

Edith is looking through The Daily Newspaper. Ever since the day when the story broke, Edith has obtained a copy each day and looked through it, just in case something else happens.

Edith sees an article headed 'Gigantic Business and LocSARA to put on a show'.

Edith reads with some concern.

The newspaper has the following.

At a bad-tempered meeting two days ago at a secret rural venue, Gigantic Business and LocSARA eventually agreed a way out of their feud without needing to go to court. Both are to attend a launch event next week and all pretend to be friends and happy with the situation, hoping to bluff their way through the event before what is sure to be a highly sceptical audience from the electronics trade and from the press. Perhaps, indeed probably, with more press interest than would be usual for such a launch of a new product.

'Oh dear.' thinks Edith. 'I wonder if someone here has talked. I need to check as best I can.'

Edith is in the foyer looking through the manually produced log of calls from yesterday.

"What is this?" Edith asks Georgina, the receptionist, "11:47 am, personal call for Ms Caroline Appleby. Did you ask who it was calling?"

"Well, yes, but he said it was a personal call and I did not like to ask again in case it seemed that I was being nosy into someone's private life and so I just put him through."

"Well, that is a difficult situation, so in future please ask for a name anyway and make a note of it for all calls including personal calls and then announce them and seek permission from the recipient before putting the caller through. Ask for the permission such that the caller cannot hear the enquiry please. I will circulate a memorandum so that if anyone wants to complain about nosiness then they will know it is to me to whom they need to complain. I will also point out that complaints must not be made to you. If anyone does complain to you please let me know."

"Yes ma'am."

Edith has asked John to come to her office.

"I think we need to call Caroline in and ask her who called her and what it was about." says Edith.

"Is that wise?" asks John.

"Possibly not, it could make us me look bad if she is innocent and also it could go against any possible future action if she is not, but I need to find out, so it is best to call her in."

“Well, it is your decision.”

“Well, yes, it is my decision and my responsibility to do what I consider is best in the circumstances.”

Caroline has been called to Edith’s Office. Edith is sat behind her desk. John is sat on a chair by the wall over to her right.

Caroline has been invited to sit down on a chair against the wall opposite John.

“Caroline,” says Edith “you received a personal call from a man yesterday morning at 11:47 am.”

“Well, the telephone rang and I answered it, I did not ask to be called. It was not arranged. The call was a surprise.”

“Caroline, what did you say to the caller.” asks Edith somewhat pointedly.

“Well, first of all I said ‘Hello’ and then I said ‘Yes’ and then I said ‘No thank you.’ and then I said ‘No, not all, I do not want to get involved.’ and then I put the phone down.”

Edith looks to her right and looks at John with an exasperated look.

“Well, you asked Caroline what she said to the caller and Caroline has answered saying what she said. You did not ask her for the whole conversation.” says John.

Edith looks at John with a look of annoyance, but she realizes that he is correct.

“Caroline, did you not think it important to inform me about the call?”

“I did not think at all of informing you of the call. It did not occur to me to inform you.”

“Well you should have informed me.”

“How so? I realized later that he may have had your consent to ring me, or if he did not then me telling you of the call could have led to difficulties.”

“Caroline, what was said in the call by everybody who spoke? This is important.” says Edith somewhat impatiently.

“Well, first of all I said ‘Hello’ and then he said ‘Is that Caroline Appleby?’ and I said ‘Yes’ and then he said ‘This is David Evans, we met at the conference, I was just passing and I wonder if you would like to join me for lunch’ and I said ‘No thank you.’ and then he said ‘Oh, maybe some other time then’ and then I said ‘No, not all, I do not want to get involved’ and then he said ‘Is it because I went to lunch with your Secretary-General? Are you annoyed at me? Or are you frightened of her?’ and then I put the phone down.”

Edith looks thoughtful. Edith wonders what Caroline might be implying by ‘difficulties’.

Edith speaks “It was a business lunch, at my invitation. There is no need for you to be annoyed at him, nor frightened of me. That should not affect your accepting of a lunch invitation from him.”

“I did not know of any such lunch until he told me about it. It had nothing to do with my decision. I was simply reporting what was said as you required: I did not say one way or the other whether I am annoyed or frightened, they were not issues that I had raised.”

“Well, he is a very pleasant man of about your age and he did help you at the conference.”

“Yes he did help me at the conference, but I do not want to get involved with him.”

John interrupts. “Caroline is entirely entitled to make her own decisions about with whom she chooses to go to lunch. As it appears are you.”

Edith looks at John. She speaks “I think that you and I need to have a conversation in private.”

“That is an excellent idea. It means that Caroline will not continue to be subjected to matchmaking by her employer.”

Edith looks fiercely at John.

Edith pauses.

“Thank you Caroline, that is all, please return to your research.”

Caroline gets up and walks to the door and leaves the room, closing the door behind her.

Edith notices that Caroline did not speak when she went, which has, until now, always been her practice.

Later.

Edith is in the foyer talking to Georgina.

“Did you tell Caroline about David Evans arriving here to ask her out to lunch when she was in France?”

“Yes.”

“When?”

“Yesterday afternoon.”

“Why?”

“Caroline told me that she had had a call from him that morning and asked me not to put any further call from him through to her. I felt that as he had rung her and that she seemed unhappy about it that I should tell her what had happened before.”

“So, when I spoke to you this morning, you knew that it was him who called her yesterday morning.”

“Yes.”

“But you told me that you did not know who it was!”

“No I did not tell you that, you asked me if I had asked the caller who it was calling and I said yes, but he said it was a personal call and I did not like to ask again in case it seemed that I was being nosey into someone’s private life and so I just put him through.”

“But you could have told me who it was.”

“I did not know at the time of the call. If you remember I did not hear his voice when he visited here. You were supervising Paula on reception.”

“You could have told me who it was. You should have told me who it was.”

“No, I disagree.”

“You could have told me this morning that you had told Caroline about him coming here.”

“I am a trained secretary. I am trained to be discreet and not gossip.”

“Georgina, this is unacceptable.”

“The staff handbook has a procedure for making a decision on any complaint about the performance of a member of staff. So kindly follow your own rules and not make a ruling outside of them.”

“If that is what you want.”

“It is not a matter of what I want, it is a matter of your rules. Knowing it was that particular man did make the situation well, difficult, and that can be assessed at any hearing that takes place.”

Edith is feeling shocked. Without a word Edith turns and walks back to her office.

‘Twice today difficulties difficult both related to an innocent business lunch finding out about what had happened at a conference. Maybe that is not how it is seen by others.’ thinks Edith.

Edith is in her office and has been thinking.

After a while wondering about difficulties and difficult Edith remembers that all of this arose as a side issue of trying to find out about the article in The Daily Newspaper.

Upon thinking calmly Edith decides that despite her earlier concerns she is almost sure that Caroline is not involved in passing on information, certainly not at that telephone call.

‘I wonder,’ thinks Edith ‘if David is the freelance journalist concerned and he had seen my press release and was trying to get something for a story from Caroline.’

Edith considers asking Caroline if she has an attendance list for the conference in the hope that affiliations might be listed.

However, in all of the circumstances, Edith decides not to do so.