

Ash Summers

“The hero Kendall Rogers has failed...” That says it all. The moment you heard your no-good ex’s name, you knew that whatever weird thing that was going on was their fault, and you are going to have to bail them out again.

Just like the last time.

The two of you were out by the cabin at the pond. You know, the cabin that your grandparents left you. It might even be worth a pretty penny, if only you could find someone who would be willing to buy a cabin next to the Temple of the Shadowy Text—a temple filled with weird cultist freaks. Not going to happen, but something to daydream about while wasting your life away at a mind-numbing convenience store job.

Anyway, there you were—out for a romantic weekend in the woods—when a pack of nightgaunts attacked the cabin. Heck, the only reason you knew they were nightgaunts was from stories told by that creepy kid you used to babysit for. Cass Peterson. That was their name. The kid used to tell you all sorts of stories about adventures that they used to have with the dream wizard, Meher Madoff, in the magical land of Sleepy Valley.

Anyway, there you were—surrounded by a pack of monsters out of some kid’s imagination, and all you had were the objects in the cabin. But you knew one thing about nightgaunts from the stories—they were allergic to salt. So you grabbed your old grandpappy’s shotgun, filled it with rock salt from the kitchen, and blasted those nightgaunts away.

When you revived your ex, who had fainted in a puddle of their own urine, they just babbled about how those things must have been following them, and how they were this “hero” who travelled between the worlds of Sleepy Valley and this one.

If it weren’t for the kid’s stories of Sleepy Valley and the now-dissolving puddle of ectoplasm on the floor, you might have dismissed it as someone’s bad dream. But killing monsters doesn’t pay the bills, so you were still stuck at your dead-end minimum-wage retail position.

Oh, and that other one—your ex, Kendall Rogers—you left them there in the cabin while you drove back to town. That relationship was over, and they could deal with the next pack of monsters on their own.

Anyway, here you are, in a... library? You guess? Only libraries don’t have trees growing in them, with shelves carved from the branches. But there are books, and if there are books, this must be a library. Or a bookstore. No, it’s definitely a library. Bookstores serve coffee and baked goods.

You're not sure, but you suppose this might be that Sleepy Valley place you keep hearing of? And you recognize other people from the town of Shady Springs here with you.

People You Know

- Kendall Rogers, the Failed "Hero" -- your no-good ex, who is always getting into trouble but can never get out of it themselves.
- Cass Peterson -- the kid you used to babysit for. They used to tell you all sorts of crazy stories about adventures in a magical land called Sleepy Valley.
- Quinn Anthony -- some monk or high priest or grand poobah or whatnot of the Temple of the Shadowy Text. Probably a crazy cultist. Although... "Shadowy Text"? Library? There could be a connection.
- Meher Madoff -- Supposedly some "dream wizard" from Sleepy Valley whom the kid would talk about. If nightgaunts and Sleepy Valley and magical libraries filled with talking trees are real, perhaps wizards are as well.
- A large tree in the corner -- Okay, you only know them about as well as you can know a talking tree who spoke to you through a magically glowing shard of glass that your ex once left at your place (well, it wasn't glowing at the time), but you do recognize the voice. Perhaps you had better ask them what's going on. Why not? That sounds perfectly normal.

Goals

- Screw over your ex -- okay, you're bitter. But in your defence, they are a useless sack of walking meat who messes up everything they touch. And the tree did blame them. And you'd trust a talking tree over your ex any day.
- Save the day -- *someone* has to fix what your ex broke. Again.
- Protect the kid. You've got a soft spot for them. And they did teach you how to defeat nightgaunts.
- And get paid for it. You don't want to have to go back to your dead-end job, though who would pay for monster-hunting?

Items and Sheets

- A shard of glass that might have once been part of a mirror. Your ex left this piece of junk at your place, and you just haven't gotten around to throwing it out yet.
- Some Runes.
- "Shady Springs" Bluesheet

Shady Springs

Shady Springs is a peaceful, normal town, nestled atop a hill among tree-filled valleys in a remote part of the state. It's a nice calm place to live away from the pollution and hassle of the big city. It might be only a matter of time before their warming and smog reaches here too, but for now Shady Springs is pristine, surrounded by unsullied nature.

The one distinction Shady Springs has, perhaps, is the Temple of the Shadowy Text, the primary worship place of a relatively minor religious figure. Most residents attend services intermittently. The local Festival of Tomes is sponsored by the Temple and draws some good-sized crowds, though the focus these days is more on used book sales and fair food than on anything terribly religious. Aside from during the festival, the town doesn't attract all that many tourists, though there are some B&Bs that do well for themselves in the spring and fall.

The civics classes teach that Shady Springs grew up around the temple, originally as a farming town, and grew slowly over time. Over a hundred years ago, there was a great war that conscripted heavily, and a memorial to the war dead sits in the town square. But since then things have been peaceful, and most pay this history little mind.

It's not that Shady Springs is completely untouched by progress. The trains make it easier to visit the city than it was in the past, and supplies the shops with clothing and appliances made far away. Ice cream and air conditioners certainly make the summers more tolerable than they were for previous generations.

All in all, it's a perfect town, one that provides a pleasant, supportive environment for kids to grow up in. It may not look like much, but to the townsfolk, it's home.

Familiar Faces

- Cass Peterson: local teenager who's lived here their whole life.
- Kendall Rodgers: grew up here but now travels the world as a travel writer, only sticking around occasionally in the off-season.
- Quinn Anthony: dedicate at the Temple of the Shadowy Text, holds regular services and oversees the formal portions of the Festival of Tomes.
- Ash Summers: local young adult who's graduated school and now works at the convenience store.