

How to Shapeshift

In a lonely part of town, down a quiet street, there was a charity shop called Merryville Helps overflowing with second hand books. Sunlight flooded through the rectangular windows filling the room with a golden glow. Posters were scattered around the walls trying to persuade people to support the local charity. On the third shelf among all the other books was a dusty gap. One book was missing. Under the bottom draw of a counter was its record card. Two hundred years ago the book quietly turned to dust. The book was called How To Shapeshift.

At dawn, when the open sign is switched to closed and the shopkeeper goes upstairs for his sofa to greet him, the books come to life. The sound of kettles boiling drifts out from the pages of the books; the scent of roast dinner being prepared leaks out from open windows on the backs of books; lights come on as the books awaken. On the shelf beginning with the letter E lived a girl called Tilly. Tilly was the only one knew about the book. One night she was chasing her puppy Biscuit when she tripped over an uneven bit of carpet and there under the counter was its record card. Tilly decided that no matter what that she would find that book. "If we can find this book," said Tilly to her puppy, "we will be the most famous explorers ever."

Every night for a year, Tilly and Biscuit searched for the book. Tilly searched behind the dirty shelves blowing the dust off them as they went; the two of them searched sneakily in the shopkeepers cosy home trying not to get caught; finally they searched in the overflowing storage room knocking over boxes as they moved. But it was always the same, everyone they met was still fully human. Then one night, they came across four old women. Surely they didn't know about the book? "You've come for this haven't you?" said one lady. She held out a big bug-shaped book. On the title Tilly read "How to Shapeshift." The woman's face was old and wrinkly with thick grey hair. "But..." But the lady beckoned her to follow. "Where are we going?" asked Tilly "To see the Jelly Man."

The old lady led Tilly through a green book and into a shaded wailing woods full of tall trees dancing in the cool breeze, blackberry bushes tangled at the trunks of trees and busy bees feeding on the flowers. The woman carried on with Tilly trailing behind. "Who's the Jelly Man?" asked Tilly.

"You'll see," replied the woman. When they came to the end of the woods, there was a chair and upon that chair was a wobbly figure. Tilly questioned him about the book. "You can't read it," said the jelly figure.

"Why not?" said Tilly.

"I the Jelly Man am the only person who has read the book and has not gone mad. I thought it would be fun to shapeshift. I thought I could be whatever I wanted to be; do whatever I wanted and experience thing no one else could. But all that happened was I got chased by predators such as many big cats to deadly snakes; got bullied by my friends and got myself into life threatening situations. It's not fun at all." Tilly frowned.

"I won't read the book Jelly Man." So he led Tilly and Biscuit back to the world.

Alice and Emily