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Subject: Re: Growing as a Team  
Posted by [Tikatu](#) on Fri, 27 Jul 2012 16:30:31 GMT  
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Friday, March 16, 6 p.m. local time, Kabul, Afghanistan

A subdued Tin-Tin sat across from Emily Tracy in the hotel restaurant. The old woman had given her a serious talk about "gallivanting about with strange men in a strange city" that had Tin-Tin's cheeks flaming red with a mixture of anger and embarrassment. It didn't seem to matter to Emily that Tin-Tin returned safely, having had a stimulating conversation with a well-traveled and genteel young man. Grandma had taken a dislike to the man, one that she couldn't explain beyond, "He makes my skin crawl" and once Grandma Tracy had done that, there was no gainsaying her.

Tin-Tin was very happy that they would be leaving the next day after the colorfast testing. She knew that Mr. al Kadar was hoping that she would consider having the plant do more than just manufacturing the new fabric; he all but counted on their plant dyeing the cloth as well. But Jeff Tracy had left specific orders about that: Tin-Tin was to note down all the dye lots that did well on the new blend, and then he would make arrangements for two different plants to color the fabric. His reasoning was that having one place dye the fabric for both the uniform pants, in their distinctive light blue, and the jackets and waistcoats, in the new dark navy hue, would cause suspicion in the minds of the cloth manufacturer once it became apparent that IR had new duds. However, depending on how the fabric took the dye in the colors that the team members had requested, Tin-Tin had the authority to have bolts done up in each color for the trim on the uniforms.

She looked over her PDA while absently sipping her wine. Let's see. According to the messages I've received, the interim new uniforms are en route and should be at the pick-up point by Monday. The places that have been doing the separate uniform pieces are all equipped with laser cutting systems and the latest in sewing technology. They should have the specialized needles already. And some are on their way to us so that we can sew on the logo patches. I'll have to ask if this stuff should be sent to a hat maker to make the baseball caps. It might be helpful.

A waiter approached the table, bearing a portable vidphone in his hand.

"Ms. Kyrano? Ms. Tin-Tin Kyrano?"

"Yes, I am Ms. Kyrano."

"Vidphone call for you."

"Thank you." The waiter put the phone down at the table and Tin-Tin rewarded him with a tip. Emily frowned as Tin-Tin pulled out her cell phone's earbud/microphone combination and plugged it into the phone.

"Hello?" Tin-Tin said hesitantly. The picture of Giles Tallman appeared on the screen and she smiled. "Oh, hello!"

"Hallo, hallo. How are you this evening? Did you get in trouble with the ever-watchful Emily?" Giles returned the smile.

"Yes, a bit," Tin-Tin replied, thankful that Emily couldn't hear his part of the conversation. "I am having dinner right now."

"Oh! Then I shan't keep you. What are your plans for tomorrow?" he asked, sitting forward. "I should like to take you to lunch again. With your chaperone, if she is feeling well."

"I... I don't think I can. We're leaving as soon as the dye testing is complete," Tin-Tin explained. "My employer is anxious to get the results of my trip here."

"Oh, that is too bad," Giles said mournfully. "Perhaps I might call you? Once you return to your home?"

"I would like that," Tin-Tin said with a soft smile. "Could I have your number? And your email address? I would like to stay in touch."

"Of course, my dear. I shall send it over in the morning. Though we may be seeing each other again anyway. I'm to be at the plant to do some haggling with old al Kadar sometime during the day. In any case, do expect my card in the morning."

"I shall."

"Then I will say goodnight. Until we meet again, my dear."

"Until then. Goodnight."

The vidphone's screen went blank. Tin-Tin slowly disconnected the earbud jack and sighed heavily.

"Who was that?" Emily asked sharply.

Tin-Tin raised her chin in a show of defiance. "That was Mr. Tallman. He wanted to take us to lunch tomorrow. But as you heard, I've told him it's quite impossible."

"Why did you want his number and email address for?" Emily queried. "You're not thinking of contacting him, are you? There's just something about that boy...."

"...That you don't like. Yes, Grandma. You've made that very clear. But to me, he was a gentleman and an excellent conversationalist. And it's been a long time since a handsome young man has admired me and taken me out to dinner." Tin-Tin looked down. "Don't you remember how it was when you were a girl?"

Emily's severe face softened. Of course she remembered. And she had always thought that her fifth grandson, youngest of Jeff and Lucille's boys, had made too much of his "My work is too dangerous for me to share my life with anyone" while dangling this pretty girl on a string with hope.

Alan was a fool and he drove her away. And being the stubborn people they both are, they'll probably never see eye to eye long enough to get back together. I don't suppose there's any harm in her corresponding with him. After all, he won't be nearby but that sharp young man Christopher will, and he's got his eye on Tin-Tin if I know anything about it! I'd better back down and just keep an eye on her.

"Of course I do," Grandma Tracy said, much more kindly. "If you want to correspond with him, I guess I don't see any harm in it. I couldn't stop you if I wanted to. But as far as luncheon goes, that's out of the question. I want to get home to my own bed and to help your father since Jeff and Dianne have left for the States."

"I understand, Grandma. I'll be glad to get home, too," Tin-Tin replied. Though my lunch with Mr. Tallman has made what would have been a very frustrating trip a touch less frustrating.

At his hotel, Giles poured himself a generous libation. He picked up the phone and dialed a secure number he knew very well.

"Jacques? I don't think I'm going to have the Penelon formula for you this trip, old boy. Why not? Because I'm cultivatin' a little 'friendship' with the lovely Ms. Kyrano. She's high into the hierarchy of Tracy Industries, and I think she'd be of more use to us as a conduit that way. Don't worry, Jacques. We can wait. We've time. By the time I'm through, not only will we have the formula for Penelon, but a wedge into Tracy's secrets that we've not had before. Yes, I'm sure. All right. Goodbye."

He thought a moment, then made another call.

"Fatma, love, it's me. Anyway you could... draw out the dyeing process? No? Ah, a pity, that. Well, it won't matter. Yes, love. Tomorrow. Ciao, dear!"

Giles sat back and turned on the television. He sat back and began to watch a soccer match, sipping at his scotch. He smiled to himself when he thought of the possibilities that Tin-Tin Kyrano could provide.

Yes, Giles old boy, we can afford to wait. Get the girl well and truly on the hook. Then... use her to penetrate Tracy's security and get his secrets.

Post by Tikatu on 23/11/2004

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