanced at Drew, motioning with his head so that Drew could tell. The doctor made the connection, and began to usher his nurses out. "Let's give them a minute."

The door closed behind them, and Scott removed his facial camouflage. "Hey, Mom," he murmured. He leaned over to kiss her on the forehead. "Welcome back."

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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Mon, 30 Jul 2012 00:53:05 GMT  
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And with that we end Chapter Eight: Home Is Where The Heart Is!

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