

Peter Johnson is in the new supermarket at Rhyming Fiction and is feeling fed up.

An interview at a business in Ruralham earlier today did not go well.

'Had he used this software, had he used that software, what about these, what about those - those version six, all about what he had already done or not done, not about his ability to learn new things.'

The weather outside is terrible today. Peter has driven back in peculiar weather as if a large thunderstorm is imminent - while driving Peter remembered a movie - of course that rolling black cloud is not pursuing him - of course not - it is just silly to think that - but

Peter is looking for something different to eat, a treat to banish the memory of the terrible interview - hard enough to get an interview in the first place, now another one fruitless.

"Excuse me sir, could I ask your help please?"

Peter realizes that a small elderly lady is looking up at him.

"How may I help ma'am", asks Peter.

"Could you possibly pass me a jar of pickled onions please, I can't reach them."

"Certainly, which sort would you like?"

"A large jar of pickled onions in white grape vinegar please."

"Shall I put it in the trolley?"

"Yes please."

Peter gets a large jar of pickled onions in white grape vinegar, looks round it and underneath it and checks the safety button is correct and then shows it to the lady.

"You're very thorough", says the lady.

"Thank you", says Peter.

"Thank you, I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't been here. I really like these pickled onions, they're gluten-free, not all pickled onions are gluten-free, I slice them up and have them with oven chips."

The lady goes on her way.

'If I hadn't been here', thinks Peter.

A pause.

'If I hadn't been made redundant I wouldn't have been here. I suppose if I hadn't been here someone else would have helped her but I am here I was here when she needed help.'

Peter feels as if the balance of the universe has been restored. Peter realizes that he had never experienced not being able to reach a jar of pickled onions off a supermarket shelf,

it had never crossed his mind that he could just do it yet that for some people it was impossible.

'Fancy having to ask for help every time one wants to buy a jar of pickled onions.'

Peter feels quite humbled by all of this.

A lady approaches, she is wearing a staff uniform. She is Margaret Johnson.

"Excuse me", asks Peter.

"How may I help?"

Peter explains the problem that the elderly lady experienced.

"Could you possibly change the display format please so that some of each product is at two different levels - then you would be displaying the same items in the same quantities yet access would be easier for some people."

"That is a good idea. I'll pass it on to the manager."

The elderly lady returns.

"Excuse me ma'am, on this jar, what is this symbol please, it doesn't look like your trademark?"

"It means 'This product is suitable for a vegan diet and is gluten-free.'"

"Oh yes, it has that printed on the label too."

"Indeed in English, but not everyone understands English. The symbol is defined to mean that in any language."

"Oh, who says so?"

"Well I don't know exactly I know that there is a research centre based in Long Fiction that has something to do with it. These pickled onions are one of our own label products, this symbol is on a lot of our own label food products."

"Not on all of them?"

"It's a new development, it was not originally on any of them, but it is gradually being added to labels for our own label food products as new supplies of labels are printed."

"Ah, thank you for explaining."

The elderly lady addresses Peter.

"This is the lady who opened this supermarket I was here she stepped in at short notice when a so-called surprise celebrity whoever it was didn't turn up she made a very good job of it didn't cut the ribbon, got it in one piece for the museum."

Margaret Johnson smiles, feeling somewhat embarrassed.

Peter notices her name badge and realizes that this is the lady that that fool had thought was his wife.

“Would you like me to accompany you round the store to help you get your shopping?” Margaret asks the elderly lady.

“Yes please,” says the elderly lady.

Margaret accompanies the elderly lady.

Peter decides to buy a large jar of the own label pickled onions in white grape vinegar. Peter also buys some oven chips. Peter checks out through the ‘nine items or fewer’ check out lane.

‘It is a good job that they don’t count the individual oven chips and the individual pickled onions in the nine’, thinks Peter and smiles to himself.

As he goes to his car the weather has not improved but Peter feels differently about it now.

‘A research centre in Long Fiction - that sounds interesting - I wonder if they have any vacancies.’