

La Flava Floro. Thursday evening. The Poetry through the Language Barrier evening.

It is just after 7:30 pm and people are arriving. Some of Julia's staff are handling door arrangements. Edith and Jane are some distance away from the door, looking towards the door, chatting, and waiting to mingle once people have arrived and settled. Edith notices one of Julia's staff speaking to a smartly dressed young man and pointing in her direction.

The young man approaches.

"Good Evening. My name is Edward Stanley. I am looking for Ms Edith Gatford."

"I'm Edith Gatford. Welcome."

"I am a staff journalist at Trade Magazine and the editor has asked me to attend your event and write a piece about it for Trade Magazine and to find out about your whole project and refer to that in my article. I wonder if we could talk later please."

"Yes certainly. I will get a press pack for you so as to provide you with some detailed written information."

"Thank you."

Edith looks in the direction of Jane.

"This lady is Jane Hove."

Jane smiles.

"A pleasure to meet you Ma'am." says Edward with a slight forward nod of the head.

"I am a staff journalist with Arts Magazine. I too am here to write up about the event."

"Oh good. I am new at this. I only started at Trade Magazine this Monday. I got a letter last week inviting me for an interview on Friday and I got the job. It is my first job since leaving university. I had written in about six months ago and I had got a reply saying that there were no vacancies but that they would keep my details on file. This is my first out-of-the-office assignment."

"Did the editor give you any special instructions?" asks Jane conversationally.

Edith inwardly winces at Jane stirring it.

"Yes, he said that as I was new that he wanted me to hand in my article a day early so that he could check it."

"Oh."

"Well that is good really, because I did not study journalism or media studies. I am a physicist."

"Ah."

Edith is becoming a little apprehensive, not about the fact that the editor of Trade Magazine wants to check the article, that is reasonable, nor that she wonders if he might alter it behind Edward's back, because if he is going to do it well that is just that, but about whether Jane might get talking about what happened to her at Trade Magazine and at the Emoji Art exhibition.

"There are going to be two intervals, so hopefully we can talk in one of those." says Edith.

"Excellent." enthuses Edward.

John approaches and catches Edith's eye.

"The presenters have arrived and have settled. We are ready to start when you are ready, though no rush as it is not 8:00 pm yet." says John.

"Thank you. John, this gentleman is Edward Stanley, he is a staff journalist at Trade Magazine and he has come to write an article about the event. I am hoping to meet with him later and have a chat and give him a press pack, but could he come with you now and observe what is happening?"

"Yes certainly." says John, then, turning to Edward, "I'm John, I'm speaking the English localizations of the poems."

John leads the way and Edward follows.

Edith looks at Jane.

"What?" asks Jane a little defensively.

Edith looks, but says nothing.

Jane understands what she means.

"Sorry Edith ... I nearly got carried away, it's a good job you stopped me."

Edith smiles as if to ask, with a stage innocence "Me, what did I do to stop you?"

It is 8:00 pm.

People are mingling and chatting, with some people already seated at the tables ready to watch the performances. The tables have been arranged with chairs only on one side of each table.

Edith is now going to find out if her idea to use a mini-xylophone will work.

The stage area at La Flava Floro is not large. It is only raised from the floor a little and is often accessed by just stepping straight onto it, though it is also accessible from each side by a gentle ramp. The stage area was designed into the building when it was constructed.

Edith goes to the right of the stage area, though not onto it, catches John's eye and smiles to indicate that she is ready to get started. John acknowledges her by a slight raising of his right hand. Edith pauses, then moves behind her table, which is some way from the

stage and to the far right of the audience, the table at right angles to the orientation of the tables at which the audience are sat. Edith sits down and then picks up a xylophone hammer in her right hand.

She plays nine notes, pausing after each group of three. 'C E G ... C E G ... C E G'

People hear the notes. The chatting quickly fades out as people quickly finish their sentences and move to the seats behind the tables. The room falls silent. Edith is pleased. It has worked, people are seated ready for the performance without any words being spoken.

John walks onto the stage from the right, followed, after a pause, by Henry and two other members of staff, Sonja and Caroline. Henry and the ladies are all dressed in plain dark clothing so that the focus will not be on them. John goes to the back of the stage slightly towards the left of the centre of the stage as the audience view him. Henry goes to the left of a table that is set midway back on the stage, parallel to Edith's table in orientation, and Sonja and Caroline go behind the table, facing Henry, such that the audience view Caroline's left and Sonja is almost hidden behind her.

Caroline picks up a card, carefully orientates it and hands it to Henry. Henry picks up the card using both hands, right hand above, left hand below and, while standing still, moves it in front of his body and then beyond so that the double-sided card can be viewed by both John and the audience.

"It is winter." says John, quite loudly.

Henry moves the card in front of him in the other direction, whereupon Caroline takes the card and Sonja hands him the second card. The transfers work smoothly and Henry moves the card in front of him and beyond so that both John and the audience can see it.

"The colour is white." says John.

Henry moves the card back in front of him and beyond and Sonja takes the card and Caroline hands him the next card.

The performance of the first poem continues in this manner.

When the poem ends the audience burst into applause.

When the applause subsides, John leaves the stage and a lady, one of the visiting performers, moves quietly to where he was stood.

There is a pause so that she can settle and then the performance of the first poem begins again, with Henry, Caroline and Sonja performing as before and the lady performer speaking in French.

This continues successfully and after the performance concludes, the audience applauds.

The evening continues with the third performer, a Portuguese man, speaking in Portuguese.

This too is well received with applause.

There is a pause and they quietly leave the stage and then, as they do so, Julia signals to her staff to serve the food and trolleys quickly appear. They are catering for special diets but this is made easily managed as all of the food is vegan and gluten-free anyway. Nevertheless there is a puréed meal for each of the people who have requested that option, and meals catering for one or two other special diets as well. The trolleys are colour coded with the colours matching the meal tickets of the people who have requested that special meal, which is usual at La Flava Floro. Yet tonight there are also symbols printed on the meal tickets and there are large A4 labels (landscape orientation) displaying the symbols on the trolleys, both to help if anyone has problems distinguishing colours yet also to enter into the ambience of the occasion. Those symbols being the same as the symbols about colours that are being used in the poems.

As people are eating, Edith consults with John, Henry, Sonja and Caroline. Julia had served them all a meal at around 7 pm so they are not eating now. Julia has promised them a snack afterwards too.

“How did it go.” asks Edith.

“Fine.” answers John.

“My arms are aching a bit” says Henry.

“Are you alright to continue?” asks Edith.

“Well, I can if necessary, but I am concerned that I might become inefficient.”

“Oh, well I can take your place if you wish.”

“Edith, that’s good of you, but you are wearing red, which is great as you are thereby conspicuous for running the show, but it might be distracting if you are stood right by the symbols as people are watching them.” says John.

“I see what you mean.” says Edith, remembering how she had herself suggested the plain dark clothing for the supporting performers. “How about if Sonja takes Henry’s role and I take Sonja’s original role?”

“That sounds fine, if that is alright with Sonja?”

Sonja nods in agreement.

Edith, John, Henry, Sonja and Caroline have all tried each role at rehearsals a few days ago so that such interchanges are possible.

After the interval the three performances of the second poem take place, with Portuguese first, then French, then English.

All goes smoothly, to much applause after each performance.

During the second interval, peppermint tea is served.

Edith seeks out Edward and hands him a press pack. They chat for a while about the whole project of localizable sentences. Edward seems fascinated by the possibility of being able to use localizable sentences to seek information through the language barrier about relatives and friends after a disaster.

“It is as if each localizable sentence is a tunnel through a language barrier. It reminds me of a tunnel diode in physics, though it is only a loose analogy, but it helps me to think of it like that.”

“Ah.”

“Yet for a whole message to go through the language barrier there need to be a number of tunnels side by side, which is more like where various pipes have been laid so that a brook can be covered by a car park and yet there is provision of capability to handle extreme water flows such as after a storm or when snow melts in the winter. Again it is only a loose analogy.”

Edith takes this all in. These are ways of thinking about localizable sentences that are new to her. It seems strange to her. Yet if looking at the idea like that using such analogies helps Edward to understand, then fine.

The interval comes to an end and then the third poem is performed, with Caroline taking Henry's original role and Henry returning and taking Caroline's original role, while Edith continues as before. The order is French, Portuguese, English. Again there is applause after each performance.

The evening draws to a close and people seem to have enjoyed themselves. People gradually drift away, some staying to chat for a while, both to Edith and her staff and to one another. After a while the last guest has gone and Julia invites Edith and her colleagues, and the two outside performers, and Jane, who is staying with Edith, to a small private dining room for the snack, which in the event is quite a substantial feast, far more than what Edith would have thought of as a snack.

Edward has had a taxi back to his hotel. Feeling inspired by what he has seen at the event and by what Edith has told him, he tries to think of what are the possibilities for communicating through the language barrier using localizable sentences. There is the article to write. In his room at the hotel he opens the press pack that Edith has given to him and begins to read. h