

Tuesday afternoon, in summer.

John is walking along the corridor from the computing laboratory, heading for Edith's office.

'I wonder what she wants.' thinks John as he walks.

'She usually walks along to the computing laboratory or speaks to me over the telephone, so this sounds as if it is something both important and confidential.'

John reaches Edith's office, turns to his right to face the door and knocks on the door.

"Please enter." calls out Edith.

John enters Edith's office.

"Hello John, thank you for coming along."

"Hello Edith, how can I help?"

"John, I know that you like to have demonstrations permanently set up, are they in fact set up at the moment."

"Yes."

"Excellent."

"And are they likely indeed very likely to be set up every day for the next month?"

"... Yes unless there is something like a major power cut lasting longer than our back-up generator can handle"

"So yes, except for some extreme circumstance - you are very careful and precise."

"Thank you."

"Right, thank you John. Thank you."

John waits for a few moments in case Edith is going to elaborate, yet she does not, and John decides not to ask.

"I'll get back to the computing laboratory then."

"Right, fine, thank you."

There is then a silence that seems to last for a long time yet is in reality just a few seconds then John leaves Edith's office and walks back along the corridor to the computing laboratory.

'I wonder what that is about.' thinks John.

John reaches the computing laboratory.

John knows that the demonstrations are all set up and were working well, yet nonetheless goes and tries them out, just to be sure.

John decides to check them out every day for the next month, because Edith mentioned a month, just to be sure.

John is somewhat puzzled. 'This is unlike Edith, she is usually very open and keeps me informed.' thinks John.

John decides to try not to wonder about what is happening, yet finds that trying not to wonder is easier to decide to do than to implement.

Wednesday morning.

Edith has arrived early. She is dressed in a style as if she is going to a 1950's-theme garden party, complete with gloves - though modern clothes.

Edith is in the foyer looking out at the car park.

There are three men in suits with her.

There are men in suits near the entrance to the car park.

John drives into the car park, parks and gets out of his car.

"That's John, he works here." says Edith.

One of the men speaks into a radio. "Let him in, he works here."

John walks to the building.

Edith observes that John is wearing a very smart suit. John does not usually wear a suit, so Edith wonders why he is wearing a suit today.

John enters the building.

"Good morning John, I can tell you now. The Secretary is due to make a whistle stop visit here for about twenty minutes, to view our work. You may have seen on the television news that he was in London yesterday."

"Yes."

"Well, he is due to go somewhere else in England today, travelling by car, and yesterday morning he was being shown the route map for today and he noticed that he would pass within about ten miles of us, and he asked if he could make a visit. Well, I heard just after lunch yesterday. It appears that it could be fitted in if he were to leave London an hour earlier, and only spends about twenty minutes here."

"When is he due here?"

"About 10:05."

"Right."

"So could you be ready to meet him and show him the demonstrations please."

“Yes, certainly, it will be a pleasure to meet him. I’ll go and switch everything on.”

John goes.

A car, followed by a van carrying a large logo of a television company enters the car park.

“Television” says Edith.

“Yes, just one, they’re on pool duty. They are not equipped to do a live broadcast. Everything they record will be available to all the broadcasters. They were told early this morning but they have just followed one of our cars to get here - they did not know the destination until they got here. We are not going to let them come in here while the Secretary is here, they can just record outside. If you want to let them in after we have gone so that they can record the demonstrations - or not - is your choice.”

A van arrives.

“Ah, that is Julia. Julia is my niece, she is bringing some food. She runs a local restaurant named La Flava Floro.”

“Did you tell her?”

“No, she brings food every Wednesday. We have a meeting every Wednesday.”

“We ?”

“Oh, the staff, I suppose that there is no real need for food to be provided, but it is just something that we do. We have the meeting late morning, then break for lunch then resume afterwards.”

“Let her in, she’s a regular.” is spoken over the radio.

Julia enters the building.

“Is something happening?” asks Julia.

“Yes, we are having a whistle stop visit from the Secretary.” replies Edith.

“The Secretary? here? today?”

“Yes.”

Julia looks at Edith and smiles.

Edith looks at Julia and smiles knowingly.

Unspoken is the following.

Julia reminds Edith that when Edith and Julia’s mother were girls, the then Secretary was visiting the local town and their mother took them to see him arrive. Their mother had told them that although it was very unlikely to happen, if the Secretary did speak to them then they were to curtsy and address him as Sir. In the event they saw the then Secretary arrive, he was on the other side of the road and as he was walking along the pavement

to meet the mayor he turned and waved to all of the spectators, who included many children. Julia, partly but not entirely frivolously, asks Edith if she is going to curtsy and Edith smiles and says that of course she is not because that was when they were girls.

Julia fetches the trolley from the kitchen and takes it out to the van and then returns with the trolley having lots of packages on it. Julia takes the packages to the kitchen and puts each of them into the refrigerator or the freezer as appropriate, then returns to the foyer.

“Five minutes everybody please.” calls out one of the suited men.

Edith and the staff, and Julia, whom Edith has invited to accompany them, go out through the front door and prepare for the Secretary to arrive.

The Secretary arrives.

A lady gets out of the front passenger seat of the car and opens the door for the Secretary to get out.

The Secretary gets out of the car, thanks the lady and walks toward the building where Edith and the others are waiting with Edith in front of the group so that it is clear whom the Secretary should approach.

We are viewing the scene from inside the foyer and we can see the Secretary as he walks toward the building yet we cannot see Edith over to our right as some of the other staff are in between us and Edith.

The television crew have recorded the Secretary getting out of his car and walking and he is now level with them though they are well over to his left. As he passes them they turn the camera so that the reception party is now within their picture, so that they can get a clear view of the Secretary and Edith when they meet.

The Secretary reaches Edith, offers his hand for a handshake and gently bows and says “Good morning Ma’am.”

We hear Edith say “Good morning Sir.”

Edith and the Secretary now enter the building, followed by John and the others.

John leads the way as he, Edith and the Secretary go to the computing laboratory where John shows some demonstrations. The Secretary is clearly impressed. When viewing the demonstration of twenty interconnected computers in a row, the demonstration that Caroline suggested, the Secretary seems delighted when John points to one particular computer and the Secretary realizes that the text is in his native language.

Edith looks thoughtful. That language is not one of the widely used languages, yet John had got that ready for the Secretary’s visit.

‘How did he do that in such a short space of time?’ thinks Edith. ‘Did he know or has he always been ready for that, just in case?’

The visit continues and lasts about twenty minutes. The Secretary sees a number of demonstrations and meets the staff and Julia and he makes a short speech and is applauded by everybody.

The visit ends, the Secretary takes his leave.

Edith allows the television crew in to film the demonstrations, though Edith notices that the computer that had shown the Secretary's native language is now showing a different language.

'Ah,' thinks Edith, 'just the three of us know about that.'

If this is a movie then the credits now roll, rolling slowly and using large type so that the credits are readable if the movie is being shown on television.

It is a condition of broadcasting the movie that there is no credit squeezing and no voice over the top of the movie or the credits. The movie is for viewing as it is produced, though advertising breaks are allowed and indeed the movie has its own interlude within it.

After the credits there is the news item from a television news programme.

"Today the Secretary, amongst his high-profile visits, also stopped for a short visit at a research centre where he was shown various demonstrations relating to communication through the language barrier.

Here is the Secretary being greeted by the Secretary-General of the research centre and here are some of the demonstrations that he saw during his visit."

The view then zooms out and we observe Jane Hove at home sat watching her television.

Jane is clearly surprised.

"Edith!" she exclaims out loud.

The End