The man, known simply as the Chief, was looking unseeingly out the window of his fifth-floor office, hands clasped behind his back, deep in thought when the soft cough behind him caused his attention to return to the room, and the three people who had quietly entered his domain and taken the seats arranged the other side of his desk. They were curious, if not somewhat fearful, having been summoned by an ambiguous inter-office email.

He took his seat and broke the silence. ‘Thank you for coming at such short notice. I know you’re all busy but I suspect you can guess why I’ve called you here.’

The three exchanged glances, eyebrows raised, but it was Gladys Crabbe who spoke first ‘Well Chief, the email was, er … shall we say, a bit light on enlightenment.’

‘Really?’ the Chief replied. ‘That surprises me. Perhaps the office rumour mill isn’t as good as it used to be. Never mind - to fill you in, the Boardroom has decided to try and jazz things up a bit. Make a few changes in order to, and I quote, “*Make things a bit more exciting*”, so we’re here to bounce a few ideas around. Any thoughts so far?’

It was the puzzled Crossword Editor who spoke next. ‘Jazz things up a bit? How on earth do you make a crossword puzzle more exciting? I’m not sure I quite understand, Chief.’

‘I’m not sure I understand either but we *do* have to come up with some ideas for the Boardroom, preferably by the end of the week, so thinking caps on people.’

‘It seems to me they may not have thought this one through sufficiently’ Gladys cut in. ‘Remember the furore when we introduced nesting to the comments? And when we dared to change the colours?’

‘Not forgetting the humps they got when we quietly eliminated a lot of the archived comments under each day’s crossword!’ Felicity, the Head Compiler added. ‘Lord knows it’s bad enough getting hounded when all the closet lexicographical *experts* come out in force below the line when they don’t agree with a clue or answer. What you *could* do is put an announcement above each crossword declaring that all clues and answers can be verified in any dictionary, thesaurus or encyclopaedia of their choice, should they bother to look first. That’d keep ‘em quiet!’ she bristled.

‘If only …’ Gladys mumbled.

‘That’s actually not a bad idea Felicity’ the Chief nodded as he scribbled a note on the pad on his desk.

‘We could always disable the below-the-line comments altogether’ the Crossword Editor mused.

‘What – and put me out of a job? No thank you very much’ Gladys replied.

‘… or change the colours again?’

‘Yes, well, it looks like we might have to do a bit more thinking about this. They do want an answer by the end of the week.’ The Chief exclaimed, looking at each of them in turn. ‘Maybe we could make an appeal to the below-the-liners to see if they have any suggestions of their own.’

‘You *are* joking, right?’ Gladys pleaded.

‘Can of worms Chief, can of worms …’ Felicity added, shaking her head in disbelief.