

## **"You look like hell", "I just got back": Market Experiences**

**Disclaimer: Heathers reference galore, I recently watched Heathers again and forgot how quotable it is. Also, this is a dramatic rendition it was honestly fun and fine**

Sensory overload. Bright colours, sticky mud, pungent odours overwhelming the pleasant smells, and voices like the tide, falling and rising louder than before. That is the experience you get at the Masai market in Tanzania. As you wander down the aisles, all you hear is "Hi, look at my store. Just one minute. Looking is free." Looking better be free, you can't charge me for looking. Markets are the epitome of chaotic and while I'd like to identify as a chaotic neutral (sadly, I'm more of a true neutral), I'd rather you "fuck me gently with a chainsaw" than spend a long amount of time in another market. I generally don't like shopping (unless it is for books and then I can waste away hours); so, I knew as I entered the shark-tank that is the Masai market that I would not enjoy this experience, but somehow it managed to surpass my expectations and truly become hell on earth. Though, not hell in the typically brimstone and fire sense, but a personal hellscape consisting of overwhelming peer-pressure and inescapable guilt featuring mom-level experts at manipulating guilt and relentless negotiation aka the merchants at the hell-market.

Not only are the merchant's experts at emotional manipulation, the market itself is the perfect instrument. The physical way the market was designed is a seller's dream. The narrow aisles with stalls on both sides create a veritable gauntlet for consumers to navigate. Facing guilt trips on all sides, if one makes the mistake to enter a stall the exit is promptly blocked and the ignorant buyer now hostage. While some may consider the use of the word hostage an exaggeration, it is not. Once you enter a stall, it is incredibly difficult to manoeuvre your way free - both emotionally and physically. The only exit is promptly blocked by the merchant and if attempt to leave you are bombarded with a variety of guilt trips ranging from "my mom is in the hospital" to "I don't have a lunch today." Being trapped in a stall that is a part of a winding path of stalls, being extensively guilt tripped it is no wonder most of us did not make it out without buying anything. Honestly, if I hadn't left early I probably would have walked out with something too.

Technically, the hell-market is a place of bartering and supposedly authentic deals. This is blatantly not true once you take one step inside. For the latter, the evidence lies in the repeated, replicated objects. Not that the sales-people won't try to convince you otherwise. But the fact remains that their stall has the exact same shit as the next and the one next to that and so on and so forth. For the former, I dare you to waltz into that market and try to barter against their magical mom-like guilt trips. It's impossible, hell you will probably end up paying twice what it's worth. Now, one might think that other market experience will aid one in this situation. LIES. This market is unlike any I have experienced before. They are experts at divide and conquer and once they have you cornered, they are relentless and will not take "hapana" for an answer.

In the unlikely event you decide to visit the Masai markets, here is some advice. Follow it and you might escape unscathed and your wallet intact:

- Stick together at all costs. DO NOT GO ALONE!
- Bring a small amount of small denominations of cash. Nothing is more awkward than bartering down an item, then needing change.

- STICK TOGETHER
- Harden your heart and soul. Be ready to withstand all kinds of emotional manipulation.