

Monday morning.

Edith, John, Edward and Mariposa arrive at the conference centre, having travelled from the hotel in Tours where they are staying. Edith had intended that Caroline would be in the group, but as that had become not possible, Edith had invited Mariposa to join the group so that the booked places on the train and at the hotel would not be wasted.

Edith approaches the receptionist.

“Bonjour, good morning”, says Edith to the lady at the reception desk.

“Good morning.”

“We have come for the conference on localizable sentences.”

“No, this is a conference on tribology. However, I have arrived with the conference organizers, there are other meetings taking place on site, I'll ask the lady from the venue to come and talk to you.”

“Thank you.”

The lady turns to her right, and goes through an archway.

The lady returns followed by another lady.

“This lady will help you.”

“Thank you.”

“Good morning, can I help?”

“Yes please, we have come for the conference on localizable sentences.”

“Ah, it starts tomorrow.”

“Oh thank you.”

“Pardon me, what is your name please?”

“Edith Gatford.”

“Ah, please wait, I have a note for you.”

The lady goes back through the archway, then returns, carrying a sheet of paper folded over.

“A lady arrived earlier this morning and left this note for you.”

Edith accepts the piece of paper, upon which is written ‘Ms Edith Gatford’.

Edith unfolds the piece of paper and reads it.

“It just says ‘Café Françoise’ who left this note please?”

“I do not know her, she was wearing a green dress. The Café Françoise is not far away, turn left as you leave and it is about two hundred metres away.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Edith decides to go to the Café Françoise.

The group enter the Café Françoise.

There is a man behind the counter. There is one other person present, over to the left is a lady - perhaps in her early twenties - wearing a green dress who is sat at a table drinking a cup of coffee.

‘She may, but need not, be the lady who left the note, there is more than one green dress in the world, but nevertheless, maybe’, thinks Edith.

“Bonjour,” says the man behind the counter, who then speaks in French, but Edith does not understand what he says.

A pause.

“Ah, do you speak English?” asks the man.

“Yes, thank you.”

“Have you come for the meeting?”

Edith does not know quite what to say.

“I will go and ask”, says the man.

The man emerges from behind the counter and goes to a door to Edith’s right, knocks and enters. Edith sees Jim at the far end of a large table and realizes that Jim has seen her by the annoyed look on his face.

Edith takes the initiative and enters, followed by the others.

Around the table are Jim, five other men and two women, all very smartly dressed. Edith recognises the Managing Director of Gigantic Business to her right and the Managing Director of Enormous Telephones to her left, and recognises some faces from the conference at Mainz, but does not recognise everyone.

“Good morning”, says Edith.

The people around the table express recognition in a courteous manner, but none of them actually says anything.

“This is a private meeting, the conference does not start until tomorrow”, says Jim.

“Ah”, says Edith as she wonders what to do.

The Managing Director of Gigantic Business speaks. “Well, as the lady and her colleagues are here, they might as well stay.”

“There isn’t enough room around the table, space is limited, it’s not practical”, snaps Jim
“I can get a smaller table to add at the end and some chairs”, says the man from the café.
Jim scowls, clearly annoyed.

“Thank you”, says the Managing Director of Gigantic Business.

The man goes.

The man returns, accompanied by another man; they are carrying a table.

They put the table in place and then go again and then return with some more chairs.

“Thank you”, says Edith.

Edith and the others remain standing.

A pause.

“I propose we invite the visitors to join us and invite them to sit down”, says the Managing Director of Gigantic Business somewhat pointedly to Jim.

A pause, during which nobody objects, but look at Jim waiting to observe his reaction.

“Very well,” says Jim, “please sit down and join the meeting.”

“Thank you”, says Edith.

Edith and the others sit.

Jim speaks. “So, where were we yes we have all agreed that the first lecture tomorrow morning will be by the Managing Director of Enormous Telephones on the topic of their new development called ‘Localizable Phrases’.”

Edith winces. ‘Is this Mariposa’s idea that people have been working on at LocSARA or is this an independent thing, maybe not the same thing at all?’ thinks Edith.

Jim continues. “So, what about the second lecture?”

The Managing Director of Gigantic Business speaks. “I would like to give the second lecture, a demonstration of the new technique of ‘Augmentable Phrases’.”

Upon hearing the term ‘Augmentable Phrases’ Edith realizes that this is quite probably no coincidence but relates to the research at LocSARA. ‘Perhaps this is what the invitation to lunch is all about?’ thinks Edith.

“Any comments anyone?” asks Jim.

“Yes,” says the Managing Director of Enormous Telephones, directly to the Managing Director of Gigantic Business, not going through the chairperson, “You are going to cause confusion, doing something different immediately after my lecture that is not right, I oppose you doing that, it will cause confusion.”

“No it won’t, it is all compatible, for example have you got exclamation mark nine nine three zero zero two as ‘The weather is’ to be followed by an adjective?”

A pause as the Managing Director of Enormous Telephones looks down at his documents.

“How ?”

“And what about exclamation mark nine nine three two zero seven as ‘Welcome to’ followed by the name of a country or a town or a city or a village?”

There is a concerned look on the face of the Managing Director of Enormous Telephones as he says “Yes!” rather emphatically.

Jim speaks. “So as the two topics seem to be the same, well, as we have already agreed on using the term ‘Localizable Phrases’ can the Managing Director of Gigantic Business change the title of his lecture accordingly and then everything will be consistent for the media and the public.”

There is a silent pause.

Edith speaks. “No, please do not use the term ‘Localizable Phrases’ as it will cause confusion as there could be problems over localizing those phrases and it could look bad for the whole localizable sentences project and cause uncertainty and confusion. Please use the term ‘Augmentable Phrases’.”

Jim speaks. “No, it has all been agreed before you got here. We cannot change it now.”

“No, it needs to be changed, it is not too late to do that.”

“We have listened to your objections but the decision has been made, it is all agreed, there is nothing that you can say that can change that, we acknowledge that your small organization has done good work in the past but now it is up to substantially sized commercial organizations to make the decisions, and we have all agreed there is nothing you can do to change that.”

A silent pause.

“Well, I suppose that you may be right. If powerful businesses meet at a powerful businesses meeting and the powerful businesses decide that the powerful businesses will do something that may cause damage because the powerful businesses have not thought deeply about it all at the powerful businesses meeting where the powerful businesses made the decision, there may well be nothing that I can do when the powerful businesses behave in that way.”

Edith notices the concerned looks as she repeatedly and emphatically uses the phrase ‘powerful businesses’. ‘Maybe they are wondering if the implication is “too powerful”.’ thinks Edith. ‘Good.’

A man to Jim's right speaks.

"Well Jim, ... when you say that we all agreed, that was a sort of tacit agreement on the facts known to us at the time. As there is new information and some ... concern ... I feel that I should consult with senior colleagues back at my company about what is best."

"How long will that take?"

"Well, it could be days, maybe weeks."

"But the conference starts tomorrow morning, you're the Managing Director, your word goes."

"Well, theoretically maybe, but I like to keep senior colleagues in the loop, ... and, let's face it, if I make a mistake and I have not consulted when I could have done but did not, then, well, it could be ... awkward."

"This is ridiculous!"

"Well, if there were a suggestion that was acceptable to everybody, then I suppose that I could then make a decision here and now."

Jim scowls.

A pause.

The Managing Director of Gigantic Business speaks directly to the Managing Director of Enormous Telephones. "So, if you were to change your presentation to 'Augmentable Phrases' maybe we could move on - you are getting first lecture after all - so get a bit, give a bit?"

A pause.

"Very well, just to keep everybody happy and move on."

Jim glares at Edith, then speaks, calmly. "So are we all agreed then, use the term 'Augmentable Phrases' ... and not the term we were going to use before."

There is general mumbled agreement.

"Very well. ... I think we should break for an early lunch, resume at two o'clock please."

"Ah, Ms Gatford, would you and one of your party like to join me for lunch?" says the Managing Director of Gigantic Business.

"Yes, thank you", replies Edith so as not to give away that the lunch invitation was prearranged, "Edward, would you like to accompany me to lunch please?"

Edward is surprised, thinking that John would be invited.

They wander from the meeting room into the café.

"Have you got your own transport?"

“No, we came by taxi from Tours.”

“No problem, we can give you a lift, my wife could not come as intended so our grown-up daughter is accompanying me ah, there she is, the lady in the green dress.”

John and Mariposa are having lunch in a nearby restaurant.

They have been chatting about the food.

“So,” says Mariposa, “shall we talk about the elephant in the room?”

John smiles but says nothing.

“So I suppose that Ms Gatford invited Edward to lunch so that you could find out from me what is going on.”

“Well, I suppose that that is possible.”

Mariposa looks strangely at John.

“Caroline Ruralby and I agreed that we would each send a copy of the document to our companies, clearly labelled as *Augmentable Phrases*, not as *Localizable Phrases*, we are being paid to observe and report back. I deliberately did not mention anything about not using the term *Localizable Phrases* in case someone saw it and used it. Caroline said she would credit me with having thought of the idea. I did not mention it was my idea to my manager well well ... Oh I was worried in case I got told off for not just sending the idea and not telling anyone at LocSARA. But the thing is, Caroline Ruralby reports directly to her managing director, but have to I report to my manager and he is not in the research department and Enormous Telephones has a large hierarchy structure and so my report got passed from one person to another and who knows where the title got changed. I hope you and Ms Gatford are not annoyed at me.”

“The Secretary-General does not get annoyed, she just deals with what arises. In fact, to put your mind at rest we were both concerned in case you might get into problems for telling us of your idea rather than just sending it to your employer, that is why we have been reticent about LocSARA publishing it. So I suppose now that it is being published, not by LocSARA, that that resolves our problem. Whether you claim credit for the idea is a matter for you, we will not interfere, but it is not only some LocSARA staff who know of your inventorship.”

“What am I to do? What do you advise please?”

“Well, I can inform the Secretary-General of your concern and ask her not to credit you with the idea unless you decide otherwise, and you could telephone Caroline Ruralby and ask her not to say anything. Do you have her mobile number?”

“Fortunately yes, we have each other’s numbers.”

“Good. Best not to send a text message, just speak directly, no voice mail messages.”

“Right, thank you.”