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*Kelsey  
Pretzer*

# An Entirely Different Business

Scene: *PALADIN* sits behind a desk, a sign over the top of it reads *NAME EMPORIUM: IPA CERTIFIED*. He is in an emerald green business suit, modest but loud at the same time. Two men and a woman are in line. The woman has a baby in her arms. *ALL* are wearing extravagant, outrageous outfits with bright colors and gaudy accessories. *The first man exits.*

**PALADIN**            Next!

**KILLIAN**            I'd like to change my name, please.

**PALADIN**            That's usually why people come see me. What can I do for you, exactly?

**KILLIAN**            I want to keep the name but I'd like to change the spelling.

**PALADIN**            You're in the right spot. I am IPA certified. [*Sees KILLIAN'S confusion.*] Don't worry, don't worry. It just means I have the International Phonetic Alphabet at my disposal so I have a few more letters than the rest of you. What's your name?

**KILLIAN**            Killian West.

**PALADIN**            I have just the letter. At the end of your last name we're gonna add an 'e.'

**KILLIAN**            Westie?

**PALADIN**            It's still pronounced West. That extra 'e' is really prestigious. Doesn't change the name but subconsciously changes the meaning. People don't mess with extra 'e's.

**KILLIAN**            Killian West-extra-e. I already feel more important. Can I practice my signature?

PALADIN                   *(Slides KILLIAN a piece of paper and pen.)* Knock yourself out, kid. That extra 'e' is gonna take some getting used to. Don't intimidate yourself by trying to perfect it too fast. It's gonna make you a well-rounded, logical person. Now you've got expectations to live up to.

KILLIAN                   *(Writes his name, admires it.)* That . . . is a strong name.

PALADIN                   'Course it is. Wanna work a few more letters into your first name?

KILLIAN                   Can you?

PALADIN                   *(Looks at the signature.)* Well, let's see . . . you spell it K-I-L-L-I-A-N? What if we add a 'y' between the last 'i' and the 'a'?

KILLIAN                   Killy-Anne?

PALADIN                   It won't be pronounced any differently, but that 'y's gonna make you exotic because no one's ever seen a 'y' like that in a name like yours. You know what it means? Your name?

KILLIAN                   I'm pretty sure my father said it means fierce.

PALADIN                   And a fierce name like that with an exotic 'y' will have the ladies tripping over themselves to get to you.

KILLIAN                   An extra 'y' can really do all that?

PALADIN                   Are you kidding? Your name is all that is ever really yours. It's what defines you as a person. It's what makes an individual spectacular. Trust me, there's something intriguing about people with 'y's in their names because it's not a common letter. You want to be intriguing, right? *(Before KILLIAN can respond.)* Well this 'y' with the 'e' we just added to your last name is gonna make you an unstoppable force! It's practically yelling, Watch out world, here comes a success!

*(The woman with the child, ADDISON, speaks up impatiently.)*

ADDISON                   Whatever happened to, "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet"?

PALADIN Do you know how many different variations of roses there are nowadays? Too many to not give them individual, unique names. Know why? Because everyone's looking for the next best thing. With all these people trying to be the latest and greatest, you've got to be bold to keep up. Why are you butting in anyway? You're in the same line as he is.

ADDISON To name my child! The hospital doesn't do it anymore now that names are a business all their own, so I've gotta take a half a day off of work to wait in your line.

KILLIAN Do you have a name in mind?

ADDISON Christian. Christian Scott.

KILLIAN Strong, handsome name. Is he named after anyone?

ADDISON My ex-fiancé, Christian, and my father—

PALADIN (*Butts in.*) Scott, perhaps? You sure I can't offer any . . . better suggestions? As a professional, of course.

ADDISON Suggestions?

PALADIN Sure, he's a handsome baby . . . wouldn't want a kid like that growing up just average, would you? Here at the Name Emporium, I guarantee your kid will be extraordinary. I can guarantee this guarantee because my names are the best. If you've got one of Paladin's surnames or last names—original or second generation alteration—you're the upper echelon of named folk.

ADDISON Did you just hear yourself?

PALADIN 'Course I did. I say that speech six times a day, at least.

ADDISON Then do you hear how ridiculous it is?

PALADIN The business of names is a ridiculous one, missy, but it's the only thing everyone needs besides a coffin. How would you be remembered without a name?

ADDISON            It's not you that should be remembered, it's what you do that people should be taking a second glance at.

PALADIN            Oh sure, if you're talking long run.

ADDISON            Life's not exactly a short run, is it?

PALADIN            Maybe not, but a good name sure would make it an easier run to run, don't you think?

ADDISON            I think a name is nothing more than a way to politely distinguish one person from another.

PALADIN            And what's your name?

ADDISON            (*Proudly.*) Addison Miller.

PALADIN            GAH! How boring! How safe!

ADDISON            (*Offended.*) I like my name.

PALADIN            Don't we all once we get them perfect? How many people tell you that you look like an Addison?

ADDISON            Quite a few.

PALADIN            (*Pretends to be surprised.*) Oh, did I just make a point? What if you renamed yourself Ashley?

ADDISON            I wouldn't.

PALADIN            Why?

ADDISON            I already have a name.

PALADIN            Exactly! It's yours. You don't want anyone else's because you like the one you got. It's you. My job is just to help those people who don't like what their parents named them find a name to be proud of. I'm helping people find themselves. You should be thanking me for the extra letters I've given to this community! It's why we're great! (*Calms himself back down and composes himself.*)

Now, are you sure I can't help you spice up your very plain existence?

KILLIAN I think you have a beautiful name, Addison.

ADDISON Thank you . . . glad to know someone appreciates modesty.

PALADIN *(Playing along, humoring her.)* Ohhhh. Modesty is what you were going for? Well, now everything makes perfect sense! Modesty can work in a surname, you know, if you pair it with an extravagant last name.

ADDISON For example?

PALADIN For example: Weste. Modest first name plus that extra 'e' last one shows that you know you're better than the rest of us but it'd be rude to rub it in our faces. Essentially who you are now in theory . . . but with a last name like Weste . . . or whatever, really, it's just an example of course . . . then you'd be that precocious person in fact.

ADDISON *(Begins to truly consider what he has to say.)* So—

PALADIN Ah-ah-ah! I do believe I'm with a customer right now. You'll have to wait your turn. *(To KILLIAN.)* Is there anything else I can do for you today?

KILLIAN How much would the 'y' and the 'e' cost me?

PALADIN Thirty flat. You could even work on your middle name as well . . . one more letter free before the price goes up. What is it, your middle name?

KILLIAN Robert.

PALADIN You wanna throw an 'o' on the end for no extra charge? I mean, if you're gonna reinvent yourself, you might as well go all the way. Right, Addison?

KILLIAN Killian Roberto Weste . . . what do you think, Addison?

ADDISON *(Considers, but not quite convinced.)* It's a bargain, no denying that.

KILLIAN *(Puffs out his chest, tries to impress her.)* Well, then I'd be stupid not to add it.

PALADIN My sentiments exactly! *(Fills out a form, hands it to him.)*  
Congratulations. You are now the proud owner of a new 'y,' 'o' and 'e.' The 'y,' like I said before, is gonna make you exotic. The 'o' is a romance vowel. That's gonna fix your sex drive, mi amigo. And the 'e' is just regal. *(To ADDISON.)* The kind of name that you're not afraid to settle down with, am I right?

ADDISON It is a pretty secure name.

PALADIN That's my job, you know. I help shape the future. I'm more important than you are in a child's life. Practically family, if you think about it. Call me Uncle Paladin. I name people names you can trust. Names you can love. Names you can get behind. If you ever decide to get behind a good, strong name, Addie, come on back here and I'll change yours for a heck of a deal. And any kid of yours in the future. A child is so easy to conceive, but a name . . . that's an entirely different business altogether.