

“Excuse me, your visitor has arrived.”

Edith reaches forward and presses the button on the intercom.

“Thank you, I am on my way.”

Edith gets up from her desk, and walks to the door, she opens it and goes out into the corridor, leaving the door ajar. She walks along the corridor and through the swing doors into the foyer.

“Edith, what are you doing here?”

“Jane, nice to see you. Are you the journalist that we are expecting?”

“Yes, I have come to interview the Secretary-General, are you his personal assistant?”

“Err, no, actually I am the Secretary-General. Were you expecting me to be a man?” smiles Edith.

“Actually, yes, my editor said that he had fixed up the interview and asked me to come down here and interview him, so I was expecting a man.” Jane explains with some embarrassment lest Edith think that she did not think that a woman could do such a job.

“Well anyway you are very welcome - shall we go along to my office.”

Edith looks toward the receptionist.

“Thank you.”

Jane follows Edith’s lead.

“Thank you.”

Edith’s office is large. As well as her desk there is a lounge type area with several comfortable seats, all a tasteful shade of orange, which mixes well with the plain pale blue carpeting.

Edith moves her right hand forward, palm upward as an unspoken invitation to Jane to sit down and make herself comfortable.

“So, would you like to lead off.” invites Edith, though not intoned as a question.

“Yes, well, I have to write an article for Trade Magazine about Localizable Sentences in general and your organization in particular.”

“Yes.”

“Can you tell me what you do here please?”

“Yes, we develop a list of grammatical stand-alone sentences and give each of them a unique code number, and we publish those lists on the Internet. The sentences are provided in the Esperanto language as the definitive guide, together with an example translation into English. Then communication through the language barrier can, within

certain limits, be achieved by sending those code numbers in a message, such as an email message or a mobile telephone text message, and the code numbers being decoded into text in the language of the recipient of the message.”

“So you’re a Standards Body?”

“Not as such, we produce the lists and the code numbers. If people choose to use them, then good, we are pleased, but we are not a Standards Body as such.”

“Ah, so you sell the lists.” Jane opines.

“No, not all, the lists are free.”

“So, how do you finance this organization then, do you get grants?”

“No, no grants.” Edith pauses “Jane, I am not sure that you are going to like this.”

“Go on.” Jane cautiously replies.

“Well, as you know, we are all professional story characters ...”

“Oh no, not this breaking the fourth wall business again!” exclaims Jane.

“Well, yes, but it is necessary. If you could just hear me out?”

“Go on.” Jane replies somewhat with some reluctance.

“Well, the work needs to be funded in some way. There are things that need to be done, such as localization of documents - of lists of sentences - into many languages and volunteer effort can only do so much. If people are asked to take a lot of time making the translations, top quality translations with good provenance of quality, then there needs to be funding to pay them.”

“You’ll be saying that they will have plastic models of you in boxes of cereal next!” Jane shouts and then composes herself, looks embarrassed, feels foolish and smiles, then chuckles.

“As long as they are made in green plastic.” laughs Edith “Anyway I don’t think that they are allowed to put things like that in boxes of cereal these days.” She pauses “But they could print tokens on the back and people could send them in, and ...” she stops, smiles at Jane and they both laugh.

“So you are thinking in terms of a paperback book, and maybe a movie?”

“Yes, exactly, but we would not publish the paperback book or make the movie, the money would come from the licensing of the intellectual property rights.”

“This money, from where does it come? Does the author give up his royalties or something? If there is a movie made, do the actors and musicians work for nothing?”

“Not a chance!” adds Edith rather emphatically. “The whole financing of the movie or television series will have to be worked out with the feature of setting up a trust fund built into it by the legal people. It will be quite an amount of money, far more than an

author's royalties or the fees for the actors. There will need to be a board of independent trustees who administer the funds according to the rules, the trustees being professional trust fund administrators paid for their services. If a movie company or a television company wants to buy the rights, then they will want to do so with the special financial arrangements, for that is what makes the project so gloriously sparkling.”

“Television series!”

“Yes, why not?”

“It sounds a bit far fetched!”

“Well, consider established organizations. From where did the money to get started come? Often from some different activity in the past, perhaps by someone else having been out to work in employment many years ago.”

“Well put like that ...”

“What are you doing for lunch?”

“Nothing as yet ...”

“Well, shall we go over to La Flava Floro and have lunch there?”

“Your sister’s place.” remembers Jane.

“Yes, but she does not run it now, she and her husband are in Canada, he is a food technologist and he had the chance of a secondment over there and they decided to go: her daughter runs it now, living in their house, so they can easily come back any time they like more or less straight away. We are holding a Poetry through the Language Barrier evening there soon. I’ll tell you all about it over lunch.”

“Fine” smiles Jane.

“When we get back here after lunch John can tell you all about the technicalities and provide you with some press release style documents so that, if you wish, you can copy whole chunks out of it for your article. In fact, I’d quite like you to do that as it will ensure that the information in your article is accurate technically. Not that I’m suggesting ...”

“Quite, I’m not a technical expert so all help is welcome. But you mentioned John, is that the same John from years ago.”

“Yes, and Henry Lambert is here too.”

“Oh!”

“So shall we go to La Flava Floro? We can go in my car if you like.”

Jane smiles and the two ladies gather their handbags and make their way to La Flava Floro.