

*The
In Between*

QUEST FOR THE KEYSTONE



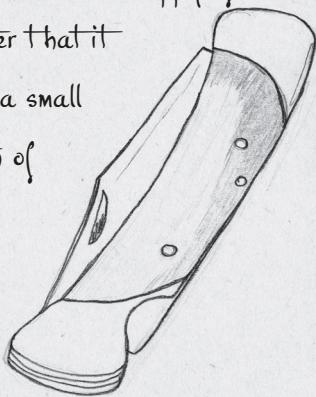
THE
JOURNAL
OF
Camilla Victoria Bly
EXPLORER

I awoke in a strange place,
and I do not know how I got here.
It seems suspiciously fortuitous that
this occurrence has coincided
with the start of a new journal...

There's nothing quite like waking up in a new place, even if you're not sure how you got there. I seem to have found myself in a strange, ever-changing land. Everything is in flux, I've no idea how the inhabitants traverse this place. I was in the library, consulting several maps charting the changing course of the Mississippi River. I must have nodded off, the next thing I knew I was here in this strange place.

I can faithfully report that my habit of being **ALWAYS PREPARED** has paid off in spades. I am not completely stranded, but have a small supply of food, plus water, a compass (no matter that it no longer seems to point North), and a small pocket knife. It is a constant truth of life that you never know when adventure may appear.

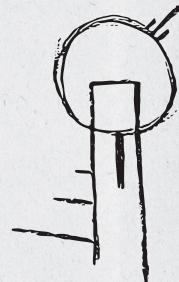
my
pocketknife



Craftsman

I wandered this land of mist and fog for an indeterminate time—days, weeks??!!—before I found another person. The soft tinkle of a bell alerted me to the presence of another being, who soon materialized in the fog. Craftsman Morris seemed only slightly surprised to see me, and jovially welcomed me to this place, the In Between. Apparently I have found my way into a world between worlds, a natural place for misfits and oddities (this description seems unfair, but I am bound to report my impressions reliably. I may be an unconventional sort of explorer, but I am an explorer nevertheless!).

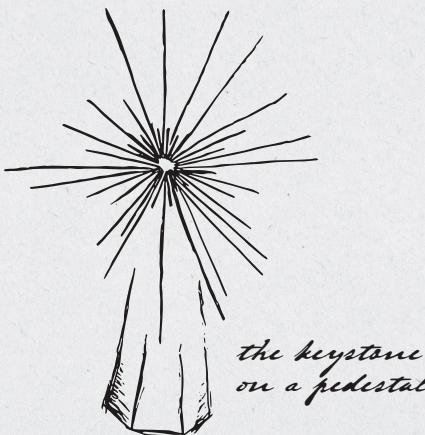
Morris told me that he is part of a great order of Architects who are tasked with guarding the boundaries between worlds. Or something along those lines, I confess I was rather distracted from Morris' ramblings by the timely arrival of a tray of food. Fresh bread and butter, blackberries and apple slices. It was all food familiar to me, but it tasted better than any other food I've had in my life. I fear that my vigorous chewing interfered with my concentration. I did note an unusual marking on the back of Morris' hand that marks him as a Craftsman.



Morris showed me to the artifact in his care, the Keystone. I found the Craftsman's musings much easier to follow with my intellectual abilities restored by much needed sustenance. The Keystone acts as an anchor to this world, keeping it in place. The care and keeping of this powerful item has been assigned to Morris, who is also able to fix the Keystone should something ever happen to it.

Keystone

The Keystone is a true sight to be seen, it rests upon a large pedestal in what I understand to be the center of the In Between. It radiates an unearthly light, and the area around is much more concrete than the misty lands I wandered through to find this place.



Knowledge Tokens

I have finally come to understand the bartering system of the In Between. To my surprise, I've found that the currency here is based on knowledge.



The folks of the In Between will trade tokens signifying knowledge for goods and services. Tokens are earned by gaining knowledge via solving the puzzles and riddles that seem to float through this place. Upon a correct answer, a token appears!

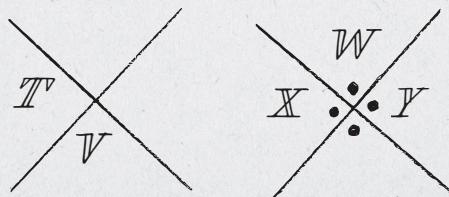
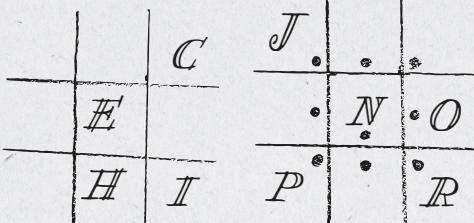
Interestingly, the tokens have different colors that correspond to different puzzles or tasks. I earned a silver token for helping Morris open a puzzle box, but I need a token of another color to barter for a two token slice of cake. Tokens only add value when they are different colors. When it comes to the In Between, the more different colored tokens you obtain, the richer you are.

Cypher Writing System

I am fascinated by the writing systems of this place. Many inhabitants seem to have brought a language with them when they came here, but there is a universal writing system that is quite similar to English. Morris was kind enough to begin teaching me to write in their strange code.

Hello, my name is Camilla. I am an expert explorer.

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Rogue Craftsman

I met another odd resident of the In Between today, Westcott. Morris later told me in no uncertain terms that he was a "quack and a fraud," which only cast my experience in a more interesting light.

Westcott told me he is attempting to establish a "Throughline" between the In Between and the other worlds that exist (I am still skeptical about these other places, but have been assured that they are quite real, and I suppose they would explain the existence of some of the odder inhabitants of the In Between). Westcott's current theory is that by correctly imagining a variety of places and worlds, he will eventually be able to forge a link between worlds. A Throughline is a sort of powerful connection that is capable of transforming worlds. It all sounded a bit theoretical to me, but I complied with his request and drew him a

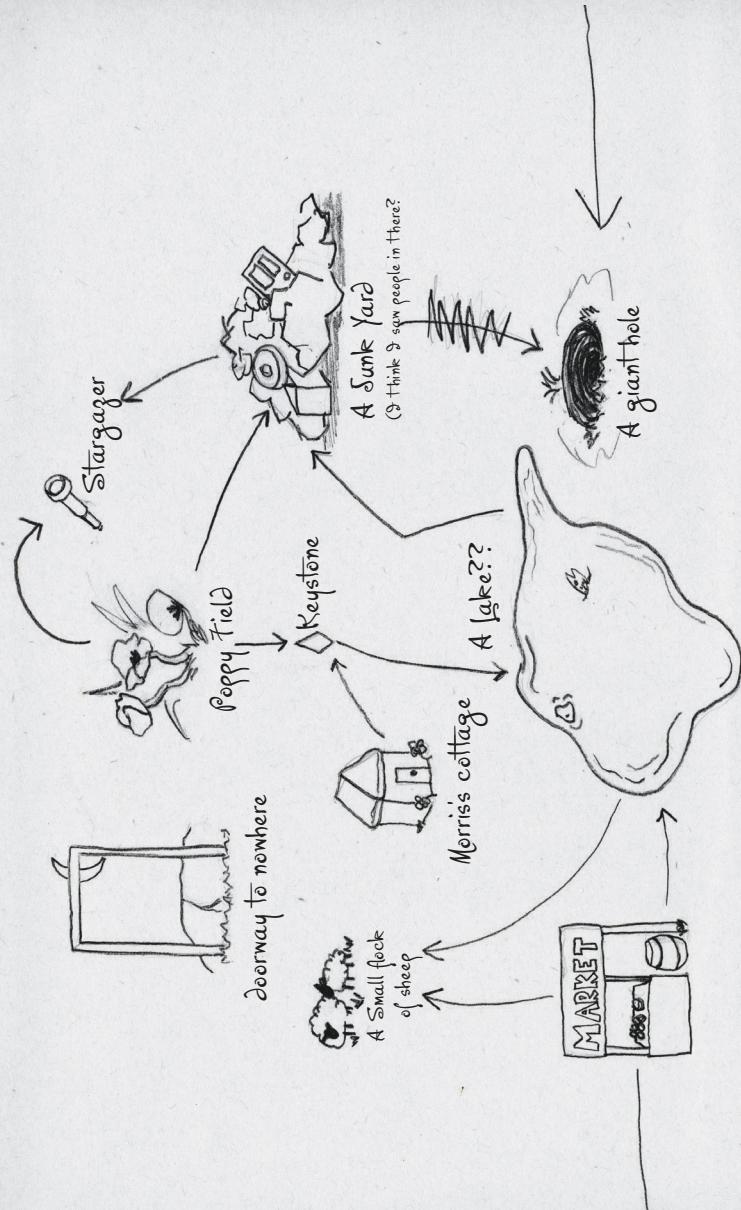


Shiftless Landscapers

Today I sat down and attempted to create a map of the In Between. I have to say, it was an utter failure. As I walked through the fog that seems to permanently exist on the edges of this place, I found myself walking into entirely new places. Or, when I tried to backtrack, I wound up in a completely different place than I expected.

Frustrated, I put away my pencils and attempted to walk back to Morris' cottage, as he has kindly offered his guest room until I can find more permanent lodgings (I was informed a solution would just appear as "that's how these things work out" which is absolutely baffling). In any case, as soon as I gave up my attempt to create a map, the landscape immediately began to behave.

This place seems to actively defy order.



Alchemist

I met a fellow today who is obsessed with creating different tools for all sorts of fantastical purposes. He's currently working on an elixir that will create a potent poison. P. Ptolemy showed me a formula he recently translated which truly baffled me, but he seemed to have somewhat of a grasp on it. The translation itself was a breakthrough, now he is working on understanding the formula, which may take some time. He offered me a knowledge token in exchange for help puzzling through the riddle, but I felt I wasn't equal to the task.

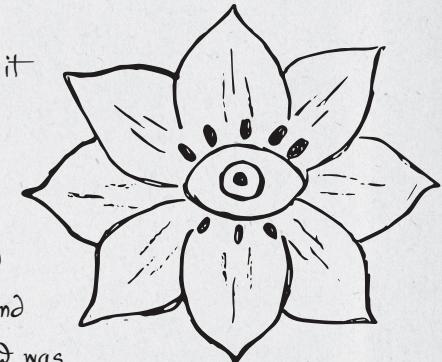
P. Ptolemy was the third being of the In Between I've found to be wearing a bell. When I asked him about it, he told me that the inhabitants have taken to wearing bells both as decoration, and as a courtesy to those who are traveling through the fog.



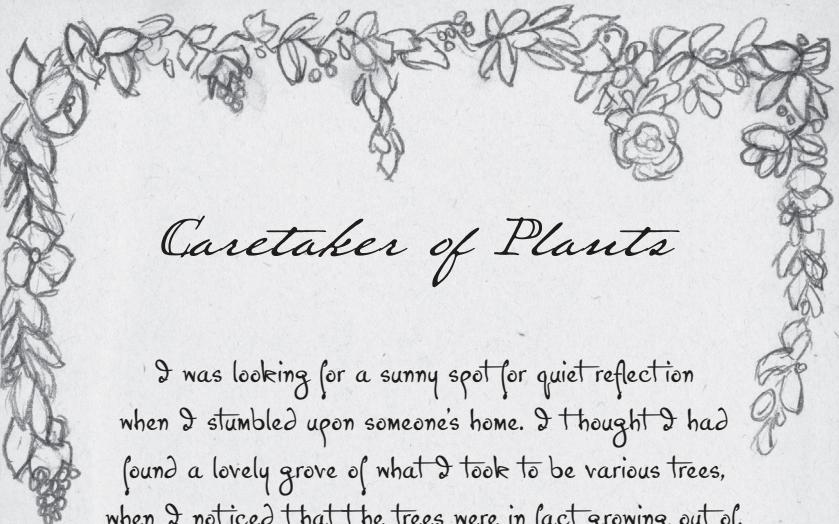
I had heard mention of a mystical being that existed on the edges of the In Between for quite some time before I resolved to seek her out. The Oracle, as she is called, was rumored to be a being of great knowledge, able to answer any question brought to her.

Oracle

Though the journey was long, it was well worth the effort, for, in this case, the whispers proved to be true. As I drew closer to the Oracle, vines twined around every available surface. Light and flowers surrounded the Oracle. I was entirely intimidated by the Oracle's presence, but she smiled at me quite kindly and encouraged me to ask my question. She consulted her book and provided me with an answer, but steadfastly refused to provide responses to any follow-up questions.



I walked away not entirely satisfied, but glad that I had been able to meet a person of such wisdom myself.



Caretaker of Plants

I was looking for a sunny spot for quiet reflection when I stumbled upon someone's home. I thought I had found a lovely grove of what I took to be various trees, when I noticed that the trees were in fact growing out of, and even around, individual pots.

I heard a quiet voice from behind a plant, and out stepped a wonderful being that seemed to have plants growing from her! We made our introductions, and I made the acquaintance of Agrimony. Part human, part plant, Agrimony has taken it upon herself to rescue dying and neglected houseplants from the windowsills of all sorts of worlds. She takes them to her home and nurses them back to incredible health and vibrancy.

Agrimony's most treasured plants, though she assured me she loved all of her charges, was a small grove of woody trees that she called the arbor clavis. The things looked rather runty to me, with strange flowers sprouting from the tops of rigidly straight stems, but Agrimony assured me that they had been entrusted to her for a grave and wonderful purpose: the protection and decoding of magic words. Her passion for these plants left me with the feeling that there was perhaps more to these odd looking plants than my eyes could discern.

Strange Trees



Thief

It appears that those who wish to hide can also access the In Between. Today I met a famous thief, known as Leila Lefaw who frequents the In Between while waiting for the "heat" from her heists to cool down. We had a fabulous conversation about the exhibits at the Smithsonian museums, specifically about the layouts. It was so refreshing to speak with someone who was truly interested in knowledge about the world I come from!

Leila told me that she had come across something of great value to the

A CODE²,
In
Between, but
that she wasn't
sure exactly what to do with it.

She told me she had come upon the thing in an old archive near some historical accounts of the Keystone and the nature of the In Between. She offered to sell it to me, but I didn't have three knowledge tokens to meet her asking price, and she wasn't interested in any of the items I offered for barter. I got a fleeting glimpse of the thing, and it looked like a code of some kind.

Keystone Taken!

My hands are shaking as I write this... to put it simply, the Keystone has disappeared. Vanished. Taken or destroyed? No one seems to know what has happened to it. To make matters worse, Morris has also gone missing. A search has been mounted to try to find any sign of either Morris or the Keystone, but the very nature of this place works against us.

You can already feel the fear creeping up in conversations. No one seems to know for sure what is going to happen to the In Between or to anyone who is here when something does happen.

Already the mists seem thicker.



Note from Craftsman

Camilla,

The keystone is gone and I do not know what to do. Soon my friends will look to me for guidance and I will not be able to give them answers. How can I face that? Better to disappear like the keystone.

As the anchoring power of the keystone wears off, parts of our little world will begin to collide with other places. We'll start leaking into worlds we fell out of, most likely in places where the fabric of reality is already thin. My hope is that the inhabitants of those other places will be able to aid the In Between. There must be a way to restore the keystone, but all I have to help me is a cryptic riddle that I cannot solve.

There is another way that exists. We do not have to create another keystone, we can make a Throughline. I've never truly understood the Throughline. It means something else for us. Transformation, change, or evolution of some kind.

I believe once the Throughline is chosen it cannot be undone. We will be changed and cannot go back.

— Morris

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Our Library has been overrun by people from another world. As much as I'm coming to have a fondness for their strange quirks like moving piles of junk from room to room, it would be nice to have our programming spaces back. They have mostly set up camp on the first floor and lower level. I've talked to several of them, and it sounds like they need the help to create either a Keystone or a Throughline to pull them back wherever they belong. From my conversations, it sounds like these displaced people need help to figure out how to make these items and some other ingredient I don't quite understand.

So I ask you, dear reader, please help!