

“Ah, John, come in please. Good morning.”

Edith had telephoned John on the internal telephone system and asked him to come along to her office, emphasising that nothing was wrong.

“Good morning.”

“I’ve just received a letter from a gentleman named Peter Johnson, who says he has been out of work for a while and wonders if we have any vacancies for which he can apply.”

“Ah.”

“We don’t have a vacancy as such, but could you do with some extra help, I could produce a vacancy if you wish.”

“Well, another person could be helpful.”

“Good ... I’ll invite him for an interview and as long as he arrives promptly - though if he is late making allowance if he has a genuine reason - and is reasonably well-presented - though making allowances as he has been out of work - and reasonably polite then I can produce a vacancy at some appropriate level. We can interview him, ask Henry to show him round and then decide on the appropriate level and then have an offer letter ready for when Henry brings him back.”

“Excellent.”

Peter Johnson is walking towards the main entrance of the LocSARA research centre.

It is a nervous time for him, so much depends on the result of the interview.

Peter is smartly dressed. When he was made redundant, not knowing how long he might be out of work - would he ever get another job - he had put two shirts, both suitable for a job interview, at the back of his wardrobe, so that he would always have a good shirt to wear for an interview. Two shirts, one plain white, one white with thin blue stripes. Two different designs, just in case of a second interview situation so that if someone noticed then no impression that he only had one shirt - and maybe had not washed it since the first interview - could possibly be inferred, no matter how wrongly, because if such a notion is thought yet not mentioned, it could go against him without him knowing. Best not to take the risk - just in case.

To try to keep calm and not seem desperate, Peter has a sort of fiction in his head, to pretend that he is a visiting journalist come to hold an interview, have a look round and write an article for a magazine. But he is not going to write an article, it is just his way of trying to handle the anxiety that he feels.

Peter enters the building.

“Do you know anything about localizable sentences?” asks Edith.

“Well, not really”, Peter replies. “I saw your building when I was driving past and I wondered if you have any vacancies - so I looked it up on the internet and learned the very basics .... but I am willing to learn.”

“That’s fine,” replies Edith gently, “it is a very specialised topic, and we have a training programme.”

Edith continues. “I note from your letter that you live in Rhyming Fiction, in Thomas Tusser Avenue.”

“Yes.”

“I’ve liked the poetry of Thomas Tusser for a long time.”

“I’m a member of the Rhyming Fiction Historical Society, they recently found some interesting information about the origins of the name - though they do not know whether it is true, or just some romantic legend, or indeed partly true, but interesting anyway.”

“Ah, yes, please tell us more.”

Edith is genuinely interested, but is asking Peter to say more so as to try to help him relax and to observe how well he explains things - so it is all a valuable part of the interview.

“Well, the story goes that originally there was one area, known as Fiction, which was the area that today is Long Fiction and Rhyming Fiction.. The area got its name because it was on the other side of some swampy land to the west of an old Roman Road from London that was still being used. Some people claimed that the swampy land did not go very far and that on the other side was good land suitable for growing crops, but some others claimed that that was just fiction. The area became known as Fiction and the name continued even when it was later found that there was indeed good land. A manor house was built in the northern end of the area.

“Years later, the manor became vacant and the then king gave it, and one-fifth of the Fiction area, to a man named Hubert Rymin, who had been the bodyguard to one of the king’s younger sons while the son was growing up. So the area became two areas, Rymin Fiction and Long Fiction. Generations passed and one lord of the manor had no sons, but three daughters and they had all married and moved away. When the time came, their husbands, each of whom had his own estate, each got a third interest in Rymin Fiction. But they didn’t bother with it, and the servants just carried on living there, though eventually it became unused and left derelict - however it has been restored and now houses the Rhyming Fiction Museum of Local Life.

“Anyway, when map makers came around many years later and the Rymin family had been forgotten in popular memory, the origin of the name had been lost and it was recorded as ‘Rhyming’ as on modern signposts.

“In the 1920s the owner of a shoe shop put up a sign outside - ‘If you want to buy some shoes, We have lots from which to choose’ - as an advertisement.

”It got mentioned in the local newspaper, then it got mentioned in several national newspapers. A few tourists came to have a look. When a tour coach party turned up one

day, the local traders realised that this was good for business and tea shops started, with signs with such things as 'If after walking your legs do ache, come inside for tea and cake'. Well, the tourists loved it, many just smiling at it being quaint, though a few were interested in it as a cultural phenomenon.

"One local man used to use his horse and dray on Saturdays through the spring and summer as a quaint rural taxi and used to be waiting at Ruralham railway station when a train arrived from London, with the dray having a sign with something like 'If transport to Rhyming Fiction you lack, we'll take you there and bring you back'.

"Well, the tourists loved it. .... And so it went on and continues today. The Parish Council plays their part and roads are named after various poets. There is a new supermarket in the village now and they've joined in the fun too."

The interview continues.

Peter is being shown around by Henry.

Edith and John are discussing how to proceed.

"Well, I am happy to give him a job .... once he relaxed and talked about the possible history of the area he was very clear and explained it all very well .... what level would you think is appropriate?"

"Well, he needs to start the learning process in the same way as Mariposa and Caroline Ruralby, so, whereas they are observers employed by Enormous Telephones and Gigantic Business respectively, Peter will be a member of LocSARA staff, so I suggest that the job title of Research Assistant sounds about right."

"Research Assistant - yes, that sounds good, I'll ask Rose to come in and then we can have the offer letter ready for when Henry brings him back."