



# Nowhereverse Tales



#26

AGES **10+**



wmfkx.11nk/3kaiw

We exist in our space and time... and we are not alone. Beyond our world lies numerous others with their own histories and biologies. And between them all, where the walls grow thin and possibility seems endless, there is a lighthouse, sitting in the space between spaces.

Welcome, travelers and castaways alike, to **Nowhere**.

## In this Issue

*When different worlds collide there can be tension. Sparks can fly, and tempers can flare up. It can be all too easy to get overwhelmed.*

*Yet there can be beauty in the chaos. New ideas can form from the mix, new pathways can open up. And sometimes we can learn a new aspect to something we've always known.*

—Ronyo

### Finding Hope

Celeste's search takes her to an old mill village suburb in Human Earth and its eclectic population.

**Rated General:** food, religious discussion

### A Limitation

You see Celeste accidentally discover a limitation of the multiverse.

**Rated General:** foreign thoughts

## Ask the Lighthouse

Dana—

*Do you think Celeste has truly changed?*

—Coda

We'll see.

*Editor's note: Dana stared at the screen for a solid two minutes before typing out this answer.*

Ask your question at [wndfx.link/ask](https://wndfx.link/ask)

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She shakes her head. “Not any more than usual.” She flexed her hands again. “Only felt that kind of exhaustion a few times. And I’ve heard of...” She shudders. “I’ve heard stories; let’s leave it at that.” She starts to say something else before you both hear a loud rumble from her stomach.

You smile and turn the ignition. “Now this problem I know how to handle,” you say with a laugh.

Celeste chuckles with you. “Thanks, Jordan,” she says quietly.

The phrase hits a block in your mind: that is ny’otu ry onuarm ename

—

You blink and shake your head, adjusting back to being just you. You’re pretty sure Celeste said something—

Green reminds you of the last second of conversation. You thank them; they’re always on top of things like this.

“Of course,” you say. “What’re friends for?” You double-check your own seat belt and back the car down your driveway. “So how do you feel about milkshakes?”



The Lightbringers will return

### Last we left off...

**Celeste**, a formerly rebellious mage from the kingdom of **Melodia**, is serving her sentence by finding each of three individuals telepathically bonded across worlds. Having spent time with **Eutychia** in the agrarian states outside Melodia, she now heads to **Human Earth** to find **Jordan**...

## Finding Hope

Celeste fished her notebook out of one of her many magically-enhanced pockets and looked at the unassuming house in front of her. It was plain, like most of the houses here: simple construction in various shapes of repair. Some of them had expansive porches or chain link fences; this house had neither. In an already unassuming neighborhood, this house was even more so.

And yet the address was the same. With a shrug she pocketed her notebook and strode up to the door. She rang the doorbell... no answer. A couple of gentle knocks on the door... still nothing.

Celeste closed her eyes and sighed. She *really* hoped this was the right place. The car ride here had ended with her and Dana in an uneasy truce, and she didn’t want to risk it by asking her to immediately give her a ride *back*.

“Can I help you, lady?”

Celeste turned around to see a middle-aged darker-skinned woman standing at the edge of the property. She had one hand on a hip and the other holding her phone against her chest, though Celeste noted the lens pointing outward.

“Hi,” Celeste said, putting on her best smile, “I’m looking for Jordan Hendrick?”

The woman didn’t budge. “Why? You with the government?”

Celeste blinked. She glanced down at herself and confirmed she was still in her Melodian mage robes. “Do people from your government usually dress like this?”

“They dress however they want, that’s the problem,” the woman snapped. “And you didn’t—” She narrowed her eyes. “What do you mean, ‘your’ government?”

Celeste held her arms out. “Can you tell I’m not exactly from around here?”

The door opened behind Celeste. “Sorry, I was on a call; can I help—Celeste?”

Celeste turned around to see someone a few inches shorter than her with long brown hair and thick-rimmed glasses. She almost sagged in relief. “Jordan?”

“Yeah...” Jordan looked at her with their head cocked to the side. “Did you bring the feathers?”

Celeste blinked and thought for a moment. “No,” she said, remembering the code words, “I left them in the Padori.”

Jordan smiled broadly and held out a hand that Celeste quickly shook. They leaned past Celeste and called out into the yard, “We’re good, Delores; you can stop recording.”

“You know her?” Delores answered, putting her phone in her pocket. “She’s not from the government or something?”

“Oh, she’s from the government,” Jordan said with a smirk. “Just not ours. Except...” They turned back to Celeste and motioned to their ears. “I thought that...?”

Celeste reached up and felt her rounded ears. “Yeah, what’s—oh! Why am I not an elf now?”

“If it’s okay to ask that, yeah.”

Celeste chuckled sensibly. She most assuredly did *not* giggle. “Human world, human body.” She raised an eyebrow. “Did they not tell you about the multiverse?”

“A bit, but—oh, come on.” They opened the door fully and motioned inside. Celeste walked in and looked around the homey living room. Jordan stayed at the door. “I’m off work and about to start prep,” they called.

Delores huffed and strode towards the door. “Well, why didn’t you say so?” she said as she crossed the lawn. She passed Jordan into the house. “And are you going to tell me what’s going on with her, or are you going to be all cryptic like with your other people?”

Celeste blinked. “Other people?”

“Well, they ain’t ‘boyfriends’ or ‘girlfriends,’ and Jordan talks about them a whole lot for them never being here.”

“Yeah, funny you should mention that,” Jordan said, their smile growing broader. “But anyway, Celeste, this is my neighbor Delores. She’s pretty much in charge of making sure my head stays on my shoulders, especially on Thursdays. Delores, this is Celeste. She’s from...”

Jordan trailed off, staring at Celeste, mouth hanging open, body almost perfectly still. The silence lasted more than a few seconds before Jordan broke it. “You’re here,” they said, their voice small.

“Okay,” you say, “how can I help.”

“I just need to remember,” she says, alternating between shaking out her hands and holding them in front of her. “Just need to...” She closes her eyes and shakes her head. “Don’t panic,” she says, but you can tell it’s not getting better.

You can feel Red and Green focus in. You close your eyes for a moment and take a breath to steady yourself before—

You open Blue’s eyes. “I have you,” you say as you put a hand on Celeste’s upper arm. “What do you need to remember?”

Celeste is breathing heavily. You can tell she’s consciously trying to keep the panic at bay. “You transform by remembering how it feels in a particular body,” she says.

“Got it,” you say. You go to ask for more, but she immediately follows up.

“Except I haven’t done much as a human,” she says. “Wasn’t human in any other world I went to, and the portal here’s in the middle of a public forest, so there wasn’t anywhere for me to go without public transportation. They already had a bunch of info on this world, naturally, so I just moved on.”

You think through what she said and the implications. “How did you get here?”

“Got a ride from one of the lighthouse staff,” she says and laughs bitterly. “My longest experience as a human is a tense car ride.”

You shrug. “Would another car ride help?”

Celeste turns to you and winces. “Can’t hurt,” she says. “I...” She takes another shaky breath. “I don’t know how long I’ll be asleep for if I sleep now.”

You get to your feet and help her up, and the two of you quickly make your way out to your car.

You help her into the passenger seat. You shut the door and run around the car and get into the driver’s seat. You reach for the ignition before she stops you.

“Wait,” she says, one hand out and the other gripping the seat belt. She closes her eyes and runs her fingers along the seat belt, tracing the textures and patterns.

And you see dull sparks wash over her from her fingertips back. Her hair loses a bit of its vibrancy, her height drops slightly, and her ears go from pointed tips to rounded edges.

You see her breathing stabilize. “Better?” you say.

She takes one last deep breath and lets it out slowly. “Yeah,” she says. “Much better.”

You smile. “That is good. Still tired?”



# A Limitation

It's later that night after everyone else has left. Celeste is unpacking her magic pockets in your guest room, and you're collapsed on your couch letting yourself unwind from another chaotic Thursday Night Pasta.

As chaotic as it can be, though, it's worth it. All three of you agree on that.

"Jordan?"

You look up to see Celeste—still fully the elf you remember visiting Red—leaning against the doorframe to your living room. She's holding a small plastic pouch.

"I think I have something for you," she says. You sit up as she walks over to your couch, though you think you see her stumble a little.

"You okay?" you ask.

"Yeah," she said with a wave of her hand, "just been a long day, you know?" She hands you the pouch.

It triggers a memory, and you hand it back. "It's not for me," you say, "but I've got the next part." You get up and walk briskly into your bedroom. You rummage through a couple of piles of junk until you find it: a footlong piece of blue parachute cord, the ends burnt and fused together.

You walk back into the living room to see Celeste hunched over, one hand pinching the bridge of her nose. You quickly rush back over to the couch and put a hand on her shoulder.

"You sure you're okay?" you say.

"Yeah," she says, though it's a little more strained. "Just exhausted. Tends to happen when I use a lot of magic."

"Okay," you say, backing off a little. "Did you do a lot of magic earlier?"

"No, just the bond spell," she says. "But after the day I've had I'm not too surprised."

You nod. "So just getting some rest will help?"

"It should," Celeste says. "Between my innate magic and the ambient magic, I should be okay..."

All three of you wince at that. "What ambient magic?" you say as gently as you can.

That wakes her up. She swears in some language none of you recognize. "I need..." She drops her hand from her face and starts looking at it. "I need to be human."

"You're actually here."

Celeste smiled gently. "I'm here. Euty says hi."

"Actually," Jordan said with a nervous chuckle, "they're wondering where Kass is."

Celeste motioned over her shoulder. "Dropped him off at the Lighthouse. The I.T. guy—sorry, person—was really excited to have an intern."

Jordan nodded... and kept nodding. "Okay," they said. They staggered over to a chair and collapsed in it. They took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "No, that's not enough," they muttered. Another breath, this one let out with an oath of, "holy mother-forking shirtballs."

Delores stepped forward. "You ok there, Jordan?"

Jordan nodded. "Yeah," they said with a grin, "yeah I am." They took a breath and stood up. "Delores, this is Celeste. She's from the same place one of my people is from, and until she showed up I wasn't entirely sure it was real."

Delores raised an eyebrow. "You want to try that again?"

"She's an alien."

Delores looked to Celeste and back to Jordan. "Like from outer space?"

"Parallel universe, but yeah."

Delores looked back to Celeste. "She doesn't look like an alien."

"Yeah, because—" Jordan stopped short. "Actually, I'm still confused about that part." They looked back to Celeste. "Can you run it by me again?"

Celeste nodded. She turned to Delores. "First, parallel universes exist. Second—" She turned to Jordan. "When you go to a world, you become something from that world. So, this is Human Earth; I'm now a human."

Delores looked unimpressed. "As opposed to, what, a unicorn?"

"An elf from a magical kingdom ruled by an immortal queen," Jordan said with a smirk.

The conversation was interrupted by a series of thuds against the front door accompanied by a muffled "Hands are full!" from the outside.

Jordan hopped up and opened the door. A larger man carrying three catering trays stacked on top of each other shimmied through the door. "Got room on your counter?" he said.

"No, but the table's clear," Jordan answered. "Want a hand?"

The man didn't let Jordan finish the question, already walking quickly through the living room to the kitchen.

“Well, that’s awfully convenient,” Delores said, turning to Celeste and looking thoroughly unimpressed.

Celeste narrowed her eyes. “What do you mean?”

“Table’s not clear!” the man yelled from the kitchen.

Jordan groaned and moved toward the kitchen. “Just don’t kill each other,” they muttered as they passed between Celeste and Delores.

“I’m just saying,” Delores said once Jordan passed, “it’s easy to say you’re some elf-thing from another dimension when you *just happen* to look like a normal human being now.”

Celeste took a deep breath and let it out slowly. This was a friend of Jordan, the person she was here to help, and therefore not someone to antagonize.

“I’m sure there’s some cosmic mumbo-jumbo reason for it, right?”

Celeste matched her gaze. “Do you think I’m lying?”

Delores held up her hands. “Look, lady, if you want to be weird, just be weird. God knows the kind of people we get here on Thursdays. You don’t need to make up a whole story about it.”

“I’m not making this up,” Celeste ground out, clenching her fists to keep from raising her voice.

“How do I know that?” Delores answered, hands on her hips.

“Oh, for—” Celeste bit her lip to silence whatever she was about to say and just stared at her hand. She took two more breaths to steady herself and calm her mind, ignoring the chatter from the kitchen or whatever Delores was saying next, focusing on the flexing of her fingers and how it *should* be just slightly different...

A wave of dull sparks shot from the tips of her fingers up her arm and swept over the rest of her. Her posture grew a little straighter, her legs and arms just a hair longer, and the tips of her ears sharpened.

“JESUS MARY AND JOSEPH!” Delores shrieked and stumbled backwards into an easy chair, arms outstretched to put as much between her and Celeste as possible.

Celeste blinked back into awareness of her surroundings to see Delores’ skepticism replaced with fear. Jordan rushed into the room, the other man right behind them.

Celeste looked at Jordan and grimaced. “Sorry?” she said.

“Get this demon away from me!” Delores yelled from her seat.

“What demon?” the man said, walking to Delores’ side.

“OKAY!” Jordan yelled, arms to the sides, one hand toward Celeste and the other toward the other two. They looked back and forth between the two groups, any patience clearly used up. They glanced at Celeste’s ears before closing their eyes and sighing.

“So you can transform back?” Jordan said.

“Princess Margo—the one I stabbed,” she added to Delores, “developed a spell to visualize bonds of love. They can be familial, friendly, reverent, romantic; but this should let you see them.” She held the glyph towards Todd.

Todd muttered something under his breath before quickly reaching out and touching the glyph. And he saw.

Faint threads gathered around him and Delores, branching away with most leading back towards the house. He saw the other people gathering around the back door and the threads connecting them to each other and to him. And as he watched, he saw Jordan exit the house and start walking towards him, two particularly bright threads curving away from them: one cyan, one magenta.

He turned back to Celeste, tears in his eyes.

Celeste broke the spell and looked contrite. “I’m sorry, Reverend,” she said quietly.

Todd shook his head. “For what?”

“I thought you’d be able to see the connection between yourself and...” She trailed off.

“And God?” Todd said with a bark of laughter. “My friend, God is not so easily seen. No...” He blinked away a few more tears, his smile growing broader by the second. “But where two or three are gathered, He is there.” He looked from Celeste to Delores to the approaching Jordan.

“No, Celeste,” he said, gripping her shoulder, “not in the way you imagined, but you have shown me my God today. But now I have to rewrite Sunday’s sermon.”

With that, he clapped Celeste on the shoulder and walked off briskly, giving Jordan a fist bump on the way out.

Jordan turned to watch him go as they walked up to the group. He turned back to Celeste and smirked. “Did you show him the, uh...” They motioned vaguely with their hands. “The magic sight thing?”

Celeste just watched Todd another moment before shaking her head with a smile. “So,” she said, “you follow a god of love?”

Jordan nodded.

Celeste grinned. “That’s good,” she said. She nodded some more. “Yeah,” she said absently, “this is going to work.”



Celeste will return

Celeste gave her a lazy salute as she watched her make her way out of the living room.

“So let me get this straight,” Delores said, sitting on a tree stump while Celeste leaned against the chain link fence. “You stabbed a princess, and in return she let you go?”

“Gave me a mission, but yeah, she did.”

“Lord have mercy,” Delores shook her head. “You’re a lucky bitch, you know that?”

“Oh, I know it,” Celeste said. She lowered her head and sighed. “Though, to be honest, I have no idea what to do next.”

“What, with the other one? Alex?”

“Alec, yeah,” Celeste said. “Unless something’s changed in the few hours I’ve been in this world...” She shook her head. “We don’t have a portal to their world. No one’s been there, and no one’s come from there.”

Delores nodded. “So how do you go about finding a world?”

Celeste shrugged. “Hell if I know. Mostly I just followed the Caretaker around; they’re the one the finds the portals...” She blinked. “So I’ll probably need to corner them for a conversation when I get back. Thanks.”

Delores smirked.

Pastor Todd chose that moment to walk up. “So I have to ask,” he said with an easy smile, “is God known in other worlds?”

Celeste tilted her head slightly. “Maybe,” she said after a moment. “What’s your god’s name?”

“God,” Delores snarked.

“Well,” Todd said with a glance at Delores, “the first time He was asked, He just said, ‘I am who I am.’”

Celeste bit her lip and nodded slowly.

Todd narrowed his eyes. “Is that funny?”

Celeste smiled, clearly holding herself back. “You have to admit,” she said, “it’s textbook enigmatic.” She shook her head. “What’s he a god of? What’s his domain?”

Todd pursed his lips and gave the question some thought. “He’s really a God of a people more than a concept. But...” He gave a half smile and shrugged. “If I had to say, I’d probably say He’s the God of love in all its forms.”

Celeste perked up at that last bit. She pushed away from the fence and started making motions with her hands, leaving glowing trails in their wake. “I can’t say whether I’ve heard of him,” she explained, “but I am learning about love.” She finished her motions and left a glowing red glyph in the air an inch away from her hand.

“Yeah,” Celeste said weakly. “Probably not my best move.”

“I don’t blame you, but...” They winced. “Yeah, probably not.” They turned to Delores. “Do you believe me now?”

Delores straightened up in the chair. “What? She said—”

“I said it,” Jordan said firmly. “I’m the one that introduced her as an elf from another dimension. So can you at least not pick a fight with her until after dinner, please?”

Without waiting for a reply they stepped back, letting Celeste and the other man make eye contact. “Pastor Todd,” they said, “this is Celeste. She’s from Eutychia’s world. Celeste, this is Todd; he’s the head of the local church.”

They took a deep breath and let it out as they lowered their arms. “Delores, I’m sorry for being short,” they said, sounding much more tired. “If you can listen while I start the pasta, I will explain as much as I can.”

Delores looked up at Todd.

“Don’t worry,” Todd said, turning to Celeste and winking. “I’ll keep an eye on her.”

With a grunt of affirmation Delores got up and followed Jordan into the kitchen.

Todd took her place in the chair and motioned to one beside Celeste. “So,” he said as she sat down, “you’re an elf?”

Celeste nodded and motioned to an ear.

Todd nodded. And kept nodding. After a moment he stopped and shook his head. “Yeah,” he breathed, “I still don’t know what to do with that.”

Celeste shrugged. “So you’re a religious leader?”

Todd smirked. “We can quibble about definitions, but yes.”

“Is me being here a problem?”

Todd’s face fell. “I don’t think so,” he said. “I’ve found that God rarely requires me to disbelieve what I see; only to believe in what I don’t.”

Celeste smiled uneasily. “I should probably avoid magic though, right? Based on...” She motioned toward the kitchen.

Todd looked up and stared her in the eyes. “Yeah,” he said. “That’s a good idea for now.”

Over the next hour, people began to trickle into Jordan’s house with various small dishes or serving implements. Celeste realized too late that she was still an elf, but the first person to notice asked if it was a costume. She went with it.

(Jordan did take her mage robe and lock it in their bedroom, though.)



When a couple of families with kids showed up, the house got infinitely more chaotic. Most of it spilled out into the backyard where a couple of groups of kids began running around indiscriminately, but even with the adults inside it was a strange combination of people acting like guests and people going straight for things in the kitchen as if they lived there. Often the same person!

Eventually a consensus was reached in the kitchen that things were ready, so everyone made their way out to the backyard.

“Okay,” Jordan said calmly to the adults gathered, “Pastor Todd brought three trays of biscuits left over from the breakfast this morning, so please for the love of everything take as many as you want.” The group chuckled at that. “Also, if you haven’t met her, this is Celeste.” Jordan motioned to her, and she waved gently at the group, getting several nods and waves back. “She’s a friend from out of town staying with me for a few days. Anything else?”

There were a few negative murmurs and shakes of the head around the group, which was enough for Jordan.

“All right, then.” They took a big breath and faced out toward the back yard.

They clapped twice. “Are ya ready, kids?”

“Aye, aye, Captain!” everyone—adult and child alike—responded.

“Then let’s eat!”

And the general chaos became a more focused chaos as a group far too big for Jordan’s small house and kitchen made their way through, grabbing plates of spaghetti and vegetables and other various side dishes different individuals had brought. And, thankfully, biscuits.

Celeste took a seat on a small sofa and started tucking in. She felt someone sit next to her but didn’t notice who until they started talking.

“I’m sorry about earlier,” Delores said.

Celeste took a moment to swallow her food and her pride. “I’m sorry too,” she said, turning to make eye contact. “I know it’s a lot.”

“Jordan’s a special kid,” Delores continued. “And sometimes they don’t do a great job of looking out for themselves.”

“I get it,” Celeste said with a smile. “I really hope I can help them.”

“All three of them?”

Celeste grinned. “You get it,” she said.

“So,” a man said nearby. “What brings you to our neck of the woods?”

Celeste glanced around the room to see pretty much everyone looking her direction with various degrees of attention. “Well,” she said, “how much do you know about Jordan’s... uh...”

“Their people,” Delores helpfully supplied.

There were some nods around the room. “Eutychia and Alec,” Todd added from the back corner which brought more nods of understanding.

“Right, well,” Celeste said, preparing her words. She’d gone over the subject with Todd beforehand, and they agreed that the broad strokes were okay as long as some of the *specific* details were glossed over.

“They’re long-distance,” she explained. “Lots of reasons why, but they are. They’ve never been able to see each other in person, and they weren’t sure it would ever be possible.”

“How does that work?” someone else said. “I mean, people go to Africa all the time, right? Where’s someplace you can’t go?”

“It’s a long story,” Todd supplied from his corner.

“Personal details,” Celeste added with an apologetic smile, hoping that would be enough.

It was. The questioner nodded and motioned to continue.

“Anyway,” Celeste said, “cutting out that long story, I’ve met Eutychia, and now I’ve met Jordan. Now I just need to find a way to Alec.”

“So you’re like a private investigator?” someone else said.

Celeste shrugged. “I think I’m more of an explorer, but sure.”

“So you just... explore? How does that work?”

Celeste smiled. “Pretty well, actually. There’s a lot out there. Lots of people, lots of stories...” She nodded to herself. “There’s always something to learn.”

The person who asked clearly wasn’t satisfied with the answer. “But do people pay you for that?”

Celeste paused, at a complete loss as to how she should answer the question.

“Oh, she works for the government,” Delores cut in.

“Of course she does,” someone else said. “You know they pay people to count bees?”

The majority of the room shifted their focus to the new speaker, with some agreeing with them and others explaining that it wasn’t that simple. Celeste breathed a sigh of relief and leaned over to Delores. “Thanks for the save,” she whispered.

“Don’t thank me yet,” Delores answered. “I still want to hear the real answer for myself.”

Celeste chuckled to herself. She leaned in closer and whispered straight in her ear, “I’m on parole.”

Delores blinked. “Okay, no,” she said at a normal volume, “I have to hear this.” She picked up her empty plate and got up. “Meet me in the back yard when you’re done.”