

Jane is sat in the end seat of the front but one row of seats in the Palm Court of Spectacular Hotel. There is a seat to her right and Jane has placed her bag and her clipboard on it. If the room gets full she will need to move it, but it is alright there for the moment.

‘What to do?’ thinks Jane.

The platform party from Gigantic Business enters.

The room goes quiet and everybody stands.

The Managing Director speaks.

“Thank you everyone for attending.”

The Managing Director then sits and so does everyone else.

It is noticeable that there is a long table on the platform with nine seats, yet only six people occupying them, the five people who were on the platform at the press conference together with Michael Walker, the Chief Programmer.

The Managing Director introduces himself and the other five people.

The Managing Director then starts the presentation and each of the five other people speak in turn, with two of them, the Chief Engineer and the Chief Programmer, demonstrating the Locomotive device used for sending and receiving InterJollies through the language barrier, which style has now been taken up by Gigantic Business rather than the style ‘over the language barrier’ that had been used earlier.

The Managing Director then speaks again.

“Now, something else. The Locomotive device is clearly a commercial product aimed at the main consumer market - we are hoping for bulk sales - yet we at Gigantic Business are also aware that there is a research centre located in the rural countryside that researches on a technology that is perhaps less commercial but is of social importance. So we deliberately made the Locomotive device so that as well as our InterJollies it is also able to handle their localizable sentences.

“And so we invited three of their top people to join us here today and they have kindly accepted and have also agreed to answer any questions that you might have.

“So, without more ado, I welcome our three guests from the Localizable Sentences and their Applications Research Association. Please welcome them in the usual manner.”

Janice leads Edith, John and Caroline to the platform and indicates the seats reserved for each of them. People present, including the platform party, stand and applaud. Janice then leaves the platform.

The Managing Director continues to speak of how Gigantic Business had deliberately made the Locomotive device able to handle localizable sentences and adds that the feature had not been announced until today because testing had still been underway.

Edith listens to this and tries to avoid catching Jane's eye in case they burst out laughing at this retrospective reworking of the sequence of events.

The Managing Director continues for a while and Edith hopes that nobody asks her whether that is a true account of what happened.

"So now we come to questions." says the Managing Director.

Jane raises her hand, as do several other people.

The Managing Director looks around the audience. Most of the attendees are men and there are just a few women. Jane is wearing a stylish suit made of an orange and brown tartan-like, yet not tartan, cloth. Perhaps this colour amongst a collection of mostly grey and black suits is what catches the Managing Director's eye.

"The lady at the end of the second row." says the Managing Director, pointing towards Jane.

"Jane Hove, Arts Magazine, to the Secretary-General if I may please. When I brought the two Locomotive devices, one yellow, one pink, to LocSARA, did you manage to find out what is the encoding format that Gigantic Business is using for sending the InterJollies in a language-independent manner, and if so, how did you do it please?"

There are gasps of astonishment around the room. The Managing Director looks shocked, however he keeps calm and looks towards Edith indicating that he would like her to answer.

Edith realizes that Jane must have a reason for publicly declaring that she took the two devices to LocSARA and may well have mentioned the colours to give some provenance to her claim.

"Well, we did find out the encoding format and the details of the codes, but it was not me who found it, but fortunately the gentleman who did is here today." says Edith, turning to look at John with an implied cue with a slight movement of her hand to answer please.

John speaks. "Well, it was quite straightforward, I simply sent an encoded message from one of the Locomotive devices to a mobile telephone from another manufacturer and that mobile telephone displayed the code as plain text. I did some tests to make sure there were no control codes that did not display within the message and found that there were not. The coding used is simply hashtags, starting with an octothorpe character and then six ordinary digits characters. The five hundred and twenty-four InterJollies are coded from hashtag eight eight three zero zero one through to hashtag eight eight three five two four."

There is much writing down of notes in the room.

Janice is standing level with the back row of seats so that she is available to help if she is needed. The seats to her left.

As John answers, Janice notices one of the journalists two rows forward from her write 883001 on a sheet of paper on a clipboard and 883524 below it, and draw a line beneath the 883524.

'I wonder if he'll add them up, like that man in the café.' thinks Janice with an inner smile.

Janice looks at the man.

'Surely not.' thinks Janice. 'No of course not, it is just a coincidence yet'

Jane continues. "Thank you."

The Managing Director is quite perplexed about this exchange: he had been trying to find out how LocSARA got hold of the Locomotive devices and now he has been openly told. He quickly composes himself and asks a man in the fifth row to ask a question. Fortunately it is all very harmless.

There are then more questions and answers, nothing controversial and it all goes off very well.

Henry is talking with Michael.

Michael speaks. "Well Henry, I understand your request and your reasoning - thank you for informing me of your three suggested formats, but there is a problem in that, yes, the software can be updated and could be updated so as to use the exclamation mark as the base character instead of the octothorpe, but the problem is that not every device would update at the same time. For example, if someone were trying to throw a message locally and there was no mobile telephone signal at the time, then the Locomotive device would not automatically update the software and so there are various possible situations that could occur if I implemented your suggestion."

"Ah, yes." says Henry.

"I will think about it. I could have the next update such that either the octothorpe or the exclamation mark can be accepted as the base character by a device when it is receiving, yet continue to use the octothorpe for sending messages. Then at some future software update I could, perhaps, update the sending software to use an exclamation mark as the base character, but I need to think about that. I suppose that it could be possible to monitor which devices have updated so that they can accept either base character then if, and only if, they are all updated then update so as to use an exclamation mark as the base character but I suppose that some devices might get tried out then put in a drawer and never used again - or taken abroad and only used for local throws and then someone with an updated unit arrives in that country it is all very problematic but as I say, I'll think about it."

"Thank you." says Henry.

Edith is talking to Jane.

"The Managing Director has invited the three of us who were on the platform to lunch. There is thus a slight diplomatic problem." says Edith.

“Ah?” says Jane.

“Well, Henry came with us, and, well he does not know London very well and so I thought that I would ask him to take you to lunch, as a guest of LocSARA, if that is alright with you.”

“With me?”

“Well, I do remember how you said ‘Oh!’ back when you came to interview me when I mentioned that Henry was at LocSARA.”

“What? What do you mean?”

“Oh Jane, I have seen the way that you look at him.”

“Are you matchmaking?” asks Jane somewhat incredulously, yet smiling.

“Well, Henry might never get round to asking you himself without a bit of a push, and if you have lunch together and you suggest visiting an art gallery this afternoon, or a museum, like, say, the Science Museum, well, well.”

“I don’t know what to say.” says Jane with some astonishment.

“So, shall I ask Henry then?”

A pause.

“Yes alright then, just to help you out so that he does not get lost in London.” says Jane with a slightly embarrassed smile.

“As you say, just to help me out so that he does not get lost in London.” says Edith.

“I see the Managing Director of Gigantic Business walking this way.” says Jane.

“Ah, time for lunch.” says Edith.

“Good morning ladies.” says the Managing Director.

The Managing Director addresses Jane. “Pardon me asking, but I am puzzled, could you possibly tell me why you volunteered that it was you who took the two Locomotive devices to LocSARA - I must admit that I have been trying to find out and - well, I nearly blamed that young man who well, you were there.”

Noting the conciliatory tone and the admission of making a mistake by the Managing Director, Jane politely explains.

“Well, actually I overheard you talking to the Editor of Trade Magazine and I felt that I had to say something so that that young man would not be blamed for something that he had not done, perhaps with disastrous consequences for his career.”

The Managing Director nods gently.

“But can I add please,” as we are clearing the air “that however it might be seen, there was no sneakiness about it, no financial profiting from it, true I was treated to afternoon

tea at a local restaurant but financially I was simply reimbursed for what I had paid for the devices.”

“Ah, afternoon tea, ... at The Golden Astrolabe Hotel?”

“Actually no, at La Flava Floro.”

“Oh, I don’t know that one. But anyway, by your actions in protecting that young man and risking being criticised you are clearly a lady of great integrity and I accept that your motive in taking the devices to LocSARA was entirely honourable.”

“Thank you sir.” says Jane.

Turning to Edith, the Managing Director asks “Are you ready for lunch?”

“Almost,” says Edith “I will go and find the others if I may.”

‘And ask Henry to take Jane out to lunch.’ thinks Edith.