

Shrinking with Portals

An excited chatter spread across the crowd, which could be mistaken for the wind in the canopy of trees surrounding them. Yugo, in the center of the assembled group of Sadidas, was delighted by the attention he was getting while practicing his new trick: Opening one palm-sized portal next to a human-sized one, the boy shoved one hand in the tiny end only for it to come out massive through the bigger portal.

“Hear ye! Hear ye!” Yugo laughed as he waved his 6-foot-tall disembodied hand around. Several audience members jerked back—understandably, as the fingers were large enough to grab a full-sized adult like a toy—before Yugo pulled his hand back through the portal and back to its normal size. “I discovered I could do that this morning! How cool is that?!”

Although they were present, two people were not participating in the bustling activity around the young Eliatrope. One of them was Amalia, the brown-skinned and green-haired princess of the kingdom, who was drinking a cup of tea at a nearby terrace with a friend significantly shorter than even her petite frame. Shin, a young Eniripsa, was sitting on a chair several times too large for him, looking blue. As any member of his race, two leathery bat wings were sprouting from his back, although long past were the times when his people lived barechested to proudly display their wings; Shin was wearing a tailored jacket, open at the front but designed to cover his back while letting the wings spread, as well as short pants. At his feet, he had the usual sandals of Eniripsa healers, while his forehead was covered with a buckled leather headband—it included two glass lenses to correct his vision when he pulled them over his eyes, but he usually used it to keep his semi-long hair out of his eyes.

Shin was not looking at the spectacle but at one of the spectators. Standing tall even among the crowd, Sir Tristepin de Percedal—or “Pinpin”—was joyfully cheering along for his friend. Shin sighed wistfully looking at him.

“Still stupid in love, eh?” Amalia asked, and Shin quietly nodded. “You should just go to him. Talk to him. He might even reply, if he remembers how. As Pinpin’s friend, I can assure you there is NOTHING daunting about him. He’s like a dumb friendly ouginak. Just a big ball of friendliness.”

“I know, I know, you told me a million times,” Shin replied with a weak smile. “Doesn’t stop me from being nervous. He’s a hero! And he’s so tall and strong, and, and...” His voice trailed off as he blushed heavily.

“I told you: Just give him food and he’ll literally lick it off your hands. You made him a chestnut cake like I said, right?”

“Yes, the cake!” Shin said, pulling a cake box out of his bag. “Thanks again for the advice! I was up all night to cook it!”

“Then what are you waiting for, champion?” Amalia nudged him off his chair. “Go ask him out!”

Taking a long breath to keep himself calm, the young fairy mustered the courage to do just that. He hopped off his chair and, cake in hands, hurried towards Pinpin. He had to shield his cake with his body from the numerous elbows of the excited crowd—Eniripsas were all of short stature, and even though he was uncommonly tall for a fairy, Shin was a good foot shorter than the average adult male. It was even worse with Pinpin, as he couldn’t help but notice his eyes were at the same level as the lop’s pectorals—which he always showed off since he only wore a cape and pants.

“H-hey, Pinpin?” Shin mewled. “I made you a ca-a cake...”

The bigger man, who didn’t seem to notice Shin at first, sniffed the air when the cake was presented to him; guided by the sweet smell, he looked down and addressed a solar grin to Shin.

“Yo, little buddy! Oh man, a whole cake for me?! Thanks!”

“I asked around for your favorite recipe, and I—” Shin couldn’t finish his sentence as Tristepin immediately grabbed the cake with his bare hands and shoved it in his mouth, which opened to comedic proportions to finish the cake in two mouthfuls. Pinpin swallowed with some difficulty, burped, patted Shin’s head with a grin and turned back to Yugo—who was busy tossing fruit through his size-altering portals to create giant ones.

“You go, Yugo!”

Not wanting to bother, Shin slinked back to his chair quietly.

“It didn’t work out?” Amalia asked, concerned.

“No. He called me little buddy and gave me a pat on the head.”

“Oh...”

There were a few seconds of awkward silence, then Shin spoke up. “It’s because I’m too small. He can’t take me seriously. He’s, like, HUGE, and he can beat up monsters and gods. All I can do is heal.”

“Healing is a great ability!” Amalia piped up.

“Yeah, but not to woo lops,” Shin countered, and she couldn’t deny that. “There’s no hope. I was born that way. *Sigh*. I can cook a million cakes, but I can never change my size...”

“What is it I hear about changing sizes?”

Both Shin and Amalia whipped their heads to see the boy who had just talked. Yugo was standing there and carrying a 5-foot-tall pear in his arms. Shin could tell Amalia just had the same idea he did, as her smile turned devious.

“Are you free right now, Yugo? I think my friend here could need your help~”

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“Are you really really sure that this is safe?” Shin asked in a worried tone.

“Oh yeah! I tried it myself!” Yugo replied. He was already bouncing two tiny portals in his open palms, ready to enlarge and throw them for Shin to use.

“Wait, I thought that your portals worked differently on people of other races?” Amalia said, suddenly seeming more concerned about her friend’s safety. “Didn’t Pinpin become sick last time he went through one?”

Yugo shrugged. “Then Shin will be sick and also two feet taller. His call.”

Just thinking about being not just taller but also taller than Tristepin made butterflies sprout to life in Shin’s stomach. He gave his assent to Yugo, who promptly created two portals, one significantly taller than Shin and the other precisely the right size for the Eniripsa to walk through. Shin took a brave step through the latter...

... and instead of the ground, there was just air where his foot landed on the other side. He tripped forward and felt snatched by something far more powerful than himself. Neither of the three people present had time to react, Shin was already free-falling beyond the portal, and he crashed on solid ground meters below.

“What the h-oh my lord...” Shin muttered. He was still in a forest, but massive blades of grass surrounded him, each reaching nearly his face. All around him, the trees were stretching so far in the sky that they dwarfed even the Sadida Kingdom’s magical trees.

Did Yugo accidentally send him to a distant land? Shin had heard a lot about the wide world, from Otomai’s island to the depths of Sufokia, but he had never heard of a giant forest.

Checking his own body, he couldn’t find any sign that he had changed—all his limbs were still intact and proportional—but he strongly suspected he was the one who was smaller than before. He wanted to slap Amalia and Yugo, but he figured that getting them to fix that mess would be more productive.

He dragged his bandana down so the lenses ended up in front of his eyes, giving him hawk-like vision. He scanned the area around him, and he spotted something that made his heart leap. The portal was still hovering a few meters in the air just above his head. If he could cross the other way...

Despite having wings, Eniripsa rarely fly. Their race used to be far smaller and could zip around in the air like nobody's business. But with years of peace and plenty, their ancestors became taller and heavier with every generation until their wings, although still proportional to their bodies, could hardly carry them a few steps above the ground.

Shin had a hunch, though. If he was really smaller, then... If his body did weigh much less than it used to, then he could surely fly higher than usual. He flapped his bat-like wings a few times, gauging the muscles and the health of the membrane, then he leaped and swung both wings down at once, displacing as much air as he could.

To his own surprise, he *shot* up. He was so taken aback that he panicked and crash-landed into a nearby bush.

On the second try, he was ready to compensate for his new weight. After one flap of his wings, he was high enough that the tall grass barely grazed his knees. With a second one, he was high enough to see above the skyline of the underbrush. It was with the third flap that he paled in terror. Not far from him, scanning the forest floor, was a man. Shin couldn't tell which God the giant worshipped, because he didn't seem to belong to any known race; he was well built, with spiky brown hair and round ears, and he was wearing a primitive brown tunic. What Shin could tell, however, was that his new body didn't even reach the man's thighs. Their eyes met, and both looked shocked to see the other.

Suddenly, Shin's ascent to the portal was a desperate bid to escape a titanic threat. He flapped harder and faster than before, frustrated. He was still heavy enough that he couldn't take off at full speed with just his wings flapping alone! He was gasping and breathing hard from the intense workout this imposed on him.

He was about halfway up to the portal when a vast shadow blocked the sky. The man had managed to cross the space separating them in seconds and was standing next to Shin, his head and torso towering over the terrified Eniripsa, who instantly regretted ever letting his eyes off him.

Moving more quickly than any creature his size had any right to, the giant brought his arm up and wrapped his hand around Shin in mid-air. The thick fingers couldn't quite

wrap all around Shin's torso, but they had a good grip of him nonetheless and clamped his arms close to his body. His legs and wings were still free, so he thrashed around desperately.

"Hey, stop resisting!" The giant ordered in a bark.

Shin didn't obey, of course, and fought back twice as hard when he noticed the giant was bringing his other arm up to secure his grip. Shin managed to wrangle one arm free, and he put his hand on the fingertip of the giant thumb—he was horrified to notice that a single one of the titan's fingernails was larger than his entire hand. He shoved with desperate abandon, and he got the hand to open just enough to throw himself towards the ground.

Usually, falling from that high up would terrify him, but he had a new trick up his sleeve.

He spread his wings as far as he could and allowed air to fill them, and he felt his fall stop; instead, he soared up, gliding on the air like a bird. The feeling of speed and freedom was exhilarating! Moving faster than ever, he maneuvered between trees and zigzagged between bushes and tall grass.

Thinking himself safe, Shin risked a glance behind him, but his hope was quickly destroyed. The giant was running after him, and with his absurdly long legs, he was keeping up the pace. Going even faster than him, Shin realized with horror, when the giant's next step brought his foot right above Shin's head. The Eniripsa tried to escape, making a daring move to the side, but the foot was faster. The giant brought it down onto the tiny with a Earth-shattering stomp, Shin thankfully being spared the brunt of the impact by landing on a thick layer of grass.

Shin could kick his legs, but the tough heel resting on his thighs made it impossible for him to move. He could feel every detail of the manly sole resting atop his back. His skull was unfortunately just the right size to fit in the gap between the biggest and second toes, with the arch of the toes espousing the back of his head. It was a snuggle fit, almost like the shape of the colossus' foot was designed specifically to make Shin feel claustrophobic underneath it. His only luck was that the giant wasn't putting much weight on him, clearly not interested in crushing his bones.

“Please, let me go! This is a misunderstandinghmp hh gmmphhh.” Shin tried to talk, but the toes pressed against his head bent slightly, forcing his face against the grassy ground. He couldn’t open his mouth without tasting a mix of grass and male musk.

While keeping him in that position, the giant was doing something overhead. Shin only knew what when he felt a thick rope being tied to his exposed legs, and no amount of resisting could help against the massive fingers operating it. The rope was tightened in a noose around his ankles, and when the foot finally raised in the air, freeing him, he felt a powerful tug on the rope and found himself suspended upside down, like a rabbit caught in a trap, in front of a young man’s face.

The giant had spiky brown hair, thick eyebrows and round eyes that reflected some innocence. More strikingly, a large scar, more like a fracture in a jar than a sword wound, slashed half of his face.

“ [Hey, do you talk? Haha, things really are weird in this place! Do ya have a name?] ” The giant asked. The sounds coming out of his mouth were like thunder, and Shin realized he didn’t understand the language. The giant didn’t seem to mind the lack of answer. “ [Well, my name’s Taiju. I think Senku would like to study you, little fairy!] ”

Shin had no idea what a Senku was or what God they worshipped, but this couldn’t be a good thing. The giant—Taiju—started walking through the forest, keeping Shin dangling at the end of his rope like a hunting bounty. No matter how much the shrunken man flapped his wings, he seemed unable to free himself.

He had done all that to be bigger, dammit, not get even smaller!

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As the two of them trekked through the forest, Shin blamed his past self for slacking on his training. He had never gone on real adventures like Tristepin, and he had allowed himself to gloss over techniques that could save him in the face of danger.

The magic of his people, the Eniripsa, was based on words of power. The words could

... only to land in a gargantuan bedroom, among tall grass-like carpet fibers. He didn't think it was possible, but Shin was even smaller. And definitely not home.

A loud, powerful voice rang through the room and, looking at its source, Shin was horrified to see a giant, even bigger than the two before. This one had slicked-back black hair with a vague green shine, and he was wearing a full outfit of green, like a lime.

Shin tried to escape, but the titan was incredibly fast, and five fingers wrapped around his body, painfully immobilizing his wings before he could get away.

What ensued were some of the most terrifying moments of Shin's life. The giant's grip was unbreakable, the skin was soft but firm like iron, and the giant was so confident in his ability that he was walking to his destination, wherever that was, without even paying attention to him.

That's only after reaching another room, where a massive, blue-haired woman was sitting in an equally massive couch, that Shin understood. The two giants exchanged some words, the woman waved an item at Shin, and suddenly, the giants' language was not gibberish anymore.

"...think he will understand?" The man asked to the woman, who nodded.

"Of course! The afterlife needs universal translators, else we wouldn't be able to welcome all souls! Ask him yourself," she replied. The giant stared straight at Shin, who was still uncomfortably trapped in his hand.

"I'm Yusuke. Who the heck are you?" Said the loud giant.

"I'm... Shin?"

"Are you some kind of tiny demon?"

"No!" Shin was offended, but in way relieved. For once, someone was listening to him! "I was sent through a portal to a different world, and everything here is much too large! You must believe me sir please!"

Yusuke sighed, looked the blue-haired woman in the eyes and she disappeared.

"We will take care of you, don't worry buddy!" Yusuke promised, and he offered a heart-melting grin. In that moment, Shin saw Tristepin in Yusuke, and he immediately knew that the giant was trustworthy.

When the woman—Botan, Shin learned by discussing with Yusuke—came back, she had a strangely shaped individual with her. Enma Jr., he called himself.

"There must be a way to reopen a path to your home," Enma Jr. had promised Shin, and the boy seemed intent on keeping that promise, as he was surrounded in a pile of books and studying interdimensional travel for the many hours that followed.

Shin had spent most of that time hanging out with Yusuke, either sitting on his shoulder if he was walking, or sitting on his knee when he was sitting. The two had found a great ease of chatting and joking with each other, which reassured Shin about the potential goodness of the giant people he might encounter on his travels.

"So, this Tristepin person is really that important to you, uh?" Yusuke summarized after Shin shared with him a lot of his torment. Yusuke rubbed his chin pensively, then his face lit up. "I know!"

Yusuke moved Shin to the top of his coffee table and, to the tiny Eniripsa's shock, Yusuke brought his sole up and drew a smiling mouth and dot eyes on the plump bottom of his big toe.

"Let's say this is Tristepin!" Yusuke said, and he put the foot down, standing straight on its heel, on the table in front of Shin. The toes were significantly higher in the air than Shin's face, which was not dissimilar to the size difference between him and the towering Tristepin.

"S-seriously?" Shin said meekly.

"Yeah!" Yusuke replied without hesitation, and he jerked his foot forward, nearly hitting Shin with it. "Imagine this is Tristepin, and confess your love to him!"

"Do we really have to do this... now, here?" Shin questioned, blushing and getting fidgety.

"Enma Jr. needs time to figure out a way to send you home. In the meantime, you should practice your confession~" There was a playful streak in his voice, but Shin could tell Yusuke really wanted to help, so he sighed and went along with it.

"Tristepin, you are..." Shin started, staring at the fake eyes on Yusuke's big toe. "No, Pinpin. Pinpin is better. Pinpin, you are... beautiful. I always loved you. When you saved the world that time, and that other time, and there was also the time you-" Shin started talking faster than he could think, and months of thoughts and feelings came out. After a few impassioned sentences, Yusuke was gone, the foot was gone, and he could picture himself talking to Tristepin face to face.

And then they kissed. Shin wasn't sure how it happened; the foot was arched forward, clearly pushed by Yusuke for his lips, but Shin himself was on tippy toes and extending himself to kiss the fake mouth on Yusuke's skin. Shin backed off with a face reddened by embarrassment, but Yusuke just smiled.

"If you need kissing practice, I don't mind helping with that too~" The giant offered, prompting Shin to loudly deny it. Yusuke laughed, and once the embarrassment passed, so did Shin.

And so, hours more passed, without news from Enma Jr., until Shin was just laying, half asleep, lulled to sleep by Yusuke's loud snoring.

"I found a way to send you home," Enma Jr. suddenly said; he was unexpectedly just inches away from Shin, causing the tiny Eniripsa to jump in fear.

"O-oh, that is great...!" Shin said, slowly getting his bearings. Go home? Finally! "How did you figure it out?"

"Simple observation," Enma Jr. responded by pointing one finger at Yusuke, and Shin was baffled when he followed it. Yusuke's mouth was wide open, and a blue glow was emanating from the back of his throat.

"Oh no..." Shin whimpered, but it did not stop Enma Jr. from grabbing him in his fist and walking towards Yusuke.

"Try to not wake him up," the lore of afterlife said, and he immediately dropped Shin directly above Yusuke's wide open maw.

On his side, Shin would not have fit inside the mouth, but going vertically, feet first, he could slide into it. Yusuke massive wet tongue embraced Shin's back on the way down, like a wet toboggan at a waterpark—and Shin was wildly blushing when he slid smoothly into Yusuke's throat, under his uvula.

Shin expected to find a stomach there, but instead he whooshed through one of Yugo's blue portals, which obstructed Yusuke's throat and caused him to snore. On the other end, he found himself suddenly in free fall in a foreign, truly alien grey, urban environment.

Shin didn't notice the flash of red behind him until a mass of sticky material slammed into him in midair. What seemed to be exceptionally thick spider web entangled Shin's wings, arms and legs, making him plummet towards the ground. Thankfully, his fall was broken by a bright red palm; it was angled just right to accompany the momentum of his fall for an instant before cupping him up safely on top of an unnatural-feeling red fabric.

When he could look up without risking to fall to his death, Shin looked at his—alleged—savior. The man was taller than the tallest tree, clad entirely in red and blue, with a spider web pattern and a black spider embroidered on the torso. The giant was swinging in the air but quickly came to a stop on solid ground before turning his attention to Shin.

“Wow, sorry there, man!” He said, and Shin noted that his voice was surprisingly boyish. “I didn't even see you there. Are you with Ant Man? I'm an Avenger too, you know? I'm Peter Pa-I mean, I'm Spiderman.”

The giant offered one finger, which was almost as large as Shin's whole body, as if it were a hand to shake. Shin helplessly shrugged and indicated with his chin the web that was holding his arms and legs glued to each other.

“Oh man, I'm so sorry!” Spiderman exclaimed. He tried to tug on some of it, but the web remained stubbornly stuck and he only managed to drag Shin's body across his palm. “I have the solvent at home, I'll just keep in your my backpack and...” He looked around for the aforementioned bag, but a loud explosion down the street caught his attention. “Oh boy, I really need to finish that fight. Sorry, little guy, it's an emergency!”

Without warning, Spiderman pulled the bottom of his face mask off, revealing a square-ish jaw, and he opened his mouth wide. A deeply seated prey instinct roared in Shin's chest, but he couldn't do anything besides tensing up; not only was the web still holding him in place, but the giant fingers had also closed around him, holding him like a sushi. They led him up to the gaping mouth and shoved him inside, feet first.

Shin could feel the wet and slick tongue rubbing against his feet and legs as his was pushed deeper inside. He had to bend his knees when his felt his soles bump against the back of the throat while his chest, shoulders and head were still outside. Peter closed his lips around Shin's tiny torso and put one finger against the tiny man's face, shoving him rudely until he was entirely inside. Beyond the horror of his situation, Shin was extremely uncomfortable, forced to adopt a frog-like pose to fit in the mouth. His entire front body, including his face, were pressed against the tongue, sinking into it.

The tongue wriggled, raised and fell in an approximation of "Sorry, I'll let you out soon" said with a full mouth. An instant later, Shin was shoved down hard against the muscle by air pressure—he could guess that Spiderman had taken off from the ground. For the next few minutes, Shin was joggled around the mouth as Peter jumped, kicked and swung while fighting whatever enemy a man his size fought.

The only advantage to the situation, Shin noticed, was that the web entangling him was sizzling in the saliva that coated everything, becoming softer by the second. After being tossed around the mouth for a while, he managed to free his arms and wrap them around the tongue in a desperate hug—he had a few near misses with Peter's teeth and didn't want to be accidentally chewed! He was glad to have done so when Spiderman said "Wait! Wait!" before screaming out loud while—apparently—being swung around and slammed against solid surfaces. Through the open lips in front of him, beyond the red curtain of the mask, he could see what looked like a large man with metallic tentacles sprouting from his back; despite everything, Shin was glad to be relatively safe rather than fighting that monster out there.

The fight lasted several more minutes, and Shin held on to Peter's tongue for dear life all along, burying his face into it intermittently. Finally, the violent movements came to an end and all that was left was the giant's ragged breath blowing over Shin's body.

"Sorry little buddy... I'm going home now." Despite the words being distorted due to

most of the space in his mouth being occupied, Spiderman was crystal clear to Shin; his voice was rumbling from the depths of his throat, resonating in his skull and sending tremors through the tiny's own bones. Shin could feel gales of warm wind washing over him with every sound.

They started swinging in the air again. Peter's tongue was far more active than during the fight, rubbing itself against all parts of Shin's body, licking him as if he were tasting him. The trip seemed to be far longer than it should, to Shin, who guessed that Peter was enjoying himself and taking it slow before having to let him go.

The most ironic part of it all was that the web was nearly gone, save some bits, as it dissolved to nothing in the giant's saliva already. Shin did try to speak up and ask to be let out, but it seemed that Spiderman couldn't hear him—or at least he wasn't reacting if he could—and Shin found himself swallowing some of the boy's saliva for opening his mouth in that environment. Flustered and sputtering, he thought his chance to escape arrived when the giant came to a halt, slightly opened his lips, allowing Shin to see what looked like a messy bedroom, and removed his face mask.

“You can get out,” Peter said, opening his mouth wider and sticking his tongue out. Shin got his first bowl of fresh air in what seemed like hours. He stretched his body and crawled out in the open and into the giant's upturned palm presented to him.

He wasn't even halfway out when a feminine voice behind both of them startled them—literally, as Shin could feel the gigantic palm bounce in surprise.

“What are you doing, Peter?”

Spiderman's previous gentleness vanished instantly; he grabbed Shin's waist between three fingers, which *flew* downward, straight to Peter's skin-tight pants... which the giant was holding open. Shin didn't even have time to scream at the thought of being shoved down there, as Peter swiftly tucked him in the waistband of his Spiderman suit and snapped it shut over Shin's legs. The shirt fabric was immediately pulled over Shin's upper body, concealing the man entirely. Shin wasn't sure if this was better or worse than his previous holding place—he was tightly pressed into the giant man's skin, feeling the fit waist against his back. Through the fabric that covered him, he could see Peter turning around and showing that it was an attractive, brown-haired woman who'd

talked.

“Heeeyyyy, Aunt May! Just came back from some superheroing!” Peter said in a way that sounded forced. “Saving the world, all that...”

Peter moved his hips like he was trying to walk away, but the so-called “Aunt May” stared directly at Shin. The Eniripsa felt anxious at the idea yet another giant person of unknown species would find him. But instead, the giantess looked away with a laugh, jokingly covering her eyes with one hand.

“Ew! Oh my gosh Peter,” she chuckled. “I know that boys your age have urges, but I don’t want to see that!”

“No wait, Aunt May, it’s not what you think-” Peter stammered.

“And what’s with the costume?” Aunt May continued. “Is that some kind of fetish? Oh wait, don’t tell me, no, I don’t wanna know. I have seen what people on the internet think of Spiderman.”

“Aunt May, I swear I wasn’t-”

“Just, next time, please close the door when you do that.” She shut the door, leaving Shin and Peter alone. The giant pulled Shin free, holding him in a fist as he sat on the carpet then letting him drop on the floor.

“Man, oh man... That was not good,” he groaned. “And the web on you’s already gone. I did all that for nothing. I... Hey, I’m sorry, dude.”

Shin was trying to stand up and tear off the last bits of web on him. He was in awe with his first view of his wannabe savior. This was the first good look he was getting of Peter’s face without his mask; he was a well-built youth with short brown hair. On Shin’s left and right, he could see the intricate pattern on the black soles and red fabric of Spiderman’s boots. The giant was sitting on an alien-looking carpet with thick strands up to Shin’s knees, slouching over the tiny. He looked genuinely contrite.

“As you can see, I’m really new to this superhero thing, hehe...” He reached far over Shin’s head and grabbed the tip of his left boot; then, he pulled it off. He put down his now bare foot on the carpet and casually reached for the second boot. “How long have you been at it? Have you recently joined Ant Man or what?”

Shin looked warily at the soles much larger than himself propped up on both sides of him. “I don’t know what Antman is.”

Peter scrunched his face a bit and turned his ear towards Shin. “What?”

“I DON’T KNOW WHAT ANTMAN IS! I DO NOT KNOW THAT ORGANIZATION” Shin yelled at the top of his lungs, and he could tell the giant heard him.

“Wait, you’re not a superhero?”

“I’M AN ENIRIPSA!”

It took a few exchanges for Shin to explain he was merely a civilian shrunken by chance, and that he couldn’t absolutely not grow back with his own powers. By the end of it, the giant looked distressed.

“Oh boy, I am SO sorry! Mr. Stark could-” He jumped to his feet, one of which barely missed Shin when it slapped on the floor. “No, not anymore...” Peter looked somber for a moment. “But I’m sure Bruce could help. Or-or Ant Man, of course. You know what?” He swirled around on his feet and faced Shin while doing a finger gun. “I’ll contact the Avengers and they’ll help you, and you can stay with me in the meantime! I got an old hamster cage for you t-to be safe! Don’t move!”

Without listening to Shin, who was yelling up at him from the floor, Peter started digging in his closet until he pulled out a hideous yellow pet cage. Shin wasn’t familiar with this other world’s technology, but he could recognize the bars of a cage anywhere. He took off, hoping to fly out of reach... but using supernatural reflexes, Peter snatched him in midair like it was nothing and shoved him into the cage’s opening, latching it closed behind him.

“You’ll be safe in here!” Spiderman said, and the smile that he was offering Shin

through the bars seemed genuine. That was the last thing the shrunken man saw before he was shoved down the teenager's bed, out of sight.

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Peter was not very often at home, Shin discovered, between something called “school” and saving the world in red spandex. Shin had no idea what “spandex” was, but it was how the giant had described his hero costume on the second day in the cage. That day, Shin also learned that the boy was a hero of legend, like Sir Tristepin—knowing the latter, Shin had no problem believing that a naive, easily excitable teen could save the world. It was on the third day after the so-called Avengers—Shin had asked who they were avenging, but Peter couldn't answer—that things moved forward.

The Eniripsa first noticed that Peter's socked feet were moving unnaturally when he entered his bedroom that day, and after the cage was pulled into the open, the tiny could notice traces of blood soaking into the sock's material. But Peter didn't seem to care.

“The Avengers are ready to see you!” The giant said excitedly while opening the cage. “They're sending a car for you to see Hank Pym right now!”

Shin took a few tentative steps out and towards Peter's sock, where the material was tainted a deep shade of red.

“Don't worry about that, I just kicked the wrong supervillain and-” Peter started.

“I can heal it.”

“What?”

“I can heal it if you show me the wound!” Shin repeated louder. They had discussed Shin's origins and powers, but it was the first time that Peter would see his healing abilities.

The giant carefully peeled off his bloodied sock, revealing a sole that was twice as long as Shin was tall, and the fairy shuddered at the memory of the first time he was stepped on. But this was Peter, a friend, he thought as he gently caressed the smooth skin of the heel. The wound was rather shallow, relative to the size of the foot it was on, but it was half as tall as Shin himself, which made it the largest healing job he ever attempted.

He brought his palms together in prayer to the Eniripsa goddess and felt a familiar energy rise around him. He whispered, “*φσέ.*” Normally, when using so much power to heal, flower petals would swirl as magic flowed, but only carpet fibers moved as Peter was healed. The blood retracted and was sucked back into the quickly-closing skin. After an instant, there wasn’t a blemish left on the sole.

“Don’t stop...” Peter suddenly said with a delighted sigh. He wriggled his toes and leaned his torso back, obviously enjoying the experience.

Shin was surprised, but he maintained the spell. Now that there wasn’t anything left to heal, it was reduced to warm air blowing against the skin and a psychic force digging into it. The sole was slightly deformed by it, wrinkling as if a thumb was massaging it from heel to toes.

Shin couldn’t move an inch while he was performing the healing spell. He noticed that Peter was inching his foot closer, but he couldn’t move out of the way, to the point that Shin was nearly face-to-sole with the ball of the giant foot after a minute. That’s when the bedroom door swung open.

“Happy’s here, he wants to see you,” Aunt May’s voice came.

Peter let out an approximation of a squeal and violently bent forward, hiding Shin from view. The tiny could only see the giant’s hand snatching him up and shoving him into Peter’s shirt pocket, but he could hear the woman say, “Again, Peter? Please lock you door” and Peter reply, “It’s not what it looks like!” A sigh ensued, then Peter stood up, leading Shin towards what he hoped was the solution to all his issues.

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“Out of the way, kid,” a grumpy old man grunted while shoving Spiderman away from Shin.

The tiny Eniripsa was standing on a pristine white table, where he had been subjected to numerous tests in the past few hours after he had been delivered to this “Hank Pym” person. The man was kind of scary, although Shin admired how easily he brushed off Peter’s hero status—if he could ever go back home, Shin promised to himself he would follow that example and treat Tristepin like a peer.

“Do you know if you can grow him back, doc?” Peter asked, clearly concerned.

“There’s no growing him back, because he was never grown up in the first place,” Pym replied in a severe tone. He took another sample he’d collected from Shin and ran it through yet another machine of his.

“Wait, what do you mean? I used to be as big as you guys! Or nearly so, at least...” Shin countered. Pym had given him a tiny earpiece with a metal branch extending to his mouth, which somehow made his voice much louder. A “mycrofone” they’d called it.

“You traversed an interdimensional portal, and whatever sent you here reprogrammed you to be your current size. You didn’t shrink. As far as our universe is concerned, this is your default state. I could grow you into a giant, from your perspective, but it wouldn’t last long and it would put immense strain on your body. No, the only way for you to grow back permanently is to go home. Lucky for you, I think I isolated the frequency of these portals of yours. I can predict where the next one will appear.”

“Wow, really? How?” Shin asked.

“Time doesn’t move at the same speed in all dimensions, kid. Time in your home world is much slower, it seems, as this Yugo fellow is currently in the middle of creating a portal. It’s less than 34% complete, but I can triangulate the location from the energy flow. At this rate, it should be fully complete in about 4 hours.”

Shin was awed by the potent sorcery of Hank Pym, but the old man kept talking. “If your friend back home has been firing up portals constantly to try to retrieve you, I would say...” he took a pause and seemingly made some calculations in his head, “... don’t

quote me on that, but I think a day here equals a minute in your world. When you arrive there, you might look like you just left, from your friends' perspective.”

The idea was mind-blowing to Shin, but also comforting. Yugo and Amalia didn't deserve to worry for him or blame themselves for his disappearance. And he would see Tristepin again...

“Now, the location of the portal is the real challenge,” Pym continued eyeing the luminous slate that he called a computer screen. “It's in outer space, two galaxies away from here. Whatever your friend's doing, it ain't working, pal.”

Shin's happy thoughts came crashing down. Outer space? There was no way he could ever get there. But it was Peter who spoke up and rekindled hope.

“I think I know a guy!”

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Upbeat music was permeating the air before Shin could see the metallic beast appear in the sky. It landed outside, where Shin could barely see it through a window, and what came out of it was a massive specimen of a man. The colossus walked out with each step accompanying the beat of the music, half dancing. It looked a bit goofy, but it took some serious balls to make such an entrance, Shin presumed.

The stranger entered the room and loudly greeted Peter but kept clear of the scowling Pym. Shin could tell that the rugged, bearded man knew the situation because he didn't look one bit surprised when he saw the shrunken person standing on the table. Instead, he cracked a confident grin.

“The name's Starlord,” the new giant said. “I heard you need a lift of the intergalactic variety?”

“This guy can bring you to the portal in his spaceship!” Peter declared.

The reveal that the man before him could travel through the cosmos made Shin's knees buckle. Back in his world, outer space was the realm of the Gods, and only divine beings could traverse it. Shin reflexively bowed as deeply as he could, imbuing his voice with all the respect and adoration he could muster.

"It is a privilege to be in your presence, almighty Lord of the Stars."

A few seconds of silence followed, broken by Starlord guffawing.

"Man, I already love this tiny dude! Come, the Lord of the Stars will save you."

Starlord's fingers closed around Shin's body, and the rest was a series of sounds and movements as the tiny man's face was blinded by the palm of the giant hand. When he was released, it was on a flat black surface near a wheel, which was held by the brown-haired man.

"Ready for take off? Four, three, two..."

The entire building the giants were in seemed to move off the ground, and Shin looked, astounded, as the planet seen through the windows shot down until it was replaced by the inky void of space.

"This is... unlike any magic I have ever witnessed," Shin admitted.

"You witnessed lots of magic, buddy?" The Lord of the Stars asked, surprised.

"He can USE magic!" Peter piped up. "He has this foot massage magic, it's so cool!"

"Wait, foot massage magic? You have something like that, and you didn't offer me some?" Starlord swiveled his seat and faced Shin head-on. "I don't work for free, you know-?"

Subjected to the giant's roguish grin, and terrified he would make a mistake that would cost him dearly, Shin anxiously agreed. This seemed like the right answer, as the titan laughed again and tore his boot off before swinging one bare foot up, the heel slamming

down in front of Shin.

The fairy took tentative steps towards the sole, which was towering above him. It looked wide and rugged, and quite terrifying to Shin, who felt like a proper Pichon out of water. He didn't know this world's religious rite or how to properly honor a divine being, but he could guess that he was expected to use his healing abilities.

It was a weird feeling, healing skin with no injuries, but Shin complied; the wind rose around him and he channeled his magic through his fingertips until he heard the giant grunt in approval. The energy emanating from Shin was softly digging into Starlord's sole, extracting primal reactions from it. The toes scrunched and extended in turn, and the foot bent forward, as if it were a Chacha eagerly leaning into pets.

Shin stopped the spell, against his will, when the foot bent so low that the big toe slammed into his face. The tiny barely managed not to end up on his butt, but all he could see was the toes filling up his vision.

"Oh! That felt good!" Starlord's voice thundered. "Do it again!"

Shin hoped he was wrong, but he thought he could understand the meaning of the god's words. With some hesitation, he stepped forward and pressed his cheek against the underside of the larger toe. Starlord immediately had shivers.

"Now, lick."

"Hey! That's too far!" Peter suddenly spoke up. "Don't make him something so gross! He-"

Peter fell silent when Shin started licking the skin in front of him. He didn't particularly want to do it, but he couldn't afford to piss off the only being able to bring him back home. He ran his tongue against the toe repeatedly. The taste wasn't even half bad! On the giant's instructions, Shin moved along the toes, worshipping the underside and the gaps between them at a slow pace.

While he was tongue-deep into the god's toes, Shin admired the sleek metal of the apparatus the giants were using, each reinforcing his feeling of powerlessness compared

to these hyper-advanced beings. He couldn't help but notice the other people—including some animal person, who looked like a Firefoux, and a tree—sitting in thrones surrounding the Lord of the Stars.

“My lord, if I may...” he started to speak. “Do your other servants worship you in such a fashion, as well?”

“Who are you calling a servant of that oaf?!” The animal roared. “I'm the captain here!”

“Wait, so you're also a god?” Shin winced, worried he accidentally challenged the social order.

“Nah, I'm the only god here,” Starlord assured, his body now fully relaxed and his arms behind his head. “My dad's a Celestial, ya see?”

“Demi-god,” the large grey man said, while the Firefoux grunted something that sounded like “God my ass.”

If a being as immensely powerful as the Lord of the Stars was only a demi-god, Shin didn't want to ever meet the full-on gods, he decided. He just wanted to be back home as soon as possible. It's with his mind filled with images of Tristepin that Shin continued his ritual of worship with more enthusiasm than ever.

For the next few hours, Shin remained on the black surface. He spent the time alternatively servicing Starlord and looking through the glass panes into space, and feeling awed by the beauty of it all. When the team approached the portal, which was hanging from nothing in the middle of the inky void, Shin knew instantly that it was the portal that would bring him back to his world.

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Back in the Sadida forest, Yugo and Amalia watched a normal-sized portal swallow up their Eniripsa friend, but nothing came out of the larger one. The two friends waited a few seconds before getting worried.

“Hey Yugo... Everything is fine, right?” Amalia asked.

“Oh yeah, yeah! I mean, it should be...” Yugo scratched his head, confused. “Unless he went through the wrong pathway inside the portal, that would mean he’s stuck in another dimension, but...”

“THAT’S AN OPTION?!” Amalia roared. “YOU DIDN’T EVEN WARN HIM!”

Yugo brought up his hands in a defensive pose. “Calm down, Amalia. If that’d happened, the portal would have disappeared...”

The portals both vanished. A few seconds of silence ensued.

“Is... is Shin going to be okay?” Yugo expected screams from Amalia, but her voice was quiet and plaintive. She understood the seriousness of the situation.

“Amalia... bring me the Eliacube.” The princess didn’t protest and just obeyed, running towards the building where the ancient artifact was stored.

Yugo wasn’t about to let a friend vanish because of him, so he got to work. In his mind, he focused on everything he knew about Shin, trying to locate him. He could picture his amenable face and remember all the instances when he’d been selfless, kind, supportive... A wave of magic came from deep within Yugo’s chest and shot through his hands, creating a portal he hoped could save Shin. He suddenly felt a tug at the edge of his senses, like someone crossed his portal... but Shin didn’t come out of it. If he did cross a portal somewhere, it didn’t send him home.

Yugo took a long breath and tried again to locate Shin with his sixth sense. He summoned a portal nearby. Then another, and another and another.

When Amalia came back, the Eliacube in hands, Yugo was winded and surrounded by a dozen portals. She had the hope, for an instant, that Shin had come out of one of them, but Yugo was somber when he took the cube out of her hands.

The Eliatrope inhaled and held the cube to his face. Despite its benign appearance, this

was the artifact that concentrated all of the combined magic of his people, and it might be powerful enough to save Shin from his blunder.

An instant later, Yugo's magic exploded into the cube's, and visions flooded his mind.

"I see Shin! He, he is..." Amalia gasped in relief. "He is very tiny... I think the portal really messed him up..." Yugo kept silent for a few seconds, his eyes glazed over but darting around in a vision only he could see.

"What the hell, Yugo? What else?" Amalia shook him.

"He is... in a cage. It's dark and messy. Something... something big is keeping him locked up!" He gulped. "But the cube... it shows me something else... a strange place."

The vision ended. Yugo rubbed the floaters out of his eyes and looked at his expectant friend.

"It's... weird. The cube tells me that if I create a portal to that specific location, I will save Pinpin, but the place is-"

"Well go on, then!" The princess' temper came back, which Yugo took as a sign that she was relieved Shin could be saved. The boy decided not to talk back, and he instead nodded and readied the cube.

Gathering all his energy, Yugo sent it into the cube. All the open portals in the area disintegrated into a sky blue mist that flew right through the cube and into Yugo's hand, penetrating into his skin like a backlit blue tattoo. Magic poured out of him and into the circular shape of a portal, which took a minute to form. But this was unlike any portal Yugo had ever created; it overflowed with sizzling, cracking energy that connected two different worlds. The energy kept rising dramatically, and Yugo's mind was flooded with visions once again.

He could see Shin tending to the foot of a much larger man in a red suit. Both looked simultaneously happy and embarrassed. He could see Shin standing on a pristine white table, a smile on his face, talking to an older man. He could see Shin, his back pressed against the feet of a massive man, looking at a nebula through a window. He could see

Shin crossing the portal and-

The portal imploded in a million blue particles. Amalia wailed and called it a failure, but Yugo knew—he felt it deep within—that Shin was back home. He had crossed the right portal.

“Shin is here! But since the original portal had been an attempt to change Shin’s size, then all subsequent portals would keep altering his size further,” Yugo said. Shin had been materialized somewhere around, but he could be... Yugo shuddered at the idea and kneeled to scan the ground where the interdimensional portal once stood.

“What are you guys doing here?” Tristepin asked.

Yugo and Amalia shrieked in unison. Tristepin was standing there, a glass of forest liqueur in hand and looking confused. “Are you playing a game without me?”

“P-pinpin! Don’t walk over here!” Yugo said. “I’m looking for, er... I’m looking for a tiny person here.” He took another sip.

Pinpin burst into laughter, spraying the mouthful of booze he was drinking onto the ground. “A tiny person? You got good jokes, Yugo. I’ll keep an eye open for a tiny dude! Hope I don’t stomp him by mistake,” he said, taking a step forward. As soon as his foot had left the ground, Yugo and Amalia shouted “no!” to keep him from walking any closer, but the lop completed his first step before stopping.

“Stop! Moving!” Yugo ordered. “Please watch where you’re stepping, Shin could be under any blade of grass.”

“Shin? Even that little guy isn’t small enough to be stepped on. And you guys call *me* a lop,” Tristepin said, rolling his eyes with an amused smile. As he was about to take another step, he looked down as he felt something move under the ball of his foot. “Uh?”

He upturned his foot, and the three giants noticed Shin. Laying among the hundreds of things that the man stepped on every day, there he was, small as a grain of rice and embedded into the sole of Tristepin’s bare foot.

“Oh.... Wooow! DUDE! YUGO! Look, it's a tiny person, can you believe it?!” His disbelief had vanished in an instant, replaced with pure, childlike joy.

Amalia piped up. “Oh no... Is.... is he okay?”

“I dunno. Hey little buddy! Did I squish you?”

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As soon as Shin crossed the portal, he knew he was home. There was a unique flavor in the air that just felt right. But his troubles weren't over, as he once again ended up in free fall. This time, the wind was blowing with unmatched power, and even his wings couldn't withstand it long enough to take flight.

Ahead of him, he caught a glimpse of the forest and Yugo, who looked like a mountain in the distance. He thought to look under him a bit too late: By the time he realized that Tristepin of all people was standing just under him, and that his alcohol glass was getting more massive by the second, it was too late. The collision against the floor was no less painful to Shin because it was made of liquid, and he was suddenly submerged in a world where everything was quiet.

Then he broke the surface. He sputtered and struggled to stay afloat in an ocean of liqueur. He retched and struggled, but he still ended up swallowing several mouthfuls or the potent booze—which is why he wasn't quite sure whether he was really feeling like the world was being tipped over or if it was drunkenness talking. When he noticed that ripples and waves were forming on the surface of the alcohol, he realized it was real.

Looking above, Shin was surprised to not see the circular opening into the sky. The glass was tipped! The hole was in fact behind him—and Tristepin's face was the only thing visible through it. It was so large that Shin wasn't sure he was even as tall as the pupil of his eye.

Tristepin's eyes disappeared from view after an instant, and his jaw seemed to grow larger by the second. Soon, Shin could only see Pinpin's mouth... and the upper lip

resting onto the edge of the glass.

Only then did Shin realize that the giant was *drinking*.

Currents formed and alcohol rushed towards the open mouth. Shin tried to fight back, but a wave slammed into him and he found himself submerged and irresistibly pulled backwards. He found himself gargling booze as he thrashed desperately, but there was nothing he could do. An instant later, he fell past the barrier of the teeth and was cast into the shade of Tristepin's mouth.

In the torrential chaos, Shin smashed against what he quickly recognized as Tristepin's tongue. It was his best chance, he figured, so he desperately held onto it; the river of liqueur kept pushing him back towards the throat.

Just when he thought he was lost, a powerful snorting noise rang throughout Tristepin's skull, and Shin was suddenly expelled out of the mouth like a cannonball. Tristepin was laughing.

Shin tried his best to control his wild arc in the air with his wings, but the power of Tristepin's laugh was overwhelming. When he landed, it was a miracle that a blade of grass took the brunt of the force and turned a lethal fall into a painful tumble.

However, nothing could have prepared Shin for the sole that crashed into him an instant later. That foot could have encased the gigantic Sadida tree under its sole, Shin felt like a crumb forgotten after a meal. He half-expected to pop like a grape, but instead, the supple skin molded itself around him, leaving him unscathed but embedded into Tristepin's sole.

Movement and blinding lights confused Shin, but then he heard Tristepin's godly voice. "Hey little buddy! Did I squish you?"

Shin tried to reply, but his words could never reach the colossus. So, he watched patiently as Amalia, Yugo and Tristepin debated what to do, and they settled on using portals to change his size again.

Shin, carefully handled between Yugo fingers was passed between three aggrandizing portals until he was nearly one foot tall. Yugo took a break, exhausted, allowing Shin to

hang out with Tristepin at his new, temporary size.

Shin didn't feel so bad. He was the same size he had been around those hunters when his adventure started, and that was not the worst size. But most importantly, Tristepin seemed to find him the most interesting person in the world, suddenly. The ginger seemed even more heroic and impressive and his gargantuan size, and Shin revelled in the attention and enthusiasm that Tristepin had to chat with him and prod and manhandle him.

"Okay, I'm ready to restore his full size, Yugo said after a dozen minutes where Shin was ecstatic, chatting with his giant Tristepin.

"Awww, does he really have to?" Tristeping jokingly complained.

"Y-yeah, do I really have to?" Shin asked, to Yugo's surprise.

The eliatrope thought about it for a minute, shrugged and said, "Nah, I don't care. If you like it that way..."

"Does that mean you're coming to live with me, spending a lot of time with me and we can have lots of fun?" Tristepin asked, sounding more excited with each word.

Shin blushed, and he nodded. "Yeah. Let's do that!"

[THE END]