

Edith is in her office. It is around 2:30 pm.

Edith has had a quiet morning, yet is wondering what, if anything, will happen following the events at The Golden Astrolabe Hotel yesterday evening.

The intercom sounds.

“Excuse me ma’am.” says Georgina.

Edith reaches forward and presses the button.

“Edith Gatford.” says Edith.

“There is a gentleman in reception asking if he may see you please. He says that he is Simon Eastleigh, from Trade Magazine.”

“Yes certainly, please show him in.”

Georgina knocks, then enters Edith’s office.

“Mr Eastleigh ma’am.” says Georgina.

“Good afternoon ma’am.” says Simon, following Georgina’s lead.

“Good afternoon.” says Edith.

“Thank you.” Edith says to Georgina.

“Thank you.” says Simon.

Georgina leaves the office and closes the door.

Edith indicates for Simon to have a seat and sits down herself.

“Well, how may I help?” asks Edith.

“Well, er .... it’s a bit awkward, but ....”

“Has you editor called you in this morning, shown you the article in yesterday’s edition of The Daily Newspaper and asked you .... indeed told you .... to come down here unannounced and find out the truth of what is going on?” asks Edith gently.

“Well, er .... um .... yes.”

“Very well. Firstly there is no takeover. Not happened, not happening, not going to happen. Indeed with our legal structure I don’t think that a takeover is possible.”

“Er .... the lady mentioned in the article?”

“A lady is indeed here. I cannot, .... I will not .... discuss her personal situation. .... But I can ask you a few questions if you like?”

“Er .... how do you mean?”

“Well, first question. Do you remember going to a conference in Mainz recently?”

“Well, yes, of course.”

“Good. Do you remember that in the discussion after one of the lectures that someone shouted out?”

“Well, er ... well.”

“Very diplomatic and tactful. So, right, it was me. Do you remember what happened afterwards, ... in that discussion.”

“... You said he could send an observer.”

“And what happened then?”

“He was a bit sarcastic about a one-day visit for a show.”

“And what did I say?”

“... You said that the observer could stay as long as he wanted. ... Ah, has he taken up your offer, she’s an observer?”

“I cannot comment on individual people.”

“Yet from the newspaper story she does not appear to have a technical background.”

“I cannot comment on individual people.”

A pause.

Simon continues “... So, is the idea that she comes here without knowing anything about localizable sentences so that she can make an assessment without prejudice?”

“I cannot comment on individual people.”

“Ah.”

“Well, I have not said anything, so I cannot be quoted.”

“I wouldn’t ...”

“I can believe you on that Simon, there was nothing about my ... outburst ... at the conference in Trade Magazine, but you have been sent down here ...”

“Ah, yes.”

“What you could do though is to say to your editor, and please write this down so that you get it exactly, ...”

Edith waits while Simon gets out a pen and paper.

Edith continues, slowly “You can ask your friend to remember what Ms Gatford said at the conference and tell him that sauce for pasta is sauce for rice.”

Simon writes it down and looks puzzled.

“What friend?”

“The message is for your Editor. You don’t need to know to whom I refer and perhaps it is best that you do not know.”

Simon looks puzzled.

“Would you like a cup of peppermint tea.” asks Edith.

“Yes please.” says Simon.

“Let’s go along to the common room then.”

The common room. Edith makes two cups of peppermint tea, one for Simon and one for herself. They sit down. Elsewhere in the room are a group of people, sat around happily chatting together, John, Henry, Caroline, Edward, Mariposa, each with a cup of peppermint tea.

“Leave it to cool for a while first, I made it with boiling water, it needs to cool.”

“Right, thank you.”

“Looks like some other people are here drinking cups of peppermint tea.” says Edith.

“I recognise four of the people, .... is that her, the one that I do not recognise.” asks Simon.

“I cannot comment on individual people.”

“Ah, yes, of course .... sorry.”

“No need to be sorry Simon.”

Edith and Simon have returned to Edith’s office.

“So Simon, some more questions for you.”

“Yes?”

“If someone were here for a takeover attempt or anything like that, do you think that the person would be sat in the common room chatting happily with the others?”

“Well ....”

“Would such a person remain aloof and the staff be very wary of saying anything to the person?”

“I suppose so.”

“And did you know that there is a small kitchenette near my office and that I could have made the cups of peppermint tea nearby without going along to the common room?”

“Er, no. .... So you took me along to the common room so that I could see the lady?”

“Possibly.” says Edith.