

- Tale of Fate #2 -

# **The Last Assistant**

**A Short Story By Shetira Anwae**

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## In Deep

The lep'rdeess moved slowly through the dense foliage. Every few feet she halted and looked intently at every stalk, every leaf and every vine. Her caution might have seemed frivolous at first glance but it was very well founded. This was Vegura, a world all too well known for its highly dangerous plant life. Any of the countless plants could well be the harbinger of death... or worse.

Shalie Miawae had been hired by the old Ashiri botany professor to gather samples deep in the woods. She hadn't been alone at the beginning. There had been seven other Ambwassi women. One by one, he had sent them off on errands deep into the dense foliage. Not one had returned.

"Damned old ass, sending us out to get samples alone in a place like this," Shalie hissed as she came upon a very unusual looking plant which stood out among the greenery. It was a tall, thick green stalk topped with seven massive bright orange leaves which formed a wide umbrella. A thick, shiny fluid dripped from some unseen orifice at the top of the plant. A sweet, peach-like odor hung about it.

Shalie slowly began to make her way around the plant.

The did her best to keep it in view while remaining in the cover of the dense foliage. Unfortunately, the thick underbrush which shielded her also concealed hidden dangers. She tripped on a branch and fell toward the plant, landing only a few feet from its stalk.

“Fucking shit!” the lep'rdess hissed as she struggled to her feet. A strange, gurgling noise came from within the alien plant. For a moment, Shalie stood staring as a pair of gooey tentacles slid out of hidden orifice and reached toward her. She shuddered and dove away from the groping tendrils, landing hard on the forest floor. She scrambled to her feet and stumbled a few times. Her sport top tore from her shoulders, leaving her modestly sized chest to bounce violently as she tried to regain her footing and put distance between her and the unusual plant. A few minutes later she came to a stop and leaned, panting heavily, on a massive tree trunk.

“I should really give that bastard a piece of my mind when I get back,” the lep'rdess huffed as she tried to catch her breath. “In fact.... after seeing that shit, I will!”

## Inviting Waters

Shalie was starting to get tired. She had struggled for five miles through the dense woods and there was still no sign of the massive field of glowing, golden-leaf herbs which she had been sent to collect samples from. What she did discover was a wide, shallow stream of swiftly flowing, crystal clear water.

“He didn't say anything about this,” Shalie muttered, looking up and down the path of the stream. She stepped out into the cool, ankle deep water and then knelt down on the well worn gravel which made up the bed of the stream. “This looks like a good, safe place to sit and rest for a bit.”

“Oh, that feels nice,” the lep'rdess whispered to herself as she let her finely curved rear settle into the cool water. She leaned back and stretched her legs. Her long, fluffy tail flicked about, splashing water all over her back. She smiled and playfully splashed water all over herself. She then lay, face down in the water and let it flow around her. It was a half hour before she finally rose and began to take another good look at her surroundings.

“Fuck this, I'm going to head back. I've gone way farther than he said. He must have messed up the directions or some

shit,” Shalie sighed as she looked around. In particular, her attention was drawn upstream. “This curves back toward the camp. If it’s all like it is here, it might be safer than going all the way back through the woods.”

The lep’rdess stood silently for a moment. Then she shrugged her shoulders and began to head upstream.

For nearly a mile, the stream remained shallow and rocky. The banks then drew close and the water deepened to knee height. The bed of the stream changed as well. Gone were the smooth pebbles. They were replaced by larger, sharper rocks.

“Maybe this wasn’t such a good idea,” Shalie murmured as she struggled to keep her footing. She didn’t stop though. Not far ahead, she could see the stream widen again.

It was not so much a widened stream that Shalie soon found herself in, but a large, very shallow pool. Steep banks surrounded the pool and the bottom was made up of soft, glimmering, silvery sand.

The lep’rdess looked around the pool’s perimeter. There was a veritable wall of greenery at the top of the banks but growing down into the pond were a large number of gnarled, ancient looking trees. At the far side of the pond was a low, wide waterfall which marked the place where the stream

continued on.

Shalie slowly moved out into the middle of the pond, gingerly testing every step. Then, after only a few dozen feet, she stopped. She sniffed at the air. A strange smell was wafting over the pond.

The scent was much like that of an Ambwassi woman. It wasn't exactly like an Ambwassi woman, however. It had an unusual, sharp quality to it. Shalie sniffed the air to get a better sense of just what it was.

"That... that smells like... her... but not," Shalie murmured as she began to move around in a circle, testing the air. "She must have come this way yesterday... it has to be her."

Shalie carefully began to follow the trail of the scent. It lead toward the far side of the pond, in the direction of one of the twisted trees. Her hand slipped into her small sampling bag as she walked. She drew forth a small but solid looking blaster pistol. For a moment she looked at it.

"Just in case."

## **She Must Be Here Somewhere**

Shalie approached the edge of the pond, where the scent of her vanished coworker was the strongest. There she was confronted by one of the most deformed trees she had ever seen. It's trunk and branches were horribly twisted. Patches of milky white fungus were growing in every nook or bend. In a few sheltered places, large, violet mushrooms grew out of the fungal mass.

“Um... Meyrie?” Shalie called, looking around the tree for some sign of the missing ty'gress. “This... this is where the smell's coming from.”

“Meyrie? I can smell you! Where are you?” Shalie yelled as she walked back and forth in front of the tree, getting closer each pass. There was no obvious way up the bank and no sign of the ty'gress who's scent was now so strong.

“She's got to be here somewhere,” Shalie muttered. “I can smell... she's here and she's alive.”

Shalie now walked up to one of the large roots which ran from the tree and into water. She leaned down and sniffed the bare bark. “Nothing.”

The lep'rdeess looked up the root to the base of the trunk,

where a large patch of the strange fungus grew. She moved closer and carefully leaned over to smell the fungus. She jerked back in surprise as her nose received a full dose of the missing ty'gress' scent.

“What the?” the lep'rdeess stammered, taking a step back from the fungus patch. “That... that can't be right!”

For a few moments, Shalie stood staring at the fungus. Then she took a step toward it. Her eyes rolled back and her mouth opened. For a moment she swooned. Then she seemed to regain her senses, or at least some of her senses.

“I... I need to sit down,” Shalie sighed. She fell against the tree trunk and slid down into a sitting position, pressing into the soft surface of the alien fungus. She stared blankly into the water. For a time she seemed completely paralyzed.

“I... I wonder where she is?” Shalie finally whispered, looking up at the sky, blinking. “The fungus... it has her scent. It... the fungus...”

“But... if... if it smells like her... what... what if it... what if it *is* her?” Shalie murmured. Then she looked down between her legs at the milky white mass. “Why... why does it feel... so.. so wet... so gooey?”



## Terror By The Pond

“Oh goddess... it's growing!” Shalie stammered as she watched the milky white fungus suddenly surge upward and flow over her abdomen. She tried to pull away, but it was too late. She was trapped.

“Oh fuck, let me go!” the lep'rdess moaned as she tried to wiggle free. The fungus was very flexible but it was also very strong. Despite her best efforts, there was nothing she could do. Suddenly, she stopped her struggles and her body tensed.

“Oh! Oh! My... my shorts! Where... did they... no! No! Not in there! Not my ass! Not... not so much! AIEEEEEEE!” Shalie screeched. She writhed and clawed at the surface of the fungus as it quickly encased her legs, chest and arms. She was now bound to her pose, sitting with her legs spread and arms to either side.

“Both... both holes... oh goddess... oh goddess...” the lep'rdess cried as she twisted back and forth in a desperate but futile attempt to escape the intense assault.

“No... no... not my... not my face!” Shalie screamed as the fungus surrounded her head and began to close over her mouth. Her voice trembled. Tears flowed from her eyes.

“Please! I don't want to go to the next life now! It's too soon! I'm not ready! Please! No! No! N... nmph... mmph! Nnnnnnn!”

The fungus filled her mouth before it completely covered her muzzle. Her bright green eyes stared out of the only hole left in her fungal prison. Her eyelids quivered as she stared into the sky. Then it was done.

The milky white mass shuddered. For a few seconds, the fungus grew into every place it could, filling its writhing victim's body. Then, the thickly encased feminine form began to melt away, adding its volume to that of the existing fungus. A few more seconds and it was over. Shalie was gone.

A new scent began to waft over the pond. It was the inviting scent of a beautiful lep'rdress.

## Evil's Due

“It never ceases to amaze me how naive these Ambwassi girls are,” the old professor laughed to himself as he stood in the pond, looking at the fungus which had consumed no less than four of his hired hands. “A shame really. I would have like to have taken a few samples of that last one. But once I unlock the secrets of this... I'll have all the girls I want. They'll beg me to let them lay in it just to please me!”

The scientist unfolded a long-armed, claw-like gadget and drew out several large bottles from his bag. He then put on a protective mask and walked up to the tree. He pressed the claw into the fungus and began to wiggle it around.

“Damnit!” the professor swore as the claw caught on some hard object inside the soft mass. He jerked the claw back in an effort to free it. Then, he collapsed, a smoking cavity where his gut had been. The fungus coated blaster dropped from the claw. Blank eyes stared into the sky. He was dead.

**THE END**

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*Ny'va is just your typical unlucky wandering young woman who's managed to get herself stranded on an alien occupied former mining colony in the middle of a scorching desert. How will she survive with no way out and no place to live? There is only one way...*

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