'Justice – or Just Us?' The Fair World Trade Fair.

By Linda Rose

Characters:

NB: No attempt should be made to be representative of the country; at most use a flag around the person like a banner.

TV Presenter
EU (European union)
Various countries' representatives, (including Brazil and USA)

A few tables are set up ready for a table-top sale.
A banner says 'welcome to the Fair World Trade', but EU comes on and crosses the word 'Fair' out and handwrites it in at the end.

Presenter: Hello ladies and gents. Welcome to our Fair World Trade. We have a wonderful selection of goods for you today from many countries across the word. Diversity – that's the name of the game. So exciting! After all – how often is it that you get to buy your goods directly from the sellers themselves; no gloss, no varnish like you might see in your food magazines. Just the real thing. Well maybe a soupcon of added pesticide and preservatives, but then, who doesn't want to be better preserved into their old ages, eh? Hee hee.

So come and join in this unique purchasing experience. It's going to start…well I can see the first traders arriving now.

Hola. Salut. Shalom. Nihao. Ahlan wa sahlan! Welcome to you all! What a wonderful spicy selection of all the world. The colours, the tastes, the aromas, ah! What a wonderful world. Welcome everyone – come and set up your stalls, anywhere you like – that's it! We'll begin trading when you are all set up and ready to go…

Official-looking person (EU) with a clipboard and ear-piece rushes in, waving frantically.

EU: Hang on. Hang on! What on earth are you doing?

Presenter: We're setting up for the fair trade…er…trade fair.

EU: Not like that you're not.

Presenter: Why – what's wrong?

EU: How come everyone is just coming in and setting up any old how?

Presenter: That's how my local market works. "Git yor Spouts 'ere!" "Luvvly spuds for fifty pee!"

EU: Well, this isn't your local market, is it? It is a World Trade Fair.

Presenter: So?

EU: There's rules and things. You can't just go doing it higgledy-piggledy.

Presenter: Rules? For selling your own stuff?

EU: Yes. We can't have any old Tom, Dick or Jemima coming and selling … well…whatever they like! We'd have…

Presenter: A great selection!

EU: …Bedlam. No. It has to be organised properly. Rules are rules and need to be followed. Right – out you all go! Come on. Shift it. Hey you; control your nuts; they're getting everywhere. I've seen you – sneaking your produce into everything just to add bulk to it…

Brazil: It's not me. It's the rich countries. They buy my stuff really cheaply and then put it in everything. I wish they didn't. Then I'd be able to afford to send my son to school properly. But they force the price down or else I can't sell it anywhere.

EU: Well, quit whinging and just be glad you can sell it at all. At least they're buying your stuff. Don't know what you're complaining about…

Presenter: They're all ready …again. Now what?

EU: Good. Now. Organise a queue. I like queues. Queues are orderly. Fair. The sign of civilisation. There's nothing like a queue. Hey – that's nothing like a queue.

The Americans push forward.

EU: Look you, stop pushing. Oh, so sorry, sirs. *(to the others)* Oi! You. Move out the way. It's obvious that you have to let the Americans to the front. They have way too much stuff to stand waiting right at the back. Let them through. *(To USA, obsequiously)* So good to see you. Would you like any help? I'm sure some of these little people with less to sell would be only too pleased to help carry some of your vast produce for you.

USA: Mighty fine of you.

Presenter: And… now they all come in and set up as before – only this time in a queue?

EU: Not quite. First we have to sort them out into tariff-paying and non-tariff paying.

Presenter: Eh wot? I think I've got my tariffs in a twist. What's a tariff when it's at home?

EU: Oooh dear. You are ignorant, aren't you? How on earth did you think you run an international trade market without knowing about tariffs?

Presenter: Oh – I know. He's that actor who did Dr. Zhivago.

EU: That's Shariff, not tariff. Omar Shariff; nothing to do with tariffs at all. I suppose you don't know what a commodity is either?

Presenter: Aha – well that's where you're wrong. I know all about commodities. My great-aunt had one once when she had a bit of trouble 'down below'. It was very useful on a cold night.

EU: No, no, no! That's a commode! Really. The material they expect me to work with. I simply must contact the union. No, a commodity is simply the thing they are selling; and a tariff is the charge we make for allowing them to sell it.

Presenter: They have to pay us, so they can sell it to us?

EU: Well, not everyone of course.

Presenter: Oh good.

EU: We have 'special arrangements' with some countries to let them off paying anything. Bit of 'you scratch my back and I'll let you off paying the tariff'.

Presenter: Only for people selling back-scratchers then?

EU: No.

Presenter: Poorer nations then. Help them compete. They need help to sell their stuff because it's so expensive to transport?

EU: No. The poor ones are the ones who couldn't offer to scratch our backs – so at least some of them have to pay. **Reciprocity** – that's the name of the game. You give me something and I'll give you something in return. It's kind of a club you can belong to.

Presenter: What if you can't afford it?

EU: Tough. Not my problem. Not running a charity, you know. Should be more careful with their finances.

Presenter: But most of their finances go to the rich nations to pay for expensive loans they had no choice but to accept.

EU: Yup. It's a tough world. Dog eat dog.

Presenter: So the rich nations get off paying the tariffs, but the poor ones have to.

EU: If we help...say… the Americans – then they'll help us back. Come on now, it's not that hard to understand.

Presenter: Understanding it isn't the problem. Believing it is the trouble I'm having.

EU: Right. Two queues now. Tariff or non tariff. Scruffy nations to the right. Pay up or get out… oh no, Mr USA – I wasn't talking to you at all. Oh, by the

way, I have a small subsidy for you to lower your prices. You know – as a thank you for all your help…

Presenter: But how are the others going to compete then if the American stuff is half their price. People will only buy American stuff.

EU: They should have thought of that before coming here then. Not my fault. Free market you see.

Presenter: Hardly free. Quite expensive I should think. Firstly they have to grow things in difficult conditions, less rain, or too much. Then it costs a fortune to transport it all here. Then they have to pay to be allowed to sell it. And then they can't sell it as cheaply as your lot. Not much that's free about all that.

EU: Well, when I say 'free' I didn't mean that kind of free. I mean they can take it or leave it – no-one is forcing them to be here.

Presenter: Where else can they go then? If we won't buy their stuff fairly? Everyone needs a market. Just somewhere to sell their stuff at a fair price.

EU: It's good for the 'Just Us' club.

Presenter: Justice? I don't think so. Your prices are not fair. Your governments pay their farmers to help them when the weather is bad, or they get diseased. Poor countries can't afford to do that. Then they all get to buy and sell to each other without paying extra tariffs – like a big private club. Then you give extra subsidies for certain ways of farming, which they miss out on too. In what way exactly is it justice?

EU: Oh no. You misunderstood me. No I didn't say 'justice'. No. I said 'just us'. That's who this is fair for. Just Us – the 'Just Us' club made up of the rich nations. The 'how to keep the wealth just for us' club. Works for us just fine. The rest of the world will catch up – one day. When they get the hang of the game.

Presenter: When will that be?

EU: When we've made enough money for our 'Just Us' club.

Presenter: Yes. Justice – or 'Just Us'. Seems you can't be in both clubs at the same time. Now I understand ladies and gents. Now I see what the mistake in the name is. You can't have Fair World Trade. Not yet anyway. Not with these rules. Not unless it says so on the label. That's it from me in the Fair Trade sale.

Why don't you help the world become fairer? Join the 'Justice Club'; not the 'Just Us' club and help make it a fairer world. Thank you!

*