

The Managing Director of Gigantic Business is in his office.

He is talking on the telephone with the Editor of Trade Magazine.

The Editor of Trade Magazine is reporting what he has discovered.

“So I sent Simon up there yesterday, unannounced in advance, and he managed to get to speak to Ms Gatford and he has some good information. Though mostly she got him to work it out for himself by asking him questions. Very clever of her I suppose as she has said nothing at all so that we could not print anything, ... but anyway that was not the object of the exercise. Anyway she did say directly that there is no takeover happening. As far as Simon can gather it seems that the woman visitor business is about her being an observer, something to do with an offer that Ms Gatford made at that conference in Mainz. Does that mean anything to you?”

“Now you mention it there was something she said to someone about sending an observer and he sneered a bit about a one-day visit for a put up show and she said to stay as long as he liked.”

“Do you remember to whom she said it?”

“Not exactly, to one of the business people. That article mentioned her being from Enormous Telephones. It is quite possible that Ms Gatford made the offer to someone from Enormous Telephones. They were certainly at the conference.”

“The article mentioned about her not seeming to have a technical background, Simon seems to have formed the view that they have deliberately sent someone who knew nothing about localizable sentences so that she can form an unprejudiced view.”

“Ah, I suppose that that is one way of doing it.”

“Simon also said, and he seemed a bit reluctant to tell me this, that Ms Gatford had sent me a message and she asked him to write it down so as to get it exactly.”

“Oh.”

“Yes, this is what she said. ‘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.’ So she seemed to have an idea that I had sent Simon up there for someone else, which of course I had.”

“Ah, yes. Well, I rang Ms Gatford yesterday asking about the takeover suggested in that article and she kept insisting there was no takeover.”

“Did you get annoyed and slam down the telephone or something? No worries, but it seems like she might have guessed I was trying to find out for you. Do you want me to read that message out again slowly so that you can write it down?”

“Could you send it by email?”

“Not a chance. Shall I read it out?”

“Yes please.”

The Editor reads out the message slowly and the Managing Director writes it down.

“Thanks. I get the first part about the conference, that all seems clear now, but I don’t understand the second part. The source for pasta is Italy isn’t it? So where does rice come from? Do they grow rice in Italy?”

“No, not source s-o-u-r-c-e, sauce s-a-u-c-e. It seems to me that she is saying to you, without giving me anything that I can print, that if you want to send an observer too then you are welcome to do so. It’s up to you but maybe it would be a good idea to send someone up there for a while, no fixed time limit, having someone just turn up with a letter of introduction from you.”

“I’ll have a think about that. Thanks for your help.”

“Thank you for your promise of some extra advertising.”

“Yes, of course, I’ll get that arranged promptly.”

The Managing Director is talking with the Legal Manager, recounting what he has found out.

“What do you advise?”

“Send someone up there, preferably this afternoon or as soon as possible, to stay indefinitely.”

“I’ll get one of the engineers who is working on it all.”

“Ah. Is that a good idea? Sending someone with prior knowledge and maybe a formed opinion. Perhaps better to send someone who knows nothing about the topic, like a recent graduate training to be a manager. If you can, maybe send a young woman so as to mirror the person sent by Enormous Telephones. Might fit in more easily.”

“I suppose I should send someone who can dance as well!”

“That would indeed be helpful.”

The Managing Director gives the Legal Manager a fierce look.

“Is that meant to be funny?” snaps the Managing Director.

“No, not at all. The lady danced well the other evening. Her footwork was magnificent.”

“Are you some sort of expert on dancing?” says the Managing Director somewhat sarcastically.

“Well, not expert, but I met my wife through ballroom dancing and we have kept an interest over the years.”

“Alright, as I say, it’s no good employing a lawyer and not following their advice. I’ll try to find a female who knows nothing about localizable sentences and can dance. Anything else?”

“Well, it would be a good idea not to have her stay at The Golden Astrolabe Hotel. It might look like spying on the lady from Enormous Telephones, and, er,”

“They might not let anyone from Gigantic Business stay there after the other evening. Is that what you mean?”

“I recommend staying at a different hotel.”

“Right, a different hotel.”

‘Lawyers!’ thinks the Managing Director.

Afternoon. The Managing Director is trying to find someone for the assignment.

The Human Resources Manager is in a meeting with the Managing Director.

The Managing Director speaks.

“Yes, that’s right, a young woman graduate who knows nothing about localizable sentences and yes, if possible, someone who can dance, ballroom dancing, not just disco-style dancing. And preferably not with a technical background, maybe languages if possible or history or something. Yet someone who can learn. Someone who can move for a while without leaving a house unoccupied or disrupting her lifestyle. Someone who is happy to go and live in Ruralshire. You can say it is on an all hotel bills paid basis and a car allowance. And try to do it quietly, no advertisement on the notice board, just try to find someone who looks a possible suitable choice and ask privately. As soon as possible please.”

Evening. The Managing Director is at home.

“Had a busy day?” says his wife.

“Yes, things came up.”

“Well, I have made us a nice dinner, vegetable hotpot with oven chips and rice.”

“Sounds good.”

“I remembered it mentioned in one of the songs that I used to sing when I was younger. I have a couple of videos of my performances. I’ll put them on after dinner if you like.”

“Yes, thank you, that sounds good.”