

Wednesday, May 30, 1 PM; England

The Hightower limousine headed away from their office building, on the most direct route to their compound. Giles was in the back, seated between his sister and Lena, to keep anything from happening. The door on Lena's side was locked; it and the window mechanism were controlled by the driver, preventing her from attempting an escape.

In Desdemona's lap was Lena's purse. Jacques had given it to her, suggesting that she try to break into the PDA inside it. "It's just possible that it might provide us with a way to get some of those secrets that Tracy Industries has." She was looking forward to the challenge, to prove that she was much better with computers than the woman on the other side of the car seat.

A large black cab, of the type used in the previous century, turned onto the road behind them. They had come to a little-traveled area, and their driver had sped up, per Desdemona's request. They were coming to a four-way stop, and she told the driver to go right through. "You're eager to get to the compound, Dez, but let's try to get there in one piece," her brother admonished.

"Oh, stop whining, Giles. Nothing is going to happen."

But something did. Seconds before the limo got to the intersection, another black cab was seen at the stop sign on their right. It pulled out and the limo driver slammed on the brakes. The cars both stopped, the limo mere inches from the cab's passenger door. The cab following the Hightower's car pulled up behind them, effectively blocking them from backing up and leaving the scene.

The driver of the cab they nearly hit got out and walked around to yell at the limo driver. "'Ere, now. Wha' d'ye think you're doin'? You got a stop sign, same as me. D'you think you're such niff-naff toffs that you c'n just run the rest of us workin' stiffs down any time you please?"

The limo driver pressed the button to roll his window down. He started to tell the man to move his car - that there had been no accident - but he didn't get more than a couple of words out. The cabbie sprayed a gas in his face that knocked him out almost immediately.

Lena was sitting on the opposite side of the car from the driver, and saw what happened. Her eyes widened, but she said nothing. She caught a movement out of the corner of her right eye and glanced over. The driver of the cab behind them had come up to the passenger door and was looking in questioningly. Desdemona lowered her window and started to tell him to get the other man to leave, but he threw a small round object into the car. It broke open on impact with the floor, releasing another gas that had all three passengers unconscious within moments.

The two men grinned at and nudged each other in celebration of a smooth operation, then one of them took a large handkerchief out of his pocket and waved it above his head. Soon a pink Rolls Royce, driven by Parker, with Penelope in the back, was seen pulling up to the group. When it stopped, the men walked over to it.

"Well done, gentlemen. I must admit, it was most considerate of Jacques Hightower to keep Mrs. Matumbo's PDA with him, so we could learn where they would take her and by what route, then give it to his sister to work on. Now, let's get our agent out of there and into this car. Then we can leave these people to their nap."

Parker got out of the car and went to the door by Lena. He tried to open it, then turned and said, "H'it seems to be locked, Milady."

"How unfortunate. But that would be expected. Can you get to the lock, or do we have to remove the others to get to her?"

"Wait a minute, yer Ladyship," one of Parker's cronies said, "I seen this type of car before, I did. There's a control on the dash that should unlock it." He pushed the driver aside and scanned the controls for a minute. "Ah, got it." He pressed a button and they heard a distinct 'click' from the rear door. Parker tried again, and it opened. He was just in time to keep Lena from falling out onto the pavement.

"Ere, Nosey, let me give yer a hand there." The other man hurried around to help Parker, and they quickly got the older woman into the back seat with Penny. The man who unlocked the door walked over and handed Lena's purse to the aristocrat.

"Thought you'd be wantin' this."

"Thank you, sir. Parker, please give them their reward."

Parker handed an envelope to each of the two men. They looked inside and their eyes lit up. They both touched the brim of their caps to Penny and one of them said, "Thankee, yer ladyship. Any time ye want summat done, just call on us."

"Thank you, gentlemen. I shall certainly keep that in mind. Now I suggest we all leave. We don't want to be anywhere in sight when these people regain consciousness."

The two cabbies touched their hats again, and went back to their vehicles. Penelope and Parker watched them go, then he got into FAB-1. Soon they were on their way back to Creighton-Ward Manor, leaving the two Hightowers and their driver asleep in their vehicle.

From: Hobbeth Sent: 11/2/2005

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