

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 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.