

Saturday, May 26; London; 12:30 PM (12:30 AM May 27 on Tracy Island)

Tin-Tin and Lady Penelope were seated at a quiet table in an upscale restaurant. They'd spent the morning at a fashion show, then shopping, and both were in need of rest and sustenance. Penny had sent Parker off to get himself some lunch and return two hours later.

"Oh my," Tin-Tin exclaimed after opening the large menu. "I'm going to have some trouble deciding what I want to order. It all sounds so good!"

"That's fine, dear. You take your time. But please excuse me; I have to go powder my nose," replied Penny.

Tin-Tin looked up at her friend. "Of course. I'll be waiting."

The aristocrat got up and walked off, leaving Tin-Tin perusing the menu. She was startled a moment later to hear a voice say, "Why, Miss Kyrano! We meet again. And London has just become lovelier because you are here. Why didn't you let me know you were coming? And why haven't you been in touch lately? Please don't tell me there is someone else; it would devastate me."

She looked up to see Giles sitting himself in the chair just vacated by Penelope. She looked coolly at him. "Mr. Tallman. Or should I say Mr. Hightower?"

His smile slipped slightly, then returned, but was not as congenial as before. "I am found out. Oh dear. How did you know?"

"Oh, come now. That virus you sent me in your all-too-brief email was a pretty good clue. Then when we found out that there were similarities to viruses sent to Tracy Industries branches in different locations and someone associated with the Hightowers - by his own admission -- planted another one in Lena Matumbo's personal computer, well we put things together and came up with the answer. Now, if you don't mind. . ."

"Tin-Tin, that virus was a surprise to me, I promise you. And I used a different surname for a very good reason. I wanted you to like me for myself, and not judge me because I'm a Hightower. And you did like me, didn't you?"

"What I liked was a lie. And I don't believe you now. So I suggest you leave."

Instead he reached across the table and took the menu from her with one hand, grasping her hand with the other. "Tin-Tin, don't say such a thing. You and I could be so good together. We had something once."

"Let go of my hand." She struggled to pull it away, but he held it tighter.

"Not until I've convinced you to come with me. You don't want to cause a scene now, do you?"

"Maybe she doesn't, but I will if you don't let go of her and leave the table this instant."

Startled, he looked up to see Lady Penelope standing beside him, eyes flashing. "Now why would I want to do that? Miss Kyrano and I were having a pleasant chat and getting reacquainted."

"It didn't look or sound that way to me. And since I am a good judge of situations, I must tell you, Mr. Hightower, that you are a liar. Get up and leave now, or I will have you thrown out."

He looked coldly at Penny. "I don't think you want to do that, Lady Penelope. It might give people the wrong idea about you. "

"You don't know much about me if you believe that. I'll say this only once more. Get up. You're in my seat." When Giles didn't move, she turned and gestured to the manager, who was standing not far away, watching. He hurried over.

"Is there a problem, milady?"

"Yes, this man is harassing my friend, and refuses to stop. He is also in my seat, and will not vacate it. I would like you to have him removed immediately."

The manager looked at Giles. "Sir, I'll have to ask you to leave now, or you will be thrown out."

Giles stood up, releasing Tin-Tin's hand. She immediately put it with the other in her lap. "I don't think you want to do that. You could lose a great deal of patronage if I told my friends how you treated me."

"But he'll gain a lot more than he loses, Mr. Hightower," replied Lady Penelope at her most aristocratic. "And they will be a better class of people."

Giles looked around at the other people who were patronizing the establishment. They were gazing at him in disapproval. He started to leave, when a waiter stopped him with a small platter. "Your bill, sir." Giles picked it up and looked at it briefly. Then, with an exclamation of disgust, took his billfold out, removed some money and placed it on the platter with the bill. As he stalked out, he was humiliated to hear several of the customers applauding.

From: Hobbeth Sent: 10/26/2005

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