

Quiet!

Story by Pennsylvania Kite Weather

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The door crept open with absolute silence. Not even the complaint of a hinge announced Shelley's entry. A wool-lined outsole of a boot took the first cautious step inside, then her brown cloak was clutched close as she sidled through the gap. She drew her hood back to behold the sight of the ancient library.

A long-held breath was finally released from her chest. The two-week journey on the roads and in the wilderness had led her exactly where she wanted to be: wedged at the feet of two mountains, sitting in a copse of timeworn trees, was this structure built mostly out of chiseled rock, and adorned with wood and marble so intricately it had to have been assembled by magic from the gods themselves.

She gazed at the aisles of wooden bookcases lined up in a ring, each end facing the outside. The long alleys narrowed in between towards the center of the rotunda, altogether like the symmetrical rays of a cartoon sun. Though the shelves may have seen better days with some missing chips and splinters in them, they held valuable tomes within every inch of space—and some had to be one-of-a-kind.

Shelley didn't know where to start. All this encyclopedic knowledge had been sitting here untouched for centuries, supposedly. There was just one magical safety measure that she was repeatedly warned about. Realizing she shouldn't wear her satchel here, she spent a good minute lifting it from her shoulder and over her golden-brown locks. She carefully left it by the door before shuffling further in.

Though the floor had been surfaced with smooth stone, it had cracked and shifted in places to expose some soil, and curiously the odd blades of grass and patches of moss dotted the ground. The place had the earthy scent of vegetation mixed with the stuffy smell of old pages. Thank the gods there was not a wooden floorboard in sight. Shelley's bright, hazel eyes plotted out every step, scouring for any loose rocks to avoid as she approached the center, descending a wide stretch of steps.

High above, a dome of glass was filtering the natural sunlight, and vines of a pale-looking breed of ivy hung in threads and clusters from the roof supports like hanging baskets. If only she could climb up and gather some to bring it back to her teacher; he could identify anything. Shelley was here for something else.

As she entered the aisles, somebody was watching her from the back of a large marble horse statue, the animal reared up in distress. A figure with the appearance of a young woman lay casually against it, chin resting on her hands in white, silken gloves. A blood-red vest was buttoned up over a beige blouse, with a cream-colored, flowing skirt beneath her slim waist. Clear, crystal spectacles with circular frames balanced on her nose, like binoculars peeking out from the bob of blonde hair.

She slipped from her perch and began to glide down with scarcely a whisper. Her heels landed on top of a bookshelf softer than a mouse's footfalls, and she strolled along keeping surveillance of Shelley, who was studying the weathered spine of a book. The keeper hopped over her to the next bookcase and stooped down, crawling with a cat-like delicateness towards the girl. And just as she came within inches of Shelley—“Hi!” The shout echoed from just over her shoulder.

Shelley flinched, but managed to slowly turn around to come face-to-face with the floating librarian, who regarded her with a spritely smile.

“Pardon me, is there something I can help find for you?”



Shelley narrowed her eyes at the trick question. The best she could probably do was spell the title in the air with her fingers, but it wasn't worth the effort. The apprentice reached out and laid a hand on the keeper's cheek. Just a little push sent her away.

The keeper pouted as she drifted in a straight line into the next section and finally caught herself on a protruding book. She spied the girl who continued perusing as slowly as possible, pausing to bend over or edging forwards on tiptoe, eventually glancing over annoyed at the librarian. In reply, she just showed a little smirk and darted up and over the shelf. When Shelley looked for her it seemed she had vanished.

Or so she thought. Shelley was combing through the third aisle when the silence was starting to get her antsy. It wanted to hurry her along, or at least delude her into thinking she was hearing things, other than her breath through her nostrils.

"Psst!"

Shelley quickly looked up to spot the keeper peering over the shelf with a thin journal dangling between her two fingers. The devilish grin alarmed her. "Catch."

She covered her head with her arms as it bounced off her scalp with a flutter of pages. In that instant she scrambled to clutch it against her middle before it hit the ground. Shelley let out a long sigh as she straightened up, shooting the prankster a glare as she put the piece back on the topmost shelf, and then went on her way.

The librarian was slightly amused; perhaps the girl hadn't seen or felt the noticeable bit of puffiness in her front. It was worth getting another look.

And so the visitor was left to wander some more, allowing her guard to lower as several books about rare flowers were discovered, and eventually passed by. Shelley was diligent though, scanning every cover one by one. She was getting engrossed in the search.

As she went around a corner, the keeper reappeared on a path to walk into her. Worse, a heel went into the top of the visitor's foot. Shelley felt like she was stabbed, pinned to the spot; her pretty features screwed up into a frown of pure agony, but still, not a sound came from the apprentice. She shoved the keeper away and lifted up her leg to massage the throbbing spot inside her shoe. Again she tried to communicate her utter frustration with a look.

"Geez," came a huff. "What are you, born mute, or infused with steel? You don't even have a weapon to fight me off, huh?"

Shelley angrily managed to mouth *I'm an herbalist*.

"Ahh." The keeper nudged up her glasses. She only turned away and walked off again on her clacking heels.

Shelley cast an anguished look at the heavens as she regretted telling that to the mischievous figure. There was probably going to be another trap waiting just before the book she was probably looking for. But perhaps this was part of the test that Shelley was undergoing, too. No apprentice graduates without a bit of hardship. With that resolve, her shoes were shuffling along again.



It must have been several hours when the thought occurred to Shelley that she hadn't seen the keeper in a while. What was more pressing was the fact that she was running out of shelving to look at. Perhaps she missed it and was in for a myriad of anxious periods doubling-back and rechecking.

Could it have been stolen? Or were the rumors true that no one left here alive with a book, or that what she was looking for didn't even exist? She heard her stomach growl, convincing her that it was time for a rest. Her legs felt sluggish, or perhaps just thicker as they drew her pants more snugly around the thighs and rear.

But then she miraculously saw the first word in the title on the spine. Carved into the wide leather spine it surely was: 'Taluna's Completed Guide to Botany'...! How incredible it was that only a few copies of its pages were believed to be scattered around the world and lost to history, that even the scribbled notes of what someone thought they read from this long ago were still treated these days as legendary recipes from the master of the flora herself! And before her here the cover was bulky underneath with what had to be countless more secrets to glean.

Overjoyed she immediately went to look at the table of contents, but found both the pages she opened to coated in a sheet of dust. Particles floated up...

"Aahh-*CHOO!*" And she sneezed!

Shelley was the epicenter of the loudest sound made in the library in decades. It echoed, reverberated down the aisles and up to the rafters. The ominous energy she created wavered out, and then came right back into her. A tingle built up in her core. Besides dropping the book in fright, she was standing rigid and quickly realized her skin was swelling outwards.

She had to calm down, slow her breathing if she could, and push some of her accessories out of the way as they rustled against the unfurling of her form. So silent was she growing that it felt dreamlike, though it was interspersed by her nervous moans as the belt was being pulled taut around her. Shelley squeaked trying to separate the buckle, making it pinch her inflating waist. She gasped when it snapped like a rider's crop, and the rate she was growing suddenly doubled.

Shedding what she could, she pushed off her cloak from her back, flumphing into a heap, leaving her in her tan sleeved tunic. Her focus went to her buttons, wrenching them apart from the bottom to save her top from becoming maternity wear. At her feet, the straps of her boots cricked and cracked as they were forced to loosen. When an oval-shaped tear announced itself on her thigh, Shelley tried to shush it, or at least stifle a curse. With ballooning skin escaping from every angle, the girl decided she had to book it for the exit before it was too late. Disregarding her ragged breath as she ran, her belly quivered through the half-open tunic like a feast was swimming inside of her stomach with hardly the weight of food at all.

To her shock, the pesky pixie dropped down right in front of her, their middles colliding with a hollow bloomp. "No running in the library!" the keeper grinned and waggled her finger in Shelley's face. Arms seized around her blimping sides and squeezed, slowing the expansion, but by dragging her fingers along, the librarian coaxed out rubbery squeals that incriminated the apprentice further. "And keep your clothes on while you're here! So many naked visitors I've had to deal with over the years..." continued the chiding, ignoring how Shelley squirmed and grunted.

"Let's see..." the keeper mused and cast off her gloves, then suddenly, with a burst of strength, she hoisted and swung Shelley around like a big rubber ball, then shoved her into the bookcase beside her. It caused a thud and a precarious wobble from the shelves, making Shelley swell out into the thin set of hips pinning her in place. "At this rate your legs are going to be too swollen and fat to budge. That'd



make you stuck here forever, won't it?" Talon-like fingers clasped onto Shelley's chest, which already strained the buttons apart. A thumb slipped through the diamond gap, prodding between the stiffening, sensitive breasts. "Won't it?"

Shelley had no answer, tightly gritting her teeth and whining, pining for the keeper to just let her go. Talking would be a death knell. She didn't want to look down at the figure grinding against her, who also appeared to be shrinking. The belly of hers was taking up so much of her frame, it was forcing her taller. She felt the sides of her back lifting from the shelf behind her as well, as all around her lower body morphed into a spherical shape.

"Well, I can't blame you for wanting to stay," the keeper smiled sweetly up at her. "Who doesn't love a good read? And there's enough material here to keep someone busy forever...! By the way, do you still want to read what you've got there?"

Shelley watched the anthology get scooped up and it was held before her in earnest. "I've read this one from cover to cover," she carried on while flipping through pages aimlessly. "Taluna was a great documenter *and* an illustrator. You know she found a way to even transfer the scent of rare flower petals into the pages? Smell!"

For a moment, Shelley only saw another pair of greyed dusty pages before her, masking the picture of a fern and the spidery handwriting describing it. It pressed into her face; she inhaled the linty, undeniably moldy aroma, and it made her cough, then sneeze again. The keeper practically cannoned off the surge of growth to the girl's belly just then, eliciting a laugh as she collided with shelf across.

The blimping apprentice moaned pitifully as she tried to shift her legs in her fleeting moment of freedom. All that really budged were her shins as she rotated her rumbling globe of a body—what in blazes could be happening to her lower limbs?!

Her waddling was the motion that did her trousers in, as the seven-foot tall Shelley became simply too wide to encompass. Her waist, hips and back combined to form one giant, continuous curve for every clothing article below her brassiere to shred into scraps. Her chest was still covered with her tunic clinging to her upper body, but those mounds appeared to be shrinking in proportion from the sheer breadth of her frame.

The keeper caught up with ease and firmly shouldered her plaything in the side. Shelley gasped as she struck the shelf, her body so stiff she still rocked it with her apparent weightlessness.

"I'm impressed," remarked the librarian with a simpering smile as she leaned back against her front. Her nails played at the hem of the ridiculously stretched, white panties Shelley wore. "One: I don't know how this thing has held up." A twang sounded out as a finger picked at it. "And second, you're still not begging for me to stop. Do you lllllike it?" Immediately each finger began to wriggle, tickling and scritch at Shelley's bloated waist. Muffled, yet wild giggles escaped as the apprentice tucked in her lips to suppress her laughter. Shaking and shuddering, trying as she might to lean away, she was cramped, stuffed against the shelf as the keeper continued her teasing.

"Is there something funny to you about breaking the rules of this place...?" came the torturer's urging. Raucous laughter suddenly broke out, loud and unbridled from the apprentice. She could keep it in no longer, ballooning uncontrollably as a result. Threads frayed on her underwear, and her top rolled up to expose the underside of her wide breasts. The librarian beamed as she hovered higher and moved herself out of the way just in time for the visitor to nestle against both sides of the aisle. Wedged there, getting sandwiched across the acres of bare skin exposed on her enormous waist, Shelley started to cry



as all her voluntary movement was taken away from her. Though her upper sleeves had survived this long, seams broke around her bloated arms that were stretched out to either side.

The keeper clicked her tongue and descended onto Shelley's belly with the carefulness of a lunar landing. The four-inch heels sunk in slightly and were propped right back up on the tense expanse of skin. "Now how are you supposed to even turn a page looking like that?" she chastised. The librarian rocked her foot back and forth, her toes and her heel taking turns to push into the delicate fabric of Shelley's body. Quietly the apprentice whined as both women could hear a few tomes being pushed from their places, dropping like boulders from the shelves.

"All you had to do was not make a peep during your time here, but I suppose now you're stuck until you learn your lesson."

"Please..."

"Ehh?" The keeper glanced down at Shelley, whose desperate, shrill voice escaped from her throat for the first time. Her rosy, puffy cheeks were pouted in defeat, but her speech had the faintness of a violin's highest note.

"Let me go... Take away the magic, or something... and I'll never come back... *Please.*" As softly as she spoke, a rumbling grew louder within her innards.

"...Ahahaha. You know, there's a truthful saying," the librarian smirked as she leaned down.

"..."

"Every good book has its climax and conclusion...!"

And with that, Shelley heard a groaning that couldn't be coming from her skin. Her eyes widened as she felt the pressure from the shelves ease up on either side. For a harrowing moment, one could hear a pin drop.

Crash! Crash! Crash-crash! Crash-crash-crash! Like dominoes falling, the bookcases in their ring around the rotunda began a cacophony, comprised of wood crunching against wood, of leather tomes bouncing and slapping off the stone floor. Shelley glanced wildly about as she rose higher and higher above the collapsing library in her rampant, exponential expansion.

So much *noise*, and it was all her fault!

Her eyes squeezed shut as she could feel her frame pulsating, barreling forth despite the beads of sweat on her brow and the worsening strain through her vast stomach. She swelled even as her bottom half pressed over the clutter lying beneath her. Even though gravity had settled most of the din, Shelley was still creaking, groaning, and squealing as her spreading underside chafed against the floor. The keeper, always energetic, was delighted to levitate along Shelley's side and snuggle and cling to her prize, letting her cheek rub and her fingers play against the quivering, drum-tight skin.

Though the ceiling neared with its sprawling strands of ivy, she squeezed her eyes closed to the sight of it, teetering there. Growing helplessly too big, but weaker as well, she gave one last grunt of discomfort at the thousands of points of pressure humming throughout her. Shelley went rigid as her massive body shrieked its surrender throughout the entire library.

"NnnnoooOOO—!!"

BOOOOM!



Shelley popped and sent the loose volumes flying from the huge, sudden gust of air. Instead of pages scattering everywhere, only a brown cloak swirled and fluttered in its descent to drape over a toppled bookcase.

Silence had settled once again, and the librarian's laughing pierced the air. "Hee hee hee hee! If only they'd all just tell me what they're looking for...! I can't see why not...!" She picked herself up from the fallen shelf she was lying on and stooped for a book at her feet, one of the thousands that had just been misplaced. She smiled at the cover and tucked it under her arm. "Ahhh, I guess I have time to figure it out."

Floating just above the sea of tomes, she began the long, spirited search for its neighbors.

It was around early 2018 that a user in a Discord channel once brought up this idea and I ran with it. At first I was working with only one main character until I started considering what another personality could do to the mix.

Thank you so much for reading.

[Project: there is life outside this little circle, once boxed in]

