

Kendall Rogers

"The hero Kendall Rogers has failed..." Oh, how those words sting. It was supposed to be an easy courier job -- go to the lake, pick up a stone, take a portal to the lake's mirror, pick up a stone there, and head back. Heck, you've done it twice before -- easy peasy. It always felt beneath you. And now you can't even do that right.

You're supposed to be this chosen hero, recruited from your home town of Shady Springs to... do heroic stuff, but you've always been an abject failure who can't even do anything right. It's like how your ex, Ash Summers, broke up with you. The two of you were out for a romantic weekend in their cabin by the pond over in Shady Springs when some nightgaunts who had been tracking you attacked the two of you. You tried to fight them off, but their rubbery skin just kept deflecting the blows. You were useless. Then your ex pulled out an old shotgun, filled it with rock salt from the kitchen, and blasted the nightgaunts to pieces. The old rock-salt-in-a-shotgun trick worked, and they were melting into a puddle of ectoplasm. However, you didn't catch all of it. Just before the blast hit, one of them knocked you out and you hit the floor hard. It was embarrassing. And to rub salt into your wounds (pun intended), Ash decided to leave, taking the only vehicle you had out of there. You had to hike back for miles in the cold, damp weather. That was it for you two.

Anyway, you've been the Library's hero (read: errand monkey) for over 15 years now. Every 5 years or so, you have to perform this epic quest -- sorry, epic fetch quest -- to grab some rocks on shore of the sacred lakes on each side of the mirrored worlds. Each lake takes you several days journey to reach! Then the librarians (read: talking trees) use the stones to replenish the magic pool that sustains the library and connects the twin worlds of Shady Springs and Sleepy Valley. There was some bit about the world being split into two identical copies, with the Library existing in between the two. And there was something about how this was done with Mirror Magic and how one world had Shadow Magic and the other had Dream Magic. This story must have had dream magic woven into it, since you always fell asleep at this point. Besides, trees are not particularly known for their conversational skills. You suppose you should be more curious as to why the trees are talking, but *shrug*. You've seen enough weird stuff that you don't question it anymore.

Anyway, you were supposed to bring back these stones, but one of them got stolen by a white rabbit wearing a waistcoat who was shouting about being late. You suppose you could have picked up another stone, but you weren't going to let a bunny get one over on you. So, you chased it down the rabbit hole and somehow ended up smoking weed with a giant caterpillar until the ghosts of your parents showed up to tell you what a loser you've been. So, you left through a garden (which had some tasty tarts) until you reached a wall that someone had been throwing rotten eggs at. Beyond the wall was just fire and brimstone and people being tortured, with a special seat reserved for you.

And then you woke up. Maybe you should have clued in that this was all just stuff you read somewhere (Hah! Take that, people who think you can't read!), but like you keep saying, you've seen enough weird stuff that you don't even question it anymore. By the time you got back to civilization, three more days had passed than should have. Either you were asleep for three days, or time went wonky - at this point, either seems possible.

Much as you miss the comforts of modern life (coffee and public transit, for starters), you needed to go back to the Library and tell them what happened. You have one of the two stones -- that's got to count for partial credit, right? And you could always go out and get another stone with another day out and another day back. You've got time, right? They wouldn't leave it to the last minute, would they? And if they did, it's their fault for not sending you sooner.

As if the end of the world cared whose fault it is.

People you Know

- Librarian Habibah -- a tree with a stick up their... whatever it is that trees have. Your boss. Sends you on epic fetch quests. Panics a lot.
- Senior Librarian Siris -- an older tree. Sleeps a lot. Doesn't talk as much.
- Ash Summers -- your ex from Shady Springs. Maybe they weren't too happy with having to fight off Nightgaunts on your romantic weekend in the woods, but it's not like you invited the monsters on the date with you. And your ex didn't need to leave you stranded in the woods afterwards either.
- Quinn Anthony -- high priest at some temple back in Shady Springs. You forget the name. Probably isn't important. You've sometimes seen them in the company of Noshi Sutherland.
- Noshi Sutherland -- kid you've seen in both Shady Springs and Sleepy Valley. Sometimes going on adventures with Quinn Anthony while in Shady Springs.
- Cass Peterson -- kid you've seen in both Shady Springs and Sleepy Valley. Sometimes going on adventures with Meher Madoff while in Sleepy Valley.
- Meher Madoff -- Hunter/stockbroker? Something or other in Sleepy Valley. You've sometimes seen them in the company of Cass Peterson.

Goals

- Be a hero! Or at least try not to screw things up any worse than they already are. You guess the end of the world is pretty bad, so that's a low bar.
- Impress the locals! You're the hero! And totally not a screwup. Okay, you are, but they don't have to know that.
- Talk to your ex. Do they still have a grudge? It wasn't your fault.
- Protect the kids. Because it sounds like a thing a hero would do.

Items and Sheets

- A shard of glass that might have once been part of a mirror. Part of an old mirror artifact. You found this on your travels. You used to have 2 of them, but can't find the other...
- A Stone from the Lake at the End of the World. You used to have 2 of them, but can't find the other... You hope this isn't becoming a habit.
- Some Runes.
- "Shady Springs" Bluesheet
- "Sleepy Valley" 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.

Sleepy Valley

Sleepy Valley is a calm, ordinary town, nestled among forested hills in a remote part of the country. It's a nice peaceful place to live away from the noise and stress of the big city.

It doesn't have much that makes it stand out from other towns, so it doesn't have much of a tourist presence, but it does draw some hunters and hikers in the warmer months who appreciate the untouched old-growth forest. The rest of the townsfolk live here year-round, working at shops and restaurants, farming, and making handicrafts.

The one distinction Sleepy Valley has, perhaps, is that over a hundred years ago, strange invaders came out of the forests and took over the town, using it as a base to expand into other areas before eventually being driven out. Some strange tales of the invasion have been passed down from people's grandparents and great grandparents, but no one alive today remembers it, and the details have passed into legend. There's a war memorial in the town square, but no one pays it much attention.

It's not that Sleepy Valley has been completely left behind by time. The highway makes it easier to visit the city than it was in the past, and supplies the market with fresh fruit and vegetables even in the winter. Snow plows and heating oil certainly make the winters easier than they were for previous generations.

All in all, it's an idyllic town, one that provides a nice, safe environment for children to grow up in. It may not look impressive, but to residents, it's home.

Familiar Faces

- Noshi Sutherland: local high schooler who grew up here.
- Rudra Brehm: only child of a local family, grew up here before going off to join the Peace Corps.
- Kanak Dorking: well-dressed local who's away on business a lot but frequents the bars when in-town.
- Meher Madoff: wealthy stockbroker who summers in a nearby hunting lodge.
- Hema P. King: well-known fantasy author who calls the town home.