

“Well everybody, the movie went down well at the première, well done.

“... We did have some tough times making the movie though, didn't we.”

“Indeed yes.”

Flashback.

“So the casting department are a bit concerned that the novel has little, or no, information about what any of the characters look like.”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, how it was put to me is that when we have done historical movies, there are often portraits of the people who are the main characters, so they look through their books of actors and their photographs and try to find someone who looks credibly somewhat like the person that the actor is to portray, not an exact match, but similar, that sort of thing.”

“Ah, right.”

“But in this novel, there's almost nothing. For example, Edith, a main character, perhaps she is the main character, all we can deduce is that she has known John and Henry for many years and with her position of seniority, well, we need someone who is female and looks at least late thirties, maybe someone mid-forties or early fifties even, and we need to get someone who can sing reasonably well, but what she looks like, whether she has dark hair, or fair hair, or whether she is tall or whatever, there is no indication.”

“Does that matter?”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, as long as the actor can play the part, does it matter what she looks like?”

“Well ...”

“My understanding is that that is deliberate so that there is no barrier to anyone who fits the basic criteria getting the role if a movie is made.”

“Ah.”

“She needs to be able to walk about, but would any other disability or unusual feature stop someone getting the part?”

“What?”

“Well, if someone looks different in some way from how a typical person looks, would you automatically rule her out from getting the role. In real life not everybody looks, well, typical.”

“What are you getting at? Can you give an example of what you mean?”

“Well, suppose a candidate happens to have a birthmark on her face, would that stop you giving her the role?”

“Well, there is nothing in the novel about Edith having such a birthmark.”

“There wouldn’t be. Nobody would mention it would they. I trust that if you worked with her that you wouldn’t either!”

“Well of course I wouldn’t.”

“So there you are!”

“Yes, alright, I get what you mean, alright.”

“I think that Edith should always be very smartly dressed, so that she is always well-turned out, just in case a visitor arrives, and as an inspiration to the rest of the staff, leading by example.”

“Yes, that’s a good point. Thank you. I’ll tell wardrobe to arrange that.”

“Edith does get some pretty weird lines in the novel, are we going to include them in the movie?”

“For example?”

“The fourth wall stuff, like that time when Edith is saying about what if the novel appears in hardcopy print form, that it should be typeset in a Venetian style font,”

“Oh, things like that make the novel stand out, of course we should have them in the movie!”

“I’ll think about it.”

“It’s a bit of a nerve really, commercial publishers often have a bit in their terms and conditions for a contract that they get to decide which font to use - yet in this novel, within the novel, not in some author note or request, but actually in the novel, there is a character trying to force the choice of font on the publisher!”

“Good for her!”

“What!”

“I said ‘Good for her’.”

“Yes, yes, now Jane Hove for example.”

“Well, Jane’s outfit has been described occasionally, and I think that she should be portrayed as very stylish and wearing quite colourful clothes.”

“I agree.”

“Well, if you think that best, yes alright. I’ll mention that to wardrobe. So yes, Edith and Jane probably both dress very smartly but in different styles from each other.”

Flashback ends.