

RETROCAUSALITY

tags: 1966, lorraine_ipsum, mars2, tab2

3 December, Santa busy with his list.

Was it taking a long time to walk up this hill, or what?

"You can't wear that thing up here."

Lorraine Ipsum, Miko at large.

"What, *this*? Consider it gone." TAB2 stripped off his visor and tossed it over his shoulder, wondering at the proliferating echoes as it clattered down the trail behind him. Somehow this all seemed familiar. It must have penetrated his prior awareness, however briefly, some number of years ago, when he first recalled this instant, starting awake, or otherwise wondering after all the racket. But it couldn't possibly have been *this* loud.

"No, the respirator," she said, motioning to his apparatus.

"But, I'll die."

"We're all dying," she said. He realized she meant presently.

"Yeah, but I need a few extra decades to read all these comic books." He mimed a command sequence purely from memory, suspiciously expert with the possibly-still-classified device. Suddenly, her near vision was filled with a crude, three-dimensional representation of his own vast back issue collection. Like long boxes, receding. He guessed. His own visor was gone.

Anyway, what was she doing up here?

"Seriously. You have to take that thing off. I can't understand a word you're saying."

TAB2 shook his head. "Nope," he said again, settling his stance and crossing his arms. When his words had no visible effect he simply pushed his way through the *torii* gate and continued on his way. Easy enough.

"Black mold," he added, over his shoulder.

Lorraine covered her mouth with her hands. Giggled formally. Out of habit, rather than any sense of capitulation to TAB2's overabundance of caution. Belatedly aware of the optics, she yanked down her hands and scrambled up the trail after him, her face flush with the effort, her robes flapping in the darkening, dusty wind.

It had been a while since they'd had a visitor.