

Edith and the solicitor arrive in the car park at The Golden Astrolabe Hotel, each in her own car. It is 2:20 pm.

They had met up at a lay-by and had a talk for around ten minutes.

By arrangement, without a word, they walk to the hotel.

They are met by the hotel manager.

“Good afternoon ladies. I understand that you have been invited to a business meeting in what was said to be ‘a conference room’. In fact it is the ballroom but we have put some tables and upright chairs in there so as to produce a professional ambience for your meeting.”

“Good afternoon, excellent.” says Edith.

“Good afternoon.” says the solicitor.

“The gentlemen from Gigantic Business are waiting in the lounge. I thought it best to take you all to the ballroom ... the conference room as it now is at present ... together, so as not to have a home team and an away team ambience of who arrived first.”

“Excellent.” says Edith.

“Excuse me, I will go to the lounge.”

The manager goes towards the lounge.

After a short while the manager returns with the two gentlemen from Gigantic Business.

The Managing Director of Gigantic Business goes to shake hands with Edith.

“Oh, I don’t shake hands.” says Edith “Good afternoon.”

“Ah, right, ... right ... Good Afternoon.” says the Managing Director, deciding not to try to shake hands with the solicitor lady. The solicitor lady would, in fact, have ordinarily shaken hands but she follows Edith lead on this occasion - Edith had, in fact, mentioned that she does not shake hands - personal hygiene - though had not asked the solicitor to do the same, though had expected that, as she was there supporting Edith, that she might well do the same.

“This is my Legal Manager.” says the Managing Director.

The Legal Manager nods in greeting, clearly taking the cue not to try to shake hands.

“This lady in my Legal Advisor.” says Edith.

The Solicitor nods.

Edith thinks ‘... hmm ... not “This gentleman”, just “This” ... hmm.’

The manager leads them to the conference room.

The manager departs and the four participants in the meeting take their seats. Edith is opposite the Managing Director with the solicitor to her left. The Legal Manager is to the right of the Managing Director, opposite the solicitor. There are two table widths between the two sets of people in the meeting, the whole improvised conference setting comprising six rectangular tables, with the participants each sat at the middle table of each set of three tables. Edith places her mobile telephone, which is turned off, and a folder on the table.

“Right then, we all know why we are here.” says the Managing Director.

“No, not precisely.” replies Edith.

“Oh come on, ... my Personal Assistant got the idea that you knew all about it.”

“Well, earlier this morning someone had telephoned me to tell me about the article and I had asked a member of staff to go out and try to get a copy of The Daily Newspaper. So when the lady rang I was aware of the article yet I had not read it at that time. I presume that this meeting relates to that article as our respective organizations are each mentioned in it, but I do not know precisely why you have asked for the meeting.”

“If I may ...” interrupts the Legal Manager.

“Yes, you deal with it please.” says the Managing Director.

“Well,” continues the Legal Manager “we intend to take legal action against you in the courts for defamation. You may avoid us taking that legal action if you publicly, by means of a press release, retract the allegations made in the article and apologise for having made them. You have no patent and we are fully entitled to use the idea with no reference to your organization. The allegations in the article are defamatory to the good name of Gigantic Business.”

“Well, we had nothing to do with the writing or publication of that article. You are quite right in saying that we have no patent, we did not want one, ... I am not sure whether the invention would be patentable anyway, ... we have not looked into that possibility as we did not want a patent. All of our output is open source as is made clear in our webspace. I repeat, we had nothing to do with the writing or publication of that article. I am certainly not going to apologise for something that we have not done.”

The Managing Director looks at the Legal Manager and nods for him to continue.

“Very well, we shall take legal action against you for defamation. The only way to avoid such legal action is to issue a press release, widely circulated, clarifying the situation and setting the record straight.”

“Oh, I am happy to do that.”

The Managing Director and the Legal Manager look at each other in amazement. They have, quite wrongly, assumed that the Legal Manager had repeated his requirement, though Edith has realized that the two statements were not the same at all, in the circumstances of which she is aware.

Edith reaches for her mobile telephone, places it on the table and presses a button and sets the output to loudspeaker, as Edith does not do putting a mobile telephone next to her head.

“LocSARA Press Office.” says a female voice from the telephone.

“This is Edith Gatford.” says Edith.

“Ma’am.”

“Please proceed as arranged, authorization code .... seven .... three .... eight ..... two.”

“Yes ma’am.”

There is a pause.

“The task is complete ma’am.”

“Thank you.”

Edith turns off the mobile telephone.

The Managing Director and the Legal Manager look at each other with some concern.

Edith opens her folder and removes four pieces of paper. Two are A4 in size and two are smaller.

“There you are gentleman, I have sent out the press release, widely circulated, including to Gigantic Business, and here is a hardcopy copy for each of you.” says Edith.

“What’s this little bit of paper!” asks the Managing Director more as an indignant remark than as a question.

“It is a compliments slip.” replies Edith.

The Legal Manager is already reading the press release.

“Compliments slip!” says the Managing Director.

“Yes, I always include one when I send out a document without an accompanying letter. They are very collectable.”

“Collectable .... collectable ....”

“Yes, some people collect compliments slips. They are usually on the same type of paper and with the same typography and logos as larger publications from the same organization.”

“I think you need to read this.” interrupts the Legal Manager.

“What, .... yes .... right.”

As he starts to read his mobile telephone rings.