

Monday afternoon. Edith's Office. Jane has called in to see Edith before driving back to London.

"So, um what I wanted to ask you as I am writing an article for Arts Magazine about the event is if you could clarify what the er rumpus was about. I only caught the end of it."

"Rumpus?"

"Oh, Edith. you were there when I came back in from the garden. I've been told that your niece was involved right from the start of it. She must have told you about it all."

"It was a good event, I really enjoyed it."

"So, you're not going to say."

Silence.

"Edith, are you going to answer?"

"Oh, what was the question?"

Edith casually picks up the locsencube that is on her desk and gently rotates it with her fingers.

"What's that you're playing with?"

"Oh, this, it's called a locsencube. Look, English here, then if I rotate it I get the glyph for the localizable sentence, then if I rotate it again I get French, then I can go round and round."

"It looks a bit trivial. Just one sentence and a whole object just to do one sentence. Bit silly really."

"Well, Henry thought of the idea and designed the prototype."

"Oh, well I suppose that it has a use as an educational example, to demonstrate a principle or something. Yes, quite interesting really, some deep significance perhaps, something beyond my knowledge of such technical matters."

"Possibly. Perhaps you could ask Henry about it. There are several designs. They arrive as a printed sheet of A4 card and then one uses scissors and glue or double-sided sticky tape to make the three-dimensional object. Indeed you are welcome to ask him for some prints so that you can make some up yourself, perhaps asking Henry to help you."

"Edith!"

"And if you wanted to, when he is about to leave you could present him with a box, a rather larger box, tied up with ribbon and suggest he does not open the box until he gets home and you could advise him to wash his hands first and then once the box is open to wash his hands again before getting the contents out of the box."

"Contents? What contents?"

“Well, a cushion for a start.”

“A cushion?”

“Yes.”

“Why a cushion?”

“So that he can kneel on it when he asks you a question.”

“Asks me a question? Oh, do you mean Edith!”

“Well, if you would like him to ask, a clear hint might be necessary.”

“I couldn't I I”

“Well”

“Anyway, if I well, hypothetically, if a lady presented a gentleman with a cushion, maybe he would not understand that the implication.”

“Ah, that is why the lady would include in the box, on top of the cushion, a leaflet explaining the tradition of a lady presenting a gentleman with a cushion, and include that if a lady presents such a cushion that there is a high probability that she may well accept such an offer made to her by the gentleman.”

“Well, where would a lady obtain such a leaflet? Do they sell them in Olde Worlde craft shops, or in the shops at country houses, or where?”

“Not as far as I am aware.”

“So, how would the lady um obtain such a leaflet?”

“Jane, you a professional writer and expert at using desktop publishing software, and you need to ask me that!”

“Are you suggesting that I should write and print it myself?”

“Possibly.”

“Oh Edith, I don't know about this tradition of the cushion, I have never heard of it. I would want to get it correct according to the tradition. Where did you learn of it?”

“Oh, I never learned of it. I made it up five minutes ago.”

A pause.

“Edith!” exclaims Jane and laughs.

Edith smiles.

“And when you are typesetting, you might like to use a nice classical font, such as a Venetian style font. I always think that text set in a Venetian style font looks very stylish and has an air of optimism in its presentation. Like if this novel is ever published in hardcopy form, whether in hardback or paperback, or indeed in both, then the text being

set in a Venetian style font will give the finished volume a distinctive, even optimistic, look. Yes this novel needs to be typeset in a Venetian style font.”

Jane looks concerned and takes a deep breath.

“Edith, quite apart from you, once again, doing your fourth wall breaching stuff, you can’t influence a commercial publisher like that! In my experience the contract will include a part that the font and the cover design are the total choice of the publisher, that means it is not for the author to say, let alone a story character from within the text itself to say.”

“Well, I have just said it, and what you said about the cover design comes into it too. I don’t want some artist’s impression of what he or she thinks I look like plastered all over the cover.”

“But Edith, be reasonable”

“Oh, well, what if on the cover there is an artist’s impression of what he or she thinks that you look like, how about that, would you like that? Say so now and perhaps it can be arranged.”

“Oh, well no, I wouldn’t like that.”

“So then I shall suggest a poem expressed in language-independent glyphs as the most appropriate artwork for the cover.”

“What, the one that Caroline recited at the conference?”

“Um no, one that is not anywhere in the novel, so that readers would need to localize it themselves using the information in the novel.”

“Yes, I like that.”

“Good.”

“But will a commercial publisher tolerate what might be seen as interference with their normal practice?”

“Well, if it is done diplomatically”

“Edith, where standard pre-printed contracts are used they might want to edit this part out.”

Edith gives Jane an old-fashioned look.

“Um, well, perhaps they would be willing to use a Venetian style font and thereby um present the novel to its readers in a distinctive and optimistic style um with an eye-catching poem set in language-independent glyphs on the cover and leave what we look like to each reader’s imagination”, adds Jane.

“And using a Venetian style font would give your leaflet design an optimistic look too.”

“Well um I”

‘So Jane has forgotten about the rumpus, jolly good’, thinks Edith.