

The Golden Astrolabe Hotel.

Edith and John are in the dining room eating dinner, taking time to eat it slowly as they have no intention of leaving early.

They are at a table for four at the far end of the room, though just the two of them there. Apart from staff there is nobody else in the room. Edith is sat with her back to the door and John is sat facing the door, just so that he can keep watch by glancing over Edith's right shoulder from time to time. Edith's left shoulder is towards the wall.

Mariposa enters the room and takes a seat near the door, diagonally opposite from them, facing towards them. She notices John but thinks that he has not noticed her so, as he has the company of a lady, who might be Edith but she is not sure, she diplomatically 'not notices' him.

A waiter approaches and shows her the menu.

Mariposa chooses her meal and the waiter departs.

Mariposa waits quietly for her dinner.

John notices the Managing Director of Gigantic Business enter. John glances at Edith to indicate "we're off", having previously arranged with Edith such a signal and its meaning.

John recognises the man following him as the lawyer who was with the Managing Director at the meeting at The Golden Astrolabe Hotel. The lawyer seems concerned to urge the Managing Director to take things calmly.

"Are you that woman who is working at the research centre but is not one of their employees, staying in the hotel?"

"You have the advantage of me sir. Have we been introduced?"

"Don't give me that. I want to know what's going on. I want to know what's going on."

The lawyer notices John walking towards them, recognising him from the meeting before and tries to draw the attention of the Managing Director to his approach.

The head waiter, fearing trouble, signals to the waiter to go and get the manager. The staff have a contingency plan in place in case anything happens anytime.

The Managing Director, alerted by the lawyer, turns towards John.

John approaches Mariposa, ignoring the two men.

"Good evening ma'am, may I have the pleasure of this dance?" and offers his right hand, palm down, as if in a formal ballroom setting.

Mariposa, realizing that John is trying to protect her, replies, as she stands, "Thank you sir." and places her left hand on his right hand as he leads her away from the two men, who are surprised - very surprised - at what has just happened.

Mariposa is not expecting to actually dance, thinking that this is just John's way to resolve the situation, thinking that she might now be joining John and Edith for dinner as Edith has now turned round to face them and Mariposa now recognises that the lady with whom John is having dinner is indeed Edith, yet Edith suddenly produces a music player, presses a button upon it and a Viennese waltz is played at quite a high volume, though at high quality. John turns to face her and Mariposa realizes that this really is an invitation to dance and so they begin to waltz.

If this is a movie, or indeed if the scene is just in the reader's imagination, Mariposa is suddenly wearing a long white ball gown.

The music plays, they waltz and although the dining room is not the size of a ballroom they make it work.

The manager arrives, closely followed by the waiter who had been to fetch him, who has informed him of what was happening, though he had left as John had approached and knew nothing about what had happened since. A security man in uniform is following. The manager watches what is happening with a combination of concern and amazement as the head waiter tells him of what has happened. Another security man arrives.

The music finishes. John bows, Mariposa curtsies.

Edith applauds enthusiastically.

John offers his right hand in the formal manner as before and Mariposa places her left hand upon it as he leads her to join Edith at the table and invites her to join them for dinner. Edith indicates for Mariposa to sit next to her.

The manager approaches the Managing Director.

"I understand that you gentlemen are leaving. These security gentleman will show you the way and assist you with finding the entrance to the grounds so that you are not delayed."

The Managing Director looks as if he is going to make an argument about it but the lawyer quickly urges him to leave it and go.

They leave.

The manager approaches Mariposa. "I do apologise for what has happened."

Mariposa acknowledges with a smile, but says nothing.

'It is indeed fortunate that John was here.' thinks Mariposa, who is still wearing the formal ball gown.

After all has settled down, a waiter arrives and serves Mariposa her dinner at the table where she is now sat with John and Edith, who now continue to eat their own meals.