

THE ENDLESS VILLAGE

by

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**EXTRACT**

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**EXT. HIPSTERVILLE - DAY**

The border with Kingdom 9.5. A BORDER GUARD in a smart uniform blocks the way with folded arms while HCC2 waits.

Eventually the 9.5 REP jogs up, wearing a branded tracksuit and talking sharply into a mobile phone.

9.5 REP

That's exactly what I said.  
There's just no profit in having kids. There's a much higher margin in hamsters. They can run those electricity generators all night. Just keep the wheel well oiled. That constant squeaking, you have no idea. Yup, yup. Ciao.

She hangs up and greets HCC2 with a handshake. He looks her up and down - he's never seen someone from Kingdom 9.5 before. She's like an exotic bird - all bright and shiny and nice smelling. She unconsciously wipes her hand on her tracksuit after shaking his.

9.5 REP

Afternoon consumer.

HCC2

Consumer?

9.5 REP

Sorry, forgot. It's citizen with you lot, isn't it? What's your Happiness Index today?

HCC2

Er, good thanks. How are you?

9.5 REP consults her phone.

9.5 REP

Overheads down one per cent, revenue up three per cent and overall brand awareness rising. But, as you know consumer... I mean citizen... time is money. How can we raise each other's profit margins today?

HCC2

(Tired, with little enthusiasm) I need to get hold of a banana.

By tomorrow. I heard Kingdom 9.5 had a bumper crop this year.

9.5 REP

You heard right. But why come all this way? You know the Banana Mule trades just outside your borders.

HCC2

I did try her, but... Let's just say I don't trust her. I'm looking for a very specific banana. It has to be certified organic, fair trade, grown locally. I thought if I transported it myself, on foot, then that would be OK. I've been walking for hours...

9.5 REP cuts him off, not interested.

9.5 REP

And what could you offer in return?

HCC2

Whatever you like, if you can give me a couple of days to get it to you. We're on eggs at the moment, but I don't think that's going to last. I could offer bucketloads of prime river snails, fed on a one hundred per cent lettuce leaf diet. Could even throw in an acorn shell cycle helmet - proven to be the safest cycle helmet in the nation formally known as the UK and exclusively patented to Kingdom Three. Please, you're my last hope.

9.5 REP NODS, TAKES OUT HER PHONE.

9.5 REP

Let me take your offer to my brand manager.

She walks away so that HCC2 can't hear and talks intently into the phone. Eventually she hangs up and comes back over.

9.5 REP

I can confirm that we do have what you want. Big, firm, gently

curved, yellow bananas, grown organically in our solar powered greenhouses, tended by highly paid, highly trained Banana Geniuses.

HCC2

Oh thank goodness!

9.5 REP

However, we don't want your snails or your helmet.

HCC2

(Weary, broken) Of course you don't.

9.5 REP

We want unrestricted access to the Kingdom Three sweat lodge.

HCC2

That's impossible. Only Kingdom Three citizens are allowed.

9.5 REP

That's our price. Take it or leave it.

HCC2

(At the end of his tether) I don't have the power to change our laws. The elders will never agree. Our citizens won't want consumers from Kingdom 9.5 trampling through our woods and polluting our organic haven with their dirty, commercialised sweat.

9.5 REP

Sweat Lodge access or the deal's off.

HCC2

Where would it end? Inter kingdom marriages? Free movement of citizens between kingdoms? Sharing resources and services?

9.5 REP

Don't believe everything you read in the Maily Pail. Kingdom 9.5 has highly beneficial trade deals with

dozens of other kingdoms. There's a big world out here and you could be part of it.

HCC2

(Spouting the mantra but with wavering conviction) No. That goes against everything Kingdom Three believes in. "Non cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good."

9.5 REP

(Amused pity) Evil? Cooperation and mutual benefit? OK citizen. Enjoy your walk back to the Middle Ages.

9.5 REP turns and strides back into her kingdom, talking on her mobile phone. The BORDER GUARD once more blocks the way, arms folded. HCC2 falls to his knees in the dirt, calls after her, but she doesn't look back.

HCC2

Please. It's just one banana. Why won't anyone help me?

HCC2 looks up at the sky - the sun is starting to set. He heaves a weary sigh, then struggles to his feet and begins the long trudge back to Kingdom Three.

**END OF EXTRACT**