

Cass Peterson

This can't be happening. This shouldn't be possible. And yet... it seems familiar.

You're just an ordinary kid. You live in a nice little house with a small yard and a pet goldfish. Your mom's a dentist. Your dad edits magazine articles. You're right on the edge of Shady Springs, so you got to play in the woods a lot as a kid.

You'd go out there, to this pond you liked. It was always so still and reflective, bright as the sky. You'd imagine you'd go through it and have adventures in a magical world of secrets and wonder.

There was this mystical figure there, Meher Madoff. They took you on grand adventures, hunting basilisks and dire tigers and wyverns. They'd show you magic, give you dreams of whatever you asked, guess your secrets, create beautiful spiraling webs of color. They'd listen to you talk about your life and your ideas like they really cared about you. It was adventure after wonderful adventure.

But that was all imaginary. I mean, it's not like stuff like that's possible in the real world, right?

You'd tell your babysitter, Ash Summers, stories about your adventures. They were always like, "Cass, you've got such an imagination!" They were always nice and baked you cookies, so you thought they must be right.

As you got older, you stopped going into the woods so much. You started rock climbing with friends. You went camping in other forests that didn't have magical pools. You still loved adventure, but you started to forget about the ones you had as a kid.

You're sixteen now. You don't need a babysitter. You tend to think about the future, not the past. You just wish that people would take you seriously, see that you're not just some silly kid any more.

But you still have a shard of mirror you found as a kid near the pool. You weren't sure if your parents would let you keep it, so you took it straight to your room without telling them. It's been there ever since. It's shiny, but it's not much to look at. You just left it there out of inertia.

Until today, when it started glowing and making that awful noise. And now you're here, in library that feels oddly familiar. And there's Meher Madoff, right in front of you. Does that mean it was all real?

And if the magical world of your childhood was real, do you really want to go back to Shady Springs? Or maybe it takes going to another world to find a place where you fit, where you matter, where people treat you like an adult.

People You Know

- Ash Summers: Your old babysitter. You spent a lot of time with them back in the day, but you're too old for that now. You see them occasionally around town, but you don't really know what to say.
- Meher Madoff: A hunter and mage from your adventures as a kid. They always took you on the most exciting and magical quests and ensured you got safely back to the pool. I guess they're real after all?
- Quinn Anthony: Works at the temple in town. You've always found the services boring when you've had to attend. All "Librarian this" and "tithe that".
- Kendall Rodgers: You've seen them around Shady Springs a few times, but you don't really know what their deal is. The alarm said something about them, though.

Goals

- Figure out what's going on.
- Decide whether you want to go home or go to Madoff's world of magic.
- Get somewhere safe, at least. This library seems like it's not doing so well.
- Maybe find someone who treats you with respect and is willing to, sorta, take you on as an apprentice or something.

Items and Sheets

- The shard you kept all these years.
- 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.