

He spent the next couple of days talking with the scientists who came to see him, reading the books Pae brought him, and sometimes simply standing at the double-arched windows to gaze at the coming of summer to the great valley, and listen for the brief, sweet conversations out there in the open air: birds: he knew the singers' name now, and what they looked like from pictures in the books, but still when he heard the song or caught the flash of wings from tree to tree he stood in wonder like a child.

He had expected to feel so strange, here on Urras, so lost, alien, and confused—and he felt nothing of the kind. Of course there were endless things he did not understand, he only glimpsed, now, how many things: this whole incredibly complex society with all its nations, classes, castes, cults, customs, and its magnificent, appalling, and interminable history. And each individual he met was a puzzle, full of surprises. But they were not the gross, cold egoists he had expected them to be: they were as complex and various as their culture, as their landscape; and they were intelligent; and they were kind. They treated him like a brother, they did all they could to make him feel not lost, not alien, but at home. And he did feel at home. He could not help it. The whole world, the softness of the air, the fall of sunlight across the hills, the very pull of the heavier gravity on his body, asserted to him that this was home indeed, his race's world; and all its beauty was his birthright.

The silence, the utter silence of Anarres: he thought of it at night. No birds sang there. There were no voices there but the human voice. Silence, and the barren lands.

On the third day old Atro brought him a pile of newspapers. Pae, who was Shevek's most constant companion, said nothing to Atro, but when the old man left he told Shevek, "Awful trash, those papers, sir. Amusing, but don't believe anything you read in 'em."

Ursula Le Guin, The Dispossessed.