

Thursday, May 3, 2068, 9:30 p.m., Tracy Island

"Come," Kyrano said simply. He had finished the cleanup of the kitchen and dining area and was now relaxing in his favorite chair with a tiny glass of cognac (a habit left from his days in Paris). Asterix lay across his lap, purring as the retainer stroked the soft fur.

The door to his suite opened and Tin-Tin walked in. She leaned over to give her father a kiss on the cheek, then flopped down in the chair next to him. "The birthday party went well," she said in a careless tone.

"It did indeed," he replied. He continued to stroke the cat, and Tin-Tin leaned over to scratch the feline between the ears. "I am thinking of giving this little one a new name," he went on. "I have yet to choose one, however. I think something in Malay or perhaps in Chinese... what do you think, Tin-Tin?"

"It doesn't matter to me," she said, sitting back in the chair with a sigh. He kept stroking the cat, waiting for his daughter to unburden her heart.

When no words were forthcoming, he asked, "Will you be going with the family to the ranch?"

She sighed heavily. "I don't know. Alan will be there." She drew her knees up and put her arms around them. "Father, why can't I find a nice man? I mean, first there's Alan, who leads me on for years then drops me, saying his life is 'too dangerous' to share with anyone." She let go of her knees long enough to make her first and second fingers into little crooks, emphasizing the "too dangerous". "Then there's Giles Hightower, who I thought was witty and charming and who turns out to be a complete cad and only wanted me so he could get into the Tracy computer system."

She paused and shook her head. "Then... there was Christopher. He liked me, and I liked him and other than that disastrous first dinner, things seemed to be okay. Going slowly, but okay. Then all of a sudden, he mouths off at Mr. Tracy and leaves... gets thrown out... whichever way you want to look at it... and before he leaves, he kisses me and tells me that he loves me! Why couldn't he have said something before that? Why did he have to be so stupid as to get himself in trouble in the first place?" She lay her cheek down on her knees. "I'm such a failure."

"Come here, my child." Tin-Tin looked up to see that her father had put the cat down and had moved to a settee, and was patting the cushion next to him. She sighed again, got up and joined him. He put an arm around her shoulders and drew her to him.

"You are not a failure. It is the men who fail to see what they are missing. There will be a man for you, my daughter. One who will love and cherish you for all the right reasons, and who will not be afraid to share his life with you. It may not be soon, and you may wait a long time, but love will come to you. I know it will."

"Yes, it will probably come when I'm too old to enjoy it," Tin-Tin groused.

Kyrano shook his head. "One is never too old to enjoy love, my sweet one. I know that for a fact."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Father. I sometimes forget about you and Lisa," she said contritely. "Will she be coming to visit again soon?"

"Yes, she will. She is to return with the children from the visit to the ranch. Mr. Tracy and Dr. Tracy will be picking her up with Cherie's guests in Greenville."

Tin-Tin laughed a bit. "If only I could have the kind of relationship that you two have."

"Our relationship is fun," Kyrano said solemnly. "But we have both seen much pain in our lives, and that is why we do not hesitate to love. I would spare you such pain if I could."

"Mmmm," Tin-Tin said drowsily. "Do you think I should go to the ranch?"

"I do, daughter. You have been working hard lately and could use the change of scene. Besides, Dr. Tracy will need extra female hands to keep those girls in check."

Tin-Tin chuckled. "All right, Father. I will go." She kissed him again on the cheek, and got up from the settee. "I'll tell Dr. Tracy right away."

"Good," Kyrano said, smiling at her. "Good night, my sweet one."

"Goodnight, Father," Tin-Tin returned the smile as she left the sitting room.

Asterix leaped back up into the old man's lap and snuggled down. The retainer began to stroke him again. "Now as for you, little one, what shall I call you?"

From: Tikatu Sent: 8/18/2005

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