

Edith's office.

The telephone rings.

Edith answers.

"Hello Edith, it's Jane ... Jane Hove."

"Hello Jane, it's good to hear from you."

A pause.

"Edith, ... you know you sent me a complimentary ticket for the forthcoming event."

"Yes."

"Well, I had already booked a room for the Saturday night at The Golden Astrolabe Hotel and I have started the process of getting a Regency style long dress."

"Excellent."

"Well, ... earlier today Henry, ... Henry Lambert, telephoned me to say he has a double ticket and would I do him the honour, his words, the honour, of accompanying him please."

"Oh, that's nice."

A pause.

Edith continues. "So did you say that you already had a ticket of your own and that you are an independent woman, so thank you for asking, but no?"

"Not exactly."

"Oh, did you tell him to clear off?"

"Edith stop it! ... I accepted."

"Excellent."

"I was wondering if you engineered this."

"Well, it is interesting to know what you have been wondering."

"Edith, ... did you put Henry up to this?"

"Well ..."

"That means 'yes'."

"Well. I have offered a double ticket to everyone here, including the observers, and I mean everybody, not just the research staff. I don't know at present how many will attend and how many of those who do attend will invite someone to accompany them. Certainly a few of them have wondered who to ask and, well, I have tried to be helpful to those people by making suggestions."

“So did you suggest to Henry that he should invite me?”

“Well, he wondered who he should ask and I did mention you and he said that he had thought of asking you first but had thought that you would have a complimentary ticket anyway so would not be interested, and I did say that I had indeed sent you a complimentary ticket, but I did add that you might want to wear a long dress and that having someone collect you from the hotel and take you back afterwards would be helpful as driving while wearing a long dress can be awkward and the hem of the dress might get dirty and having a man around in case the car breaks down is always a comfort to a lady anyway, but especially so if she is wearing a long dress and you would need someone to dance with and what better than going with someone rather than sitting there hoping that one of the few men there without anyone with them might ask you to dance.”

“Edith, you know full well that I went to evening classes on car maintenance and fault fixing.”

“Ah yes, so you did.”

“Edith!”, says Jane then laughs.

Edith joins in the laughter.

“Anyway,” says Edith, “I suppose that you might ask if you can have the Monday off as holiday, not saying why, but actually so that you could ask Henry to join you for Sunday lunch at The Golden Astrolabe Hotel, as a thank you for a wonderful evening at the event, dancing with you all evening.”

“Well, I could ask him for lunch and then drive back to London later in the day.”

“Well, ... yes ... but then he would not be able to take you out to dinner on Sunday evening at the new French-style gluten-free vegan restaurant ‘Chez Albert’ that has just opened in Rhyming Fiction that you saw advertised in a leaflet and happen to mention over lunch.”

“Edith, I haven’t seen any such leaflet.”

“Oh, there’s lots of them about round here, I’ll put one in the post for you if you like.”

A pause.

“Thank you - bye.”

“Bye.”

‘Hmm,’ thinks Edith, ‘I wonder if Caroline Ruralby has asked Simon yet?’

Edith pauses.

‘A bit strange with Caroline Appleby though, saying that she would have a single ticket please and saying that she would like to attend and would be happy to help with the organizing but that she doesn’t want to dance at all. Still, best not to ask why not.’