

## Asking For Trouble

by Janie Reynolds

She found herself in a big, new world; different kinds of people all blowing around in the wind and speaking unknown tongues.

As she clung to a tree in the centre of a courtyard, her cotton dress flapped around her waist and the violent winds whipped her long brown hair in straps across her face. Before she could think what to do, a tremendous roar rose behind her and she was sucked into the vortex of a huge tornado. She tumbled in its belly across a thousand rooftops until they reached a large and magnificent building. And there, she was dropped, right down, through the roof, and into the middle of a wooden-panelled room full of people acting extremely seriously.

The first thing she noticed was the way they were dressed. Heavy, stiff, angled costumes made them look bigger than they were. And she imagined how, even in the full force of the winds, that type of clothes would prevent them from being blown away.

Looking around her, the people could largely be divided into three groups. Some were well-built, dressed in black, with round helmets, big boots and, at their sides, hung holsters, batons and grenades. Second was a group of greying ladies with wrinkled faces and unflattering clothes. She thought she caught a slight flicker of empathy from one of them but was swiftly overwhelmed by expressions that suggested she had done something she shouldn't have. Lastly was the group of suited, rich looking people, shuffling through huge stacks of papers and whispering to one another. They didn't much spare a moment to even look in her direction.

A door opened at the front of the room, onto what looked like a stage. A voice hailed, "All rise," and everyone froze and fell silent as a man wearing a sheep wig walked towards what looked like a throne.

He sat and cleared his throat. Then, in a voice with no intonation, he peered right down at the girl, and said, "Are you the defendant?"

Lifting her head as far as she could to try and meet his eye, she replied, “What is a defendant?”, hoping, very much that it was an OK thing to say.