

The Press conference. The Palm Court of Spectacular Hotel.

The room is fairly crowded with journalists, though there are some empty seats. There is a low stage at the front of the room upon which there are several tables arranged so as to produce the effect of one long table and five chairs.

Jane Hove is here. Simon Eastleigh is here. They do not know each other.

Jane is in the second row, over to the left, as viewed looking towards the stage. Simon is in the fifth row, over to the right.

The platform party enters. The journalists stand.

The Managing Director of Gigantic Business finds his seat at the centre seat of the platform. There are four other people, all male, who stand two on each side of him.

“Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you all for coming to our press conference here today. Please be seated.” says the Managing Director.

The Managing Director introduces the Chief Designer, who is at the Managing Director’s far right, who demonstrates how InterJollies are used, using two Locomotive devices, one pale blue, one pale green, going from English to French respectively.

The Managing Director then mentions that the Chief Engineer is at his right, the Company Lawyer is at his left and that the Marketing Manager is at his far left on the platform and then invites questions from the assembled journalists.

A gentleman in the centre asks “You call the device the Locomotive, is there any particular reason for that please?”

The Managing Director indicates for the Marketing Manager to answer.

“Well, the fact of the matter is that we were looking for a name for the device and at one of the meetings one of the people there referred to the device as the Locomotive. As you will appreciate, I am sure, when we develop a new product we do so in a commercially confidential manner until we are ready to launch. One of the people involved in the development is interested in railways and he happened to refer to it as the Locomotive while development was taking place and then other people did the same. When we heard the name the marketing team felt that the name did in fact convey very well the idea of InterJollies going through the language barrier, a locomotive hauling a message from one culture to another through the language barrier, sort of going through a tunnel from one to the other.”

Simon asks a question.

“I notice that you said through the language barrier whereas the text on the invitation to this meeting said over the language barrier, and”

Simon is interrupted by the Marketing Manager. “Well, through, over, across, they are just different words for expressing the same concept.”

“Yes, but through is the word used by the Lo”

Simon is interrupted by the Managing Director. “It is one question each,” then looking round at Jane “Madam, do you have a question?”

Jane is surprised but answers, “Yes, please, ... Jane Hove, ... Arts Magazine ... Could you say in what colours the Locomotive device is available please?”

The Managing Director indicates for the Chief Designer to answer.

“The Locomotive is available in pale blue, pale green, yellow, pink, orange, lavender, black, white.”

“Thank you. Are the shades of the colours custom colours or have you used standardized colours?”

“We used colours that we selected from a standardized palette. That enables us to communicate our design choices more easily to the manufacturing department.”

Simon notices that Jane was allowed two questions even though he had been told that it is one question each.

Questions continue, and Simon raises his hand to request a chance to ask a question but is not chosen.

Several people are each allowed two questions, one lady is allowed three, but Simon is not allowed to ask a question again.

The Managing Director speaks “Well, everybody, thank you for coming, there are Locomotives to purchase at only eighty pounds each and as there is likely to be a high demand for them we have to restrict purchases to two for each accredited journalist. Please be ready to show your credentials when making a purchase. Also, if any of you want to ask detailed technical questions to our Chief Engineer, he has kindly agreed to answer questions in an informal setting in the corner over there.”

With that the journalists begin to depart. Jane notices that Simon is heading for the corner where the Chief Engineer is to answer detailed technical questions. Jane wants to listen in, just in case he has another go, but decides that first she will buy the two Locomotive devices so that she can hopefully get one in yellow and one in pink.

Jane is fairly early in the queue to buy the devices. Jane shows her credentials and asks for a yellow device and a pink device and pays for them with her credit card.

Jane goes over to the informal discussion with the Chief Engineer. People are sat around in more or less a ring with a few people stood behind as there are not enough chairs available. There is clearly great interest in the technical details. Jane listens but just does not understand. Simon is stood some distance away from where she is standing. Simon seems to be taking in the technical details but Jane considers that he has probably not asked any question yet.

'Maybe,' thinks Jane, 'the fact that he is still here and not thrown out means that he has not said anything yet.'

After a while there is a pause and Simon asks the Chief Engineer "Are you aware of LocSARA, the Localizable Sentences and their Applications Research Association?"

"I'm here today to answer questions about the Gigantic Business Locomotive device."

The Chief Engineer looks away, as if looking for someone else to ask a question.

"But, but, have you seen their work on localizable sentences? Have you copied their ideas and not acknowledged them?"

There is a hush. The Chief Engineer looks at his watch.

"Well, Ladies and Gentleman, I think we have had a good technical discussion and I look forward to reading your comments in the press. Thank you for coming."

The Chief Engineer gets up and leaves.

"But, but, have you heard of LocSARA?" calls out Simon, but the Chief Engineer has gone.

Most people are going away, preferring to pretend that nothing has happened, but Jane stands still.

Simon turns, sees Jane and blurts out, even though he does not know Jane "There's something going on here, something they are trying to hide. I think I've got a big story, a scoop."

Jane wonders what to say, wondering whether to say anything, but Simon has gone.

'Off to write his story, his big scoop, oh dear.' thinks Jane.