

Thursday, March 15, 2068, 8 a.m. local time, Kabul, Afghanistan

Tin-Tin adjusted her head scarf as she stepped from the taxi. She had opted for a long, traditional Malaysian batik blouse with coordinating slacks and a head scarf, in accordance with the local traditions. Behind her, Emily Tracy wore a nearly ankle-length skirt and a white blouse under a coordinating jacket. She, too, wore a head scarf, though she had grumbled about it.

"Why can't the locals let their visitors dress as they please? If they visited the States, they wouldn't have to change their clothes to match our traditions!"

"Mrs. Tracy, the United States does not have a single religious tradition," Tin-Tin had said with a sigh. "It's much more open. Here, we do not want to offend, and so 'In Rome...'. "

"Do as the Romans do," Emily finished the old saw and sighed.

The manufacturing plant looked very modern and up-to-date. They were met at the security gate by a Mr. Fudail al Kadar.

"I am so happy to meet the creator of such a unique fabric, Ms. Kyrano," Fudail said, bowing to her.

She returned the bow, and introduced Emily as her chaperone. "I hope we can discover why there has been such trouble manufacturing my fabric."

"Truly, we share the same goal." His gaze shifted from Tin-Tin to a tall, thin blond who had come up behind her. "Ah, Mr. Tallman. You are in good time." Fudail smiled widely. "Mr. Tallman is considering placing a large order at our plant."

"Giles Tallman," the blond said, taking Tin-Tin's hand and bowing over it.

"Tin-Tin Kyrano," she answered graciously. She indicated Grandma Tracy. "My chaperone, Emily." Emily glowered at him.

Giles smiled toothily. "Charmed, I'm sure."

Fudail rubbed his hands together, then presented each of the visitors with security badges. "Now," he said, his dark eyes shining eagerly. "Let me show you the jewel of our company." With that, the foursome entered the building proper.

Behind them, a small man, dressed in native garb, watched them enter. Satisfied, he climbed into his ancient car and drove away.

And outside the gates, another man, large and dark and dressed in shirtsleeves and jeans, watched the small party go inside, and then the other watcher drive away. He got back into his

own truck and pulled out a small, sophisticated computer. Typing quickly, he sent an email message.

"Our pigeons are being hunted."

Post by Tikatu on 10/11/2004

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