

# Lost in Translation

*“Don’t let your daughter-in-law eat autumn eggplants.”*

—Japanese Proverb

You hear footsteps echoing down the corridor. Van Rjien promptly returns and, upon his entrance, immediately besieges you with another onslaught of apologies.

“Sorry, I know you must have many questions, but we are lacking in time. If you agree to cooperate with us, then I can tell you that which you need to know.”

Cooperate? Us? You feel as though some sadistic force has thrown you into the plot for an over-budgeted Hollywood flick. Involuntarily, your head inclines forwards ever so slightly, and before you can find any words with which to respond, Van Rjien has taken this as an affirmative answer.

Next thing you know, he is leading you through more corridors while you attempt to garner some information: apparently, Arjan Joost Van Rjien is an ‘investigative agent’ working for Melbourne Water, and for the past week has been undercover at Melbourne University. You had somehow managed to get yourself involved when you inadvertently took off with a modified newspaper intended as a message for him.

He hushes your incessant queries as you draw near a vast room filled with rows of filing cabinets as far as the eye can see, each one large enough to house a clan of kitten-ninjas. Or are they ninja-kittens? As you ponder this and other questions intimately connected with the meaning of life, Van Rjien produces a thin file and gestures towards the old photocopier.

“Here is a brief report on the situation. Make a copy and study it well, but make sure that you are prepared.”

*Prepared for what?* you want to ask, but knowing that you won’t get a satisfactory answer, you keep your mouth shut. He hands you the file and disappears again into one of the aisles where you can hear him rummaging through more files.

Your attempts to photocopy the files are shortlived as you realise that whoever used it before has left you with a paper jam. After struggling with the photocopier, you eventually relieve it of its congestion. *Hey, you think, for something so sensitive, this doesn’t make much sense... or does it?*

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—Alisa Sedghifar