

The staff room at the supermarket at Rhyming Fiction. It is mid-morning and staff are gradually, on a rolling basis, having their break.

Margaret Johnson is there.

Jason is saying, to the people there, what happened to him earlier on.

Flashback.

Jason is shelf-stacking in the canned fruit aisle of the supermarket at Rhyming Fiction.

A smartly dressed woman addresses him.

“Excuse me, I am looking for some canned tomatoes, but there does not seem to be any. .... Do you sell them here?”

“Good morning madam, .... Yes we do sell canned tomatoes, they .... well, they are in the canned vegetables aisle - it is from head office, they say how the stores are set out, every store is the same - even though botanically a tomato is a fruit.”

“How strange.”

“A gentleman asked about it the other day, he even commented in rhyme - I think I can remember what he said.

“A tomato botanically is a fruit, Cans should be placed in the aisle to suit!”

The lady smiles.

Jason continues - “I can get a can for you if you wish.”

“That’s very kind of you to say, but I’m happy to go myself, good day.”

The lady smiles. Jason smiles. The lady goes

The flashback ends.

Margaret Johnson is talking to the store manager, in his office.

“Jason did well this morning it appears.”

“Ah, young Jason, he’s not been here very long.”

“Indeed, but he is doing well, taking a very sensible attitude to customers, even when, like this morning, some people, fortunately none of whom work here, might act stupidly.”

“So, what happened?”

Margaret repeats what Jason had said.

The store manager looks a little concerned.

“Well, between you and me, and not for anyone else, someone in the company, no names, rang me just before you came in to tip me off that head office has a mystery shopper, a smartly dressed woman going round and reporting back to head office about the attitude of staff to customers. Her speciality it seems is to ask questions that on the face of it sound ridiculous and then note how staff deal with it, either sensibly or whatever happens. You say that young Jason did well?”

“I wasn’t there, but from his own account it seems he did.”

“Very well. .... Of course she might not have been the mystery shopper .... but, well ....”

A knock on the door.

“Enter!”

A young woman, a member of staff, enters.

“Sorry to bother, but there is a lady outside, she says she is a journalist from Arts Magazine, a Ms Hove, and she wonders if she could speak to Ms Johnson about the store opening.”

The store manager looks at Margaret.

Margaret sighs with a resigned look.

“Send her in please”, says the store manager.

The door is closed as the young woman leaves.

“I’ll stay if you like, and basically treat it as chairing a meeting if you like.”

“Yes please, that would be best.”

A knock at the door.

“Enter!”

The young woman enters, followed by Jane Hove.

“Ms Jane Hove, associate editor of Arts Magazine, sir.”

“Thank you .... How do you do Ms Hove?” says the store manager.

The young woman leaves and closes the door behind her.

“How do you do?” says Jane.

Jane shows her staff card for Arts Magazine. The store manager looks at it and carefully compares the photograph on the staff card with Jane.

“How can we help?” asks the store manager.

"I am writing an article for Arts Magazine about the store opening, I have the press release and the publicity photographs, but I was looking for a few more details please. For example, the suit you wore, does the colour have a name, and is that suit one available in the store and if so, what colours are available please?"

"The colour of the one I wore is called Rootstock Rose. It is available in the store, and it is available in Rootstock Rose, Vanilla, and Mint Green."

"Was the choice of Rootstock Rose your own choice?"

"Well ..," Margaret pauses "Well, actually, it was suggested to me, and I thought it a good choice and I agreed as I thought it a good choice."

"Ah, who suggested it to you?"

"Er ..," Margaret pauses, and looks at the store manager.

"It was suggested to her", says the store manager.

"By you?"

"No, not by me, but I think that should remain between Ms Johnson and the lady who suggested it to her. It was suggested something like a smart outfit such as a lady could wear as a guest at a summer wedding, so as to look smart without upstaging the bride. I think that that suit and the colour worked well with the green ribbon."

Jane decides not to push the matter of the identity of the lady who advised Margaret.

"Yes, it worked well in the colour picture of you cutting the ribbon", says Jane.

"Well, I didn't actually cut the ribbon."

"Pardon me?"

"The photograph shows me as if I am going to cut the ribbon, but I did not actually cut it. In fact, it is intact and has been donated to the Rhyming Fiction Museum of Local Life."

"Oh!"

"So was that your idea?"

"Well, ..," says Margaret.

"Well, we must get on", says the store manager. "Thank you for coming Ms Hove."

"Er .... right", says Jane "Thank you both for seeing me."

The store manager stands and Margaret Johnson opens the door and Jane leaves the office.

Jane wonders what is going on and wonders if there is an interesting story here.

Jane goes to the clothing section and looks at the range of clothes on display.

Jane decides to leave without trying to ask more questions of anybody, but decides to buy a few items, including a can of tomatoes.

Jane is sat in her car in a service area car park on the way back to London.

Jane looks at the photographs in the press release.

In one picture, of people shopping in the newly opened store, Jane notices a view of a lady in a smart white suit, in the distance, facing in the opposite direction.

'I wonder if that is who I think it is!' thinks Jane.

Edith is in her office.

The telephone rings.

"Edith Gatford", says Edith as she answers the telephone.

"Edith, this is Jane Hove. I am writing an article on the opening of the supermarket in Rhyming Fiction .... I am wondering, were you there?"

"Oh, I don't make statements to the press of what I do when I am off-duty."

"What?"

"I said ...."

"I know what you said, I only asked you if you were at the opening of the supermarket in Rhyming Fiction."

"I know what you asked."

"So you won't say one way or the other!"

"Correct."

"Right, I shall find out in some other way."

The telephone call ends abruptly.

'Oh, will you indeed', thinks Edith.

Jane is upset. She feels that she should not have said that. Best not to drive while upset. Jane decides to go into the on-site restaurant and have a meal so as to calm down.

'I must ring Edith tomorrow morning and apologise, .... if she does not want to say then I must respect that and not try to find out. Yes', thinks Jane.