

2:15 pm.

Edith is in her office. She is telephoning John, who is in the computing laboratory.

“John, could you come along to my office, promptly please, something has come up and we need to act promptly.”

John arrives in Edith's office.

“Ah, John, come in, a situation has arisen.”

Edith looks a little embarrassed.

“Well, ... you know how I lost my cool in the discussion period after your lecture at the conference in Mainz.”

There is silence. John is clearly not going to say ‘yes’.

“Well, ... you know how in the ... discussion ... between me and that man from Enormous Telephones that I said that they could send an observer here ... and then ... well you know how it went, I said that someone could stay as long as they like.”

“Yes.”

“Well, Rose has just brought in this printout of an email that arrived literally a few minutes before I rang you. It was sent to the general enquiries email address that is on the website, but Rose read it and realized that she should bring it to me immediately.

“It says ‘Regarding your kind offer for us to send someone to observe your work, a member of our staff is on the train that is due to arrive at Ruralham station at 3:07 pm today for a stay of one month in the first instance. Please meet and greet and transport to a local hotel.’ It is from a female name in the human resources department.

“So could you take the official car and meet him and take him to his hotel. Try not to get into any discussions about our work if you can, but offer to collect him tomorrow morning and bring him here. Is that alright please ... I know it is all of a sudden, maybe that is so that I don't have a chance to back out of my offer, though of course I would not do that. I said it, so I shall honour it.”

“Right, I'd better be getting going.”

“Wear your name badge please ... I'm sure you were going to anyway.”

John smiles and goes.

3:02 pm

John has arrived at Ruralham station a few minutes ago, and is now stood on the platform at Ruralham station waiting for the train from London, due in at 3:07 pm. John is wearing

his official LocSARA name badge and is holding in his right hand a piece of A4 card, with LocSARA printed upon it in large lettering in landscape format.

The train arrives, promptly on time.

Doors open and a few passengers start to get off the train. John sees a man in a suit carrying a suitcase and a briefcase.

John holds up the piece of card and catches the man's eye.

The man speaks. "If you're here on a meet and greet then it's not me, I live here, I just had a meeting in London this morning and stayed in a hotel overnight."

"Oh, ... er ... sorry." says John.

"No problem." says the man.

Distracted by this, John had not been looking up the platform. As he turns to look, he notices a young woman in a smart white suit carrying two suitcases looking at him.

"Are you by any chance waiting for me?" says the young woman. "I'm Mariposa Prynter, I work for Enormous Telephones."

She shows her staff identity card and John notices that her name is spelled with a letter 'y' and not a letter 'i', although she pronounced it the same as if it had been spelled 'Printer'.

"Ah, yes, good afternoon. I'm here to transport you to your hotel, if that's alright."

"Thank you."

John offers to carry one of the suitcases and Mariposa accepts.

They get to the car. John loads the suitcases into the boot and they get into the car.

"Which hotel are you staying at?" asks John.

"Oh, I have not got anything booked. I was told that your organization would arrange it."

"Ah," says John. "It's alright, I'll get something arranged - excuse me please."

John gets his mobile telephone and rings the research centre.

"LocSARA, Ms Gatford's office, how may I help?"

"Ah, hello Rose, this is John, could you ring the Golden Astrolabe Hotel and book our visitor in please, staying for a month please."

"Yes, certainly."

"Thank you, bye."

"Bye."

John turns to Mariposa. "So, it is about a twenty minute drive, but it is not too far from the research centre, so it will be easier day by day."

“Thank you.”

John drives Mariposa to the Golden Astrolabe Hotel.

The manager of the Golden Astrolabe Hotel is outside to greet John and Mariposa, accompanied by a hotel porter who carries the cases into the hotel.

John watches as Mariposa signs the book at the hotel and notices the beautiful calligraphic styling of her writing.

‘That might make a nice font.’ thinks John.

John arranges to drive Mariposa to the research centre tomorrow morning and then returns to the research centre.

John enters Edith’s office.

“Well, did you meet him alright?”

“Well I met our visitor, who is now at the Golden Astrolabe Hotel.”

Edith notices something in the way that John answered the question.

“What?” asks Edith.

“Our visitor is not a ‘him’, she is a lady, she looks like she might be fresh out of university.”

“Oh, that is interesting.”

“Maybe they have sent someone who knows nothing at all about localizable sentences so that she can write a report based solely on what she finds out here, unbiased one way or the other before she starts.” says John.

“Or maybe,” says Edith “maybe she is somebody’s daughter.”

Edith looks at John, who has said nothing, but Edith realizes what she has said and quickly backtracks, “Oh you know what I mean.” says Edith, smiling.

John laughs. “I didn’t say anything!” protests John.

“Seriously though,” says Edith, “she might be one or the other, or maybe both.”

Edith pauses, then continues.

“I have been trying to think of the implications of this. What if some of the other businesses each want to send someone here maybe for as long as they like, maybe for years.”

There is a pause.

Edith and John look at each other, wondering where this might lead.