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Subject: Re: Home is Where the Heart Is  
Posted by [Lillehafrue](#) on Sun, 29 Jul 2012 15:54:31 GMT  
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From: Tikatu Sent: 8/21/2006 6:37 PM

Friday, July 27, 2068, 5:30 p.m., local time, Paris (Saturday, July 28, 3:30 a.m., Tracy Island)

Giles Hightower drummed his fingers impatiently on the leather seat of his limousine. He was waiting for his target to leave the hotel, at which point his driver would ease up to the curb and he himself would make Professor Hackenbacker an offer he couldn't really refuse.

He ground his teeth in frustration that, as in the case of Mrs. Matumbo, he had to take a hand in this venture himself. When Celeste and her cronies had failed to bring the Professor to him the evening before, he had been livid. He had called Celeste several times over the course of the evening, until at long last, she answered her phone.

"Where is he?" Giles had asked curtly, trying to keep his rising temper in check.

"I do not have him," Celeste had said haughtily.

"Why not? Don't tell me you and your bungling cohorts can't abduct a single man?" he'd said snidely.

Celeste had scowled. "That 'single man' has the luck of the devil himself," she had told him. "Not only that, but he is under someone's protection."

"Whose?" he has asked sharply.

"I do not know. But if you want Monsieur Hackenbacker, you will have to capture him yourself!" And with that she had abruptly hung up.

"Capture him myself," Giles had muttered. "I should have done this in the first place." He had gone back to his contacts in the airlines and at the hotel, who had told him that Hiram Hackenbacker had an afternoon commercial flight to Baltimore Washington International Airport. Baltimore Washington? Perhaps a visit to Mrs. Matumbo? Or perhaps some other business in that area? No matter. I know when his flight leaves and will be waiting for him to leave the hotel.

And that's why he was there, waiting impatiently for Hackenbacker to show his bespectacled face. He poured himself a glass of chilled wine, and sipped it as he waited.

Finally, the gentleman himself appeared, followed by a porter who carried his luggage. Giles picked up the interior phone and said one word: "Allez." (Go.) The limousine eased out of its space, and began to edge its way up to the curb.

However, the ride came to a wine-spillingly abrupt halt. Giles swore, long and loud, as his drink splattered all over his designer suit. He picked up the phone again and spat, "Quel est le problème?" (What's the problem?)

The driver replied quickly, "Il y a une voiture..." (There is a car....)

Giles glanced out the window and gaped at what he saw. An absurdly pink, custom-built Rolls Royce had pulled up to the curb. A middle-aged man with a formidable proboscis and an understated livery was putting Hackenbacker's luggage into the boot of the car, while Hackenbacker himself climbed in to sit next to a somewhat familiar looking blonde. Giles squinted, then his eyes widened. "Creighton-Ward? What the bloody hell is she doing here?"

It was obvious from what Giles could see of their interaction that the two were old friends, or at least well-acquainted. The chauffeur -- who Giles now recognized as Aloysius Parker, a man he had thought about recruiting - finished putting the luggage into the car, then got in and drove the strange car away from the curb. Giles picked up the phone again. "Conduisez à De Gaulle." (Drive to De Gaulle.) He realized that he had an advantage; he knew where Hackenbacker's flight was departing from. If he could only get there first....

His driver was very good and knew the city better than Lady Penelope's chauffeur did. They arrived at the international departure terminal well before the pink Rolls did. On the way, Giles tried to think up a good plan for waylaying his target. He knew he couldn't use a weapon inside; everyone had to pass through security checkpoints just to enter the terminals nowadays. Actually, when it came down to it, he probably wouldn't be able to approach Hackenbacker at all; Lady Penelope would most likely accompany the scientist to the terminal and would recognize him. No, he had to do something else.

"Pierre," he called to his chauffeur. He had come up with a plan. FAB-1 pulled up in front of the departure terminal and Parker got out, flagging down a skycap to help with Brains's luggage. Brains and Penelope both got out and entered the terminal.

"It sure was nice of you to bring me to the airport," Brains said, smiling at his companion.

Penelope waved a gloved, perfumed hand. "I assure you, dear boy, it was my pleasure. I wish we could have had more time together here in Paris; I so miss the Tracys these days. But they, and I, are very busy, as were you during this week of seminars. Did you learn of any new technologies that would be of use in the Tracy's family business?"

Brains nodded. "Yes, I believe so. There were several presentations of interest and I plan on following them up by corresponding with the people involved."

There was a lull in the conversation as they passed through the scanners at the security checkpoint. Then, Brains began to expound on some of the interesting things he had learned during the week. Penelope listened, but with only one ear. The other one was intently listening to a message that came through her earring.

" 'E's 'ere, milady. Just as you thought."

She glanced towards Parker for a moment, and nodded briefly. Then she turned her full attention back to Brains, secure in the knowledge that her chauffeur and his accomplice, Jean-Claude, were in full charge of the situation.

"Now," Giles said, in French to his chauffeur, who had changed his livery for a skycap's uniform, borrowed from an unfortunate gentleman who lay senseless in a nearby closet, "you have your instructions. You are to tell Mr. Hackenbacker that there is an urgent phone call for him and offer to guide him to the office where he may take the call. In the meantime, I will distract Lady Penelope's attention." He handed a small plastic vial to the chauffeur. "Wave this beneath his nose, but don't breathe any in yourself. It won't knock him out, but it will daze him enough that we can remove him from the terminal, claiming that he is drunk. Do you understand?"

The chauffeur nodded. Giles looked at his watch. "Very well. I will go in search of Lady Penelope."

He adjusted his tie, and strode out of the alcove where he and his compatriot had been planning. But before he took more than a step or two toward the main concourse, a strong hand closed over his wrist, and as he looked up, a puff of powder hit his face, especially his eyes. He let out a cry, breathing some of the stuff in while trying to rub it out of his eyes. The room began to swim, and he staggered, trying to get away from the two men who had come silently up and had lain in wait for the two men. The last thing Giles saw before he slumped to the ground was the weathered face and cheeky grin of Lady Penelope's chauffeur.

Parker put the cap back on Her Ladyship's lipstick tube, then turned to Jean-Claude, who had wrested the plastic vial from Giles's companion and waved it under the false skycap's nose, just as Giles had instructed. The two of them had stayed just out of sight and had been listening intently to the plan that the Brit had concocted. Now the French chauffeur was staggering, stunned by the contents of the vial, which Jean-Claude promptly stoppered.

"'And that over 'ere," Parker said, holding out a hand. "Milady will be very interested in the contents o' this."

"Oui, I am sure she will," Jean-Claude agreed, handing the vial to Parker. He eased the now-dazed fake skycap down to sit on the floor, propped against the wall. "What shall we do about these two?"

"Ay fink Milady would have a word about that," Parker said. "Ay'll tell 'er." He raised his wrist to his mouth. "Milady, we've caught the blokes. We're waitin' to know what ye want us t'do wiv 'em."

Lady Penelope heard the message, but couldn't respond. Brains was still going on and on about the conference and it was only when they came to the second security checkpoint, the one for boarding passengers, that she was able to stem the tide.

"It all sounds terribly fascinating, Hiram," she said brightly. "But here we are at the departure checkpoint and sadly we must part. Please give my regards to Lena Matumbo when you see her and to Jeff and Dianne and Tin-Tin when you reach the island, there's a dear."

"Of course, Lady Penelope." Brains replied, smiling. "Thank you again for all you've done."

"You're quite welcome, Brains, quite welcome. Have a good flight, now." She leaned over and gave him a chaste peck on the cheek. "Adieu, my friend."

"Goodbye, Lady Penelope," he replied as he entered the line for the checkpoint. She turned to walk away, waving a little as she did, then once out of Brains's line of vision, she opened her purse and took out her compact. "Parker," she said quietly. "Have Jean-Claude tell the security people where to find our miscreants. Then bring the Rolls around. It's time we went home."

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