

FOUND IN TRANSLATION

Minna Lunney

I strolled down a bustling street, bound for the Reveresque, a regular stop on my excursions abroad. I was no native here, but I operated as one. Wherever I looked, the scribbles on signs received clarifying subtitles. I recognized a bistro by its inviting smells, and the description whispered into my ear. The chatter of passersby came through clear as a bell, dubbed over in my mother tongue.

When I reached the correct block, I slipped out of the crowd and into a sunny courtyard. My attention fell toward the Reveresque entrance, and the unfamiliar face before it. One would expect their staff to be immaculate in appearance and demeanor, and this new doorman was that and more. There was something unusual about the way he spoke to guests coming and going, how their eyes never failed to light up in response. I quieted my translator to have a listen.

"Guten Tag, Frau!" he addressed a woman gliding through the doors. *"Wie geht es Ihnen?"*

He grinned and nodded to the next fellow to approach. *"Salaam, Aqah! Haleh shomah chetori?"*

Without hesitation, he waved to a man who was leaving: *"¡Buenos tardes, Señor!"*

Awestruck, and admittedly jealous, I halted in my tracks.

I had the latest translators at my disposal- or so I'd thought. Everything I saw and heard converted effortlessly, but I spoke in my native language, relying on listeners to utilize their own translators. In the lofty circles I floated in, this was never an issue.

Here, though, was something utterly exotic, in the hands of a mere hotel staffer. I'd never heard of anything that would enable so many different foreign words to issue from the user's mouth.

Curiosity took hold, and I resumed my advance. "Excuse me," I said once I was close enough to the entrance.

The doorman's gaze locked onto mine. "Hello, sir! May I help you?"

I watched his lips move, forming every syllable perfectly.

"That's a remarkable translator," I said. "May I ask what model?"

Unfazed, he pointed to his temple. "First edition, sir."



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