# In the name of kindness

Tie-Dye became aware of the world around her. Immediately afterward, she closed her mind down again, but to no avail. She didn’t need to see this world to feel its differences as compared to her home. She had decided to leave her home world to explore the universe, but she hadn’t realized just how different this world would be. Her home was a constantly shifting dimension of colour and light and movement and *change*.She was an elemental of colour and light, and while she could be seen by all, she lacked form and substance. She was excited about the chance to explore new worlds, such as this ‘earth’, but she didn’t know how much of this *sameness* she could take.

*Ok, relax*. She took a deep breath in, and then let it out. *I can do this*. She opened her eyes and stood up, feeling the oddest sense of something resisting her. Looking around, she decided she was probably in a town or a village. She had learned about this world when she was studying other dimensions, so she knew what the dominant life form here looked like. She also knew what the parasitic creatures that *thought* they were the dominant life forms looked like, and she decided to study them first. She relaxed, closed her mind, and sent her consciousness down into her individual particles, sending them to the places they needed to be. Opening her eyes, she checked her form over and nodded. It would suffice.

When she reached the town she paused and looked around. Now what? She hadn’t really planned everything out completely, and had in fact been hoping to figure it out as she went. For now, she decided to wander around and examine the people who lived here. If she was going to be exploring this world, she should know how the natives acted. She was just starting down the street when she had her first contact.

“Hello missy, what are you doing here?” A man approached her, sounds coming out of his mouth. Tie-Dye didn’t understand the noises, but she had planned for that, and she caught the essence of the thoughts from the man’s mind.

“You can call me Tie-Dye”. She didn’t *speak* so much as use telepathy and move her mouth, but the people here were not so skilled in the mind-arts, and didn’t know the difference.

The man frowned, trying to grasp what she had said. Tie-Dye realized, too late, that her name did not translate as well as she thought it did. The man spoke again. “What’re you doin’ out here all alone?” He stepped towards her. “Did you need someone to show you around, perchance?”

He grinned at her, and Tie-Dye caught a glimpse of browned gums and crooked teeth. She wondered offhandedly what the man had done to get a mouth like that, and if there was anything that could be done about it. In her own world, physical forms were just as variable as everything else, and the concept of being stuck with one appearance was new to her.

“Yes, that would be nice. Thank you” Tie-Dye attempted a smile, and found it harder than she had thought it would be. For such an important part of human culture, she thought it looked and felt extremely awkward. “What is the name of this place?”

The man looked a little surprised, as if he wasn’t expecting her to accept his offer. “This here’s Sunvaili, young missy” He peered at her from behind heavy eyebrows. “How is it that you don’t know where ya are?”

“I set out from home recently, deciding to travel the world. I’m afraid my sense of the land is not as good as it could be”

He nodded. “Ah, tryin’ to live on your own, are ya?” he sighed, as if reminiscing about the past, then shook himself. “well, come along with me, then.”

He led her down the street, stopping at various places to tell her about the different buildings. “This here’s the Music Note Café” He told her, pointing at a blue and white building with flowers in the windows and the sound of violins coming from inside. “Even if ya aren’t hungry, it’s nice to go in once in a blue moon and listen”. He led her inside, and they sat down at a table. Tie-Dye saw the front counter, and it’s assortments of pastries. She also saw the man’s wistful glances at the front counter, and began to wonder about him. If he was hungry, why wouldn’t he get something to eat? She scanned her mind, trying to recall the lessons she had had about this planet and its people. *Oh, yes, right*. These people had a system of currency that they used for physical objects, including food. She would need to find some of that later, but more importantly; this man didn’t seem to have enough of it. She came back into focus and realized he was looking at her expectantly.

“I’m sorry, what? I think I zoned out”

“That’s okay, missy. I was just askin’ what you thought about the music” He glanced at the tall woman playing the violin. “It’s pretty, isn’t it?” He grinned. “The woman is too”

“Yes, the music is lovely.” Tie-Dye thought for a minute, trying to understand his other statement. “And if you like the woman, why don’t you talk to her?”

The man frowned. “it aint that simple missy. This world isn’t what it used to be, ya know. You need *stuff* now.” He shook his head. “Anyway, why don’t I show you the rest of this here town”.

Tie-Dye nodded, not bothering to say that she *didn’t* know what this world used to be. She stood up and followed the man out the door.

By the end of the day, the man had shown her all around Sunvaili, and they were sitting on a bench at the park. Tie-Dye looked at the man. “Thank you for showing me around and everything”

“Oh, it’s nothin’ miss. Really.” The man looked uncomfortable. “Actually, it’s me who should be thanking’ you.”

“Why?” She frowned, puzzled. Had she missed some vital part of human culture involving gratitude?

The man looked down. “Well, ya see miss, I wasn’t first plannin’ on showing you around town. I was goin’ to take you down some back alley and rob ya blind” He looked at her. “I changed my mind, though, when you acted so nice to me, acceptin’ the offer and all.” He sighed. “Not many people will agree to spend time with me, an’ you’re the first one in at least a year who’s been with me for a day straight.” He looked down again, and she saw a tear fall from his eye.

“It’s nothing, don’t worry about it. I was just being nice. Thank you for not robbing me”

The man nodded. “you’re welcome, missy. It’s nothing. Let’s just call it even then, hey? In the name of kindness.”

Tie-Dye nodded. “Yes. In the name of kindness.”