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谜中谜职场小说系列

职场英语阅读第一书

旅店奇遇

Room Service

James Schofield 著
张燕译



对应剑桥商务英语初、中级
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外文出版社
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Chapter 1

Skim read the chapter once. Check:

- where the Grand Hotel is.
- what Richard does there.
- how old the Grand Hotel is.

It began at ten o'clock on a Friday morning when Elizabeth walked into the bar of the Grand Hotel in Valletta, Malta, and said to the barman:

“Can I have a cappuccino, please?”

“Right... that'll be 80 cents, please.”

“Thanks. Here you are.”

“Thank you, and here's your change.”

“Thanks.”

She left the change on the counter and wrote something down in a notebook.

“Three!” she said to herself. She closed the notebook and smiled at Richard across the bar.

“Is there something wrong?” he asked.

“No, no. I'm doing research. You're British, aren't you?” He nodded. “Well, on average, in a typical conversation like this we say ‘Please’ twice and ‘Thank you’ three times. I'm doing a masters degree in anthropology,” she explained.

“And that’s what anthropologists do, is it? Study people’s conversations?”

“Not just conversations! Clothes, food, drink, behaviour... everything.”

Richard wished he was still studying. He had finished his geography degree at university last summer. Now it was May and he was working in the Grand Hotel in Valletta as bellboy, waiter, receptionist, driver ... anything that needed doing really. The manager — Aurora Picardi — was a friend from school. When he visited her after his exams she gave him a job while he decided what to do next. His parents kept asking him when he was going to do ‘something sensible’. But what was sensible?

“I’m working on a novel,” he said, which wasn’t exactly sensible but he hoped it would impress her.

“Really? How far have you got?” she asked.

“It’s finished. I just haven’t written it down yet, which makes it difficult to sell. That’s why I’m still working here. Anyway... are you staying at the Grand?” Richard asked, to keep the conversation going. Most of the other guests in the hotel were not as easy to look at. She was in her mid-twenties, with long brown hair and large blue-grey eyes. Her nose was perhaps a bit long, he thought, but she had a lovely mouth.

“Yes, I am,” she replied. “The manager said my room isn’t ready yet. I’m here to see if the Grand Hotel would be suitable for an anthropology conference.”

"Right... well, I'll check to see if your room's ready now, if you like. Your name is... ?"

"Elizabeth Rodgers."

"Richard Villas," they shook hands.

"There!" she said. "We'll probably never do that again. British people don't, you see. The average Briton shakes hands about twice a week. How many times do you think a German shakes hands in a day?" Richard shrugged his shoulders. "Six!" she shook her head in amazement. "Six times every day. Isn't that incredible!"

Aurora was standing at reception with Albert Cini, the head porter, as Richard came out of the bar. Albert was eighty-two and had been employed by Aurora's grandfather as a bellboy when he was twelve. In seventy years at the hotel he had seen and experienced nearly everything. Richard had learnt many useful things from him like how to deal with angry guests, sort out the emotional problems of honeymoon couples, or open locked doors without a key.

"Aurora," Richard called. "Is Ms Rodger's room ready yet? No, no Albert! I can take her bags, don't worry."

"Yes, Maria's just finished the cleaning. Listen, Richard, it's important that we make a good impression on Ms Rodgers," said Aurora quietly. "She's helping to organise a conference and they may use the Grand. So be careful what you show her. We've given her one of the

recently-decorated rooms — room 220 — at the front of the hotel, with a view of the sea. ”

Richard nodded, took the large old-fashioned room key and collected Elizabeth. The Grand Hotel was certainly very grand, but it was also more than a hundred years old. A renovation programme had started and the hotel now had excellent conference facilities, kitchens and reception areas. But some of the bedrooms were not finished and sometimes guests who stayed in the old rooms had a few problems. Two weeks before, a guest needed to be rescued from her bathroom window by the fire brigade when the handle fell off the door. After climbing down the ladder wearing only a hotel towel and a shower cap she was cheered by a small crowd which gathered at the bottom. The local television station even showed it on the news.

They took the beautiful old 1900s lift to the second floor. A lot of new technology was being installed, but Aurora was very careful to make sure that the original Art Nouveau style of the hotel was not lost in the renovation. Richard opened the door to Room 220 and let Elizabeth inside.

It had a tiled floor and a large French window which opened onto a balcony with a clear view of the dark blue Mediterranean sea. The bedroom was painted a plain cream colour and a flat screen television was in one corner. A large blackframed mirror hung on the wall in front of a dressing table and opposite a large double bed, which had

patterned Moorish carpets either side of it. A chandelier, made of coloured Venetian glass, hung from the ceiling in the centre of the room. She went onto the balcony and leant on the rail.

“Oh, I love it! Look at the sea! Just think how close we are to North Africa here!” she waved her arm in the direction of Italy. She needs help with her geography, thought Richard. He put her bag down.

“Well, I’ll be in reception if you want anything,” he said and quickly left.

“Wait!” he heard her call. “Wait!” but he carried on. He didn’t want her to tip him.

Chapter 2

Skim read the chapter once. Check:

- what Richard shows Elizabeth.
- who Dr Brian Butcher is.
- what Brian is doing in Malta.

Richard walked downstairs, past Aurora and Albert and into the bar. He picked up Elizabeth's coffee cup from the counter. Interesting girl, he thought. Of course, she probably has a boyfriend somewhere. Maybe even a husband. But perhaps she didn't.

"Richard, how long are you going to stand there holding that coffee cup?"

asked Aurora as she came into the bar ten minutes later. She looked at him hard. "Are you all right?"

"Hmhm? Fine, fine," said Richard and disappeared behind the bar to do some cleaning.

Later that morning, Richard was on reception when the lift doors opened and Elizabeth appeared again. He jumped guiltily and dropped the passport which he had been looking through. Albert, who was sitting next to him, picked it up and gave it back to Elizabeth.

"Thank you," she said. "By the way, do you have a map of Valletta? If we hold the conference here I'll need to

make a list for the conference delegates of restaurants, bars, museums and other places to visit. Though of course," she added "For most conference delegates a bar is the only place they want to visit"

"Richard could show you around," said Aurora, coming out of her office. "He's an excellent guide to bars and restaurants. "

Elizabeth smiled. "Would you mind, Richard?" Richard looked at Albert.

"It's a tough job," Albert replied, "But somebody has to do it. Off you go!" He gave Richard a push and Richard followed Elizabeth outside like a dog let out for a walk.

The city of Valletta was small enough to make a walking tour of the main sites quite short, so when they were finished, Richard borrowed the hotel car and drove to Marsaxlokk to show her the fish market and have some lunch by the sea. They ate mussels cooked in garlic and then fresh fish from the market, grilled in front of them. During lunch Richard listened instead of talking. He didn't concentrate too much on what Elizabeth was saying, but just enjoyed looking at her and hearing the sound of her voice. After a time, however, he noticed that one name was being repeated too often.

"I'm sorry, but who exactly is Brian?" he asked.

"Dr Brian Butcher, my tutor at university. He's really brilliant. He's in charge of the conference. It was his

idea for me to come here to check if the hotel is suitable or not." For about five minutes Richard had to listen to how wonderful Dr Brian Butcher was.

"So, he's much older than you, is he?"

"Not really... only about ten years older. I think he's thirty-five."

"So, he's married, then?" Richard continued. Was it his imagination or had Elizabeth gone slightly pink?

"Yes, that's right," she replied.

Richard relaxed, but only a little. In his experience of university professors, a wedding ring was no guarantee of good behaviour. But, for the moment Richard had Elizabeth to himself and so he decided to show her as much of Malta as possible. They saw the cliffs at Dingli, visited a stone age temple and then took a little boat to see the blue lagoon on the island of Comino. They finally got back to the hotel in the early evening. Richard parked the car and Elizabeth waited for him by the door.

"Thank you," she said. "I really enjoyed myself today."

"My pleasure!" Richard replied. "Listen, if you're not too tired we could go out this eve..."

"Lizzie! Lizzie! There you are!" A tall thin man was standing at the reception desk waving at Elizabeth. He had thick dark hair and was wearing a cream coloured linen suit which looked very good with his tanned face. "I've just arrived from the airport."

“Brian, what are you doing here?” Dr Brian Butcher gave Elizabeth a kiss on the cheek. “Well, I was going to a seminar at Newcastle University this weekend, but I had a call from the organizers when I was at Heathrow, saying it had to be postponed because of sickness so I bought a last-minute flight over here to see what this place is like. I’ve just checked into the room next to you.”

Richard had doubts. A cream linen suit for a seminar in Newcastle? Even in May and even with global warming, this did not sound very believable. Richard had a feeling he was not going to like the new guest. Brian noticed him standing behind Elizabeth in his hotel uniform.

“Ah ... could you take my bag to room 221? Thanks!”

Richard definitely disliked him.

“Lizzie, shall we get a drink at the bar before dinner?” Brian smiled in Richard’s direction, and pushed a small banknote into his jacket pocket.

As Richard saw Brian gently guide Elizabeth in the direction of the bar, he realised he really hated Dr Brian Butcher.

Chapter 3

Skim read the chapter once. Check:

- where Brian's wife thinks he is.
- where Brian and Elizabeth go after dinner.
- why Brian complains about Albert.

It was a bad evening for Richard. He was working in the bar next to the restaurant and could see Elizabeth's face as she had dinner with her tutor. Brian could, it seemed, be very funny and Elizabeth spent most of the meal listening to and laughing at whatever he said.

After a while Albert came and stood next to Richard and watched with him.

"Nice looking girl," he said quietly. "What's she doing with somebody like him? You have to do something, Richard!"

"She's only having dinner with her tutor," Richard replied feeling depressed and dropping peanuts on the floor. Albert looked at him. "And anyway, what can I do?" he continued. "He's good-looking, funny, intelligent, he's got money..."

"And he's married, isn't he? Come on Richard, you can be quite funny, you aren't stupid and you're much less ugly than me. But if you won't do anything, then I will!"

Just at that moment Brian stood up and walked out into the bar, taking his ringing mobile phone out of his pocket. He ignored Richard and Albert behind the bar and the other guests drinking there and spoke as if he was alone in the room.

“Yes, yes darling... terrible weather here, but you know, what can you expect in Newcastle! No, no the seminar’s going well. Interesting group. Yep, yep... I’ll be back on Tuesday afternoon. I’ll call you tomorrow ... yeah, love you too!” Without even noticing his audience, he walked back to Elizabeth. Albert and Richard looked at each other.

“Newcastle!” said Albert “His wife doesn’t know he’s in Malta. I wonder what that tells us about him, huh?”

Richard thought he knew but didn’t want to think about it.

“Can’t we stop her drinking?” he complained. “They’re half way through a second bottle already.” They finished it — far too quickly, Richard thought — and stood up to leave. As they walked past, Elizabeth gave Richard a small guilty smile. He tried to look disinterested, but only managed to look cross.

“I’ll tell you what, Lizzie, why don’t we get some fresh air? Let’s go for a short walk along the sea wall,” Richard heard Brian say as they reached the foyer. “Do you want to get a jacket or something? No? Well, if you