

Shiori, The Wandering Archiver - Short Story

The sun's rays acted as illuminated guidance, everything below basking in the glow. Everything, however, is nothing but familiar details to the wanderer. Shiori Novella, an eccentric archiver with a penchant for the unordinary and irregular. She is drawn to the spectacle of a human's story, no matter how dull and boring it is. And upon coming such stories, like any good observer, will note them down in vivid detail without delay in her notebook. One can speculate how much is written within, how depraved they are, how contrived they can be, or even how long ago such stories occurred.

One such story occurs on a day like any other. Shiori, ever the traveler, wanders from town to town in search of an interesting tale. This time unfortunately, her own plot seems to be at an impasse.

"What do you mean you don't accept these coins? Do you know how much these are worth in Niflheim!?"

A girl with hair that is half black and half white, who is outfitted in a black coat, is explaining and bartering with a man in front of a stagecoach.

The man, an aged individual with traveling and escort experience under his belt, has an unconcerned look on his face. It is further accentuated with the wrinkles under his eyes and furrowed brows above, disinterested in the ladies coins she is laying out on her hands.

"Sorry lady, I only take kingdom approved dollarons. Not some fancy elf coin you got here." He says in a low stern voice, his patience clearly wearing thin. Despite his inflexibility, the unwavering archiver continues her pursuit for transport.

"Oh, but dear sir, these coins in my hand are of utmost rarity. What can be more valuable than an item in scarcity. Plus, if you ever do venture into elven territory, you will at least be well equipped for transactions." She says with a sparkling glimmer in her yellow eyes, filled with confidence that she seemingly sealed the deal.

"If these items are so scarce, then what use do I have for them on a common day if I can't use them normally. Look lady, I have a business to run, so scram. I don't need your elven coin." Despite her pleas, the driver of the stagecoach maintains his unsympathetic look. He even brushed her off with a hand gesture to move away from his business.

Shiori, pouting with a slightly irritated look, puts the coins back into the pouch and walks away from the stagecoach. The person next in line behind her stepped in with their turn to do business with the driver of the traveling service.

The archiver, with her satchel containing her notebook and variety of pens in hand, sat down by a nearby bench by a building. She glanced around the area with her head resting upon her hand and her legs crossed over one another. An assortment of businesses are located in the plaza,

crowds of people going about their day in this lively affair. Still displeased with how things turned out, the shade from the building provides a cooling relief to get her back into a capable headspace.

"I can't believe no one here wants to take these elven coins. I thought because it was gold, the people here would at least value them a little bit."

She mumbles to herself, thinking about what to do next. She bounces the pouch of coins on her free hand, distracting herself from her own predicament.

"Maybe I shouldn't have asked for coins as a gift from Niflheim... Maybe I should've gotten something these unintelligent fools would have liked, like jewelry or something."

Shiori continues to pout while juggling the pouch between her hands now, looking up at the sky and hoping for a new possibility to present itself.

"I don't think jewelry would have helped either. The people here operate on a very strict system of specific rules for transactions."

An unfamiliar voice suddenly presents herself beside Shiori, standing next to her by the bench. Shiori, caught off guard by the random presence that appeared, jolted to the side away from the stranger. The stranger was also gazing out on the plaza of businesses.

She was a fairly tall woman with youthful and natural beauty to her. She has green hair that is long and flowing, a summer hat to protect her from the beaming sun, an open brown coat with a white dress shirt underneath, a black skirt, and a similarly colored pair of boots. The woman also has an endearing and alluring quality to her that Shiori can't help but lower her guard around.

"But a wise merchant worth their grit would seize a most fortuitous opportunity. It's good to be flexible and have as many options available to you."

The woman says with a calm and kind voice, with a sense of casualness in her inflection. She then looks toward Shiori with a motherly smile, one that children would love.

Shiori, rebounding back from the sudden shock, gathered her composure, sitting straight up with a short grunt to clear her throat.

"Ah, I see you are a lady with a good eye. You see these are-"

"Golden elven coin from Niflheim. I know, I saw what went down."

The green haired woman said plainly, still maintaining her polite smile.

"Oh..."

"But don't worry my dear traveler, I'll be more than happy to give you safe passage to wherever you want to go in exchange for those coins."

The green hair woman says, standing now in front of Shiori. In Shiori's eyes, she was like a god send she needed in her most dire moment.

"You will? That's wonderful news!"

Shiori says with excitement, standing up with her solemn mood now shifted into a 180. She then backed up, wanting to properly introduce herself.

"Ah, I'm sorry. I didn't quite catch your name. I'm Shiori Novella, and like you guessed before, I am most definitely a traveler."

The girl clad in dark clothing grandly bowing after the brief introduction. Her attire is a stark contrast to the woman in front of her.

"Nice to meet you Shiori. You may call me Fauna. I'm a traveling merchant."

"Ah, ok Miss Fauna. Is there a reason you're leaving town?"

"Why yes. As a traveling merchant, I sell a variety of merchandise that I have traded and gathered from various regions. I also try to establish good business relationships with locals of the places I visit. I've finished everything I needed to do here..."

Fauna paused looking down at Shiori's hand, her gaze now fixated on the elven coins in the pouch.

"I then saw the little incident you had concerning your pouch of coins. You see, as a traveler of sorts myself, having a variety of currency would be helpful for trade if I ever do visit a place that would need them."

"Well that's just perfect. I don't have a specific destination in mind. So I'll happily travel with you in exchange for these coins."

Shiori lifts up the coin pouch, giving a smile to showcase her good will in this moment.

"That sounds like a pleasant deal. I still need to pack up some things today. So if you don't mind, could you meet me by the city gates later this afternoon? Let's say by dusk?"

The merchant clasped her hands with Shiori's, her eagerness evident with her soft grip and close distance already crossing personal boundaries.

The two then part ways. Shiori decided to visit a nearby cafe to kill time before her appointed meeting with Fauna, a new acquaintance and like-minded compatriot.

Dusk had fallen, painting the sky with hues of purple and orange. Shiori stood at the city gates, her eyes scanning the crowd for Fauna. The merchant was easy to spot, her vibrant green hair a beacon in the fading light.

"Ah, there you are!" Shiori called out, waving excitedly. Fauna returned the greeting, her smile warm and inviting. "Let's get going. I'm eager to see what adventures await us."

Together, they ventured out of the city gates in a wagon and into the sprawling forest beyond. The trees, thick and towering, cast long, eerie shadows that danced in the moonlight. The air was filled with the sounds of nocturnal creatures, their calls echoing through the woods.

As they walked, Shiori couldn't help but feel a sense of excitement. This was exactly what she had been looking for: a new adventure, a fresh perspective. She turned to Fauna, a curious glint in her eye. "So, Fauna, tell me about yourself. What made you decide to become a traveling merchant?"

Fauna chuckled. "Well, it's a long story. But essentially, I've always loved exploring new places and meeting different people. And being a merchant allows me to do both. Plus, I get to indulge my love of bargaining and trading."

Shiori nodded, impressed. "That sounds like a wonderful life. I've always been more of an observer, a chronicler of stories."

As they continued their journey, the night grew deeper. The forest seemed to come alive, the creatures of the night growing bolder and more numerous. Suddenly, a low growl echoed through the trees. Shiori and Fauna froze, their hearts pounding in their chests.

A large, shadowy figure emerged from the darkness. It was a monstrous creature, its eyes glowing with an eerie green light. The creature let out a roar that seemed to shake the very ground.

Shiori and Fauna exchanged a frightened glance. They knew they had to act fast. Without hesitation, they turned and ran, their legs pumping as fast as they could. The creature gave chase, its howls growing louder with each passing moment.

As they ran, Shiori's mind raced. She knew she had to think of a way to escape. She remembered her ink familiars, small, sentient creatures that she could summon at will. With a deep breath, she focused her mind and called out to them.

"Novelites, I call upon you. Defend your queen!"

A swarm of tiny, black creatures appeared around her, their eyes glowing with an inner light. The creatures made of ink took on shapes of flying animals like bats and birds. Shiori commanded them to attack the monster, and they did so without hesitation. The familiars swarmed the creature, their tiny bites and scratches causing it to roar in pain.

The monster was distracted with its vision obscured by the swarm of inky familiars, giving Shiori and Fauna a chance to escape. They ran as fast as they could back to their wagon, their hearts pounding in their chests. Shiori jumped into the back and Fauna held the driver's position. With a whip from the reins, the two horses rushed forward away from the monster.

"I think we managed to get some distance. Still, we should be on guard and continue out of this forest and into a clearing."

Shiori mentions a brief outline of a plan, still gasping for air. Her body is not the most physically adept since she always spent her time being a bookworm.

"That's probably for the best."

Fauna says while guiding the horses, her composure resuming back into her natural and calm tranquility. They both knew it wouldn't be the last of any eventful encounters.

"By the way, what were those things you summoned? And were they made of ink?"

Fauna asks with a curious glance into the back of the wagon. She sees Shiori holding onto her satchel, gripping with a solemn fondness.

"Indeed, those were my familiars that I could summon. How I got them and my powers is a long story however."

"Well, we still have quite a long way till the next town. I could use a story and the company to keep me going through the night."

Shiori ponders for a moment, debating whether she should reveal the extent of her powers or not. But Shiori has encountered many characters throughout her adventures, and after enough observation today, she can attest to the quality of Fauna's virtuosity.

"Hmmm, well alright then. Don't go sleeping on me during story time, ya hear." The Archiver said with amusement and eagerness, a yapper to her core.

Shiori Novella was once a quiet, bookish librarian in a small, secluded village. Her days were spent surrounded by shelves filled with ancient tomes, each one a treasure trove of knowledge and stories. She loved the feel of paper beneath her fingers, the scent of old books, and the rhythm of turning pages.

But Shiori's love for books extended beyond the confines of her library. She was always eager to trade with travelers and merchants, exchanging rare volumes for exotic goods or simply for the joy of sharing her passion with others.

One day, a mysterious stranger arrived at the library, carrying a heavy, leather-bound book. The stranger offered to trade the book for anything Shiori desired. Intrigued, Shiori accepted the offer, unaware of the secrets the book held.

As she began to read the tome, Shiori felt a strange energy coursing through her. Her hair, once as black as the night sky, began to turn white, and her eyes took on a striking yellow hue. She also discovered a newfound ability to manipulate ink, shaping it into strange and wondrous forms.

The book, she realized, contained forbidden knowledge, a power that had been dormant within her until now. Terrified and confused, Shiori fled the village, determined to understand her newfound abilities, as well as use them to satiate her curiosity. She embarked on a journey, traveling from town to town, reading as many books as she could find and recording the stories of the people she met.

To Shiori, life is full of fascinating stories. Stories are what can teach people about the world, a record of their existence on this world. And she wants to experience as many as she can.

Over time, Shiori learned to embrace her powers, using them to help others and to explore the world around her. She became known as The Archiver, a wandering storyteller who chronicled the lives of those she encountered. And though she missed her old life as a librarian, Shiori found a new sense of purpose in her role as a keeper of stories.

With the last of Shiori's words recounting her past, there was a moment of silence that blended with the night. The wagon continued to head to its destination with the guidance of the horses. Shiori, now confessing her history to a stranger she met just today, she wonders if she made the right decision. She coiled up in her spot on the wagon's back, worried if she startled the merchant.

Just then, Fauna spoke up in a soft and sincere voice.

"My oh my, now that's quite the tale. But after our encounter with the monster earlier, I can honestly believe it."

Shiori turned towards the front of the wagon, gazing at Fauna. Her insecurities are now faded away.

"Hehe, glad you liked my tale. As an archiver, I always strive for picture perfect accuracy, but I do try to spice up my words for the more important moments."

Her confidence, while founded, is fueling her ego. Shiori, now in a cheerful mood, follows up with an inquiry of her own.

"What about you Fauna? What's your story?" Shiori asked while rummaging through her satchel to look for her notebook and a pencil, eager to hear Fauna's story.

Fauna stopped the cart, surrounded by an open grassy field with long grass and a variety of plants. She turned to Shiori, a serious expression on her face. "Shiori, there's something I need to tell you."

Shiori's excitement faded as she looked at Fauna. "What is it?"

"Well, you see..." Fauna stepped off the wagon's front, walking deep into the field. She extends her hand, grazing upon the feel of the plants as she walks. Her body radiates under the basking glow of the moonlight. She is not too far off from the wagon, still within relatively close distance.

Shiori hops off from the back of the wagon and slowly follows Fauna. The green haired merchant almost seemingly is guiding the young archiver. Shiori becomes even more entranced by Fauna.

"You see my dear archiver, I'm not really a human," Fauna admitted, her voice soft.

Shiori's eyes widened. "What do you mean?"

"I'm a kirin," Fauna revealed, removing her hat to reveal a pair of long, elegant horns that resembled branches. "A creature said to bring good fortune."

Shiori's jaw dropped. She leaned forward with a starry eyed expression, her hands clenched and held up with glee. "A kirin? That's incredible!"

Fauna smiled. "Glad to know you're not spooked by this sort of thing. But that's not all. I'm also known as Ceres Fauna, the Goddess of Nature."

With Fauna's true character revealed, she disregarded her human restraints to let her godly presence flow out into the world. The grass below her grew slightly and the budding plants bloomed fully into flowers. The scenery around her is picturesque and majestic, as if it was straight from a painting.

Shiori was speechless. She had been traveling with a goddess, and she hadn't even realized it.

"I took the form of a human merchant so I could observe humanity up close," Fauna explained. "I wanted to understand what it was like to live among mortals, to experience their joys and sorrows."

"And your knowledge of nature's bounty helps you as a merchant," Shiori added.

"Exactly," Fauna replied. "I can use my powers to find valuable resources and to ensure my travels are safe."

The moonlight bathed Fauna with a soft and ethereal glow, illuminating her true aura. Shiori, with her observant yellow eyes, can see Fauna's true nature out in the open laid before her. Shiori looks upon Fauna with an almost wicked smile, wanting nothing more than to observe her story. Likewise with the kirin, who took a vested interest in the eccentric archiver.

"There's so many questions I want to ask. There must be so many stories to you..."

Shiori paused, letting her intentions be known to Fauna as they both walked closer to each other.

“And I want to archive it all. I want to continue traveling with you as long as possible to see what stories unfold on this adventure.” Shiori says with a scheming smile, unfazed by Fauna’s godly presence. Her desire for stories override any other feeling she should be experiencing at the moment.

“Fufu, you are certainly the most interesting human I have met so far. I don’t mind entertaining you. I’m looking forward to your companionship, Shiori Novella, The Archiver.”

Fauna said with a calm and motherly gaze. Her demeanor, despite her otherworldly aura, still has a sincere human feel to it. She extended her hand, confirming her willingness to this unspoken pact.

“And I am looking forward to it as well, Fauna the merchant, or should I say Ceres Fauna, the kirin Goddess of Nature.”

Shiori says in a placid and unfazed manner, meeting Fauna’s hand with her own, shaking it with cordiality and familiarity. Her wicked grin hasn’t disappeared, not draped with malevolence or ill-intentions, but unwavering appetite for a good story.

